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# TOWER AND TOWN

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MAY 2023

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# TOWER<sup>AND</sup>TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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## East-West

Our appreciation of the East-West links has never been more important than in this fast-changing era. The present issue of Tower & Town contains several examples of these venerable links. The first and second articles deal with the enrichments of western travellers to the east - the 20<sup>th</sup> century search for unity with nature in Arabia according to the seasoned English traveller Wilfred Thesiger, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century experiencing of wonder in Syria, so vividly penned by Sarah Bumphrey.

However, as you dear reader appreciate, links with the east are much older as we are reminded around Christmas and Easter. And it is this Biblical link which is here explored by John Osborne in his excellent article about the association of Paul the Apostle with Ephesus in southern Turkey.

Now, if you are seeking some surprises, go no further than the article by Ghanim Alsheikh. Imagine the monks accompanying the Crusaders on the way to Jerusalem, the British presence in southern Mesopotamia during early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the confectionary manufacturing at Pontefract in Yorkshire. In fact, the article compounds the history and east to west transfer of an elusive commodity, Liquorice.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the authors, our new compiler of this issue, the chairman and team of Tower & Town.

**Raik Jarjis, Editor**

Cover picture by Raik Jarjis using image supplied by Ghanim Alsheikh

# Wilfred Thesiger: Unity with nature Raik Jarjis

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It is not surprising that, in a world governed by conventions and conformities, nomadism is indeed romantically appealing. Take, for example, the British explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, (1910-2003), who during the years he spent among the Bedu of Arabia and Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq came to understand, admire, and share a way of life that had endured for many centuries. His thoughts on the matter are encapsulated within his written and photographic work: ‘Arabian Sands’ 1959, and ‘The Marsh Arabs’ 1964.



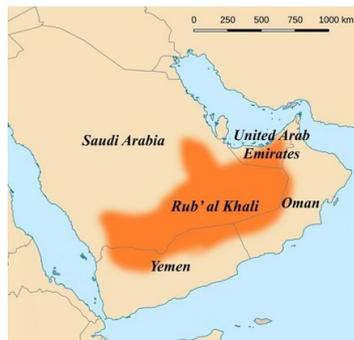
*“Then too, there’s a solitude, and a freedom of these vast spaces. And to some of us, the irresistible attraction of nomad life: an unencumbered life where only essentials count, where one’s pleasures, though very simple, very real: a long drink of clean water, the occasional luxury of meat, a few hours of sleep when the effort to remain awake becomes a torture, or a short linger over a small fire in the cold of the early dawn.” (Arabian Sands 1959)*

Thesiger was born in Addis Ababa, (Ethiopia), and educated at Eton and Oxford. At the outbreak of WWII, he was assigned to the Sudan Defence forces, and subsequently served in Abyssinia, Syria, and with the S.A.S. in the Western Desert. His post-war travels, always on foot or with animal transport, included Arabia, Iraqi marshes, Kurdistan, Hindu Kush, Abyssinia, and Kenya. In addition, he was decorated with the military Distinguished Service Order, and was awarded for his travels and writing a CBE, several notable medals, and fellowship of the Royal Society of Literature.



Some of his prominent travels were those in the period 1945-1950 across the desert of the Empty Quarter in Southern Arabia, (Rub’ al Khali); which is one thousand kilometres long and 500 kilometres wide. The terrain of this part of the Arabian Peninsula is covered in sand dunes, some up to 250 meters high; which he crossed twice with Bedouin companions and guides.

In order to get ready he underwent a five-month probation at the fringes of the Empty Quarter in order to adapt himself to Bedouin ways and the rhythm of their life. The following excerpt from his text on “The Sands of Ghanim” reflects his observations from that period, confirming the attraction of nomadic life.



*“My companions were always awake and moving about as soon as it was light. I think the cold prevented them from sleeping, except in snatches, for they had little to cover them other than the clothes they wore, and during these winter nights there was often ground frost. Still half asleep, I would hear them rousing the camels from their crouching places. The camels roared and gurgled as they were moved, and the Arabs shouted to each other in their harsh, far-carrying voices. The camels would shuffle past, their forelegs hobbled to prevent them straying, their breath white on the cold air. A boy would drive them towards the nearest bushes. Then someone would give the call to prayer.*

*God is most great... I testify that there is no god but God... I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God... Come to prayer! Come to salvation! Prayer is better than sleep. God is most great... There is no god but God.*

*Each line except the last was repeated twice. The lingering music of the words, strangely compelling even to me who did not share their faith, hung over the silent camp.” (Arabian Sands 1959)*

What Thesiger learnt from this journey did indeed slot well within his conservative Victorian mind-set – admiring the Bedouin for their incredible hard lives and intimate contact with the earth, a contact that we in the west had lost. There was nothing more in the world that he wanted than to become one of them, but that, of course, was a romantic dream. During his three years with the tribesmen, he discovered with some bitterness, that you can never unlearn what you know, never become what you are not. For all his genuine love and regard for the Bedouin, Thesiger was never able to abandon his place in civilization, never really to become one of them. Yet by travelling with them at the pace of the camel, dressing as they did, speaking their language, practising their customs, he found that one could, at least for a time, regain some of that sense of unity with nature which thousands of generations of human beings had known, but which ours had lost.

# Syria: East-West Melting Pot Sarah Bumphrey

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I sometimes find it rather hard to believe that my family and I were fortunate enough to travel to Syria in 2010 and visit places such as Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Palmyra which have since been destroyed by the Syrian army and/or ISIS. I have chosen six snapshots from the many unforgettable experiences we had which illustrate the theme of East and West in one way or another.



Syria is a country at the crossroads of civilisation – a melting pot of East and West. It has been marched through and meddled with by many different armies and peoples. This was evident from the very beginning of our visit. Arriving at the airport I wondered why it was named after Julia Domna, who, as the wife of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, had lived in York from 208-211. The reason was, as our Syrian guide told us, that she, along with four other Roman empresses, was Syrian, born in Emesa (now Homs). She was a remarkable woman, educated and powerful and striking in appearance as can be seen from her portrait (photo left) in her elaborate wig.

We spent a couple of days in Damascus. We visited St Ananias' House where St Paul stayed, on the "street which is called Straight" [Acts 9:11] situated in the Christian quarter on the eastern side of the Old City among many churches of different denominations. Steeped in bible stories from childhood, my husband and I found this incredibly moving as did the group of Australians visiting at the same time (photo right).



As you move westwards into the Muslim quarter the road becomes encroached by a lively covered souk full of every kind of shop most notably selling spices of a myriad of colours and some very racy underwear! The Umayyad mosque afforded our first experience of the interior of a mosque. We were provided with some very unattractive clothing to cover our bare flesh and for the women our hair too. Men in shorts were provided with long skirts! It was worth the ignominy of the awful attire. A panoply of wonders met our eyes: beautiful mosaics and patterned marble and a man sleeping with his shoes by his side on the red carpet in the centre of the



prayer hall! It was intensely moving to be in this venerable space where Christianity and Islam co-exist. Christian and Muslim tradition alike consider it the burial place of John the Baptist's head while Muslim tradition holds that the mosque will be the place Jesus will return before the End of Days (hence the Isa or Jesus minaret – left). Two shrines inside commemorate John the Baptist and the prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn ibn Ali, whose martyrdom is frequently compared to that of John the Baptist and Jesus.

As a linguist I found it thrilling to visit Ugarit (near Latakia in northern Syria). In a very unremarkable room, its crumbling walls overgrown with weeds, clay tablets had been found written in Ugaritic (used from 1400/1300BC). They provide the earliest evidence of both the North Semitic and South Semitic orders of the alphabet, which gave rise to the alphabetic Phoenician writing system and its descendants the Hebrew, Syriac, Greek and Latin alphabets. My son was moved to say “That’s really cool, Mum” (photo right).



We had our most memorable experience of all in Aleppo. Walking through the back streets we met a girl aged about 7, returning home with her arms out in front of her bent at the elbows across her body carrying several flat, circular loaves of bread, standard fare in Syria. I remember her beaming smile, her bright blue school uniform and her shining black plaits tied with matching ribbons. Turning the corner we found the bakery with its open arch above a counter at which a queue of mostly men was waiting. We were ushered to the front to ensure that, as visitors, we were served first. We were treated with gentle courtesy. I am chilled to think what has happened to all those people, going about their ordinary lives with joy and kindness, when so many inhabitants of Aleppo were killed, injured or displaced during the civil war.

Returning to Damascus we visited the Al-Azm palace (built during the Ottoman era as a residence for the governor of Damascus). The beauty of the interior with its striped masonry, restrained decoration of key features in patterned marble, cascading bougainvillea and elegant trees is well disguised. You enter through a nondescript door and down a long, narrow corridor. It was good to see a group of



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school children enjoying the space under the quiet but firm direction of their female teachers (photo left). As they all learned English at school they were keen to try out their skills with us; they left waving a cheery goodbye and saying “We love you!” We loved them too. East or west, we respond to each other as beings with a common humanity and I cannot help thinking that the

Syrian people deserve far better than the hand they have been dealt.

## Great is Diana of the Ephesians John Osborne

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How to start a riot? If you are Paul the Apostle, ignore any official guidelines about impartiality, choose a public place capable of holding 25,000 people, take no notice of local interests and sensibilities, and shout out that the local gods are not gods at all.



Paul had already been in Ephesus for two years and in the accompanying photograph (page 8) you can see the Greco-Roman theatre in which he addressed and annoyed the local crowd. We can imagine the strength of his oratory. Led by Demetrius the silversmith, the cry went up, according to the Acts of the Apostles, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians”. Demetrius successfully played on the local craftsmen’s fear that their business making and selling images of the patron goddess of the city, Diana – aka the Greek Artemis – would be undermined, and a riot broke out, which was quelled only after the intervention of a senior Roman official. Paul, admitting later that he was in fear of his life, left the city. The tradition that he was gaoled in the small building on the distant hill in the photograph, which today is known as St Paul’s Prison, is almost certainly baseless.

Ephesus was one of the great cities of the Greco-Roman world, situated south of Izmir (aka Smyrna) on the west coast of what is now Turkey, a rich and vibrant place with a busy port which connected local traders and travellers with the Aegean and Mediterranean world beyond. It was the capital of the Roman province of ‘Asia’, the western part of what we call Asia Minor. Founded by Greeks from the opposite shores of the Aegean Sea, it had already been in existence for over a

thousand years, had a population of many thousands (some say a quarter of a million) and was obviously a significant place for Paul to visit on his missionary journeys in the 50s AD.



sight.

Nor did Diana's (Artemis') temple survive. It was one of the 'Wonders of the Ancient World' for its architectural magnificence, but only one re-erected pillar survives above the silt that overwhelmed it. The other photograph gives us an idea of the cult of Artemis: though her statue is now headless, her many-breasted torso shows that she is not the 'virgin goddess' and Amazon-style huntress that you find elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world, but a goddess of fertility, strongly resembling the female deities of ancient Syria and Mesopotamia - Astarte and Ishtar.



A small community of Christians already existed before Paul's two visits. It must have grown rapidly and the city's importance to the Christians is demonstrated by the letter that Paul wrote, and the large church, which survives among the ruins, where leaders of the Church from throughout the Empire gathered for two Ecumenical Councils in the 400's AD to discuss – no, argue bitterly about – the true doctrine of the Church.

There is tradition, a very strong one, that after the Crucifixion the young St John brought the Virgin Mary to Ephesus and that she died here. On the hill opposite the waterlogged site of the Temple of Artemis are the partially restored remains in brick and marble of the vast 6th century Basilica of St John; and up in the wooded hills above ancient Ephesus there is ‘The House of the Virgin Mary’. This is a tiny brick building from the Byzantine period but with foundations possibly from the 1st century AD. This previously unknown building and its location were miraculously described in detail by a nun in a vision in her native Germany in the 19th century. She had never visited the area and a search led to its discovery. Cures are said to have taken place here. Not surprisingly it is much visited, and there has been much ‘commercial development’, as The Blue Guide blandly puts it.

## The Journey of Liquorice Sweetening Plant from Mesopotamia to England Ghanim Alsheikh

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Would it astound you to know that there are records of liquorice being consumed by the Mesopotamians, Pharaohs, Alexander the Great and Caesar? In those days it was more often drunk than eaten, but its medicinal benefits and capacity to quench thirst were known even then. In addition, Mesopotamians widely used it as a remedy for different ailments.



In the UK, the most popular form of liquorice are liquorice sweets. Pontefract in Yorkshire is the first place where liquorice was grown in the UK, and it was where liquorice mixed with sugar started to be used as a sweet in much the same way as it is today. Liquorice is first reported in England as growing at a monastery in Pontefract, from whence its fame spread to the States and beyond - all from the root of a plant related to the pea! Today, Pontefract is a historic market town in the Metropolitan Borough of Wakefield in West Yorkshire, England, located east of Wakefield and south of Castleford. In addition, recent research has shown that liq-

licorice was first introduced to England from Mesopotamia, (modern Iraq), a long time ago!

Liquorice was well known to the Mesopotamians as a sweetening source and as a remedy for different kinds of diseases. Indeed, the earliest written record of liquorice in ancient Assyria, Mesopotamia, dates to 2100 BCE in the Code of Hammurabi. Liquorice is one of more than 250 medicinal plants identified from hundreds of clay tablets excavated from the library of King Ashurbanipal of the Assyrians. In addition, the best brand of beer they used to make is the “sweet beer.” By the 8th century AD, the Abbasid Caliphate empire inherited and governed Mesopotamia and beyond from their new capital, Baghdad. It is interesting to add that in the Arabic language, Liquorice is known as “As-Sous”, which was flourishing during the Abbasid empire (750-1258) and mentioned several times in the grand “Book of Abbasid Cooking” by “Ibn-Sayar-Alwarraq”, which was written around the year 960 AD, comprising 555 pages covering 132 chapters. It was also mentioned in the famous medical Arabic books of that period. In cooking, liquorice was used in ancient Assyria and Abbasid Mesopotamia as a highly refreshing cooled drink, (as it is in today’s Iraqi and Syrian cities), and as a sweetener and flavouring agent in food. In medicine, it was frequently mentioned in Arabic medical texts to treat cough, asthma, respiratory infections, diuretic and as the drug of choice in gastro-intestinal ailments.

During the period 1095 to 1272 AD of the Abbasid era, there were eight separate military Crusades attempting to regain the Holy City of Jerusalem from the Muslim Arabic rule. They were met with a varying degree of success. At one time, the Crusaders held Jerusalem, but they were expelled from the city for the final time in 1244. These expeditions were usually accompanied by groups of monks, especially the Cluniac monks from northern France, who were an offshoot of the Benedictines. By the end of the 12th century there were about 300 of their abbeys in Europe and, of these, 30 were in England, notably at Bermondsey, Reading, Faversham, and Pontefract. The Cluniac monks are thought to have ‘discovered’ liquorice when accompanying the Crusaders in the Middle East (Old Mesopotamia), where it was already a popular drink and a suitable alternative to the Islamic banned substance, alcohol. It is thought that they then grew liquorice in their herb garden at Pontefract in Yorkshire. This source would encourage the widespread cultivation of the plant in this West Yorkshire area after the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the 1530s. The period from 1400 to 1650 witnessed the great era of

the herbalists, including such well-known champions as Gerard and Culpeper. Both these men distinguished that liquorice was a most useful herb and had positive effects in mouth ulcers, dyspepsia, and piles.

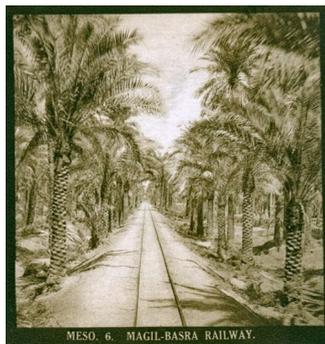
In the 1820s two major developments took place. A local Pontefract chemist called George Dunhill found that if he added sucrose from cane sugar to a liquorice mix, he could produce a ‘sweet.’ The second and perhaps even more important development was the introduction of steam power to enable ‘punching’ and ‘stamping’ machines to be developed. This allowed the mass production of squares and roundels, the basis of the “Allsorts and Pontefract Cakes of today.” From this period onwards, development was explosive. Factories sprang up all over the area. Initially the liquorice produced in the local fields in and around Pontefract, was sufficient to supply the growing local industry, but after several disappointing summer seasons, the local supply proved to be insufficient and untrustworthy.



Liquorice of Pontefract

In 1905, the good news on a new source of reliable supply came from the “British Medical Journal” reporting from Baghdad, on the cultivation of Liquorice in Mesopotamia. “Major Newmarch, the Political Resident in Turkish Arabia, and British Consul-General at Baghdad, has just transmitted to the Foreign Office a special dispatch containing many particulars of interest on the liquorice-growing industry in Mesopotamia. The plant is commercially grown wild throughout the country especially on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. About 5,000 Arabs are at the present time engaged in digging liquorice root. The root, on being brought to the receiving station, is weighed, and dried, and is then forwarded to Basra, southern Iraq, to be pressed into bales for export in the Makina station (in today’s Al-Hakemeia neighbourhood in Ashar where until today the street there is known as Makina Street! About 10,000 tons are annually exported from Basra at the average value being £5 per ton. The industry appears to be largely controlled by Americans. In addition to its medicinal use liquorice is now a good deal employed in sweetening and in manufactured tobacco.” (See BMJ. 11 Feb 1905; page 314.)

During the WWI, the British forces took control of the liquorice industry and augmented the exports from Basra to England. From 1900 to the outbreak of the Second World War, weekly liquorice production increased from about 40 tons to approximately 400 tons. The Makina was extended, and a special railway was established to carry the raw material to the Makina and the bales from Makina to Basra Port pavements at Margil to export to England (see photo.)



The numbers of workers in England also increased dramatically in parallel with this huge output. At maximum production, there were more than 7,000 women and about 2,000 men in the factories of ‘Liquorice Town’ of Pontefract, producing everything from sweets, Pontefract cakes, Catherine wheels and Spanish sticks to many other mixtures, including flavoured tea.

***Ghanim Alsheikh**, MD, PhD (Lond), FFPH-RCP. Professor Alsheikh is a specialist in Neurosciences, Public Health and Medical Education. He was the founding dean of two medical schools in Iraq and Yemen (1988-2000) and served as WHO regional coordinator for the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Educated in Iraq and the UK, he currently holds an honorary post at Imperial College London WHO Collaborating Centre and lives in*

## Family News

Naomi Painter

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We were saddened to hear of the death of the **Reverend Donald (Don) Woffenden** on 22nd February in Newmarket Suffolk. He was 93 and died peacefully.

Don was the last Congregational minister at the church in Marlborough which is now the Parade Cinema. He was here from 1964 to 1971 and played an active part in the ecumenical life of Marlborough and the Congregational church. After Marlborough he and his family moved to Looe in Cornwall. The church he moved to was the Riverside Church teamed with the Methodists and is now used in the TV series Return to Paradise.

Don’s last appointment was in Newmarket Suffolk where he lived with his wife Margaret until she died some years ago. Don and Margaret’s son lives in Wimbledon.

# Marlborough Churches Together, Easter Procession

Helen Stokes

For many years, Marlborough Churches Together undertook a march of witness which ended with a parade from St Mary's to St Peter's Church. This year has seen something of an updated revival of that event which took place on Easter Saturday April 8th. An invitation was extended to members of all the churches and the community as a whole to take part in a semi-dramatised procession down the High Street, with three dramatised scenes on the way.



The first scene on the Town Hall steps gave an overview of how Christians understand the life of Jesus and included a depiction of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Scene Two outside the Jubilee Centre gave a glimpse of Peter's denial and Jesus' trial and conviction by the Jewish leaders. Jesus was led from there to St Peter's Churchyard where the crucifixion was enacted. The presentation ended with reference to the resurrection and a rousing rendition of 'Amazing Grace' was the finale.



The procession took place in glorious sunshine. It was wonderful to see shoppers and shop keepers stop what they were doing to watch. Many of the cast and onlookers were greatly moved and plans are already in place to make The Easter Procession a fixture in future years.

## **1<sup>st</sup> May (*Bank Holiday Monday*)**

Bushton Manor Plant Fair & Open Garden, SN4 7PX, in aid of St Peter's Church Roof Fund, Clyffe Pypard.

*Entrance £3, children & parking free. Dogs on leads welcome.*

## **4<sup>th</sup> (*Thursday*)**

Marlborough Floral Club, Mildenhall Village Hall, 2pm.

Sarah Willman - workshop on foam-free arrangements. Treat yourselves to an enjoyable afternoon out on the first Thursday of each month.

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

## **5<sup>th</sup> (*Friday*)**

Marlborough College: Exeat starts (to Monday 8<sup>th</sup>).

Primary School Art Exhibition, St Peter's, (to Monday 8<sup>th</sup>).

## **6<sup>th</sup> (*Saturday*)**

Manton Street Party, Manton, 3pm-6pm.

Tower Tours, St Peter's, afternoon.

Marlborough Concert Orchestra and the Marlborough Choral Society: 'Coronation Prom', St Mary's Church, 8pm-9pm.

## **7<sup>th</sup> (*Sunday*)**

Coronation Cream Teas, St Peter's, 10am-3.30pm.

Join us in celebration of King Charles III's Coronation and enjoy listening to the Wiltshire Police Brass Band, readings from the Marlborough Players, and singing by the Marlborough Choir.

Tower Tours, St Peter's, 10am-4pm.

High Street Party, Marlborough, 12 noon-3pm.

*For full list of events over the Coronation Weekend please see the Marlborough Town Council website <https://marlborough-tc.gov.uk/coronation>*

## **8<sup>th</sup> (*Monday*)**

Community Tidy Days.

## **10<sup>th</sup> (*Wednesday*)**

Marlborough Gardening Association, Town Hall, 7pm.

Lecture on 'Planting for pots and containers'.

*Non-members welcome £3, or join for the year (to February 2024) £10.*

## **13<sup>th</sup> (*Saturday*)**

Marlborough Gardening Association Plant Sale, Town Hall, 9.30am-12 noon.

*Payment cash only. Entrance Free.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> (Sunday)**

11<sup>th</sup> Series of Brilliant International Musicians: Jâms Coleman (Piano) enjoys a rich and varied musical life as a soloist, chamber musician and vocal accompanist.

*See more details and book tickets on the St Peter's website:*

*<http://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/event>.*

*£10 for members of St Peter's Trust, £15 for non-members, and free for schoolchildren & students. Tickets also available on the door, subject to availability.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday)**

Talk by Dr Caroline Ness, The Merchant's House, 7pm-9pm.

‘Couture in the Country: from Edwardian glamour to the swinging sixties via the fashionable wardrobes of the ladies of Chiltern Lodge’.

*More information & tickets (£15 or £12 for Friends) via the website:*

*<http://themerchantshouse.co.uk/event>*

### **18<sup>th</sup> (Thursday)**

Marlborough History Society talk, St Peter's, 7.30pm-9.30pm.

‘Wiltshire, Breadbasket to the Roman Rhineland’, by Sam Moorehead, historian and numismatist, based at the British Museum. Moorehead is a leading expert on Roman coins, and is the author of several books on the history of coinage of the Roman Empire.

*More information on the website <http://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/event>*

*Tickets available on the door £5. Free to History Society members.*

### **20<sup>th</sup> (Saturday)**

Art of Jaipur Indian Block Printing Workshop, St Peter's, 10.30am-12.30pm.

Demonstration on this ancient craft and learn to print your own beautiful designs using a wide range of hand carved blocks. Please wear old clothes or bring an apron!

*Further details and booking (£29) via <http://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/event>*

The Merchant's House Victorian Cemetery Walk & Talk, Rugby Club, 2pm-3.30pm.

Join Kim Wakeham on a tour of the graveyard, opened in 1853 and closed in 1924, and find out more about the people buried there. Meet at 2pm at the Rugby Club, wear comfy, sturdy shoes. See the website for more information and to book:

*<http://themerchantshouse.co.uk/event>. Tickets £10.*

### **25<sup>th</sup> (Thursday)**

St Mary's: Term 5 ends (to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June).

### **26<sup>th</sup> (Friday)**

St John's: Term 5 ends (to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June).

### **27<sup>th</sup> (Saturday)**

Marlborough College: Half Term starts (to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June).

# Nature Notes: Special May Days

Robin Nelson

May is the birdwatcher's favourite month, when our summer visitors, the males in particular, look as bright and smart as they do in the field guides. The **Common Redstart**, a migrant which I occasionally encounter on local walks in early May, is a striking mixture of reds, blacks and ash-greys, its fiery, orange tail shivering as it perches on a fence post. Then there are the **Warblers**, arriving one by one, like members of an opera company, setting up their favourite positions to sing from.



I have always kept bird records, so can look back on some special May days since moving to Wiltshire. A startling example was a day in May 1984 when I encountered a “trip” (group) of three Dotterel on Hackpen Hill. The **Dotterel** is a rare wader which breeds in the Highlands of Scotland on sparse vegetation above 1,000 metres: my birds were so confiding and tame I was able to approach to within a few feet and hear their twittering calls as they circled overhead.

A few years later another rare wader appeared on a patch of water near Collingbourne Ducis: a **Black-winged Stilt**, with immaculate black and white plumage and ridiculously long, bright red legs. Exceptionally rare for Wiltshire, it must have attracted a fair number of “twitchers” during its five-day stay.

I look back on some records with mixed feelings. I see that at dusk in May 1998 I was listening to two **Nightjars** “churring” and a **Woodcock** “roding” overhead in a copse near Great Bedwyn. A beautiful newly-born deer, no bigger than a hare, was lying silently by my feet, while I gripped my dog by the collar. I don't know about the current population of fallow deer in Savernake, but the copse is silent now at dusk in May, apart from the occasional sounds of hooting Tawny Owls.

A local friend organises an annual Dawn Chorus walk, starting at his farm in Berwick Bassett and then continuing from Avebury up to Windmill Hill. We usually manage to log c.40 species, and that has included Grey Partridge, Quail, Yellow Wagtail and Whinchat. With my Swindon Choir we raised a tidy sum on a Sponsored Birdwatch Day in the Water Park in May 2019.

One balmy May night I remember stopping by the Marlborough College Lakes after a social event and hearing, for the first and only time there, a Nightingale in full song. A colleague met me later, didn't believe me, and assured me that I'd been drinking.

He may have had a point!

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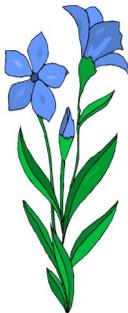
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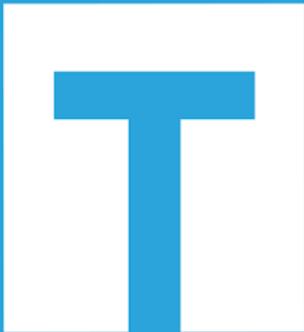
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# Marlborough Church Contacts

---

## **Fr John Blacker**

513267; marlborough@catholicweb.org.uk  
*Parish Priest, St Thomas More RC Church*

## **Reuben Mann**

07894 048146  
office@emmanuelmarlborough.org  
*Minister, Emmanuel Marlborough Church*

## **The Revd Tim Novis**

892209; twgn@marlboroughcollege.org  
Senior Chaplain, Marlborough College

## **The Revd Pete Sainsbury**

512364; revpetesainsbury@gmail.com  
Team Vicar and Worship Director,  
St George's Preshute & The Marlborough  
Anglican Team

## **The Revd Stephen Skinner**

512457; rev.stephen.skinner3@gmail.com

*Minister, Christchurch Methodist*

## **The Revd Chris Smith**

514357; revcsmith@outlook.com  
Rector; Marlborough Anglican Team

## **Rachel Rosedale**

512205; rachelrosed1@gmail.com  
*Member, The Religious Society of Friends*

---

## **Penny Reader**

marlb.anglicanteam@tiscali.co.uk  
Church Cottage, Silverless Street, SN8 1JQ  
512357; 07593 815609  
*(Weekdays, 0900 to 1300)*

## **David Wylie**

07564 082092  
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# Drop-in facility for young people in Marlborough



We are delighted to announce that Wiltshire Youth for Christ, in partnership with Devotion and churches in Marlborough, will be trialling a “drop-in” facility for young people from Easter onwards. We are grateful to St Mary’s Church for the use of the amazing facilities in the newly refurbished Church Cottage on Silverless Street. Our initial plan is that the drop-in will run on Monday afternoons, from 3-5.00pm, starting on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April.

The drop-in is open to all young people of secondary school age, free of charge. It will be staffed by our senior youth worker, Steve Dewar, accompanied by volunteers, all of whom hold enhanced DBS clearance. Steve has many years of experience working with young people across Wiltshire in schools, community projects and churches; he is fully trained in terms of safeguarding, first aid and food hygiene.

Young people will be offered hot or cold soft drinks, healthy snacks and a warm, engaging, safe and welcoming environment to sit and chat, play games or listen to music. Steve and the volunteers will be on hand to offer a sympathetic listening ear, support and encouragement as required. To complement and promote local provision they will signpost young people to other agencies and activities as appropriate. One of our key aims will be to include ideas from the young people themselves and hear how they would like the facility to develop in future. We will review the drop in with our partners at the end of the school year in July, taking into account feedback from young people and local stakeholders, to determine future developments.

Wiltshire Youth for Christ is a small, local independent faith-based charity, with a track record of successful and sustained engagement in North Wiltshire. We are motivated as a charity by our passion to share God’s love in practical ways with young people, who face increasing challenges in terms of mental health, the after-effects of the pandemic and a wide range of pressures. We believe in them, their potential for leading positive change and development in communities and their unique value as individuals with a diverse range of skills and gifts. If we can, working together on this project, play a part in helping them to find their place and develop confidence and direction, we will see it as a success.

We have been encouraged by the support we have received from many groups and individuals in Marlborough as we have explored these plans. We would be delighted to hear your views and how this project might be developed and, crucially, linked into other ongoing provision. You may have questions or concerns or would like to help. Please feel free to contact us:

Steve Dewar, Senior Youth Worker: [steve@wiltshireyfc.org.uk](mailto:steve@wiltshireyfc.org.uk);  
Fergus Stewart, Director: [fergus@wiltshireyfc.org.uk](mailto:fergus@wiltshireyfc.org.uk)

Dear friends,

At the time of writing, Easter has passed and the summer term lies open before us... But in the Anglican tradition, the season of Easter, or 'Easter-tide', lasts several weeks. (Best keep the chocolate consumption limited to a few days, mind you).

The given Bible readings for the Sundays after Easter focus on what it is to be Easter People. Living in the light of the resurrection of Christ is to follow the two on the road to Emmaus, encountering the risen Christ as you 'do life'. It's to be a questioner like Thomas and encounter the trueness of the risen Christ. It's to be like Peter at the Lakeside Breakfast (see John's gospel, chapter 21), still riven by the failure of denial but to be restored with food, friendship and fond love. It's to be in crisis, but then to have the risen Christ come to you in prayer and worship, and gain a sense of the 'long game' of Bible hope. These are just some examples of what is to be an Easter Person.

The resurrection power of Christ is of course not limited to one time of the year, but our wonder in the resurrection takes on a wonderful focus in these weeks. Spend some in chapters 20 and 21 of John's gospel before coming to the great story of Pentecost in late May. The encounters described in those chapters are both deeply human and really rather awesomely divine.

Every blessing,



Revd Pete Sainsbury  
Team Vicar in the Marlborough Anglican Team

## From the Registers

## Penny Reader

---

Baptisms - We welcome

26 March Katie Louise at St Mary's

Departed - We pray for the families of:

3 March Joan Podger (93), Churchill Court, Marlborough  
West Wiltshire Crematorium

13 March Amanda Cornes (67), St George's Road, Newcastle under Lyme  
St Mary's, Marlborough

There are historical novels which are simply stories set in the past, historical fiction in which actual happenings and people are 'novelised' and, my favourite, a blend in which fictional characters meet, engage with or are witness to real people or events. **The Misadventures of Margaret Finch** by Claire McGlasson is one such, set in the late 1930s. Our heroine works for the recently created Mass Observation project as an observer of the 'working classes at play' in Blackpool. One of the attractions on offer is the defrocked Rector of Stiffkey, the 'Prostitutes' Padre', who is engaged in a campaign to clear his name. Margaret becomes caught up in his mission, initially sympathetic, later more sceptical, as she and the novel both begin to question the nature of celebrity, notoriety, and who exploits who? I have a minor quibble with the title of this book, 'misadventures' sounds jaunty, comic even, but this is a poignant and occasionally uncomfortable story of class insecurity and snobbery, and the challenges of maintaining detached accuracy – and of course, the grim, true story of Harold Davidson's dramatic, public demise.

By coincidence, a prostitute causes the downfall of another Mr Davidson, in *Rain*, one of W Somerset Maugham's best known short stories. Maugham is a central character in **The House of Doors** by Tan Twan Eng, my book of the month. It weaves together stories of marriage, betrayals and secrets, colonial life in 1920s Malaya, Sun Yat-Sen's struggle to overthrow the Qing dynasty in China, and a (real) murder trial that rocked Penang society. With a wealth of detail it's extraordinarily evocative and convincing, fact and fiction combining seamlessly, and it feels like one of Maugham's own stories, read on a verandah, with the wind susurrating through the casuarina trees.

Set much further back in history, Christina Hardyment's **The Serpent of Division** is her first novel, though she has an extensive back catalogue of biography and social and literary history. Set in the late C15th, the central character is Alyce Chaucer (grand-daughter of Geoffrey). Thrice married, lady-in-waiting to Margaret of Anjou, she was connected for good or ill to most of the main players in the Wars of the Roses. Only the bare facts are known about her, so the author admits she has given her imagination free rein, and created a mystery story, seething with political manoeuvring and ruthless characters.

Finally, non-fiction - Lucy Easthope's **When the Dust Settles** is eye-opening and disturbing, also heart-warming, humane and important, I'm sorry it took me so long to get round to it.

  
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## Dying Matters Awareness Week

Lara Hill

Dying Matters Awareness Week takes place this year from 8 to 14 May, led by Hospice UK's Dying Matters campaign. Throughout the week, people across the country will come together to encourage communities to get talking about death, dying, and grief.

The theme of Dying Matters Awareness Week 2023 is 'Dying Matters at work'.

At Prospect Hospice, there will be an interactive display in the Heart of the Hospice cafe which everyone is welcome to contribute to. The display will ask different questions on the topic of death and dying, such as, 'What do you want people to wear to your funeral?', encouraging us all to think and talk about death, and helping to break the taboo that surrounds it. There will also be displays in our charity shops and at Swindon Hub.

Keep an eye on Prospect Hospice's website and social media for news and updates. If you would like to get involved with Prospect Hospice's Dying Matters Awareness Week, please contact: [larahill@prospect-hospice.net](mailto:larahill@prospect-hospice.net).

# News from the Churches

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## Marlborough Anglican Team

### St Mary's

Friendship café meets on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May. (*Poster page 25*).

Warm Wednesdays continue on Wednesdays, 10.30 am. (*Poster page 25*).

Ascension Day service on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm.



## Christchurch Methodist Fellowship

All logos, (and often correspondence), of the Methodist church has the Methodist Red present. This is the traditional colour

## The Methodist Church

of Pentecost and may be taken to symbolise the Methodist conviction that through the power of the Holy Spirit, all humanity may be saved. For this reason, Methodist Red should appear on every piece of communication wherever possible. On entering St Mary's, there is a red banner celebrating Christchurch Methodist Church, made by one of our members. As we enter the time of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, to each and every one of us, it is good to contemplate Methodist Red.

Christchurch Methodist Fellowship contact details are on page 19.

Our website <http://www.christchurchmarlborough.org.uk> will continue to carry news of our witness.

## Emmanuel

New Road Marlborough, SN8 1AH

We are grateful to meet for a weekly 4 pm Sunday service at our church with crèche and Sunday School groups. All are welcome to stay afterwards for refreshments and a sandwich tea for the children.



**Coronation Open House** Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2.30 pm – 4 pm. Join us for refreshments, games, and music and find out more about our church and the KING of Kings! All are welcome!

**Emmanuel Community Helpers** Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> May. Do you have a DIY or gardening job that could use a helping hand? Our team of volunteers are ready to make quick work of it! Contact us at [office@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto:office@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

**Sparklers** Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 3.45-4.45 pm (*Doors open at 3.30 pm*) at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. A monthly kids' club for school years Reception to Year 2. Games, Snacks and Bible Stories!

**CY (Christian Youth)** Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May & 21<sup>st</sup> May, 5pm-5.30 pm. Our Youth Group for school years 7-11. We're a friendly group and enjoy meeting for a short Bible study on themes relevant to young people. Meeting in the Youth Room at Emmanuel Marlborough after the main service.

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

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

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

**Breakfast Book Club**, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 7.15am-8 am, Zoom meeting. For more information and to RSVP, please check our website events calendar at [emmanuelmarlborough.org](http://emmanuelmarlborough.org).

**Homegroups**, Thursdays during term time, Pewsey: 7.30 pm, Marlborough: 8 pm, Ogbourne St George: 8 pm. Bible study, prayer and fellowship. For more details, email [office@emmanuelmarlborough.org](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)

*Advanced Notice:-*

**Holiday Bible Club**, 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, 9-12.30 pm at Emmanuel Church.

*Emmanuel Marlborough is becoming the Heroes Academy! There'll be games, crafts, songs, snacks and Bible stories as we learn to become superheroes, and learn about Jesus, the greatest superhero of all!*

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Thy Kingdom Come is an excellent initiative from the Archbishop of Canterbury, which keeps the vitality of prayer on the church's agenda in an interesting and fresh way. After Jesus' Ascension into heaven the disciples went back to Jerusalem where 'they all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers' (Acts 1:14). Jesus had told them to, 'Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49). They obeyed and prayed and the power came quite gloriously at the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out in abundance. Today we so desperately need a new Pentecost - will you join me in praying for God to move in our midst in a mighty and missional way?

St Mary's will be set up with eight 'prayer stations' that one can wander round and pray through – thank you all the local churches and groups who are creating a 'station'.

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30pm- Bishop Stephen Lake will be opening our installation when he leads our deanery Ascension Day service.

The prayer stations will then be open 9am to 5pm until Monday May 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>** from 7pm, we invite you to join us for 24 hours of continual prayer, until 7pm on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup>. Come along or sign-up on the sheet at the back of St Mary's to commit to a specific half hour. Revd Pete Sainsbury will be leading an hour of 'Prayer and Praise for Pentecost' at 7:30pm on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May as part of these 24 hrs.

My hope is that many, many souls this May can all join together praying, 'Thy Kingdom Come'.

## The Religious Society of Friends Quakers in North America

A talk about the Quaker presence in America from their arrival to the present day, given by Tom Massey and Barney Rosedale. An open meeting on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May, to which all are welcome. 2.30pm in the Friends' Meeting House.



# Tower and Town staff

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<b>Chairman</b>	Sarah Bumphrey	chairman@towerandtown.org.uk 16 George Lane, SN8 4BX	516862
<b>Advertising</b>	Chris Rogers	advertising@towerandtown.org.uk	
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<b>Subscriptions</b>	Peter Astle	4 Laurel Drive, SN8 2SH	515395
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## Production Teams

### *June*

Editor	Jo Payne	jun.editor@towerandtown.org.uk	07766 721799
Compiler	April Nobes	jun.compiler@towerandtown.org.uk	

### *July*

Editor	Preshute Primary	jul.editor@towerandtown.org.uk	
Compiler	Peter Noble	jul.compiler@towerandtown.org.uk	519034

## Every Month

<i>What's On</i>	Sarah Bumphrey	whats.on@towerandtown.org.uk	516862
<i>News from the Churches</i>	Alison Selby	church.news@towerandtown.org.uk Crossmead, Kingsbury St, SN8 1HU	511128
<i>Family News</i>	Naomi Painter	family.news@towerandtown.org.uk	
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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 June issue by Tuesday 9 May 2023 please.

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