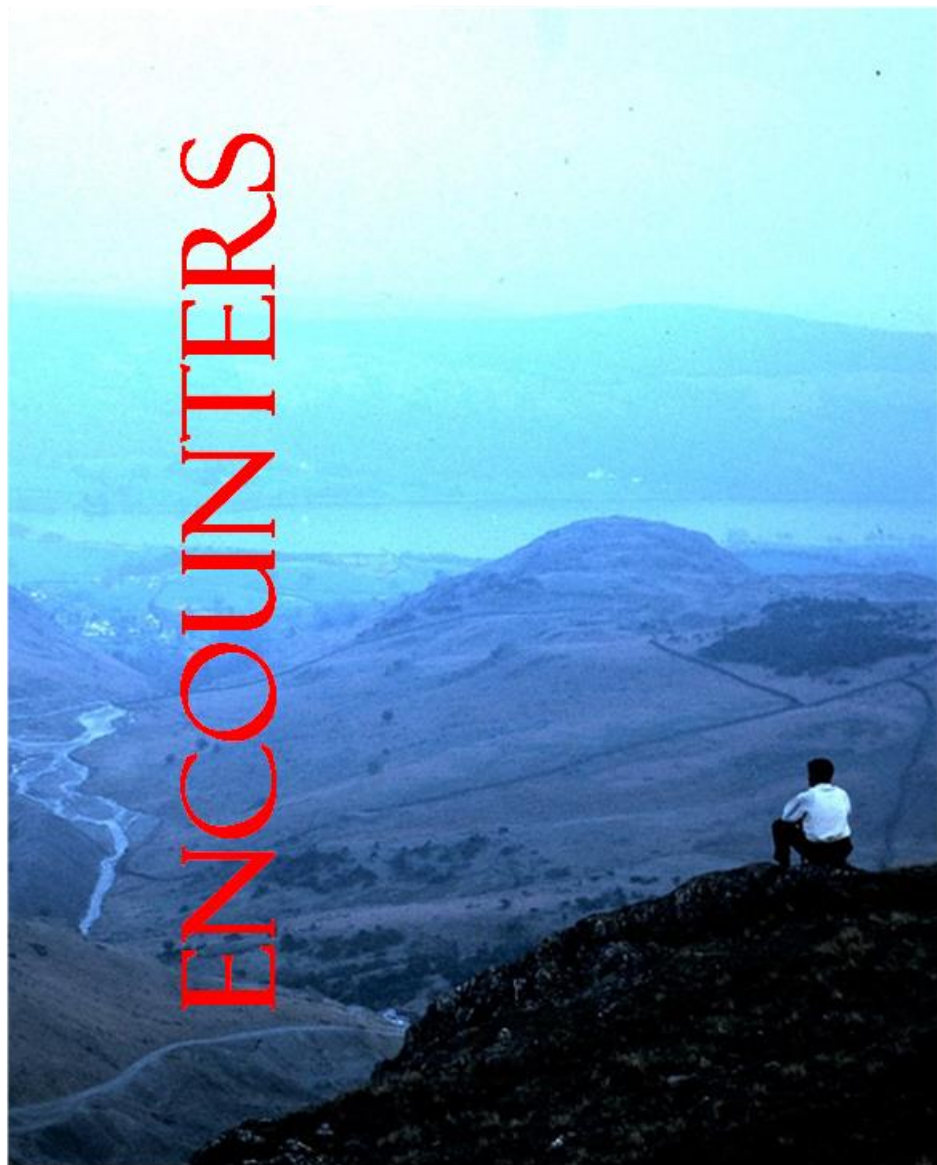

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May 2024

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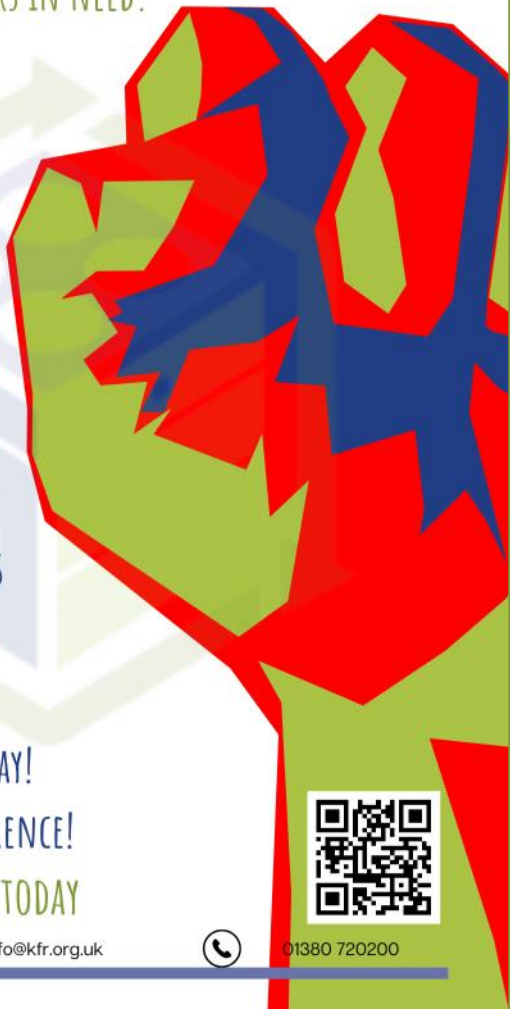
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TOWER^{AND}TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

NUMBER 747 MAY 2024



EDITORIAL

The diverse contents of this issue share the common theme of encounters. The aim is to remind us that encounters play roles in defining the epic of life.

Firstly, the nature of time and envisioning of reality are explored by reflecting on a past encounter with the landscape. Then, in an article by Hugh de Saram we have a momentous biblical example, that of Elijah and the evolution in man's understanding of the creator. An invitation to pause and think. This is followed by text about encounters with country houses and mystery, which is linked through the character of Agatha Christie to an article about life-changing encounters during the golden age of travel.

Moreover, Sarah Bumphrey writes for us about her life-enhancing encounters within our community, forged in her case through the 'thread' of embroidery, and Ghanim Alsheikh assesses the factors for inventing writing at ancient Sumer and its subsequent global implications.

Lastly, I have written for you about Alfred Wainright and his life-passion for the fells of the Lake District. In a way, you could also read my first article about time as another love letter to Wainright's country, and all what it entails.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the authors for responding so well to the 'encounters' challenge, and to fellow contributors and members of the Tower & Town team.

Raik Jarjis, Editor

Front cover: Raik Jarjis atop Coniston Old Man, (Dieter Steinmann 1971)

Intensive encounters with the landscape could occasionally induce transcending inner thoughts. Take for example the often-discussed case of “Wanderer above the Sea of Fog”, by the German romantic landscape painter Casper Friedrich, (1774-1840).

https://i1.wp.com/freecascadia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Wanderer_above_the_sea_of_fog.jpg?w=1920

I can also go further by attesting a relevant personal experience dating back to 1971, when I was following my star as a young man on a scientific odyssey that included education at different nuclear energy sites. Hence, on a beautiful April day, I set off south from Windscale to the Winfrith site in Dorset with my fellow student and dear friend Dieter Steinmann. By late afternoon we stopped for the night at Coniston in the southern part of the Lake District National Park, located between Coniston Water and the 802m high Coniston Old Man. It was twilight when we reached the summit of the Old Man, and I sat down gazing at the majestic scene below, now in dim blue. And it was here as light began fading away that my thoughts drifted between yesterday and the intriguing life-journey ahead. Soon, I found myself amid awe and sensation in what I could possibly describe today as the sublime.

The 1971 cover photograph of this magazine is of young me taken by Dieter. It captures those moments of being engrossed in my train of thoughts, oblivious of the passing of time – a treasured image that I have revisited recently upon receiving the sad news of Dieter’s passing away. Consequently the mind’s eye took over as I recalled the 1971 encounter atop the Old Man, then it was the beginning and now is the beginning for the end, trying to make sense of those solitary moments aided by resonant image and sound – “Day and Night” by the Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher (1898-1972), and “Who Knows Where the Time Goes” by the English Folk singer Sandy Denny, (1947-1978).

Across the evening sky, all the birds are leaving
But how can they know it's time for them to go?

Before the winter fire, I shall still be dreaming I do not count the time
For who knows where the time goes? Who knows where the time goes?

One way or another, we are merely leaving birds in awe of time and the “Telling on the Mountain”.

https://i.etsystatic.com/12791998/r/il/0d15e2/2738470904/il_1588xN.2738470904_9t1w.jpg
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo_YsIC9jxI

Write about an encounter? Well, yes, I suppose I could. That one years ago when I was still young and fit and full of vinegar; not like now, with COPD from all those burnt offerings and bone-on-bone hip joints from years of pounding the Judean footpaths.

It all began one beautiful sunny day, not a cloud in the sky. Not that that was any cause for celebration. Drought, it was. No rain for months; years even. Crops brown and parched in the fields. Wells dried up. Misery everywhere. But I knew what to do – or thought I did: call down fire from heaven. Show the people who's boss. And it worked. I really showed them; and we took the opportunity to slaughter as many of the opposition as we could catch up with. Lovely! Clean sweep.

Didn't last long though. The trolls got to work; vile messages on social media, death threats, hate mail. In the end I had to run for it, go into hiding.

It was then that I started really thinking. At first I just wanted to die. What a useless pantomime: fire from heaven, for goodness sake! Immediately crowded out of people's minds by that amazing Egyptian belly dancer at the Coliseum. There must be a better way to people's hearts.

I found myself heading for Mt Horeb. I love that climb, the incredible views you get as you rise above it all. And there's that cave near the top. Good places for thinking, caves. I spent the night there and came out early to view the sunrise. And that's when it struck me. Like a thunderbolt, you might say – except that it showed me how useless thunderbolts are. Fire, earthquake, tempest? Vagaries of nature, nothing more; like whatever it was that hit Sodom and Gomorrah - sound and fury, signifying nothing.

The only way to people's hearts is to listen to that voice inside you that shows you who needs the love of God and what you must do to bring that love to them.

Now THAT was an encounter.

<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/KAQpZhuornQ/maxresdefault.jpg>

Mysterious affairs at Styles and Charters

Raik Jarjis

During the late 1980s I took break from academia to lead industrial Research & Development. One night I received a call from a professional inviting me for discussion with a global company at an address in Ascot. This led to unsuspected encounters with two mysterious country houses when I later found myself sitting at my new desk gazing through a grand vertical window. I was by then taking care of the mysterious affair at Charters, the growing of diamonds from gas, which was at that time a guarded secret for my new employer, De Beers.

My office was within Charters House, Sunningdale, (Ascot), a 1938 country house designed by Adie Button & Partners. At that time, Christopher Hussey in the pages of *Country Life* was positively ecstatic: 'Charters, is in the broad sense, an illustration of how modern science and industrial craftsmanship can help to carry on that tradition of civilisation of which the great English country house has for so long been the highest expression.' Charters was owned at one time by Sir Montague Burton, the tailoring giant, it eventually became a corporate headquarters for aircraft manufacturer Vickers Armstrong, then De Beers. In other words, it was a house that held many mysteries, plus of course those during my own time.

What is also interesting is that during my time at Charters House I was in fact within walking distance along Charters Road, Sunningdale, from another mysterious country house, half-timbered with imposing chimneys. This was indeed the property bought by Archibald and Agatha Christie in June 1926, and ominously named it the Styles, after Styles Court in Agatha's first crime novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1921). In principle, the year 1926 should have been wonderful for Agatha Christie, (1890-1976), not least because of the publication of her great book, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. However, it didn't turn out that way as Archibald had already developed a passion for golf, and for one of its practitioners, Nancy Neele. Consequently, the year turned out to be most traumatic for Agatha, precipitating her widely reported strange disappearance on the night of 3 December 1926, and her subsequent divorce in 1928.


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It was 19th century steam that triggered the Golden Age of Travel from around 1880 up to the cataclysm of WWII. For the first time travelling for leisure became possible via luxurious trains and ocean liners. Hence, luxurious trains were first introduced in the USA by the Pullman Company in 1867, and later inspired European developments leading to the maiden voyage of the Orient Express in 1883.

1. Encounter in London

It was in the spirit of that age that in Autumn 1928 a notable lady visited the offices of Thomas Cook & Son on Ludgate Circus, London, seeking a holiday after finalising her divorce in October. She bought tickets for sailing to the West Indies; however, two days before her departure an encounter in London set her on a new life trajectory.

The lady considered it Fate that a casual meeting with a couple at a dinner invitation filled her with enthusiasm to visit Baghdad and Ur in Iraq on the Orient Express from Victoria Station. After all, Ur was a place she was thrilled to read about in the Illustrated London News archaeology dispatches of Leonard Woolley, (1880-1960). Next morning she rushed back to the Cook's office to cancel her West Indies booking, and to book instead for the Simplon-Orient Express to Istanbul; from Istanbul to Damascus; and from Damascus to Baghdad across the desert using motor transport, (Nairn Company). Thus began the fascinating association of Agatha Christie, (1890-1976), with the Near-East.

2. Encounters at Ur of the Chaldeans

Agatha Christie was welcomed at Ur by the archaeologist Leonard Woolley and his wife Katherine, and the experience inspired her to write "Murder in Mesopotamia", and to express her sentiments:

'I fell in love with Ur, with its beauty in the evenings, the ziggurat standing up, faintly shadowed, and that wide sea of sand with its lovely pale colours of apricot, rose, blue and mauve changing every minute.'

One of the first true cities in the world, Ur is about 160 km northwest of the modern city of Basra, southern Iraq. This site has been known to the British Museum since 1854, and it was chiefly excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922 and 1934 funded by the BM and Pennsylvania University. Interest in this city continues as the archaeological findings attest – from thousands of inscribed clay tablets from the period of Abraham, a picture of Ur in his day can be reconstructed. Moreover, enough evidence exists to suggest that Abraham's Ur

also had skilled engineers, architects, knowledgeable farmers and artisans, as well as celebrated jewellers. The achievements of the latter graced many a citizen. Indeed, royal graves of Ur from 500 years prior to Abraham's time have yielded a stunning array of art objects of gold and precious stones. Dominating the city, both physically and spiritually, was the temple-tower or ziggurat which rose in three stages to one hundred and fifty feet above the streets. Dedicated to the moon God Nanna, the ziggurat was constructed at Ur at around 2100 BC by Ur Nammu, styling himself 'King of Sumer and Akkad'. Even in its ruinous and current restoration states, it is an imposing sight.

For Agatha, Ur merited a second visit during the spring of 1930 when she met the young archaeology apprentice, Max Mallowan (1904–1978), who was away during her first visit. They shared their passion for the past, and their encounter is now legend within Mesopotamian archaeology.

Agatha and Max married in Edinburgh in 1930, aged 40 and 26 respectively. In addition, Max's passion for his work soon paid off by earning a professorship at London University, a knighthood, plus in 1947 1st directorship of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, (BSAI). Agatha accompanied Max on many excavations, including Nineveh and Nimrud in northern Iraq, where she helped in preserving and photographing artifacts such as the Assyrian Ivories discovered by the team of BSAI at the bottom of wells in Nimrud.

But soon the age of flight arrived, and the Orient Express was no longer economical. Then a day came when Dame Agatha and Sir Max found themselves departing their excavations on a Mediterranean ship. Agatha stood by the rail of the departing ship, looking back at the dim blue mountains of Lebanon as they receded into the distance. Max asked what was on her mind as nearly ten years of writing, travelling, and digging together came to an end.

'I am thinking', she said, 'that it was a very happy way to live.'

<https://c8.alamy.com/comp/ce5t22/ziggurat-of-ur-of-the-chaldees-ancient-sumerian-site-in-southern-iraq-ce5t22.jpg>

https://bible-history.com/images/common/genesis_ur_of_the_chaldees.png

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30851043>



Eclipse Imminent, Connecticut U.S.A. Credit Rory Webster

Unravelling the Sumerian Invention of Writing

Ghanim Alsheikh

Often called the “Cradle of Civilisation,” Iraq was home to ancient Mesopotamian peoples who between 10,000 and 3,000 BCE developed the world’s first writing, agriculture, and cities. Powerful civilizations from the Sumerians to the Neo-Assyrians ruled the region; and the Biblical sites of Babylon, Nimrud, and Nineveh can be found in modern Iraq. Mesopotamia, which is often referred to as “The cradle of civilization,” stands as a testament to the remarkable advancements achieved by these ancient societies. Among its many contributions, the invention of writing holds paramount significance, marking a pivotal moment in human history and igniting a revolution that would shape the trajectory of civilization for millennia to come. Mesopotamia's fertile lands nurtured the birth of this extraordinary development, positioning it as the epicentre of a burgeoning civilisation.

In examining the genesis of writing, a crucial question emerges. Was this invention an accidental occurrence or a purposeful endeavour? In this respect, by delving into the archaeological evidence and historical narratives, it becomes evident that the emergence of writing was a deliberate response to the exigencies of ancient society, rather than a stroke of happenstance.

In fact, archaeological excavations have unearthed clay tablets, such as the ones discovered at Nippur, Southern Iraq, offering invaluable insights into the origins of writing. These artifacts narrate the tale of the first written tablet presented to the king of Urarrata-Armenia, delineating the numerical figures of taxes owed to the Sumerian monarch. This tangible evidence underscores the pragmatic impetus behind the invention of writing—a necessity born out of administrative requirements and the imperative to maintain societal order.

The Sumerians, inhabiting the fertile plains of Mesopotamia, confronted the complexities of burgeoning urban life, necessitating efficient methods of record-keeping, communication, and governance. As trade flourished, populations expanded, and cities burgeoned, the need for a systematic means of recording transactions, laws, and administrative decrees became increasingly apparent. The cuneiform script, characterized by wedge-shaped symbols impressed onto clay tablets, emerged as the cornerstone of Sumerian writing. Initially devised as a system of accounting and administrative record-keeping, cuneiform gradually evolved into a versatile medium capable of expressing a myriad of concepts, from

epic poetry to legal codes.

The intentional development of writing reflects the ingenuity and foresight of ancient Mesopotamian civilization. Recognizing the utility of a standardized system of communication, Sumerian scribes meticulously crafted a repertoire of symbols and signs, enabling the transmission of knowledge across generations and fostering the preservation of cultural heritage.

The ramifications of the Sumerian invention of writing reverberated far beyond the confines of Mesopotamia, catalysing advancements in diverse fields and shaping the course of human civilization. Writing facilitated the codification of laws, the dissemination of religious texts, the compilation of scientific knowledge, and the transmission of historical narratives. It served as the cornerstone of monumental literary works, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, and facilitated the exchange of ideas among distant civilisations. Moreover, the advent of writing heralded the dawn of history, enabling societies to transcend the ephemeral confines of oral tradition and immortalise their collective experiences in written records. Through the meticulous documentation of events, individuals, and cultural practices, writing bestowed upon humanity the invaluable gift of memory—a repository of knowledge that transcends the bounds of time and space.

In conclusion, the Sumerian invention of writing stands as a testament to the profound ingenuity and foresight of ancient civilisations. Far from being an accidental occurrence, writing emerged as a purposeful response to the exigencies of urban life, transforming humanity's ability to communicate, record, and transmit knowledge. As we navigate the annals of history, we are indebted to the Sumerians for bequeathing upon us the extraordinary legacy of the written word—a timeless testament to the indomitable spirit of human ingenuity.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/writing/Sumerian-writing>



Savernake Forest Monster. Credit Hugh de Saram

Thank you, Rob

Our warmest thanks go to Rob Napier who, after many years as a compiler for Tower and Town, has decided to step aside. He has been an expert compiler creating well organised and beautifully laid out magazines shown most recently in the first three editions of this year.

John Osborne writes: “Rob has been one of those vital people on whom you depend so much that you hope (selfishly) that they will go on doing what they do for ever, though you know that they won't and shouldn't. He has a brand of practical intelligence which enables him to have thought up the answer before you yourself were aware that there was a problem. I have found him a great pleasure to work with, always fresh, quick and responsive - and good humoured - ready with ideas and solutions, and enjoying finding them. A man who could be relied upon to make a crooked way straight, and modestly take less credit for it than he might.”

Rob will be a real loss to the team. We shall miss his expertise and wise counsel but wish him a very happy “retirement”.

Sarah Bumphrey (Chairman) and the Tower and Town team



Credit Raik Jarjis 2024

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Consider the Lilies, and the Orchids too.

From the middle of April to the beginning of May Snake's-head Fritillaries should be swaying in the breeze on North Meadow, Cricklade. But with flooding currently preventing access, my annual pilgrimage is on hold: despite the presence of thousands of bulbs of this exotic lily species, many simply will not flower if water levels do not recede in the near future.

The situation may well be better at Clattinger Farm Nature Reserve, where the fritillaries compete for space with Primrose, Buttercup and Lady Smock. Here, in this unimproved grassland, there are Green-winged Orchids creating patches of bright purple in an adjacent damp meadow. And later in the season the Southern Marsh, the Common Spotted, the Heath Spotted, Pyramidal and Burnt-tip Orchid varieties will all appear.

Orchids are one of the most popular and elegant flower families, with over 50 native species occurring in the U.K., flowering from mid-spring through to late summer. Searching for them is always a thrill, with a hint of magic to it, and Wiltshire, with its downland areas, mature woodland and abundant grassland habitats is a special county for these beautiful flowers.

As many as eleven different species can be seen at Morgan's Hill Reserve, near Devizes, where monitored animal grazing, scrub clearance and reduction of the invasive tor grass help to create a favourable habitat for flowers.

I wonder what the average dog walker makes of my activities when they find me kneeling on a slope smelling a Fragrant Orchid or measuring another flower with a tape measure to establish if it is the Lesser or Greater butterfly variety. In June and July there are masses of Common Spotted Orchids there: my favourite is the Pyramidal, with its conical shape and stunning purple colour.

As its name suggests the Early Purple is the first of our common orchids to flower, the pinkish-purple flowers appearing on a spike of medium height above a rosette of spotted leaves in April and May. I have found this orchid in the Cherhill and Calstone Down areas alongside patches of bluebells. The leaves are shiny with dark purple blotches. When first in bloom it has a wonderful blackcurrant scent, but as the flowers fade it starts to reek! It's good that enthusiasts delight in photographing rather than collecting the various species. In my case I often turn to my Keble Martin "Concise British Flora in colour" and marvel at the three magnificent plates of orchid paintings.



Encounters with Textile and Stitch

Sarah Bumphrey

On a warm, sunny day in July 2022 as I was walking to Ann Louise Smith's Open Studio in Cardigan Road (part of the Marlborough Art Trail) I was thinking to myself, as I often do, how lucky I am to live in Marlborough with its rich cultural life. I was not disappointed.

Ann had opened her studio on a weekday for textiles and tea. Going down the side of the house I entered the back garden with its lush lawn dotted with apple trees onto which the studio opened. The room was full of the sound of female voices and an exciting array of different textures and bright colours with inks, paints and printing techniques on paper and fabric, further embellished with hand and machine stitch. It was inspiring to see what is possible with mixed media and a vibrant imagination.

In this welcoming environment Ann told me about Textiles and Stitch around Marlborough (previously a branch of the Embroiderers' Guild) which meets in Kennet Valley Hall. Women come from all over the area including Swindon and Corsham on the first Monday of the month for a talk by a textile artist. Optional workshops are available once a month offering opportunities to learn new techniques or develop skills. As we work, we talk or lapse into productive silences and have tea and cake or biscuits, often to the gentle whirring of sewing machines. It is extraordinary how different the pieces of work we produce are, how appreciative we are of one another's work and how much we help each other with ideas and advice about stitches, techniques, and materials. The day is always over far too quickly.

I particularly enjoyed the talk and workshop led by Michala Gyetvai who specialises in felted and embroidered work which seeks to capture an emotive and evocative interpretation of nature integrating fine and applied art. Her work is constantly refined throughout the process of making. She told us: "What I do up here [top left] affects what I do here [bottom left]." She suggested we look at the work of landscape artists showing us examples such as Samuel Palmer and Georgia O'Keefe and encouraged us to try out combinations of colour, shape, stitch, and texture in small experimental pieces. I was completely happy trying techniques I'd never used before and really enjoyed looking at the widely different pieces we produced and learned so much from. I have since entered two pictures in Michala's style for the Textiles and Stitch Exhibition, 6th-9th June in Kennet Valley Hall, Lockeridge. All are welcome!

Continued p.18

From 3rd May (Friday) to 2nd June (Sunday).

The White Horse Bookshop Annual Open Art Exhibition

Come and see the lovely and thought-provoking art and sculpture on display.
<https://www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk/blog/annual-open-art-exhibition-2024>.

4th (Saturday) at 8pm

Marlborough Folk-Roots: Megson: St Mary's Church Hall, Marlborough.

Four times nominated in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, husband and wife duo Stu & Debbie Hanna draw on their Teesside heritage and humour to create a truly unique brand of folk. Multi-instrumentalists Debs and Stu have gained fame for their lush harmonies, intelligent song-writing and exquisite musicianship. "Simply Brilliant!" *Sunday Express*. Booking details: <https://www.marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk>

6th (Bank Holiday Monday)

Bushton Manor SN4 7PX Open Garden Plant Fair: 11am – 3pm.

This 18th century Manor House has the most delightful gardens, and the Plant Fair is the only time they are open to the public. Enjoy a variety of stalls with plants, crafts, food, garden items, home-made refreshments and food from the BBQ. Games and a Treasure Hunt for young people! In aid of St Peter's Church Roof Fund, Clyffe Pypard. See Facebook: 'Bushton Manor Plant Fair 2024'. £3. *No charge for children or car parking. Dogs on leads welcome.*

8th (Wednesday) and 18th (Saturday)

Marlborough Gardening Association, Marlborough Town Hall – 6.45pm for 7.30pm.

This month's talk on the 8th May will be entitled 'Early Summer Colour' with Peter Biggs. There will also be a Plant Sale later on in the month, on 18th May from 9.30am-12 noon. *Further details: <http://www.marlbga.org.uk/index.htm>*

9th (Thursday)

Marlborough Floral Club, Mildenhall Village Hall, 2pm.

This month features "A Floral Workshop" with Denise Bright. Come and have a hands-on go! *For information, please call Micky Graham on 01672 514301.*

16th (Thursday)

St. Peter's Church Marlborough – 7.00pm for 7.30pm

The Marlborough History Society presents "Marlborough's Hidden Places". Bob Holman reveals the incredible capabilities of black and white photography using his iPhone camera to illustrate the wealth of interesting historical features in Marlborough. *Guests welcome. £5 entry (students free).*

Details from: <https://www.marlboroughhistorysociety.co.uk/whats-on/>

23rd (Thursday)

Citizens Climate Lobby – Marlborough Town Hall. 7pm for 7.30pm.

Presenting Film '2040' – a powerful and inspiring vision of our post carbon future. Introduction by David Waltham, Professor of Geophysics, Royal Holloway College. Citizens Climate Lobby works to promote a Climate Income Policy, where fossil fuels are priced at source and funds redistributed to all citizens, helping to drive carbon from the economy and support a green transition.

Tickets £6 (refreshments included) from The White Horse Bookshop and Packaging not Included, Hugbenden Yard. <https://citizensclimatelobby.uk> or email judy@citizensclimatelobby.uk

30th (Thursday)

Gigspanner Big Band, Raynor Winn - Memorial Hall, Marlborough College. 8pm

SALTLINES is a prose and music collaboration between bestselling author Raynor Winn (*The Salt Path*) and The Gigspanner Big Band, featuring celebrated British folk musicians including Steeleye Span fiddle player Peter Knight. Especially written compositions by Raynor explore the beauty, stories and traditions of the South West Coast Path with songs and tunes that were originally gathered from the route. *Booking details: <https://www.marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk>*

Looking Ahead....

Friday 7 June, Saturday 8 June and Sunday 9 June, 10am-4pm

Textile & Stitch Around Marlborough Exhibition in Kennet Valley Hall, Lockeridge. A wide-ranging display of textile art by members, both independent work and group challenges, demonstrations of different techniques and tea, coffee and home-made cakes available. Entrance £4.00 – children free.

Saturday 8th June, 7.30pm

The Lifeboat Concert in Aid of the RNLI: St. Peter's, Marlborough.

Local chamber choir Dodecantus present seafaring songs and verse celebrating the Bicentenary of the RNLI. Licensed Bar & Raffle. *Tickets £10 available from <https://RNLIILifeboatConcert.eventbrite.co.uk> and The White Horse Bookshop.*

Marlborough LitFest National Love Books Competition.

Open to anyone in three age groups: 13-15 years, 16-19 years and 20 years and above. Winners in each category receive £300. Entries can be made on the LitFest website www.marlboroughlitfest.org **Deadline for entries: 28th June (Friday)**

Saturday 29th June: 8.30pm

Charity Starlight Walk returns for a glowing night of fundraising fun!

This year introduces a fresh 10km and 15km route, starting and concluding at The Deanery CE Academy in Winchelstowe, with a stop at Town Gardens, Old Town for reflection. Open to all. To sign up, visit www.prospect-hospice.net/starlight.

School Dates – please see school websites for any updated information.

St John's School, Marlborough St Mary's and Preshute Primary: Term 5 ends Friday 24th May.

Marlborough College: Half term begins 4pm Saturday 25th May.

And the larks sang a song of welcome

Raik Jarjis

'On 22 March I took him to Haystacks. We left Kendal at 6 am when it was still dark, and we were near the summit of Haystacks just before 9 am. No one else was about. The day before was sullen and wet and so was the following, but that morning was perfect. The sun rose steadily in a blue sky. I left him as he had requested, beside Innominate Tarn, and the larks sang a song of welcome.'

Betty Wainright, (wife and walking companion)

There were times in Britain when the pace of life was much more humane, and a determined shy character, Alfred Wainright, (1907-1991), had ample time to flourish. His love-letter to the fells of Lakeland, and desire to escape from the common round by stepping off the well-trodden path, resonated with many of us.

Wainright grew up poor in Blackburn during the 'Matchstick Men' cotton mills era of Lancashire, becoming an accountant, and a much-loved fell walker, guidebook author, and book illustrator. His encounter with the Lake District at the age of 23, using saved £5, sealed his obsessive love affair with the fells of Lakeland, prompting him to relocate to Keswick from the age of 34 till his death. He did describe himself as having once been shy but having grown up to be antisocial, saving his energy and time for fell wandering and producing one page per night of his meticulous handwritten pictorial guidebooks of the 214 Lakeland fells, (1955-1966), which he started in 1951.

'Memories crowd on you as you delicately bring to life on paper the various features of the mountains you have seen so often. Your pen moves through a mist of dreams ... Yes, drawing was a good idea.'

'And if you, dear reader, should get a bit of grit in your boot as you are crossing Haystacks in the years to come, please treat it with respect. It might be me.'

Alfred Wainright, whose ashes were scattered in 1991.



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<https://textilesandstitch.co.uk/>

My encounters with Ann Smith and Michala Gyetvai have led to life-enhancing experiences of new friendships and creative achievement. And it's not just fun, as sociability and learning new skills are important factors in a healthier old age. This is worth bearing in mind at a time when healthy life expectancy has increased but not as much as overall life expectancy such that more years are spent in poor health. A woman in England in 2018-20 could expect to live to on average 83.1 years of which 19.3 years (23% of her life span) was in "not good" health. For men the figures are 79.4 and 16.3 (20%) *. In her book *Extra Time* Camilla Cavendish writes "Old brains **can** learn new tricks – and they must, to keep in shape" and in the words of the psychologist George Vaillant: "The key to healthy ageing is relationships, relationships, relationships" [Harvard Study of Adult development].

Textiles and Stitch works for me, what works for you?

*Statistics from *What is happening to life expectancy in England?* The King's Fund, August 2022

Textile art by Ann Louise Smith



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Family News

Naomi Painter

George Astley (1844-1923) was Great Grandfather of Tower and Town reader Jim Astley Millington. George was born in Great Bedwyn and the 1861 census puts him as living at Braydon Hook, a house deep in Savernake Forest that became derelict but is again inhabited by a young family who beautifully resurrected it a few years ago.

Jim Millington's father Robert Astley is buried at Cadley Church; his uncle Edward, Robert's elder brother of Bloxham Lodge was Head Gamekeeper to the Marquess of Ailesbury, and is buried at Chute.



Growing up I found imagining Jesus quite difficult, yet this was a breeze in comparison to thinking about the ‘Holy Ghost’. In St Peter’s Wooton we said the Creed each Sunday, so it got a mention but not much more. Berol, the baker’s wife, once lay down on the floor by the communion rail. I asked at lunch what had happened and was told she had ‘had a turn’. I remember feeling something more might have been going on. She didn’t look unhappy and seemed different from others in the pews whom I’d seen ‘having a turn’.

When I was nineteen, I picked hops for a famer in Tasmania called Tom. He was a Christian and got me thinking about my faith. Two other pickers, Alan and Polly, invited me to their church one Sunday. I was curious so went along and was surprised that it met in a tin hut with wood fired stoves for heating. On the wall was a picture of a mushroom cloud and a message warning us about the apocalypse. The worship began and at one point the minister invited the Holy Spirit to come into our midst. I wasn’t quite prepared for what happened next as Polly suddenly burst forth in gibberish. I remember looking across at her – she looked in total ecstasy. Someone else in the church interpreted what she had said and on we went. I remember leaving and thinking that our school chapel might not have given me the whole picture when it came to religion.

The Pentecostal Church, which believes in powerful modern-day manifestations of the Holy Spirit, began in California in 1904. It has since spread around the world, even to Tasmania, and has 400 million adherents. From the 1960s the charismatic renewal has brought a fresh emphasis and experience of God’s Spirit into more traditional churches. If you’ve ever sung ‘Shine Jesus Shine’ you’ve experienced the fruit of this movement. A greater emphasis on personal prayer, an expectation of miraculous healing, speaking in other tongues, hearing God’s voice today, these are all hallmarks of this renewal. Of course, there have been some cranks and eccentrics in the mix, but broadly speaking many Christians would testify to new dimensions of faith and a fresh love for God.

In this season of Pentecost (Whitsun) the church is thinking again about the Spirit’s work in our lives. St Paul wrote that ‘the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power’. But isn’t the modern church one of (endless) talk with little power? How have we flipped things round? If you feel similarly concerned, please join me this month in praying one of the oldest prayers in the church, ‘Come, Holy Spirit!’

This year Pentecost falls on Sunday May 19th. To find out more about God’s Spirit why not come along to our Churches Together service at St Mary’s at 5pm. All welcome.

New Plants for the New Season

Amelia Trevethick

Spring is in the garden – what is growing, what has survived the winter, what needs to be replaced, what gaps need filling and what needs to be bought afresh? Perhaps a shrub, a perennial or some bedding plants? Should some vegetables or fruit be given a go this year?

With the help of the Marlborough Gardening Association Plant Sale, all these quandaries can be resolved. Every spring, for the last 25 or so years, the Association has run a plant sale. It is held in the middle of May, when hopefully the garden has had its last damaging frost and purchases can be planted out with confidence.

All plants are grown by members, except for bedding plants. In the past, we found it difficult to grow these in sufficient quantities for the sale. So now we welcome Andy, who used to have a stall on the Wednesday market, and he does a great job for us offering plants and pots. All other plants are grown by members which ensures that they are suitable for local soil and climatic conditions.

So what are we likely to have on our stalls? Perennials which grow year after year such as dornicums, euphorbia, hylotelephium, penstemons, brunnera, hellebores are always popular. There'll be Shrubs such as hydrangeas, weigelias, salvias, euonymus and Cottage style plants. Think aquilegia, centurea and geums. And, if you need information about any of the plants, do ask whoever is behind the counter.

There's always Fruit such as strawberries and raspberries and a Vegetable section with tomatoes, courgettes, various beans & peas, maybe a few cucumber plants and more. Also Herbs such as rosemary, sage and mint and all sorts of House plants typically succulents, cactus, spider plants etc.

Unlike a garden centre or nursery, we are more like Lidl – great value and “when it’s gone it’s gone”! The date for your diary is 18th May at the Town Hall, starting at 9.30 am. Please don’t forget to bring your cash, as we have no card facilities, and a bag for your bargains.



While I'm slightly dubious about, and frankly weary of the trend to re-write (mostly) Greek myths "giving a voice to the previously overlooked and misrepresented women of the ancient world" (pause while I retrieve my eyeballs which have rolled so far to the back of my head that they've stuck), that doesn't mean I'm not happy to read historical novels set in the ancient world. No, sirree. Especially when the ancient world depicted is Lindsey Davis's Rome. I think I wrote before Christmas that I was looking forward to reading *Voices of Rome*, and now I have done and am here to press it on you.

It's not that the female characters *haven't* been under- or mis-represented of course, but different times, folks, different culture, different *mores*. Lindsey Davis's great skill is in making her characters (women and men) relatable, while effortlessly evoking the obvious differences between first-century Rome and us, here and now. *Voices of Rome* is a collection of four novellas. Those readers who know the Falco and Flavia Albia books will recognise many of the characters and the author's combination of humour and acute insight into human nature, treating serious matters seriously, but maintaining an engaging lightness of touch.

The most sombre story is *Vesuvius by Night*. The author's website, and the introduction to this book tell us that she has been reluctant to write about the eruption of the volcano and the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum, feeling that it's not a subject for her more light-hearted narratives. She's right of course. She gives us characters we know and care about, so her vivid description (drawing on Pliny) of their fate reminds us that the excavated city, now a tourist attraction, is in fact the grave site of real people with everyday messy and mundane lives and families and businesses.

Invitation to Die entertainingly describes the genuine horror of being summoned to a banquet by the Emperor Domitian (terrible food and the very real possibility of being murdered), and *The Bride from Bithynia* is set during the Boudiccan revolt in Britain, in the rain...The lightest of the four stories is narrated by Postumus, an inspired Ancient Roman hybrid of William Brown and Adrian Mole, funny and touching, and leaving a trail of confusion in his wake. Fans of Davis will be delighted with these little treats, new readers may well become fans on the strength of this book.

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Marlborough Churches Together

Usual Sunday Services Times

Society of Friends, Friends Meeting House, The Parade

10.30am Meeting for worship

St George's Preshute (Anglican)

8.00am Holy Communion (1st & 3rd Sundays)

10.30am Worship

St Mary's with Christchurch Methodist Fellowship

8.00am Holy Communion (2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays)

10.30am Worship

5.00pm Informal Worship (with Energize Children's Church)

St John the Baptist, Minal (Anglican)

9.00 am Worship

St Thomas More, George Lane (Roman Catholic)

11.00 am Mass

Emmanuel, New Road (Free Evangelical)

10.00am Worship (every 3rd Sunday)

4.00pm Worship (every Sunday)

Marlborough College Services are shown at the college chapel

For more information and updates please check the individual church websites.

From the Churches

Children/Family Activities

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

The Ark Parent/ Carer and Toddler Group, Mondays during term-time, 9:30am to 11am in the Church Hall, Silverless Street. Please contact Caroline Philips (cphilps2@gmail.com)

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

Venue on 2nd May; meeting at Emmanuel, New Road.

Explorers, Fridays during term time, 6-7.15 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, 7.30-9 pm. Our youth club for school years 7-11 at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. Friends, fun & faith – everyone is welcome!

Midweek Activities

B.L.T (Bible Lunch Time), Monday, 13th May, 12.30 pm

Pop in briefly if you're busy – Stay & chat if you can. Light lunch + short Bible talk, meeting in the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough.

Welcome Wednesdays , 10.30 am in St Mary's.

Ladies Bible Study, Friday 10th May. Every second Friday during the school term. Friends discovering God's truth in the Bible (All ladies welcome - onsite crèche available). For more details, email ladies@emmanuelmarlborough.org or refer to emmanuelmarlborough.org/home/events/events-calendar/

Homegroups, Thursdays during term time, Pewsey – 7.30 pm, Marlborough – 7.45 pm, Ogbourne St George – 7.45 pm. Bible study, prayer and fellowship. For more details, email office@emmanuelmarlborough.org

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

Marlborough Churches Together Easter Procession 2024

The extraordinarily wet and stormy weather of March was miraculously suspended on Easter Saturday enabling the Easter Procession 2024 to be celebrated in sunshine! Those taking part walked the length of Marlborough High Street and presented three short scenes recounting the biblical message of Easter. We were delighted to be led by Edward Maurice carrying a cross aloft. The crucifixion was recounted outside St Peter's Church and the message of forgiveness and reconciliation with God gave way to thankfulness for new life and the promise of resurrection for those who believe. In today's world where there is so much brokenness it was a great joy to stand together outside St Peter's Church and sing 'Amazing Grace' and proclaim: 'Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!'

Update on the Marlborough Deanery Partnership with the Diocese of Morobo in South Sudan

Bishop Data writes: "This partnership is playing a big role in the Episcopal Diocese of Morobo in praying for Christians, preaching the word of God and extending practical support for activities in the Diocese. We deeply appreciate your prayers and donations....Continue to keep the Diocese of Morobo in your daily prayers."

The agricultural project has yielded good harvests of beans and groundnuts, and cassava will be harvested this May. The clergy are using the Bibles, prayer books and hymn books for which we donated money, and this has improved worship, preaching and teaching. They are also grateful for the provision of the 20 bicycles, enabling them to carry out their pastoral work and preaching much more

effectively. A long-standing need is for clean water, since many wells have been destroyed by rebels. The digging of a new borehole in the church compound is estimated to cost in the region of £6,000. The Marlborough Deanery Sub-Committee is investigating, bearing in mind the limitations of our expertise and finances, how this might be achieved.

Activities planned for this year in Morobo include

- the planting of more beans, maize and groundnuts (for which the Marlborough Deanery has sent more money)
- a Youth Conference in May, with 600 participants
- a Clergy and Spouses Conference in June
- Confirmation in all parishes

Geoffrey Harrison - 1930-2024 Peter Harrison

Geoffrey was born in Grays, Essex and moved to Epsom when he was 7. On leaving school he joined Midland Bank in Threadneedle Street, London before his National Service in the RAF, in Scotland. Continuing his bank career he worked in London and married Stella in 1954, moving to Byfleet where they welcomed their two sons, David the Auctioneer and Peter who served in the Royal Navy.

In 1965, Geoffrey was appointed to the Sunningdale branch as manager and then in 1970 to Marlborough. He lived in the Aylesbury Arms Hotel until their house sold, when the family joined him in Marlborough.

He was a founder member of Ascot Round Table and of Rotary, continuing to support them on coming to Marlborough. Supporting the local community, he happily became a trustee of St Peter's Church, treasurer of the League of Friends of Savernake Hospital and one of the founder members of The Merchant's House and Action for the River Kennet. He was made manager of the Bridge St, Swindon branch in 1975 and it was a tribute to the loyalty of bank staff that four past members of the branch attended his funeral.

An enthusiastic fisherman, he delighted in the river at Poulton and would rush home from work to catch the evening rise. For many years the family went on fishing holidays in Wales, staying in a lakeside caravan.

He was a loving, caring man, plagued by arthritis in his later years, which hampered his activities. He loved his garden, delighting in growing beans and tomatoes in grow bags and generally pottering. On retirement, he and Stella built a small house in Spain and for 19 years would spend the spring and autumn there, enjoying the food, warmth and company of friends. They also travelled to Australia to visit his brother Leonard who was an original "£10 pom".

Sadly his elder son David passed away two weeks before him, but his family and his many friends will remember him with love and thanksgiving.

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

All items for the June issue by Tuesday 14 May please.

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