
TOWER_{AND}TOWN



Links through History

FEBRUARY 2023

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TOWER^{AND}TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

NUMBER 733 FEBRUARY 2023



Links through History

Henry Ford famously, or infamously, said 'History is More or Less Bunk'. In fact, he was referring to tradition, as a dead hand that stifles the need for contemporary creativity. But he was, and is, wrong.

At the November meeting of the Marlborough History Society, Neil Stevens spoke about the Americans in Marlborough in the Second World War. There was a very large audience for this topic of 'local interest', as if it was an opportunity to look at the town of our forebears and to imagine how things were in such different but familiar surroundings.

In the pieces that have been generously contributed to this edition you will find even in sometimes very small ways that 'History' is not necessarily remote, but a mirror in which we can see ourselves: King John and his wife resided in Marlborough Castle; there are war graves in Marlborough's cemeteries, and so on.

The Ukrainian families who are here in Marlborough and the area round about shared their Christmas celebration with us in St Peter's Church and thanked us for the help and friendship that they have received here. Even at this terrible time for their nation, whatever the next two years may bring, we have a piece of history in common.

John Osborne, Editor

Cover picture: Christmas Links in St Mary's Church by Simon Mills

Hundreds of people joined to create Christmas Links 2022 in St Mary's Church, filling it with coloured paper chains, a pop-up living room and contributions from the Ukrainian community. The Nativity scene emphasized our common humanity and the links we share.

'Warm and welcoming...too wonderful for any words...thank you!'
(see page 27 for more comments).

Many thanks to all those who contributed and helped.

Helen Stokes

Ammunition Explosions at Savernake in 1946

Mervyn Hall

On St George's Day in 2023 (23 April), it is planned to unveil a memorial at High Walls in New Road, Marlborough. This memorial will commemorate those brave men who prevented what was potentially the biggest disaster to befall the town since the great fire of April 1653.

The story begins in the early months of World War 2, when Savernake Forest was selected to become an ammunition storage depot in July 1940. It was chosen because it had good rail and road links and ammunition could be dispersed over a wide area under cover of broadleaf trees, which would hide it from the air. Thousands of tons of ordnance were stored there, including over three thousand tons of chemical ordnance, like mustard gas.

The first Americans arrived at Savernake on 23 July 1942 and their numbers grew to over 1,200 in the build up to D-Day. They were billeted in camps around the area, including Tottenham House, Postern Hill and Cadley.

As a portent of things to come there was a serious explosion, caused by a fire, near Warren Farm on 7 July 1945, which badly damaged the farm buildings and St Katharine's Church. Damage ranged as far as Crofton, Great Bedwyn, Bedwyn Common, Chisbury, St Katharine's and isolated settlements around the forest. One American serviceman was killed.

When the war ended, Savernake began receiving large quantities of unused American and German ordnance for preparation and onward shipment to ports for disposal at sea. Part of the preparation was to drill holes in the wooden ammunition boxes, so that they would sink when dumped in the sea.

On Wednesday 2 January 1946 in North Savernake Sidings near Cadley, trains had arrived, laden with munitions, from Newport, and a train was being prepared for dispatch to Silloth in Cumbria for munitions to be dumped at sea. A fire started, it is thought to have been caused by binding brakes on a wagon, and several explosions occurred. The men on site decoupled the burning wagons and moved the main train out of the way and then there was a huge explosion. Local historian David Chandler, then aged eight, still remembers that day and seeing a mushroom cloud above the forest.

Present that day were eighteen servicemen, five men from the National Fire Service and three men from the Great Western Railway; eight of the servicemen lost their lives. Two of the servicemen that died were buried with military honours in Marlborough Town Cemetery: Corporal Thomas S Pickersgill and Private Francis W E Whieldon. They are remembered every Armistice Day with poppies on their graves.

Those that survived received one of the largest collection of gallantry awards ever given in peacetime, 2 x George Cross, 4 x George Medal, 4 x MBE, 6 x BEM and 2 x KCBC.

Had the burning wagons not been decoupled the whole train would have blown up, over a thousand tons of explosives, which would have devastated the town of Marlborough and caused many casualties. We owe a lot to those men.

Reference: *Savernake at War* by Roger Day



The Naming of Trees in Savernake Peter Noble

One local result of Covid was the significant increase in visitors to Savernake Forest. Paths that were mere suggestions became well worn, and new paths opened up to become similarly obvious. It was on one delightful amble discovering several new variations that I realised my current Savernake Forest Map (available at White Horse Bookshop, St Peter's Church and Postern Hill caravan site) was becoming seriously out of date, especially as two more cattle grazing areas had been fenced since its publication. It was time to produce the next edition, and as I pondered the history of Savernake I realised that there was nothing anywhere in the forest to commemorate the family that had been wardens and then owners of the estate for some 950 years. Wasn't that worth recording somewhere? The answer suddenly became obvious as I passed the *Marie-Louise Oak* and asked myself: 'Who was Marie-Louise?'

Research tentatively suggested that she could have been the Duchess of Parma, Napoleon's second wife, who is known to have visited Bath and would inevitably have rested at a fine house and estate half way along the bumpy road from London; and what finer than Tottenham House on Savernake estate. And would not her host, Thomas Brudenell-Bruce (Marquis of Ailesbury), have proudly shown her his Capability Brown designed forest and rides; and perhaps, as she expressed her delight, he named the track they rode in her honour: *Marie-Louise Ride*, and subsequently, the tree itself? Or perhaps Marie-Louise was just a family friend... or the horse! That tree's name however reminded me that some of Savernake's mighty oaks, part of history themselves, also record snippets of human history too. This idea could be extended. (*The Marie-Louise Oak—see picture on the page opposite.*)

With the permission of Forestry England and the approval of Lord Cardigan, whose ancestors were the wardens and owners since 1067, his long established Savernake connection is now recorded in the names of trees; and as the surname changed three times through female inheritance and marriage, four great oaks now perpetuate that history:

- *Esturmy* - (the name believed to mean 'trustworthy'), Richard of that name was a Norman knight who accompanied William the Conqueror.
- *Seymour* - (also originally a French name from St Maur south of Paris), Roger married Matilda Esturmy and the Seymours inherited the forest.
- *Bruce* - another lack of male heir transferred ownership, by marriage, to this family and shortly afterwards there was a similar transfer of name to:
- *Brudenell* - the name Bruce was however retained such that the present Lord Cardigan is David Brudenell-Bruce.

During those recent discussions, three non-historic tree names were also added, *Troll* and *Goblin*, and *Young Paunchy*, an obvious pairing with *Old Paunchy* not far away, giving a nice total of 32 named oaks for visitors to seek out, and all now appearing on the latest map (5th edition). But how would visitors recognise these added trees?

While involved in my map-making and discussions, it was a very pleasant surprise to discover that local architectural technician and Savernake enthusiast, Kieren Dobie, as a very competent sign maker, had been quietly restoring damaged tree signs or replacing the missing ones, and matching Forestry England's own signs perfectly. We both realised that while the map might direct visitors in the right direction, Kieren's signs would prove their arrival, and he was keen to add the new names to his project. But though the significance of many names allocated to the twenty-six earlier is understood, it remains a mystery who allocated them and when, and in some cases why.



The Marie-Louise Oak



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A Tale of Two Isabels - Isabel of Gloucester and Isabel of Angoulême

Nick Baxter

Readers may recall my article, *Isabel of Gloucester – a Remarkable Lady*, published in Tower and Town in August. Prince John married Isabel at Marlborough Castle on 29th August 1189, nearly ten years before he became King. The marriage was mired in controversy as the pair were cousins ‘in the third degree of consanguinity’ sharing, in King Henry I, a common great grandfather. Canonical law prohibited such a marriage unless dispensation was granted by the Pope: it was not.

In this article I continue the story to explain how the marriage failed and what happened to Isabel afterwards. Isabel of Angoulême, John’s second wife and mother of the future King Henry III, stayed at Marlborough Castle: on one occasion in 1200 for several weeks. So this is a tale of two Isabels.

Because the Pope had not granted dispensation for the marriage of John to Isabel of Gloucester, Baldwin, the archbishop of Canterbury, forbade John to live with Isabel. John ignored Baldwin appealing to a papal legate that he was seeking dispensation. A request for dispensation was made but never followed up: in the process Baldwin conveniently died. No-one else objected to the marriage.

That should have been the end of the matter: but it wasn’t. We don’t know of any honeymoon. John and Isabel were in Normandy together at some time in 1190 and 1191 as they issued charters there. But no children were born. By 1193, John was estranged from his wife. John’s brother Richard was intended to have married Alice, the daughter of the French king Philip, but Richard was more interested in fighting and was fully occupied on the Crusades. John actually considered getting out of his marriage to Isabel to marry Alice instead. King Philip had fallen out with Richard and offered his daughter’s hand to John along with those possessions in France that were held by Richard. It was John’s mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who stopped him, threatening the Crown would seize his estates if he went to France. John stayed and remained married to Isabel: at least for a time.

Things came to a head in 1199 when King Richard the Lionheart got in the way of a crossbow bolt during a siege of Chalus castle. On 6th April, ten days later, Richard died of infection caused by the wound. Now king, John did not have Isabel crowned with him at his coronation in May.

As papal dispensation for his marriage had never been granted, John didn’t need a divorce. Three bishops of Normandy and three of Aquitaine declared the marriage invalid. That was good enough.

However, John lost his Gloucester lands as Isabel was now left an unmarried

heiress. She maintained a household in Winchester to which John paid £80 a year. He even bestowed occasional gifts to her. But the marriage was over.

On 24th August 1200, king John married Isabel of Angoulême at Bordeaux: she was only 12 years old. John brought his child bride across the Channel and had her crowned queen at Westminster Abbey on 8th October.

On 25th October John visited Stanley Abbey in north Wiltshire where he was the guest of Abbot Nicholas. He left Isabel at Marlborough Castle while he went on an itinerary of the Midlands and joined his young wife later at hunting lodges south of the Thames.

In 1206 John made his ex-wife, Isabel of Gloucester, take into her household and care for his queen, Isabel of Angoulême. On 1st October 1207 a son, Henry, the future king Henry III, was born at Winchester Castle. Following the birth, John's ex was removed to Sherborne and her allowance reduced to £50.

In January 1214 Isabel of Gloucester married Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex. In 1215 they joined with the rebel barons against King John. Mandeville died on 23rd February 1216 from wounds received at a tournament. King John died on 19th October the same year: his nine-year old son, Henry, succeeded him. Isabel was now Countess of Gloucester and of Essex in her own right. In September 1217 Isabel married her third husband, the baron Hubert de Burgh, one of the regents to the boy-king Henry III. The marriage was brief; Isabel died on 14th October and was buried at Christ Church Canterbury.

Isabel of Gloucester's importance within the history of Marlborough centres on her marriage to John, the future king of England, at Marlborough Castle. This was the royal marriage of the time, a day that would have been one of celebration. It was sad the marriage didn't last, if indeed it was ever really a marriage at all. John's second wife, Isabel of Angoulême, came to Marlborough castle too, where she stayed for several weeks waiting for her husband to return from his Midland itineraries.

Isabel of Angoulême - see picture on page 12

Erratum:

The painting on page 11 of the St Mary's Edition of the magazine last month was by Charlotte Sambrook of Year 3. We apologise to Charlotte for our failure to credit her for her beautiful painting.

The Origins of the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission

'And when all was done, and the People of the Graves were laid at ease and in honour, it pleased the Padishah to cross the little water between Belait [England] and Frangistan [France], and look upon them. He give order for his going in this way. He said: "Let there be neither music nor elephants nor princes about my way, nor at my stirrup. For it is a pilgrimage. I go to salute the People of the Graves." Then he went over. And where he saw his dead laid in their multitudes, there he drew rein; there he saluted; there he laid flowers upon great stones after the custom of his people.'

This extract from *The Debt*, a short story written by Rudyard Kipling in 1930, is based on Kipling's personal experience of the pilgrimage made by George V in 1922 to the battlefields and cemeteries of the Great War in Belgium and northern France. It captures perfectly the mood of a country four years after the end of that war paying homage to the hundreds of thousands of British and Imperial soldiers who had died between 1914 and 1918.

That it was possible to pay homage in this way was largely due to the remarkable inspiration and incredible effort of one man, Fabian Ware. Ware had had a varied career before the war but was clearly marked as a person of exceptional administrative ability. He was also an idealist, and that gave him the vision that was to become the driving force behind the creation in 1917 of the Imperial War Graves Commission.

Ware was a volunteer ambulance driver at the start of the war, and quickly realised the need for some sort of organisation to trace the missing and record the dead. Using his powers of persuasion and ability to use contacts in high places, he managed to persuade the army to accept the responsibility for registering the graves of those who died in the war, and then most remarkably to get the French and Belgian governments to gift the land where the men of the British and Imperial forces were buried. Early on the great value of this registration to the morale of the troops and the British public became clear. General Haig commented on this work in 1915: "The mere fact that these officers visit day after day the cemeteries close behind the trenches, fully exposed to shell and rifle fire, accurately to record not only the names of the dead but also the exact place of burial, has a symbolic value to the men that it would be difficult to exaggerate."

In May of 1917 Ware achieved the first part of his dream with the establishment of the Imperial War Graves Commission by Royal Charter. He then set about bringing on board some of the best people in the country to turn his dream into

reality. Rudyard Kipling became literary advisor, capturing the spirit of commemoration in the simplest but most poignant of phrases - 'Known Unto God' on the headstones of unnamed graves; 'Their Name Liveth For Evermore' on the Stone of Remembrance. Edwin Lutyens, Herbert Baker, and Reginald Blomfield, three of Britain's most distinguished architects, were brought in to design the great memorials to the missing (Thiepval, Tyne Cot, and the Menin Gate) and to help with the planning of the cemeteries. Arthur Hill, top man at Kew Gardens, with advice from Gertrude Jekyll, was responsible for the planting of the cemeteries to create as near as possible 'the peacefulness of an English country garden'. Sir Frederick Kenyon, Director of the British Museum and President of the British Academy, wrote the report that became the bible of the IWGC and set the template for the great work of registration and burial that took place in the years immediately after the war.

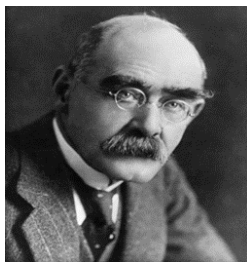
The result is a commemoration of the dead on a scale unmatched in human history. By 1927, ten years after the establishment of the Commission, more than 500 cemeteries on the Western Front had been completed, well over 400,000 headstones had been erected, sixty-three miles of hedges had been planted, 540 acres sown with grass. Across the world a thousand of Blomfield's Crosses of Sacrifice were up, 400 of Lutyens' Stones of Remembrance were in place, and the names of 150,00 missing servicemen had been inscribed on memorials. The Commission's Director of Works, Colonel Durham, told Ware on his return from a tour of half the world: "You have created a new Empire within and without the British Empire, an Empire of the Silent Dead."

Ware was determined that those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Great War should be properly honoured, and so they were. There is no glorification of war in these cemeteries and memorials, indeed the opposite. As King George V said on his visit to Tyne Cot as part of his Pilgrimage in 1922: "In the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."

David Du Croz



Fabian Ware



Rudyard Kipling



Edwin Lutyens



Tyne Cot cemetery on the slopes of the Passchendaele ridge



The Thiepval memorial to the Missing of the Somme



The Cross of Sacrifice



Isabel of Angoulême (see pages 7 and 8)

Dipper (*cinclus, cinclus*)

I see that in the Tower and Town December 2021 issue I mentioned that a dipper was wintering along the River Kennet in Marlborough. Well, the bird has returned and is regularly seen in the Town Mill area in the last hour of daylight. A displaced feather on its right flank identifies it as the same individual and occasional bursts of song suggest it is probably a male.

Dippers are small, chunky, stout, short-tailed, short-winged, strong-legged birds living along fast-flowing upland waterways and slower lowland rivers broken by weirs. They hunt their largely invertebrate prey by diving, swimming (both on and below the surface) and walking on the bottom. The dipper's sober plumage helps it to blend into the riverside background until its penetrating 'zit, zit' calls draw attention to its presence. The dark-brown plumage and white throat and upper breast makes it superficially similar to the ring ouzel (hence the nickname 'water ouzel') but a binocular view reveals the head, nape and gorget* are a rich chestnut brown.

Dippers have a distinctive whirring flight due to their short wings, and a characteristic bobbing, curtsying motion when perched beside the water, giving rise to the Latin name *cinclus, cinclus*. Whilst under water, the wings are covered by a thin, silvery film of air, due to small bubbles being trapped on the surface of the plumage, which is dense, with a large preen gland for waterproofing the feathers. Their eyes have well-developed focus muscles that can change the curvature of the lens to enhance underwater vision, and nasal flaps to prevent water entering their nostrils.

The dipper is a scarce bird in Wiltshire mostly confined to the By Brook and parts of the Frome. Appearances on the River Kennet are very rare, hitherto confined to one or two winter sightings. I occasionally join the dedicated team of two or three enthusiastic watchers lined up on the bridge at Town Mill, waiting for the bird to appear for a few minutes before going to roost under the bridge. While they wait a grey wagtail occasionally appears, or perhaps a kingfisher. One lady asked me what we were looking at as she passed by with her shopping. "It's a dipper" I said and passed her my binoculars. This was the moment when the bird performed its party trick, disappearing underwater for a good twenty seconds. "Can't see any bird" she muttered, and moved on, convinced we were making it up.

**Gorget, noun. An ornamental collar*

A part of a wimple covering the throat and shoulders

A specially coloured patch on the throat, especially a bright patch of feathers on the throat of a bird, especially a hummingbird

What's On in February

February calendar

2nd (Thursday)

2pm Mildenhall Village Hall. Marlborough Floral Club. Demonstration by Katie Baxter - 'A Touch of Vintage'. If people would like to bring along a floral arrangement of their own, the title for that is 'Vintage Valentine' and you will be given feedback from the demonstrator. Treat yourselves to an enjoyable afternoon out on the first Thursday of each month. For more information, please call Micky Graham on 01672 514301

5th (Sunday)

7.30pm St Peter's Church. 11th Series of Brilliant Young International Musicians: Fibonacci Quartet. The Quartet was formed in 2019 and consists of students of David Takeno and Louise Hopkins. Luna De Mol and Kryštof Kohout (violin), Elliot Kempton (viola) and Kosta Popavić (cello). See St Peter's website for further details. Tickets £15 (members £10) in advance from www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk, or on the door on the night. *See picture below*

10th (Friday)

Marlborough College: Half Term starts (to Sunday 19th)
St John's: Term 3 ends (to Monday 20th)
St Mary's: Term 3 ends (to Monday 20th)

16th (Thursday)

7.30pm-9.30pm St Peter's Church. Marlborough History Society talk: Educating Churchill – Mission Impossible? By David Lough, the author of two books on Churchill, the second of which, newly released, deals with his early life and relationship with his Mother. Tickets available on the door £5, free for History Society members. *See page 17*

20th (Monday)

3.45pm-4.45pm (Doors open 3.30pm) Wesley Hall, Oxford Street. Sparklers: a monthly kids' club for school years Reception to Year 2. Games, snacks and Bible stories. See emmanuelmarlborough.org for more details



The Fibonacci Quartet

Amanda Fletcher sent in the following paragraph about her mother:

Iris Guy died on 15 November. She was born in 1929 in East Ham and trained as a primary school teacher at Avery Hill College near Eltham. In 1973 she and her husband, Derek, moved to Marlborough when Burmah Castrol relocated their head office to Swindon. Iris was a popular member of several local groups and was on the coffee rota at St Mary's for many years. She delivered Tower and Town in Manton Hollow. We will remember her for her kindness, happy disposition and zest for life.

Rachel Rosedale writes:

Alison Nielson, previously of Kingsbury Street, Marlborough died on Sunday 1 January, in Lanark. She moved two years ago, aged 102, to be near her son Hamish. Her husband, Ian, died some years ago and was an early editor of Tower and Town. She had a daughter Catherine who lives in the USA. All were well known in Marlborough.

Anushirvan and the Salt

A Persian Fable

Anushirvan, the great King of Kings, was out hunting one day with his courtiers.

Some of the game was being prepared for roasting when it was realised there was no salt.

A servant was sent to a nearby village to fetch some.

“Make sure you pay for it,” said the king.

The courtiers laughed that such a trifling thing as salt should have to be paid for.

“The foundation of oppression was once small in the world,” replied Anushirvan. “But those who have ruled have made it grow to reach its current size.

“If a king eats just one apple from the garden of his subject, his servants will eventually pull up the entire tree from its roots.

“A tyrant does not remain in the world, but his curse abides forever.”

From the *Gulistan* of Saadi, Persian poet

A Bunch of Amateurs, showing at The Parade Cinema on 22nd and 23rd February. (Flyer opposite.)

There is something wonderfully appealing about being an Independent cinema showing a film about Britain's oldest film club. As a lifelong cinephile myself, it's easy to feel an affinity for the cast of *A Bunch Of Amateurs*.

The Bradford Movie Makers have met every Monday since 1932 to recreate iconic film scenes, more often than not, in the most amateur fashion. It is here that the film's appeal lies; in watching a group of elder cinephiles arguing over the merits of their short film, the latest film they have watched, or other, more personal issues.

At the time of the film, the Bradford Movie Makers are not in the best financial situation. Their clubhouse is quite literally crumbling around them, the outside has become a fly-tipping area, and the bills are continuing to rack up, but against this background, there is still optimism and a genuine love for the club and the people in it.

Kim Hopkins' documentary does a fantastic job of focussing on the various characters involved without becoming overly sentimental or critical, allowing viewers to form their own opinions of those involved. Thanks in large part to the hand camera footage and snappy editing, it is easy to become invested in the trials and tribulations of the Bradford Movie Makers.

The film covers a period of 2-3 years, following such high points as an attempt to remake the opening of *Oklahoma* with an actor who can neither ride a horse nor sing and then the crushing low point of the global pandemic, will the club and it's 90-year history survive... There is only one way to find out.

At only 95 minutes long and £5 a ticket (for members), why not take a chance on our Parade Picks?

by David Williams, General Manager of the Parade Cinema



“Educating Winston Churchill – Mission Impossible?”

by David Lough

His second book about Churchill deals with his early life and relationship with his mother, and is drawn from correspondence between the two which throws a new light on this period.



**Thursday, February 16, 7:30 pm,
St Peter’s Church.**

Guests are very welcome, £5 entry.

www.marlboroughhistorysociety.co.uk/Facebook



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For more information visit: www.prospect-hospice.net

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; revcjsmith@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
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A Quaker View Rachel Rosedale and Masireh Touray

Quakers are advised to consider and act on the following:

‘We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God’s creation.’

With this in mind the local Quakers and Nick Maurice invited our MP, Danny Kruger, to address us on strategies his government is adopting to deal with climate change and ask how we could help to achieve these objectives.

We thought it would be good to invite a member of the Gambian diaspora to tell us of the effects of climate change on her country and this is what Masireh Touray told us on that evening in November.

“Good evening everyone. My name is Masireh Touray and I am from Gunjur, the Gambia. I speak on behalf of my family members and friends currently living in the Gambia and from my personal experiences, also for Kombo Sallah Association UK and Gunjur Marlborough Link on the impact of climate change in the Gambia with a specific focus on the town of Gunjur, which has been linked to Marlborough in the UK for over 4 decades.

Let me start with some true incidents that the Gambia is suffering seriously from the impact of climate change.

1. An increasingly unpredictable rainy season is leading to a detrimental effect on food production in the country, especially rice (the staple diet); with a corresponding dependency on expensive and often unaffordable imported rice, whose importation is itself contributing to climate change. The bulk of the rice consumed in the Gambia is mainly imported from Pakistan, Thailand and Brazil. When I was growing up everyone consumed rice harvests from the rice fields that were 10km away from compounds and the rice would serve the entire family for a whole year.
2. Changes to rains are causing both drought and flash flooding e.g. July 2022 in Gunjur heavy rains, causing significant damage to local homes and Jabang estate was also hit by flash flooding destroying valuables, fixtures and fittings.
3. An increase in the temperature of the Gambia, which is consistent with the findings of the UNDP (Sweeney, 2012 *UNDP Climate Change Country Profiles; The Gambia*)
4. Increased salination of the Gambia river with a corresponding reduction in fish stock, (a dramatic rise in the cost of fish) and coastal erosion. This is

likely to have severe economic impact as the country relies on the seasonal tourist industry, which makes up 20 to 25% of the Gambia's GDP. As a result of gradual alteration in the natural environment related to coastal erosion and economic impact of climate change many young Gambians have become climate migrants/refugees both in Africa and Europe. Recently a video of a young Gambian who entered Italy through 'the backway' went viral, he is seriously ill and had been sleeping rough in Rome for two years; so sad.

5. Deforestation is likely to worsen and exaggerate the impact of climate change on the country through the unsustainable use of firewood reducing the earth's carbon sinks and increasing erosion of the top soil leading to reduced soil fertility.
6. As a Gunjurian I notice the most significant impact on fauna to be on livestock malnutrition and a positive impact on the mosquito population causing a reduction in the incidence of malaria. Additionally, the loss of fauna through climate change is observed to have a potential impact on the biodiversity of the country.
7. The community of Gunjur almost unanimously claimed that they believed climate change to be the will of God. This was not a view held by more educated Gambians who were well aware of the scientific causes and responsibility by industrialised countries.
8. The Gambia is suffering from the impact of climate change despite their own minimal contribution to the atmosphere changes. The difficulties faced by the Gambia in tackling these problems include a lack of funds, accessibility and communication. It is clear that if the current rate of change continues the Gambia will only struggle more to react and even maintain health standards; most likely the development of the Gambia will be hampered. It is imperative that the UK (and other more developed countries) begin to take more positive steps to reduce their impact on the environment to protect less able countries such as the Gambia.

I hope that the DFID – the UK government's Department for International Development - recognises our responsibility as an industrialised country for the impact on poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, and use it in their efforts to encourage a reduction in the use of fossil fuels and a greater emphasis on and commitment to renewable energy sources in the UK.”

We Quakers ask you to pray and think what your contribution to address this crisis could be.

It feels like a-g-e-s since I had to write a column, as if my reading and writing muscles have gone rusty, but here I am again, and looking back I've read a variety of goodies during the break. I've caught up on a couple of things I've had on my list for a while. *Blurb Your Enthusiasm* (the author, Louise Willder spoke at the Literature Festival) was a lovely light, dip-in-and-outable book, just right for holiday reading. Writing the 'blurb' on the dustjacket of a book, intended to entice the reader, is one of those unsung, unregarded arts, and Willder has been doing it for over 20 years. Did you know that the first printed advertisement in English was for a book? With a fluent, chatty style, Willder gives us insights into how we're persuaded to pick up a particular volume. I'd have liked more detail in some sections, but her style is, understandably by the nature of her profession, fairly concise. I enjoyed the faintly acerbic tone of some of her comments, especially regarding the challenges involved in promoting 'literary' fiction – the kind of novel in which nothing actually happens, but it's so beautifully written. It confirmed my own preference for, you know, an actual story.

The action in *The Dazzle of the Light* by Georgina Clarke is loosely based on some of the activities of the 'Forty Thieves' an actual gang of women criminals in south London in the early part of the last century. Following a chance encounter, two women, from different backgrounds, develop a toxic fascination, to the point of mild obsession with each other. We see how both are to a large extent hampered in their ambition by the rules of their respective societies, the criminal and the 'respectable' political class. Detailed and twisty, the plot gradually reveals the envy and desire, and the connections and corruption which lead to downfall and thwarted aspirations.

Stolen by award-winning Swedish author Ann-Helen Laestadius is a good winter read, a detailed and slow moving coming of age and crime story, with a heroine from a Sami reindeer-herding clan. The Sami are subjected to discrimination and prejudice by many in mainstream society, and the police are dilatory in investigating attacks. The heroine also has to deal with the tensions arising from the clash of modern contemporary ideas and the deeply rooted traditional culture. (It's being filmed for Netflix.)

Did you read *Love Marriage* by Monica Ali when it came out? If not, the paperback is now available and I loved it and all its fallible, well-meaning characters.


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News from the Churches

Christchurch

would like to thank everyone for their prayers and support over the past months. The decision to move as a group has not been easy but we are now ready to move forward as Christchurch Methodist Fellowship. Many readers will know that we moved to St Mary's with our first joint service on January 15th. January 8th saw the final service for the Methodist Fellowship in the New Road building. The service was led by Rev David Gray who is the Superintendent of the North Wilts Methodist Circuit. It was lovely to see the building full of fellow Christians in Marlborough and from around the circuit. We also welcomed back some former members. It was certainly bitter sweet as we say farewell to a building that has served us well for many years and move forward in faith and in the power of His Holy Spirit as we learn what God has in store for our Fellowship. We look forward to new horizons and new opportunities to continue our Christian witness in this town.

Christchurch Methodist Fellowship: office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk and 07564 082092. If only post will do: Christchurch Methodist Fellowship, c/o The Manse, 18 Priorsfield, Marlborough. Our website will continue to carry news of our witness: <http://www.christchurchmarlborough.org.uk>

Marlborough Churches Together AGM

Takes place on Wednesday 1st February at 12.30pm in St. Mary's Church. Open to all, who are warmly welcome. Please bring your own sandwiches.



Friendship Café

Meets on Saturday 4th February at St Mary's Church Hall from 10.30am. (*Poster opposite*)



Marlborough
Anglican Team

Warm Space Wednesdays

Wednesdays, 10:30 am. Continues to meet through February. (*Poster opposite*)

MAPAG



MAPAG Trustees thank all those who made generous donations for the Christmas vouchers. MAPAG were able to donate 45 vouchers, which were distributed via Marlborough St. Mary's and Preshute Schools, Foodbank and Love Marlborough Kids Meals.

The next open meeting is being held on Tuesday 7th February, 5pm on zoom. All are welcome. Zoom link from Rachel Rachelrosed1@gmail.com.

Ash Wednesday – the start of Lent is on 22nd February.

Please see the church notice sheets for service details.



'Lent for Everyone'

In the New Year we often make resolutions about getting fitter and joining gyms. However, how fit are we spiritually? Lent is traditionally the time in the church's year when we ask ourselves probing questions about the health of our faith. This year, to help in this endeavour, we are offering a Lent course based on a book by Tom Wright. Tom was Bishop of Durham and is a scholar, who writes in an accessible way. His book 'Lent for Everyone' focuses on Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. With daily readings and small groups to discuss together, this our moment in Marlborough to get in shape spiritually. Please join in! More details shortly in the church notice sheets.

Emmanuel



Our church mailing address has changed to :-

Emmanuel Church Marlborough, New Road, Marlborough, SN8 1AH.

We are grateful to meet for a weekly 4pm Sunday service at our church on New Road with crèche and Sunday School groups. All are welcome to stay afterwards for refreshments and a sandwich tea for children. Mid-week we are also delighted to offer a variety of activities including homegroups meeting in Marlborough, Pewsey and Ogbourne St George and community groups as below - for more details and the latest updates, please check our website at www.emmanuelmarlborough.org:

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.

Explorers Fridays during term time, 6-7:15pm 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, 7:30-9pm. Our youth club for school years 7-11 at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. Friends, fun & faith – everyone welcome!

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

Sparklers

Monday February 20th 3:45-4:45pm (doors open at 3:30pm) at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. A monthly kids club for school years Reception to Year 2. Games, Snacks and Bible Stories!

Christmas Links in St Mary's December 2022

Some reflections from the Comments Book

'Atmospheric as usual' How great that people were touched and moved by all those paper chains and the displays.

'A wonderful display of community spirit...thanks to everyone involved.' Awesome to have so many from church and town communities contributing in making and putting everything together and stewarding and praying and.....

'The link of home and hearth to the sacred is an ancient idea we should embrace... the links forge in our hearts the way we are connected to each other....' It's too easy to see Christian faith as disconnected from the everyday and the church as remote. The church is full of ordinary people living ordinary lives who want to connect with the Creator God. Making a proper living room within the church building was about 'common ground in a sacred space.' It's how most of us 'do' Christmas.

'Very pleased to see Ukrainian people represented and thought of so kindly.' We mustn't forget the pain of being separated from your country and loved ones nor what we have gained from having Ukrainians living in our midst.

'A beautiful way to make us think.' The characters in the Christmas story can represent so many things. Commitment, the overlooked, celebration, the gifts we receive from relationships. Such an encouragement that visitors explored these ideas and wrote so movingly as they added their thoughts to the displays.

'...lovely descriptions leading to Jesus' birth.' Yes. The stable scene on the altar was at the heart of everything, the truth of Christmas

'How lucky are we!' Yes indeed! What a gift to have people who will invest time and effort in order to create and share something widely.

'Gets better each year which is pretty hard to do....' How humbling it is that people have felt moved and want to come back.

'Too wonderful for any words.' God took what we offered and made it something much more. Awesome

FROM THE REGISTERS

Weddings - we congratulate

3 December Rachel Lummis and Martin Sims at St George's

10 December Kate Maurice and Edward Humphrey at St George's

Departed - we pray for the families of

11 December David Bailey (85) Rogers Meadow, Marlborough

25 December Hilda Owen (104) St Margaret's Mead, Marlborough

Tower and Town staff

Chairman	Sarah Bumphrey	chairman@towerandtown.org.uk 16 George Lane, SN8 4BX	516862
Advertising	Chris Rogers	advertising@towerandtown.org.uk	
Distribution	Sue Tulloh	distribution@towerandtown.org.uk	288912
Subscriptions	Peter Astle	4 Laurel Drive, SN8 2SH	515395
Treasurer	Peter Astle	treasurer@towerandtown.org.uk	515395

Production Teams

March

Editor	David Du Croz	mar.editor@towerandtown.org.uk	511725
Compiler	Rob Napier	mar.compiler@towerandtown.org.uk	512333

April

Editor	Marlborough Coll.	apr.editor@towerandtown.org.uk	
Compiler	Hugh de Saram	apr.compiler@towerandtown.org.uk	516830

Every Month

<i>What's On</i>	Ali Pick	whats.on@towerandtown.org.uk	512250
<i>News from the Churches</i>	Alison Selby	church.news@towerandtown.org.uk Crossmead, Kingsbury St, SN8 1HU	511128
<i>Family News</i>	Jessy Pomfret	family.news@towerandtown.org.uk	519134
<i>Arts</i>	Gabriella Venus	arts.correspondent@towerandtown.org.uk	
<i>Books</i>	Debby Guest	books.correspondent@towerandtown.org.uk	
<i>Nature</i>	Robin Nelson	nature.correspondent@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 March issue by Tuesday 7th February 2023 please.

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