
TOWER_{AND}TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES



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July Edition Front Cover:

Front cover of Marlborough Grammar School magazine 1963 edition

TOWER AND TOWN

Marlborough Grammar School

Many people have suggested to me that Marlborough Grammar School should be featured in Tower and Town. Now is a good time to investigate when so many ex-students still live in the area and/or keep in touch via social media.

As usual with Tower and Town topics contributors willingly agreed to contribute their knowledge and expertise. I am grateful to Trevor Dobie for putting the news out on facebook and asking his brother, Laurie, to reflect on his time at the school in the early fifties. Liz Bissett gives a vivid impression of the school in the sixties and Rob Drury brings us towards the school's final years in the seventies.

Marlborough Grammar School was an exceptional school. It is fitting that such an historic town should have a school dating from the reign of Edward VI. Nick Baxter brings us snapshots of its long history from the writings of A.R.Stedman, its distinguished headmaster from 1932-62, and the recollections of David Chandler, a student from 1949-57.

The school was unusual in many respects. When most grammar schools were single sex institutions Marlborough Grammar School was co-educational. It had a boarding house, Wye House, for pupils in outlying villages into which Anna Mills gives us some insights, not all of them pleasant. Juliet McGregor gives a much more positive picture of The Folk Song Society which thrived from 1964-1971 and enriched the lives of many.

Both Nick Baxter and I really enjoyed the account of the trip to Russia in 1973 from the school magazine. Nick focusses on the rapport between the students and their Russian hosts while I, as teacher who used to take students on school trips abroad, am aghast at how much freedom the students were given. No 17-page risk assessments in those days – and no harm done!

Sarah Bumphrey - Editor



Marlborough Grammar School Snapshots

Credit Nick Baxter



The "Boys" entrance at MGS

When I moved to Marlborough in 1991, my daughter Jenny started at St Peter's Junior School on The Parade. The separate "Boys" and "Girls" entrances were from the time the school was built in 1904. This was the Marlborough Grammar School until it moved in 1962 to a site in Orchard Road.

In 1975 the MGS merged with the Marlborough Secondary Modern School at Chopping Knife Lane to become St John's Comprehensive School but continued to remain on two sites. The Orchard Road site was named "Stedman" after Alfred Redvers Stedman (Headmaster 1932 – 1962). Jenny started at St John's in 1995. More recently, the Chopping Knife Lane site was sold and the Stedman building replaced with a modern school, St John's Marlborough.

Why "St John's"?

The MGS was founded by King Edward VI in 1550 following the dissolution of monastic hospitals. The Hospital of St John

the Baptist had been confirmed in a King John charter of 1215 and was on the Marsh (renamed The Parade in the 1860s when it was used as a parade ground for the Marlborough Volunteer Rifle Corps). MGS began its life in the former hospital building until it was demolished and replaced with a Tudor lath and plaster purpose-built school room together with dormitories and a master's house. This school was itself replaced in 1791 and again in 1904.

The centrepiece of a 1934 MGS photograph (below right) shows Stedman and his colleagues flanked by pupils. Born on 7th December 1901 Stedman was only 30 years old when he took up his appointment as headmaster.

I am indebted to David Chandler for his remembrances of Mr Stedman,

"Mr Stedman, who was the head during my time at MGS (1949 to 1957), was a brilliant man, who was far ahead of his time. He didn't for example believe in corporal punishment except when his staff demanded it!"

I have a signed copy of Stedman's "Marlborough and the Upper Kennet Valley" published in 1960. It is remarkable that he found the time to write it!

I was surprised to discover Russian was taught at MGS. In 1963 the MGS Magazine printed a fascinating article "Trip to Russia" written by "V.B.S" who recounted a train journey on the way,

“ . . . at some small Polish town a group of young Poles came into our compartment. For a time we acted in a typically British way by keeping ourselves to ourselves, thinking that it would be impossible to communicate with them anyway, as we couldn't speak Polish. However, the idea occurred to us that perhaps they spoke Russian, and after our first tentative: “Ywee gavoreefye po-ruski?” they started to talk to us in a mixture of German and Russian. After about two hours of talking to them, and eating their sunflower seeds and cake (we had had no food for a day) we had become good friends, and there were sad farewells when we changed trains.”

Even at the height of the Cold War V.B.S found the Russian people friendly, describing how songs were sung in farewell,

“When we left Moscow we were given a magnificent send off by our Russian friends. They gave us presents and sang songs for us on the station platform. We learnt many Russian songs, and taught

them some English songs. We shall never forget singing songs with our Russian friends at midnight on a station platform – a thing that would never happen in England.”

Michael Stevens was the acting headmaster before William Roger Daffurn took over in 1964. Daffurn was the last headmaster who had the challenging role of preparing the school for merger.

David Chandler remembers Mr Daffurn, “ . . . a very nice man who attended the Lockeridge Gospel Hall which caused a bit of negative comment I recall. He didn't become head of the new St John's Comprehensive, much to the disappointment of the former MGS teachers . . . I thought the right decision was made when the Governors appointed Mary Marston, an outside candidate. She did a good job over her time in the job, of pulling the two teaching staffs together. Mr Daffurn, to his credit, carried on as a classroom teacher in the new St John's.”

Nick Baxter



Credit Nick Baxter

Marlborough Grammar School February 1934

Boarding at Wye House

I was at Wye House in the late 1960s, not the mythical swinging 60s of popular imagination, this was more like the 50s.

My clearest memories are of the dorms and the food. Leftover army cots, grey blankets and not enough of them, no heating in the dorms. A timetable posted for the one bath per week, 10 minutes in shallow hot water in a cold bathroom.

Some of the food was OK, shepherd's pie, but a lot was awful – powdered eggs – who knew they even existed? Every Wednesday for breakfast we were served a big dish of solid scrambled eggs, cut into eight slices per table and served with cold toast and marge. Half a slice of crispy golden deep fried bread for breakfast on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with either a slice of bacon or a solitary tinned tomato. We could eat as much white bread and marge as we liked; there was a pile on the table for breakfast, with marmalade, and at tea and again at supper, served in the kitchen. Mugs of weak cocoa and more bread and marge, with jam.

There were only a few of us boarders, about 60 from the school of 500, all living too far from the grammar school for a daily commute so we boarded in a big Georgian house down in the town. Girls dorms upstairs, boys down. Meals and leisure in the prefab huts. Home at 5.15 for tea, then prep class in the huts, supervised by sixth formers, silence for 90 minutes.

Homework was done, no messing. Then a short amount of free time.

First years went to bed at 8, then the rest at 15-minute intervals, lights out 30 minutes later, no talking. It was OK – we knew no different, but it was harsh; there was no softness in the physical or emotional environment and a distinct lack of kindness, just efficiency and such a firm belief that rules would be adhered to, that they almost always were.

In those precious free hours, we huddled round the night storage heaters listening to the Top 40, recorded from the radio on a massive reel-to-reel tape recorder by Neil. Or we played snooker on a half-sized table in one of the huts. Girls weren't allowed to wear trousers – apparently it might have enflamed the boys - but skirts were short and leaning over the table was precarious but also fun, lots of giggles.

It was all a far cry from the fantasy I'd developed from Enid Blyton: no warm midnight feasts, not a trace of condensed milk. Much more like a junior army camp than the (hopefully) more emotionally literate modern times. I've kept a few habits – we'd walk home past the outdoor swimming pool in the summer. When the water temperature hit 60F we could swim – I'm still happy in cold water. And I still like marmalade with my bacon.

Anna Mills

An extension of Anna Mills' story can be found in the online version of this July edition

Tower and Town Donations

As I expect you all know, Tower and Town is a not-for-profit enterprise run entirely by volunteers. Every now and again when funds allow, Peter Astle, the Tower and Town treasurer, is pleased to let the committee know that we have surplus funds and are able to make a donation to a local charity.

In December a donation of £500 was made to MAPAG (Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group) to help fund vouchers for families experiencing hardship in the run up to Christmas.

In June a donation, also of £500, was made to the Jubilee Centre towards the refurbishment of their kitchen. Jane Davies' article on page 13 describes the



Credit Jubilee Centre

excellent services the Centre offers for the over 60s in Marlborough alongside opportunities for volunteering.

Thank you for supporting Tower and Town by subscribing as it is your payments (along with revenue from advertising) which enables these donations to be made.

Sarah Bumphrey, Chairman

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Laurie Dobie 1949-56

When I attended the school it was in The Parade off London Road in the large red brick building still standing today. There was a temporary building for the dining room and a separate single storey woodwork room.

On my first day I was put in Miss Shelton's class and I remember the Headmaster's welcome speech in the entrance hall.

My favourite subject was Art - I liked drawing and painting - followed by sports, especially football and cross country running. Not surprisingly my favourite teachers were Mrs Burt (Art) and Mr Parsons (sport). Mr Stedman, the Headmaster, seemed rather aloof. I don't

remember having any conversations with him and he didn't take any lessons.

My fellow students had very different personalities and backgrounds and I made friends for life. Students came into Marlborough from surrounding villages, some boarding in Wye House opposite the school.

The best thing about the school was the range of lessons from academic to sporting and the worst thing was the school dinners! All in all the school gave me a good rounded education especially A Level Art which shaped my lifetime career in architecture.

Liz Bissett 1960-68

I attended MGS from 1960 – 1968. The first two years were in the old buildings with one entrance for boys and one for girls. In my first-year form room, the desks were wooden with decades of names scratched on them. They even had a white porcelain inkwell filled with a blue grey ink.

Games took place in Elcot Lane - quite a walk for little legs, before we even started to play hockey or football! I can still see and smell the breeze block changing room.

We lived near enough to walk home for lunch each day and sometimes would stop off at the homemade sweet shop on the Green to buy fudge. This was run by a motherly woman called Mrs Strutt.

I was a very serious, well-behaved student and was mortified when I received two detentions - one for not wearing my beret on the way to school (I think I was reported by a prefect) and another for doing the wrong exercise for French homework. Both were in the first year and I didn't ever receive another one.

The new school was being built at the time and in my second year we caught coaches for either a morning or an afternoon twice a week. I was in the new buildings from the third form onwards. As it was too far to walk home for lunch, I had school dinners from then on. I don't have particularly good memories of the food (cabbage, liver, lamb) and the puddings

were often milk based – rice or tapioca with jam or sponge puddings with custard/treacle). I do remember the good-natured camaraderie of the lunch table.

My favourite subjects were all the languages: French (despite the fierce Mrs Kalaugher); Latin in Year 2 (with the lovely Deputy Head Miss Stevens) and then German and Russian in Years 4 and 5. I think about 15 of us did Russian O level and just four of us did A level and I went on to study Russian and French at university. Unfortunately, in order to study four languages at O level I had to give up all three sciences, so it was a rather one-sided education and to this day I'm embarrassed at my lack of scientific knowledge.

We had a charismatic Russian teacher: Mrs Pollock was a small, Scottish live wire who insisted that midway through our double lessons we should all go for a brisk walk around the school grounds to give us (and her!?) a break so that we came back re-energised for the second lesson! What a good idea - I've never heard of that since (and I taught for 35 years). We also sang a lot of Russian songs - very unusual - and a great contrast from the very, very formal way French was taught by the formidable Mrs Kalaugher.

Mrs Pollock was married to the Russian teacher at the College, Richard Pollock. I've since learned that he went on to become Margaret Thatcher's Russian translator/expert. Miss Williams was another ahead-of-her-time teacher; I remember being allowed to take our pop records into art

lessons to listen to as we worked. Michael O' Regan was a wonderful teacher but sadly he never taught me. Mr Stedman, the Head when I started, was old and gentle. Then his successor, Mr Daffurn, was younger, serious and stern.

I loved going to school. It gave me the chance to excel in my languages and study them at university. It was flexible. The maths teachers despaired of my ever passing O level maths (although somehow I did with grade 6 - the lowest pass) and were prepared to lay on a geology O level just for me in the sixth form. That would apparently have counted as the equivalent to a maths O level which I'd need to get into university. When I sat the Oxbridge entrance exams, all alone for hours on end in Wye House, the matron brought me coffee and biscuits mid-exams!

I went on two French exchange visits to Bergerac when I was 14 and 16 - that's when I fell in love with France. Going to school with our penfriends was fascinating - their school life was totally different to ours and the way of teaching English completely different from the way we were taught French. I had nothing in common with my penfriend but got on well with her mother! We went by train, had to cross Paris and took the sleeper train, arriving at our destination early the next morning.

MGs shaped my life. I grew in self-confidence and was Head Girl. I studied languages at St Hilda's College, Oxford and became the teacher I always wanted to be.

MGS Folk Song Society

The beginnings of the society are first recorded in the MGS magazine of December 1964, when it was growing steadily under the guidance of Mr Michael O'Regan.

The society was open to the Upper School only, and so it was finally in September 1965 that I was able to join in the fun. This date happened to coincide with the arrival of a new member of staff, Miss Carolyn Eaton, a vibrant young teacher from South Wales with a vast knowledge of everything 'folk'. Carolyn sang and played guitar and, together with Michael, injected such a force into the fledgeling society that we never looked back.

Between them they opened our eyes and ears to the widest range of folk songs imaginable: traditional, sea shanties, protest, narrative, ballads, gospel, blues; all aspects were covered. The society grew rapidly both in number and repertoire. We met every Friday lunchtime in the Art Room which became our haven. We were taught how to play our guitars, from simple strumming along to mastering the advanced

clawhammer style of picking. Oh, the joy when that skill was achieved!

In March 1966 a joint meeting was arranged with Marlborough College Folk Song Society. This took on the form of a lecture/recital by the leading authority on Folk Song at that time, A.L. Lloyd, a key figure on the folk revival of the 1950s and 60s.

Members of our society began to sing and represent the school at music festivals, functions and fetes both in Marlborough and beyond, including Cirencester and Devizes. We gained much experience and confidence from these forays. Termly evening meetings were held where members had the opportunity to perform in small groups or individually, as well as experiencing the joy of the whole society singing together.



The Young Tradition performing at an evening meeting in December 1966. Peter Bellamy is on the far left.

Guest performers added much to these evenings and in December 1966 The Young Tradition entertained us. They were a group from London with a growing reputation. Their lead singer, Peter Bellamy, went on to enjoy a long solo career and has been acknowledged as a major influence by later performers including Jon Boden of Bellowhead. In the spring of 1967 Trevor Lucas was our guest before he went on to become part of the Fotheringay and Fairport Convention dynasty.



Martin Winsor performing at an evening meeting in December 1967.

Carolyn Eaton is standing to his right.

Then in December 1967 Martin Winsor sang for us and with us. Martin was co-owner, with Redd Sullivan, of the first folk club in London, the famous Troubadour. In the Easter of 1968 Pete Stanley and Brian Golbey brought Bluegrass to our society, now with a membership exceeding a hundred.

Such was the success of our society by now that in the summer of 1968 it was decided that, due to numbers, we should move our end of year celebration into the main hall. Despite misgivings about 'losing the heart' of our folk club by doing this, the brilliant personalities of our guests, the

magnificent Strawbs, together with their superb music only added to the success of the evening. Over the years our little society had been blessed with true folk royalty of the day.

My final year at MGS, 1968-69, coincided with much change within the society. Carolyn Eaton left for pastures new, Michael O'Regan stepped back from his role as our chairman, and our Friday lunchtime meetings became 'Folk Workshops'. December 1968 saw our evening meeting take the form of a ceilidh. The Yetties, a folk group from Dorset, together with Peter Dashwood as MC, gave us an evening of both song and dance. At this time Peter was a highly acclaimed expert in the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS).

My time at MGS came to an end in the summer of 1969. The Folk Song Society continued for a further year and a half, still attracting excellent guests: Mike Cooper, Jo Ann Kelly and Steve Rye, Bob Hall and Simon Praeger.

But the winds of change were blowing and sadly the Folk Song Society was formally dissolved in the Spring Term of 1971 owing to 'lack of support'. So our wonderful society that had blazed bright as a star for several years was no more. It had provided those of us lucky enough to have been part of it with so much enjoyment, developing our skills, talents and confidence in ways that cannot be measured. Magical days indeed that we shared together, guided by two incomparable teachers.

Juliet McGregor

School Trip to Russia in 1963

The following article consists of extracts from an account written by V.B.S. in the 1963 edition of the MGS magazine about a school trip to Russia.

As you may imagine, the prospect of going to Russia was very exciting, mainly because we did not know what lay ahead of us.

Thoughts of oppressed workers, badly dressed women, coupled with the idea of beautiful buildings, occupied us as we set off on what was to be a wonderful holiday. The group consisted of seven girls and fifteen boys with the group leader and his wife. The journey across Europe was rather uneventful until we crossed the East German border in the middle of the night, when we were woken up to have our passports stamped by a menacing-looking armed soldier. That evening was also rather a shock to us when Margaret and I found that we were to share a sleeping compartment with Mr Sherbourne (the group leader) and three other boys of our own age.

We arrived in Moscow and were met by a crowd of school children with flowers and presents. They wanted to show us what they called 'our Moscow' and were obviously very proud of their country and of their city. It was a surprise to see them so well-dressed and looking very much like Western girls and boys.

In Leningrad we had more free time to ourselves and those of us who were 18 or

over could do whatever we liked. One evening we met a Russian man in the hotel who was rather inebriated to say the least and he invited three of the boys and Margaret and myself back to his flat. This was not to be missed as very few visitors to the country actually get a chance to see inside a Russian home. So, we accepted his invitation and walked with him down the backstreets of Leningrad to his flat. As he was the editor of a newspaper, we expected him to have quite a high standard of living, and we were shocked to see where he was living. He lived on the top floor of an old block of houses and to reach these we had to step through piles of rubbish. On the stairs up to his flat (one main room and two small rooms) there was an appalling stench, and his living room had no carpets on the floor. There was a huge patch of damp on one of the walls covered by a copy of Pravda and the furniture was very shabby. He did eventually sober up and was very friendly and we were interested to hear of his regret that Russians cannot read many contemporary English books or newspapers.

We made many friends in Leningrad and when it was time to leave, they stood on the quay and waved goodbye to us. What struck us most was their wonderful hospitality and when we arrived back in England, wearing our Cossack hats and clutching our bottles of vodka, we were determined to return to Russia one day.

V.B.S.

Rob Drury 1966-73

I arrived at Marlborough Grammar School for my first year in 1966 - Tuesday September 6th to be exact - and I was coached in from the north of the county. About 30 of us boarded at two stops in Wroughton before making further stops in a daily 40 or so minute journey to the Cherry Orchard entrance.

I was nervous about moving to a larger school and the thought of meeting unfamiliar new classmates as well as new teachers - some of whom it turned out were attired in intimidating black gowns. Knots tied at the end gave some pupils timely behaviour reminders when needed.

I settled in and made many new friends from unfamiliar, and some initially incorrectly pronounced, Lord of the Rings villages: Easton Royal, Manton Hollow, Clench Common, Wootton Rivers, Figheledean and Mildenhall. I spent seven happy years there with some great teachers and it was a good education. I particularly remember our dear German teacher Mr Caswell and was in the first contingent of the school exchange with Delmenhorst.

Over 50 years later, I look back with fondness with MGS, keep in touch and meet up with several old school mates

now dotted around the country, as well as those still in the locality. Some of us have had the good fortune to turn 70 during the last 12 months.

I still remember the calling of the boys' register for Mr Coles' 1.1 class in those early days of Autumn 1966, almost as clearly as I can recall the England team that had won the World Cup a few weeks earlier.

Morning registration was a nervous time for me as I didn't want to miss my turn to shout out my presence. The alphabetical boys' surnames that came before and after me in roll call were therefore etched in my memory at an early stage and mostly remain there. At least one is sadly no longer with us, but I know many still are: Andrews, Blake, Blower, Blowers, Cave, Clifford, Costley, Crook, Curtis, Dobie, Drayson, (Drury), Dyson, Findlay, Fitchett, Frysol...with apologies to those overlooked and also to unnamed future friends from classes 1.2 and 1.3.

As for the girls of 1.1...I also remember quite a few names and one remains a good friend and neighbour today. Many other good memories...too many for this short overview!

The Marlborough Myths

In 1351, after the devastating Black Death had killed from 30 to 50% of the population, labourers were in very short supply. They could have demanded high wages and moved to areas that offered better money, but a statute (a law) of Edward III decreed that they had to remain in their home locality and accept the wages that applied before the plague.

A result was that some towns set up 'statute fairs', humiliating occasions where labourers competed for employment. However, such fairs were not ordered by Edward's statute or that of any other monarch.

In 1576, Good Queen Bess issued a charter that made Marlborough a 'Free Borough', hence events, including fairs were held at the discretion of the local 'burghers', the forerunners of the Town Councillors. Around this time some of the 'stattie fairs' became known as mop fairs, but there is no evidence of such fairs in Marlborough before the late 1600s.

Tradition has it that the Marlborough Mops, which occur in early October, are held on the weekends either side of Michaelmas but Saint Michael's day is 29th September! In 1751, September 'lost' eleven days when changing from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar so the festival planned for the end of September was now 10 days into October, giving the date of the current Mops. Hence, if linked to Michaelmas, the Mops must have started before 1751.



© Sarah Bumphrey

The Mop Fair in 2021

Have I mentioned King John? Well no. He died 130 years before the Black Death triggered the stattie or mop fairs. He did give Marlborough its 1204 charter that permitted an eight-day fair or market; however, there must have been regular markets before and since 1204 for the town to survive so why the charter? It has been suggested that it being his fair, King John would take a cut of the proceeds...

Would it take an act of parliament to cancel or move the Marlborough Mops? No, it would not. The Mops dates, their duration and very existence are at the discretion of the Town Council.

Peter Noble

Marlborough's Jubilee Centre

Are you over 60 and looking to make new friends and enjoy good company? The Jubilee Centre is a warm, welcoming, fully accessible space where you can connect with others, share stories, and spend time together.

We welcome guests for day sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, offering entertainment, activities, company, gentle exercise and games, together with freshly cooked wholesome food, hot and cold drinks. With all our guests we focus on their individual likes, interests and strengths. We aim to make a positive difference in people's lives, listening to them, their stories and ideas, encouraging independence, choice and continued development of life skills.

We also provide an excellent three course 'meals on wheels' service, five days a week that is delivered hot to your door. All our meals are prepared by our cook, in our on-site kitchen. The menu varies day-to-day, but we always include soup, a main meal with lots of veggies and a delicious pudding. Our delivery volunteers are DBS checked and will pop in with the meals to say hello and have a quick chat.

Together, we celebrate community, dignity, and joyful ageing.

As a registered charity, volunteers are integral to our everyday operation. By joining in our activities and supporting visits to shops, Post Office and more, you can make a really positive difference to someone's life. Our volunteers find it a

rewarding experience. The Jubilee is there for everyone over 60, not just the vulnerable elderly in our community, but for all and for those of every background and experience.

We are part of Wiltshire Council's Living My Life Daytime providers group. Wiltshire Council have checked our policy documents and are happy to recommend us.

We can also offer a fully accessible space for other activities, such as the balance courses currently offered through the U3A. If you have an idea for an activity suitable for the Jubilee Centre please do get in touch either by emailing thejubileecentre@aol.com or phoning 01672 513087.

Jane Davies



A guest participating in "the hat game"

© Jubilee Centre

What's On in July

Marlborough Floral Club

2nd Thursday 2.00pm Mildenhall Village Hall. Tales From The Cutting Garden with Katie Baxter. All welcome. £6 to attend. Contact Micky Graham on 01672 514301 for more information.

An Evening With Imelda Staunton and Jim Carter

3rd Friday 7.30pm Town Hall, Marlborough. Join two of Britains most beloved screen and stage icons for an exclusive, intimate evening of stories, laughter and behind-the-scenes secrets. Married for over forty years since meeting on the set of Guys and dolls, this legendary duo brings their undeniable chemistry and warmth to the stage. Tickets £35 at www.themerchantshouse.co.uk/book-now/

All money raised on this very special evening will go to help preserve The Merchant's House, its garden and treasures.

Another way to support this important work is to visit The Merchant House and Garden – open Tuesday to Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm (last entry at 3.00pm). Tickets £11 (Adults), Children and Historic House Members Free. Entry through the gift shop.

Brilliant International Musicians Series: Paddington Trio

11th Saturday 7.00pm – 9.00pm St Peter's Church, Marlborough. Seen as one of the

most exciting chamber ensembles of their generation, the Paddington Trio has been recognised in international competitions and live performances for their fresh interpretations and exuberant energy. Finnish violinist Tuulia Hero, Irish cellist Patrick Moriarty and American pianist Stephanie Tang have made London their home and emerged as an ensemble of an entirely unique and lasting entity. The trio's grand mission is to bridge the gap between new listeners and serious classical music enthusiasts by welcoming everyone into their living room of musical discovery and shared love of chamber music. Tickets £20, members £15 from stpetersmarlborough.org.uk

The Whitehorse Bookshop Summer School

Throughout July All events take place in the White Horse Book Shop gallery and workshop space. A wide variety of talks on Local and International Politics and History, Songwriters, Narration in Music, Creative Writing, Guest Authors, a behind the scenes at Flower Shows and Bookshops, and guides to Bridge, Bookbinding and Conversational Arabic. Pick up a Summer School brochure in the bookshop or view it online along with full booking details and further information:

www.whitehorsebooks.co.uk or call 01672 51207.

What's On in July

School Dates

Marlborough St Mary's Primary and Preshute Primary Term 6 ends Tuesday 21st.

St John's Term 6 ends 12.00noon Friday 17th July.

Aldbourne Heritage Centre

Revised opening times: Weekends and Bank Holidays 11.00am – 4.30pm.

Wednesdays 1.00pm – 4.00pm.

The Heritage Centre is a small museum located next to The Crown Hotel in the centre of the village (SN8 2DU). For full information see

www.aldbourneheritage.org.uk

Coming Up in August

St Peter's Presents Tom Gamble

Saturday 1st August 6.30pm – 9.00pm St Peter's Church, Marlborough. Celebrating the release of his sixth solo album, "Six String Vagabond", join Tom as he returns to Marlborough for a genre-bending concert featuring original music, songs and virtuosic arrangements from the new record.

Tom's live performances have been praised for their "virtuosity, spontaneity and humour". His recordings have been featured regularly on national radio, and

his live tours have encompassed six continents and stages such as London's Southbank Centre, Bridgewater Hall, RMS Queen Mary 2 and the Olympics. For tickets see stpetersmarlborough.org.uk

Giffords Circus

Thursday 13th – Monday 24th August Marlborough Common. Tickets Adults £23 - £36, Children age 3 to 14 £14 - £27, Under 3 free (to sit on lap). For more information and to book see: tickets.giffordscircus.com

Looking Ahead

Marlborough LitFest 2026 24th – 27th September

New festival Main Event Sponsor is St Mary's and St Margaret's Calne. Author Satham Sanghera and novelist Louisa Young join already confirmed historian and educationalist Sir Anthony Sheldon, award-winning novelist Kit de Waal and LitFest's 2026 Golding Speaker, Sebastian Faulks.

The full LitFest programme launched at the end of June with priority booking for Friends of LitFest open from 29th June. General booking opens on 10th July.

Linda Illsley - What's On Editor

Gardening: Vietnam and Cambodia

In March my husband Jon and I spent three weeks touring in Vietnam and Cambodia. Gardens and planting there is so far removed from what we know and do here in the UK.

In that part of Asia they have two seasons “hot “ and “very hot “. Thankfully we were there in the hot season. Temperatures varied from Hanoi in the North of Vietnam from 28c to Ho Chi Min City in the south at 34c to San Reap in Cambodia at 36c plus and high humidity.

We saw numerous road side stalls selling mostly indoor plants. Any outside space seemed by home owners in the country side for growing rice however large or small their plot of land and for keeping the odd cow. The other “home “ grown crop was sugar beat.

In the towns living is either multi storey and shop fronted.

The formal gardens were beautiful particularly at the Royal Palace in Penang Penn Cambodia. These gardens need constant watering and maintenance and are all planted with the Buddhist faith in mind. Entrances and exits are carefully planned for feng shui and planted to support harmony (Ying /Yang).

The Buddhist temples too had formal and extremely well tended gardens all presided over by the monks.

Road side vegetation were predominantly oleander and palm trees.

Poinsettias that we just house at Christmas in England grew prolifically outside in pots. Orchids were also in abundance for sale and used in restaurants, cafes , hotels and museums.

The National flower of Vietnam is the lotus flower and these seemed to be growing in anywhere where water pooled and they are absolutely beautiful.

The main tree crop is coconut. We saw so so many and enjoyed drinking from them often.

Gardening as we would use the term isn't one I would associate with Vietnam and Cambodia. It's too hot and dry and land is used for food and animals, not decoratively, unless it's a National park , palace or monument.

Ruth Fleming

Marlborough Gardening Association



Vietnamese Water Lily

The Vietnamese National flower

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Nature Notes

It's been a wonderful spring with so many highlights, and I'm not quite ready for it to be over.

The duke of burgundy butterfly that I wrote about in May's edition has had an exceptional year, with an amazing count of 89 individuals. The county butterfly recorder has told me this is a record for Wiltshire. For a species that has struggled massively in recent decades, it is an encouraging sign and a reminder of how important small pockets of suitable habitat can be.

Another welcome return has been the grasshopper warbler. A small warbler that makes an extraordinary journey from West Africa, it has once again taken up residence in the nearby water meadow. It's insect-like call is the sound that many people hear before realising it is coming from a bird.

There has been more good news too. A pair of redstarts in Savernake have

successfully raised at least four fledglings, confirming that they continue to return and breed in the forest, which is incredible. They are clinging on in very small numbers.

With the much warmer evenings, I often head out for a walk an hour or so before dusk. Camera in hand and binoculars around my neck, I set off to see what the evening might reveal. This is often the best time to encounter hares. On some evenings, I have counted eight or more in a single field. They are gradually becoming accustomed to my presence and no longer race away the moment they spot me. Once they realise I pose no threat, they seem a little more tolerant, allowing those fleeting glimpses into their lives.

Further along the footpath stands what I have come to call the "owl tree", a magnificent ancient oak with a history all of its own. In previous years, a pair of tawny owls have used the tree and

Credit Helen Llewelyn



Tawny Owl



Tawny Owlet

Credit Helen Llewelyn

surrounding bushes to conceal their fledged young while they hunt. Last year's cold, wet spring proved disastrous, but this year has been different.

As I approach the tree, a familiar high-pitched screech rings out through the evening air. Then another, and another. Hearing at least three young tawny owlets calling from the trees is a wonderful way to end an evening spent watching wildlife.

Helen Llewelyn



Tawny Owlet

Credit Helen Llewelyn

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Living with Uncertainty

“Doubt” said Voltaire, that formidable star of the Enlightenment “is certainly uncomfortable, but certainty is absurd”.

Yes, the sure thing is cosy, but we live in a world polarised by fear and conflict, a world deeply unequal, where we are battered by the certainties of those around us who, at different levels, have the power to spread hate and violence and the organised cruelty of war.

There will always be tensions and conflicts in life, but could we not be less certain that we know the right way, be prepared to listen deeply to one another, especially to those who seem different from ourselves? Could we not hold our diversities more tenderly?

Andre Gide said “Believe those seeking truth; doubt those who find it”

Quakers don’t do Collects, but here is one of our ‘Advices and Queries’:-

‘Do you respect that of God in everyone, though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people’s opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making false statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.’

Barney Rosedale

Family News

Dr Robert Andrew Reekie, OBE. 17th November 1939 – 27th March 2026

Andrew Reekie came to Marlborough as a partner in the Marlborough Practice in 1971 together with Virginia and their three children Jonathan, Alison and James. I arrived three years later to join Andrew, Tim and Dick Maurice and Bob Wheeler, and found their welcome very reassuring.

Andrew was a GP in the old style where consultation was face-to-face, examination

was routine, and home visits were an integral part of the work. His home visits were legendary, with a strong social element and concern for the elderly; he used to have nail clippers to deal with the toenails of those who were having difficulty getting down to their feet. His weekly branch surgeries in Avebury were amazing. He was much loved and respected.

He kept up with new ideas, new methods and new medications, and had an active

interest in Tropical Medicine, having spent some time working in Jamaica before coming to Marlborough. In 1992 he left the Practice to work in Israel in a teaching role with Medical Aid for Palestine in the West Bank, Hebron, and in densely populated Gaza where he became increasingly aware of the cruel inequalities and growing tensions.

After three years there and so that Virginia could join him, he joined the Foreign Office as doctor to the High Commission in Delhi and then Dhaka in Bangladesh where he not only looked after British and foreign diplomats but also had oversight of the medical facilities in the surrounding countries. He earned an OBE for this work. He returned in 2002 to spend five more years as a GP in Purton.

In retirement, he continued to travel

widely. I remember going with him to the mountains of Morocco, and over the Karakoram passes from Pakistan into western China. In Marlborough, he loved to walk on the Downs, he enjoyed the musical events, Michael Hart's great U3a History classes and more recently the cinema.

He began to lose his mobility two years ago which led to him spending his last six months in Aldbourne Nursing Home where he received wonderful care.

Many said at his thanksgiving service that he had cured them not with medicine but with his twinkle and smile, which he still had to the end. We miss him.

Barney Rosedale

Could you spare a little time to brighten someone's day?

Friends of Savernake Hospital and the Community
Register Charity No. 262732.

We are looking for a **friendly, good-humoured person**, who would enjoy chatting to the patients up at Savernake Hospital,

whilst talking our trolley shop around the thirty-bed ward **once a week**.

This would be followed by an **hour-long** shift in our shop in the foyer.

If you are a good listener, enjoy meeting people, and would like to **make a real difference**, we would.

If you think you might be interested, contact our shop manager, Ian Philpott for further details via **shop@friendsofsavernake.org**

Make a real difference in your local community

On Sodom and Gomorrah

This is an attempt to examine the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and its value in teaching morality.

The picture is painted of two cities - TWO cities, not just one - so evil, right down to the very last inhabitant barring Lot and his family, that God felt it necessary to step in and obliterate them both. Some very unusual conversation is reported, leading up to this holocaust.

Those cities obviously contained amongst their inhabitants new-born babies, toddlers in nappies, five- and six-year olds, young bolshie teenagers and all the other ages of men and women you would expect to find in a city. But, we are told, every last one of them was so wicked that God took the quite extraordinary step of intervening personally to wipe them out.

We might perhaps ask whether there isn't a teeny bit of exaggeration that has crept into the telling of this tale. Personally, I have never visited a city where every last human I encountered was wicked.

We might also perhaps ask whether this story portrays a god any more attractive than the other gods mentioned in the Old Testament: Baal, Molok et al. Admittedly

Molok apparently demanded the sacrifice of your first-born son, but that's as far as it went. Whole cities? No. The god who obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah is in a quite different league. Personally, I would run a mile before worshipping such a deity.

Fortunately, I am saved from running that mile by Elijah. Elijah, of course, was one of only two people seen with Jesus at the Transfiguration. Why Elijah? Why not Isaiah or Daniel or one of the other major prophets?

My estimate is that it was because of his pivotal moment of understanding at the mouth of that cave on Mt Horeb, the moment when he realised that God is not in the fire, not in the tempest, not in the earthquake; He's there in the still small voice of conscience that moves the individual human to action.

So obliterating whole cities is not what He's about. That's not how God behaves. Rather, He even allows us to kill Him, to nail Him to a cross, if that's what it takes to convince us that in his love He will never never never abandon us.

Hugh de Saram

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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 (behind the Town Hall)

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

10.30am Worship

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

(1st Sunday of the month is All-age worship with Children's tea at 4.30)

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)

10.00 am Morning service

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 REGISTERS

Baptisms - We welcome:

10/05/26 Ocean Ward (Katie) St Mary's, Marlborough

17/05/26 Cameron Abbott (Rebecca & Michael) St George's, Preshute

Departed - We pray for the families of:

27/05/26 Muriel Mercer (88), Barrow Close St Mary's, Marlborough

01/.6/26 Ann Cheetham (84), Purlyn Acre St Mary's, Marlborough

News from the Churches

Marlborough Anglican Team with Christchurch Methodist Fellowship:

Children/Family Activities:

The Ark Parent/ Carer and Toddler Group

Mondays in term time, 9:30am to 11am in the Church Hall, Silverless Street. Please contact Caroline Philips for more information cphilps2@gmail.com

Energize Saturday Sing

We're launching Energize Saturday Sing this term—relaxed, joy-filled mornings for children with music, a short Bible story, and snacks. Grown-ups are warmly invited to stay for coffee, cake, and conversation – a great way to connect with other families. Saturday 18th July, 2pm–4pm
Please contact our children's and family worker, Penny Reader, for more information penny.families@gmail.com

Midweek Activities

Welcome Wednesdays

A reflection, coffee and doughnuts every Wednesday, 10.30 am in St Mary's.

St Mary's Women's Group

Thursdays 10 am to 11 am. Join for coffee, chat, Lectio and prayer. All welcome - for more details and dates, email marlb.anglicanteam@tiscali.co.uk

New- Men's Fellowship Group

You're warmly invited to join a friendly and relaxed gathering for Bible study, prayer, refreshments, and genuine conversation. This group is especially for gentlemen who attend St Mary's Informal 5pm Worship

and would enjoy connecting more deeply with others.

The group will run on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, at 12noon-1pm at Church Cottage, Silverless Street.. If you'd like to know more, feel free to get in touch with Tim Gauntlett at tim.gauntlett27@gmail.com.

Social Events

Men's Supper Club

Feel like having a good dinner with the guys down at the pub? Why not try the Men's Supper club on Friday 3rd July, 7.30pm at the Castle & Ball. Please contact David Chandler if you would like to join.

Emmanuel Church New Road, Marlborough, SN8 1AH:

Sunday 10 am weekly. Includes children's group, age 3 to school Year 4, followed by refreshments.

Sunday 4 pm weekly. Includes crèche and Sunday School groups, followed by refreshments (for adults) and a sandwich tea for the children.

Weekly activities: home groups in Marlborough, Pewsey and Ogbourne St George, as well as community groups. Please visit our website at emmanuelmarlborough.org.

Weekly/one-off Events:

Women's Bible Study, every other Friday during term time, 10 am- 11.30 am. All women welcome - onsite crèche available. women@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Homegroups, Thursdays during term time,

News from the Churches

Pewsey – 7.30 pm, Marlborough – 7.45 pm, Ogbourne St George – 7.45 pm.

office@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Little Friends Toddler Group, Thursdays during term time, 10-11.30 am at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough, SN8 1AP. Free play, singing and story time, snacks for children and refreshments for carers.

littlefriends@emmanuelmarlborough.org

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

explorers@emmanuelmarlborough.org

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! For more details, email

fridaynights@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Sparklers, Monday, 15 June, 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! For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact: sparklers@emmanuelmarlborough.org

Rooted, a discipleship group for Y7-9 and Y10-13: Friday (5 June), 6-7.15 pm at the Prest's home. Through Bible study, training and discussion, we want to grow in love for each other and for Jesus. Held fortnightly

with food, before Friday Nights youth group. We'd love to see you there! For more details and the location address, please email

ruth@emmanuelmarlborough.org

St Thomas More, George Lane First Communion

St Thomas More Church was even more packed than usual at the Sunday morning Mass on 7th June as eight young parishioners made their First Holy Communion, joined by families, godparents and friends of the children, with a large number making the long journey from Brazil.

From last autumn, Catechists Brigid Sparke and Sue Kieran have led the children and their families through a series of lessons to prepare them for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and The Eucharist. Working with Father John and Brigid and Sue, the children took leading parts throughout the Mass. They bravely sang *a capella*, undertook readings and wrote and read their own Bidding Prayers.

After Mass there was a "Communion Breakfast" for the children followed by the sharing of a magnificent cake, kindly donated by Savernake View Care Home. The first slice was expertly cut by one of our First Communicants, Ruari, whose great grandmother, Anne is resident at Savernake View.

This was a day of profound joy and spiritual celebration for our children, their families and our whole parish.

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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 August issue by Tuesday 14th July please.

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