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# TOWER<sub>AND</sub>TOWN

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THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES



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# TOWER<sup>AND</sup>TOWN

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## Colours

The universal power of colours has been recognised by artists, scientists, and writers, who sought to understand the nature of colour and its effect.

One of the implications is here highlighted in the refreshing article by Catherine Byrn, capturing the colour-induced moods and reflecting on 'What a Wonderful World'. In the second article I invite you to travel in time and place to appreciate the intimate relationship between light and colour through the work of J.M.W. Turner and others.

This is followed by a treatment of the concept of colour denoting cultural richness, heritage, and identity; specifically, loss and regaining due to global conflicts. Here, Mosul (Iraq) is the subject, and you will find references to its cultural and faith icon, the Latin church. In addition, we are lucky to have from Mosul itself the views of Saad Salem presented in the complementary article in which he informs us about the rising from the ashes of the iconic leaning minaret of Mosul. Dr Salem lived

through the devastation of Mosul and as a surgeon was active treating the injured and maimed.

We are also lucky to be taken back to the reformations and turbulent Tudor England by Tony Kieran through his dynamic article, employing the metaphorical theme of tapestry weaving to study the three Lord Chancellors of Henry VIII. He also considers a thought on the possible implications of the Christian name Thomas and brings forth the fascinating case of one of the chancellors, the 1516 originator of Utopia, Thomas More.

The brutality of that age, and to some extent today's, is contrasted in the Clergy Letter of Father John Blacker in which he reminds us of the present need for forgiveness and fresh starts. I think we can all applaud this message by Father John.

Recent scientific findings form the basis of a final article on the lavish colours of the birds-of-paradise.

**Raik Jarjis - Editor**



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# Satchmo Sings of Colours

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*"The colours of the rainbow, so  
pretty in the sky  
Are also on the faces of people  
going by  
I see friends shaking hands,  
saying, "How do you do?"*

It is in this spirit that I would point out that colours in the sky and elsewhere evoke moods or emotions. We see this, for example, in the use of 'mood' boards in interior design, the creation of ambience in places where people gather such as pubs, restaurants or even exhibition spaces, the making of a suitable atmosphere for certain activities to take place - one might mention schools, hospitals, conference rooms, lecture halls and such. In fact, colours can induce specific responses: blue/calm or sadness; green/relaxation or uplift; yellow/cheerfulness or joy; red/stress or maybe fear. Of course, in our homes and gardens colour has a major impact on our feelings whether for good or ill.

There is also an abundance of the creative use of colour by artists to convey moods in representative and abstract art. In this context, the bewildering array of the palette of colours is often sourced from the earth itself and natural materials (though now sometimes synthesised). It is interesting to note that the artistic

artefacts themselves create a whole new realm of influence of colour in our lives. Just think of your favourite painting!

In addition, many words and expressions in English involving colours have associations with other spheres of life. For instance, we speak of navy blue, bottle green, acid yellow, sky blue, emerald-green, rose pink and so on. Phrases such as 'seeing red', 'purple prose', 'green with envy', 'blue-sky thinking' and many others enrich our vocabulary. Some even say they find music akin to colours! Writers often use colours imaginatively in their descriptions to paint a picture in the mind to vivid effect.

Important scientific or technical

applications of colour can be seen, for instance, in medical scans of the body even down to cellular level, in biological studies of bioluminescence in deep-ocean creatures, as well as for visuals in space exploration or geological studies and so on.

Ultimately, I would echo Satchmo (Louis Armstrong) when he sings of the colours of the rainbow, ending: What a wonderful world! Oh, yea...!!



Photo: (©Raik Jarjis)

**Catherine Byrne**

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# Colour Regaining at Mosul; With an Ode to Times Lost

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An early Christian settlement, with the first archdiocese attested to in 554, was established in what is now northern Iraq over a cliff across the river Tigris from biblical Ninevah.

The settlement expanded, the Muslims arrived in 641, and the city of Mosul rose to succeed Nineveh as the Tigris bridgehead of the road that linked Syria and Anatolia with Persia - a trading hub, and an agricultural and manufacturing centre, (origin of the “Muslin” textile). Notably Mosul and its provinces became home to Christian and Muslim communities that coexisted with a sizeable Jewish presence in a colourful ethnical mix of Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians, and Yazidis.

These colours were extinguished in 2014 when the Islamic State, ISIS, brutally arrived and Mosul was depleted of its historical communities. Moreover, the fierce urban warfare to defeat ISIS in 2017 reduced Mosul to rubble. Soon, it was realised that recovery necessitated regaining of cultural identity and returning of the displaced communities. Hence, groups of voluntary locals identified symbolic churches and mosques that required renovating and re-building.

Thanks to their efforts, UNESCO, and some funding organisations that a milestone was reached in 2025. Two of Mosul’s most important buildings, the al-Saa church tower and the adjacent al-Hadba minaret, stood again side by side as they did in the past, symbols of Muslim and Christian co-existence. The story of the minaret is presented in the following article by Saad Salem, but I would like to say a few words about the Our Lady of the Hour Dominican Latin church in Mosul.

The 17th century marked the opening of the Latin missions in Iraqi Mesopotamia, and the church was built in the Byzantine style, between 1866 and 1873, in the vicinity of several ancient churches, leaving a much-appreciated legacy for local Christians and Muslims - Strengthening faith, and developing a health centre, a boys’ school, and the first girls’ school and press in Iraq. The clock tower of the church became the other icon of Mosul, lending its name, al-Saa, (Arabic for the clock), to the local Muslim and Christian quarters. And it was here whilst dwelling in the shadow of the minaret between the age 2 and 7 that the nuns of the church took care of me during mixed nursery and primary schooling, as they did for my father years before me.

**Raik Jarjis**

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# Beholding Light and Colour

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From Turner to 'The City', via Cambridge, Oxford, Mesopotamia, and Yorkshire.

## JMW Turner, Isaac Newton, and the Mesopotamian Potter

Turner was described by the German critic and historian of art Richard Muther (1860–1909) as “The great composer of colour, the boldest poet among landscape Painters of all time.”; and it was the English polymath John Ruskin (1819–1900) who commented that “Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) paints in colour but thinks in light and shade.”

This, I think, resonates with many of us touched by the poetic ecstasy of Turner's 'light and colour' work. No wonder that his art was so inspiring for the original expressionist artists, and the modern abstract expressionists, Albert Irvin: 'Colours of Feeling' | HENI Talks. In fact, his work remains so fresh and full of light, worthy of celebration this year. 2025 is the 250th anniversary of Turner's birth, and Turner 250 has been nationally launched to include several exhibitions, such as those at Tate Britain in London and the Whitworth in Manchester, Turner 250 | Tate Turner: In Light and Shade | Whitworth Art Gallery.

It is here useful to remember the inherent intimacy between light and colour - Natural light itself is a composition of different colours revealed in the sky as a rainbow. To appreciate this, we must applaud the Cambridge

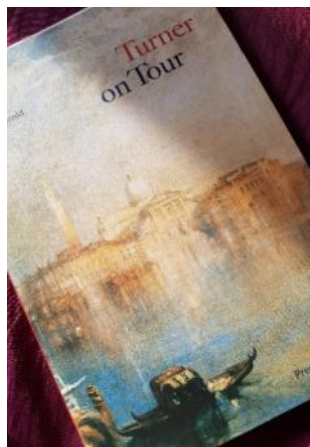
man of 'Reason', Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727), who measured the colour spectrum of light using glass prisms and enhanced the science of optics among many other great things. Moreover, we must be aware that the colours we perceive result from light reflection, transmission, refraction, interference, or absorption upon encountering different materials and media. Some visual effects are produced due to more than one of these processes, and this was realised by Muslim potters in 8<sup>th</sup> century Samarra in Mesopotamia. I have developed at Oxford research of lustre pottery from the period and found out that it employed the earliest nanotechnology to create the colour transcendence effect under the influence of light, (PDF) Ion-Beam Archaeometry: Technological Assessment of Ancient and Medieval Materials.

## Yorkshire

Whereas Turner expressed light using oil and water colours, the medieval gothic glazier John Thornton of Coventry (1405–1433) captured its majestic aura through transmission with his Great East Window of York Minster which contains two biblical cycles, Creation and Revelation. It is said that Thornton was commissioned in 1405 and subsequently executed in the perpendicular style the staggering work of 156 m<sup>2</sup> of glass in just three years, (The Great East Window, York Minster, UK » The York Glaziers Trust). This window was vividly described recently by the British painter and

Continued on page 6





*Light-on-Light*



*Colours of Light*



*An example of 20<sup>th</sup>  
century European Lustre  
Pottery*

*All photos credit Raik Jarjis*

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architectural artist Brian Clarke (b. 1953) as analogous to a bridge between mundanity and the sublime. In fact, as a



York Minster, east window  
(© Raik Jarjis 2025)

boy on a school trip Brian Clarke braved it across the Pennines from Oldham in Lancashire to York and experienced rapture whilst mesmerised by the Great East Window when the Minster's choir were singing in the background.

It is therefore not surprising, if staying in Yorkshire, not to visit David Hockney at Bridlington, but to head south to the city of Leeds to discover that the captivated boy from Oldham has finally left his own light and colour legacy. Here we could stroll along the Victorian Quarter whilst looking upwards at the over 122 meters long vibrantly coloured, traditionally

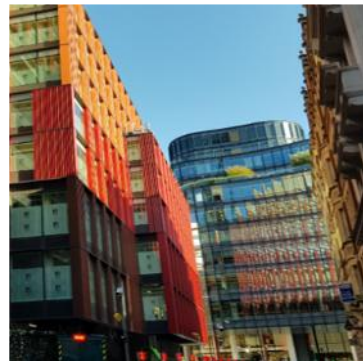


Hockney: still colouring  
(© Raik Jarjis 2025)

leaded roof, which extends from one end of the street to the other. This art of light by Brian Clarke was completed in 1990. It remains the largest single work of stained-glass in Great Britain and the largest stained-glass roof in Europe, measuring 725 square metres. It is a bold signature of secular world stained-glass – a triumph by another British artist who also brought much light and colour to places of worship.

## ‘The City’

I hope that our exploration so far does not shroud our search for light and colour beyond the exotic. The truth is that colours can be even found within the mundane and profane if we just care to look enough. Take for example ‘The City’ in London, a financial shrine of a



Light and colour in the city  
(© Raik Jarjis 2024)

forest of concrete and glass that suited matchstick men and women roam, and sunlight struggles to enter. It was through this forsaken edifice of modernity that I entered on 11 October 2024 searching for light, colour....and possibly love, (please refer to photos).

Continued on next page



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And now that you're gone  
You know the sun don't shine  
From the city hall to the county line  
And that's why I said

Bobby "Blue" Bland (1930-2013) Bing  
Videos

Raik Jarjis

Ain't no love in the heart of the city  
Ain't no love in the heart of town  
Ain't no love and it sure is a pity  
Ain't no love 'cause you ain't around

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## Aversion to Greyness: Some Lessons from the 1959 Class at the RCA

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*'It is the power of nature that comes to us through colour. What does colour do to us in relation to nature? It is as if nature is alive and conscious and wants to affirm its presence...its power...It is colours that makes us realise the intensity of nature.'*

From the last conversation with Etel Adnan (1925-2021), a Lebanese-American poet, essayist, and visual artist. (see p.11 - *A flower for Etel Adnan*)

Thinking about colours could help us to overcome greyness during uncertain times. Take for example the colourful 101 years old Glenys Cour who has built her long and vibrant life around her passion for colour, using fingers and rags to execute paintings. Glenys counted the great Welsh poet Dylan Thomas as a friend, and she is still painting every day at her home in Mumbles overlooking Swansea Bay, (*Artist Glenys Cour: The colourful life of 100-year-old painter* - BBC News)

And what about the young men and women who found post-war solace at the 1951 Festival of Britain, rebelled against the mundane, and brought colour and immediacy to the 'New Britain'. Among them David Hockney (b. 1937), Francis Bacon (1909-1992), Howard Hodgkin (1932-2017), and Lucian Freud (1922-2011) are shining lights.

I have first become acquainted with the work of the only survivor of the group, David Hockney, during the early part of the second half of 1970s through links with the Manchester School of Art. I was firstly struck by the confident simple colour lines he employed to execute portraits of the British textile designer Celia Birtwell (b. 1946), whom he first met in 1968. Little did I know, then, that David Hockney was a member of a new batch of painting students that enrolled at the Royal College of Art, London, in September 1959. A batch that, according to Hockney himself, was viewed by the RCA staff as 'the worst they have had for

Continued on next page

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many, many years'. This is not surprising as the class seemed to have had an aversion to the post-WWII prevailing greyness extenuated (somehow celebrated) by the Lancashire mills landscape artwork of L.S. Lowry, (1887-1976), and the 1953 abstract expressionism, "Ocean of Greyness", evoking the energy and vastness of the ocean and considered one of the last fascinating works by the American painter Jackson Pollock, (1912-1956). In fact, there was a backlash when a member of the 1959 RCA batch, Allen Jones, was in a life class voluntarily exploring the half-century old Fauvism of non-naturalistic colour application. His teacher, Ruskin Spear, looked at the work in progress and exclaimed, 'What's going on here? What's all these bright colours? Look, this a grey room, with a grey model, it's a grey day, it's a grey prospect'.

I must also add that this struggle against greyness is not unique for the 1959 RCA class. The Slade Art School, London, before the onset of the War to end all Wars was looking decidedly to France for colour inspirations. It was in France where radicals have already violated the rules of academic painting by constructing their pictures from freely brushed colours that took precedence over lines and contours. And it was at The Slade between 1910 and 1919 that a batch of students rose to become giants of British art. They included Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Mark Gertler, Richard Nevinson, and Dora Carrington.

Similarly, the wider circle of artists, primarily the 1959 student batch at the RCA and their associates, shaped British

art during the remaining decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Francis Bacon had an appetite for strong colour, and he painted colour fields inhabited by the human figure. On the other hand, David Hockney experimented with different mediums to generate compositions of vibrant colours expressing his insatiable efforts to understand the world.

I must also add that David Hockney, now 87, has synaesthetic associations between sound, colour and shape, a perceptual phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. I am, therefore, prompted to wish that he continues 'listening to music' and be mad about colour; much in character than succumbing to a greyness drift, (*What Makes An Artist?* David Hockney). Finally, it is interesting to point out that '*Living in Colours*' was his 2025 graphics exhibition at the Halcyon Gallery, London, and '**David Hockney 25**', curated by Norman Rosenthal, is on at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, until 31 August 2025.

*"I loved that he worried about precisely when in spring the blossom of the hawthorn would appear in Yorkshire, and that was all he cared about. It was his Monet moment of embracing nature and art, and a language which then spoke to the world.*

*"I always say, 'Do you know what Gertrude Stein said to Picasso, about the famous portrait he did of her?' Gertrude Stein said to Picasso, 'It doesn't look like me.' And Picasso answered, 'It will do.'"*

Raik Jarjis

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# Rising from the Ashes: the Leaning Minaret of Mosul

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Situated north of the capital, Baghdad (Iraq), the city of Mosul is often called al-Hadba, (Arabic for the hunched), due to its iconic leaning minaret (see photo p.11) that its centre in late 20<sup>th</sup> century deviated by 2.6 Meter from its base.

The minaret was built by Nur ad-Din Zangi, caliph of the Zangi's dynasty, who took the city in 1170. As an integral part of the new Great Nuri Mosque, it was for many centuries the highest minaret in the world. However, there has been great debate about its leaning nature since minarets in the Islamic World are normally built straight. Is the form original? Or is it a manifestation of subsequent wind direction effect and soft building materials? (the minaret was constructed of clay bricks and calcium oxalate cement strengthened by egg whites, which are both local products and their components are found naturally in Mosul).

Mosul endured dark times during the occupation by ISIS that started in 2014 and was subjected to large-scale destruction during the 2017 battle to dislodge ISIS. The losses of lives were compounded by the losses of cultural heritage, including churches and

mosques. The al-Hadba minaret was purposefully blown up.

It was soon realised that Mosul's recovery could not be attained unless its iconic churches and mosques are re-built. Therefore, an international consortium was established and led by the United Nations cultural heritage organisation, UNESCO, to reconstruct the minaret and a nearby iconic church due to limitations of the Iraqi government. Funded by UAE, an international Competition was set for re-building the al-Nuri Mosque and the minaret in its leaning form and ornamentations using as much as possible of the original materials scattered following the 2017 blowing up. An Egyptian architecture firm won the contract, and a three-year preparation period was followed by the meticulous reconstruction of the minaret by a local contractor and skilled labour. With the task having just been completed, 2025 represents a special year for the people of Mosul as it marks raising from the ashes their beloved al-Hadba minaret.

## Saad Salem

Saad Salem is a general surgeon in Mosul and graduate of the Medical College of the University of Mosul.

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# The Tudor Tapestry: A King, and His Three Advisors

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The Tudors with their rich robes, furnishings, country estates and palaces might seem alluring. Yet a dark reality might lie unseen beneath such superficially attractive appearances.

Under an absolute Tudor monarch, life's strands could be so twisted as to cause an irreversible change in the pattern or destiny concerned, precipitating a bloody unravelling. Who lived and prospered or who died could prove haphazard and messy, under Henry VIII.

Consider how the following rose and fell during his reign. First, Thomas Wolsey, born in 1473, ordained in Marlborough in 1498, rapidly rising to be Archbishop of York in 1514, then Cardinal in 1515, and from 1515 to 1529 Lord Chancellor, enriching himself on the way.

However, his failure to annul Henry's first marriage became treasonable. Only premature death in 1530 shielded him from the same bloody fate as befell the next Lord Chancellor, Thomas More; and after him, Wolsey's protégé, Cromwell.

Shakespeare's "Henry VIII" dramatized the dying Wolsey lamenting:

"Had I but served my God, with half the zeal

I served my King, he would not in mine age

Have left me naked to mine enemies."

Thomas More, born 1478, a successful lawyer and judge, succeeded Wolsey as

Lord Chancellor in 1529 yet resigned in 1532. His conscience would not allow him to swear to Henry as Supreme Head of the English Church, nor accept the annulment of Henry's first marriage.

But resignation did not save his life unravelling. In 1535, two years after Henry's marriage was finally annulled, and despite his international reputation as a scholar, More was decapitated, a traitor to the King. His offence? Some say the "thought crime" of not endorsing Henry's second marriage.

Thomas Cromwell born 1485, after some years abroad, had joined Wolsey's service as an advisor. Later, in 1533, driven by talent and ambition, he "conjured up" the annulment of Henry's first marriage; but not before Henry had "married" the pregnant Anne Boleyn.

In Parliament Cromwell had master-minded the campaign to assert the validity of Henry's second marriage, the very issue that persuaded Thomas More to renounce public life, resign as Lord Chancellor, and refuse the Oath of Supremacy.

Yet Anne Boleyn fell, Henry remarried, and Cromwell, having lost Henry's confidence, was next for the axe. Did he feel remorse or resentment as he fell? Admirers say he died stoically; his detractors question this.

More is reliably reported to have behaved with composure and dignity on

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*A flower for Etel Adnan (© Raik Jarjis 2024)*



*The Re-constructed al-Hadba Minaret (January 2025), (© Saad Salem)*



*Revival of the Spirits of Mosul (UNESCO). In October 2024, the Scaffolded al-Hadba Minaret is shown (r) facing the clock tower and domes of the renovated Latin Church (l), (© Saad Salem)*



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the scaffold, ready to die, knowing his conscience was clear, asserting:

"He died the King's good servant, and God's first."

There is much to admire in Thomas More that the other two clearly lacked. In life, a faithful husband, father, scholar, politician, statesman, and finally, martyr. His bloody end was the inevitable penalty for a life of integrity.

Among his scholarly works are "Utopia" and probably the "Declaration of the Seven Sacraments" which, ironically, in 1521 earned Henry VIII the title "Defender of the Faith" from the Pope.

His reputation grew after his death. He topped "The Law Society Gazette" 1999 poll as the most significant legal figure of the second millennium. Many recognise him as a man for whom the demands of an informed conscience mattered more than self-serving compromise, reputation, ambition, social status, privilege and even life itself.

Ask, what weaver could have conceived a pattern showing three such contemporaries who shared the same Christian name, whose lives, fortunes and fates were so inextricably interwoven with

Henry VIII?  
Were they christened after the Apostle, "Doubting Thomas"? In one account, he died by decapitation in India. An intriguing thought, given the beheading of two of these Thomases: only the intervention of natural death sparing Wolsey from the same bloody fate.

Of the three, Saint Thomas More remains the best known and most honoured. Numerous churches everywhere are dedicated to him; within the Royal Courts of Justice, London, the "Thomas More Building" houses the Central London County Court; and his epitaph inscribed on a memorial erected on the Embankment, Chelsea, London, proclaims to all:

Sir Thomas More  
1478 +1535  
Scholar  
Saint  
Statesman

Henry died in 1547, prematurely aged, chronically sick, an object of pity, laid low by excess.

**Tony Kieran**

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# Nature Notes: Spring

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## **“In springtime, the only pretty Ringtime when birds do sing”**

If the weather is warm and sunny  
an early morning  
spent birding in the  
first days of May is  
invigorating.

May has always been my  
favourite month as birds  
continue to arrive from  
the South, their songs and  
calls providing an avian  
orchestra of cooing,  
twittering, trilling,  
drumming and warbling.  
Some incoming species  
include Swift, Spotted  
Flycatcher and the diminutive Quail, with  
migration continuing till the end of the  
month.

At this time in a favoured  
location such as a damp,  
overgrown corner of the  
Cotswold Water Park,  
separation of the sounds  
of a dozen species singing  
at the same time is tricky.  
A Garden Warbler, for  
example, alongside a  
Blackcap; a Sedge  
Warbler and a nerby Reed  
Warbler; Chiff Chaff and  
the similar-looking Willow  
Warbler. Once their songs  
are learnt it is a better aid to  
identification than fleeting views in

dense vegetation.

Birds calls and songs often seem right for  
their chosen habitat:



*Stonechat-Saxicola rubicola-©Helen-Llewelyn*

Referencing a visit to the  
Farnes last May the  
combined raucous  
screams and cries of the  
Auks, the Kittiwakes, the  
other Gull species and  
the Terns seemed  
entirely appropriate as I  
looked down to an  
oceanic background -  
they need to be noisy to  
be heard above the din  
of the crashing waves.

Our local downland birds  
offer a gentler range of  
sounds...the ventriloquist Quail for  
example, the Meadow Pipit and Tree  
Pipit with their parachute displays, the  
soft calls of Whinchat,  
the clicking sounds of a  
Stonechat, the scary  
“Cooree” of the Stone  
Curlew at dusk. Birding  
is about listening as well  
as watching.

## **Robin Nelson**

As retiring Nature  
Correspondent, my  
thanks to all who have  
enjoyed my notes, and  
good wishes to Helen as

she takes over the role.



*Blackcap-Sylvia atricapilla-©Helen-Llewelyn*

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# What's On in May

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**The Marlborough Singers Spring Concert. 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday 7.30pm** Holy Cross Church, Ramsbury. From Mozart to 'Les Miserables'. All proceeds to the Prospect Hospice. Dedicated to the memory of Max Brockman-More. Doors open 7.00pm. Tickets £10 from Ramsbury Post Office or on the door. Bar and raffle.

**Marlborough History Society Guided Walk of Lacock** lead by Nick Baxter.

**6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 11.00am.** Beginning at the entrance to Lacock Abbey (SN15 2LG) and ending at St Cyriac's Church (SN15 2LB). Half a mile on level terrain lasting about an hour. Free to society members. Guests £5 cash on the day. To book contact Nick direct at nickbaxter.history@gmail.com or mobile 07368 421339 or via John Osborne at jeo66@btinternet.com or on 01672 514364. More information at marlboroughhistorysociety.co.uk

**The Arts Society – Pewsey Vale. Charles I, King and Collector. 6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 2.30pm** Bouverie Hall, Pewsey. Speaker Barbara Askew. Charles I's obsession with collecting art nearly bankrupted the country and alienated the people. Sold off by the Commonwealth, much was bought back by Charles II, others now grace the great galleries of Europe. Non-members welcome. £7 cash or card on the door. details at [taspv.org.uk](http://taspv.org.uk)

**Marlborough Floral Club 8th Thursday 2.00pm** Mildenhall Village

Hall. **A Crescent or C Shaped Arrangement** with Sally Taylor. £6 to attend, no pre booking necessary. Information from Micky Graham 01672514301.

**Brilliant International Musicians Series: Anna Tilbrook (piano) and James Gilchrist (tenor). 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday 7.00pm** St Peter's Church, High Street, Marlborough. Tickets £15 (£10 for St Peter's members). See [www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/events](http://www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/events)

**Marlborough History Society: The Other Slave Trade: Abolition in East Africa and the Indian Ocean in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. 15<sup>th</sup> Thursday 7.30pm** Town Hall, Marlborough. Speaker Stuart Laing had a first career in the British Foreign Service. He was Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (2008-20018) and now researches, lectures and writes on Mediterranean, Arab and East African History. Entry £5. Guests very welcome. More information at [marlboroughhistorysociety.co.uk](http://marlboroughhistorysociety.co.uk)

**Chap's Choir & The Bebington Bitter Men. 24<sup>th</sup> Saturday 7.30pm** St Peter's Church. From London and The Wirral respectively these singers are joining forces to raise funds for mental health charity CALM. Pop rehashes, snowy hunting calls, songs of the sea and more, promise an evening of sonorous entertainment. Tickets £12 from [stpetersmarlborough.org.uk](http://stpetersmarlborough.org.uk)

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# What's On in May

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## **Organ Discovery Day as part of Play the Organ Year 2025. 31<sup>st</sup> Saturday**

**10.00 – 11.30am** St George's, Preshute **First Encounters** – an opportunity for young people and their families to come and discover the magic of the organ, the 'King of Instruments' with Andrew Brown (organist at St George's). No musical experience necessary.

**2.00 – 5.00pm** St George's Preshute and Marlborough College Chapel.

**Experience Afternoon** – for organists and lovers of organ music. An opportunity firstly to hear and play St George's Concaher organ, followed by a visit to the Beckerath organ in Marlborough College Chapel.

Admission free and refreshments provided. Please register interest by 24<sup>th</sup> May: contact Andrew Brown on 07879 776193

## **School Dates - please see school websites for any updated information.**

St John's, Marlborough St Mary's Primary and Preshute Primary half term 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May.

Marlborough College Exeat 12.00noon Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May – 9.00pm Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May. Half Term 4.00pm Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May – 9.00pm Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## **Coming Up in June**

### **Prospect Hospice Starlight Walk.**

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June.** Celebrating 45 years of care. Walkers can choose between 10k or 15k routes starting and ending at The Deanery Academy in Swindon. Sign up at [www.prospect-hospice.net/starlight](http://www.prospect-hospice.net/starlight)

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## **Looking Ahead**

### **Julia's House Children's Hospice**

#### **Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge. Friday**

**19<sup>th</sup> to Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September.** The charity is seeking 20 outdoor enthusiasts to take part. The circular walk encompasses the three major peaks in the Yorkshire Dales: Pen-Y-Ghent, Whemside and Ingleborough. Hikers can choose to complete all three peaks in under 12 hours or take the 24-mile route at a slower pace. All accommodation, transport, mountain guides and meals will be provided. Trip will include an extra day of adventure exploring the picturesque Ingleton Waterfalls Trail. Register interest at [www.juliashouse.org/Yorkshire](http://www.juliashouse.org/Yorkshire)

**Linda Illsley**

What's On Editor

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# A Good Read

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Never complain, never explain, never apologise. That's what we're told to do (well, not do), but I'm going to break at least two of those rules. My complaint is that no-one's publishing anything I want to read! (I exaggerate, obviously, but some months it feels like that.) Everything I pick up at the moment seems to be a paragraph and punctuation-free, gender-flipped, dystopian debut novel about alienation and identity. *No*, thank you.

Which explains why I've been re-reading old favourites, guaranteed to dispel grumpiness. It started when I was shelving *Brat Farrar* by Josephine Tey, and remembered I love it and hadn't read it for a while. Gosh, it's good. Then Emma and I were chatting about authors and how they fall in and out of favour (and print) and we remembered Mary Wesley, so I ordered myself a copy of *Harnessing Peacocks*, and had a happy couple of evenings reading about snobbery, cookery and lady-like prostitution. I can see myself working through all Wesley's output over the next couple of months. And then as an absolute treat I went back to *Old Filth* by Jane Gardam, which as you may be aware, is a complete masterpiece. A

tragi-comic, sort-of-fairy-tale, crisp and psychologically astute, it is about alienation (see above), but it's one of the most richly textured and satisfying books I know. I'm sure many of you have read it; if you haven't please do so at once.

All this re-reading is sanctioned by Lucy Mangan, in her new book (yes, it's new! And I've read it!) *Bookish: How reading shapes our lives* (a sequel to *Bookworm*) starts with the author's fuming indignation about having to read set texts, rather than roaming through the shelves picking and choosing for herself. Then through university, bookselling, marriage and journalism Mangan expounds on the books she loves, hates, appreciates and all stops in between. She is adamant (and I do so agree) that snobbery around reading is the very worst kind of snotty one-upmanship; yes, you can be MA Cantab *and* enjoy Dan Brown. Of course you could analyse the gulf in literary merit between *The Faerie Queene* and *The Da Vinci Code*, but does it matter? If you like it, read it is her message, and when you've finished, have you read?....Did you know it was part of series?...He also wrote..... She declares herself a fan of some of my favourite books and authors, and flags up dozens I've missed or dismissed or just not got around to. It's going to be an expensive summer.

Debby Guest



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# Clergy Letter

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In recent years, concern for the environment has become an important part of everyday life.

Many of us try to preserve the earth's resources by recycling items such as paper, glass and cans, rather than throwing them away. Our newspapers may be used again for a very different purpose, but they certainly prevent waste and save trees. Although we have begun to re-use the earth's resources, we seem to have developed a different attitude to human beings. We have learned to save discarded objects, and to discover new uses for them. With people, however, we are often quick to condemn those who have failed, or seem finished. The politician whose mistakes in public or private make the headlines is quickly confined to the scrap heap. A disaster or a scandal becomes public, and someone is soon singled out as being to blame, and often forced to resign. But God is ready to forgive us and use us again to be witnesses in the world

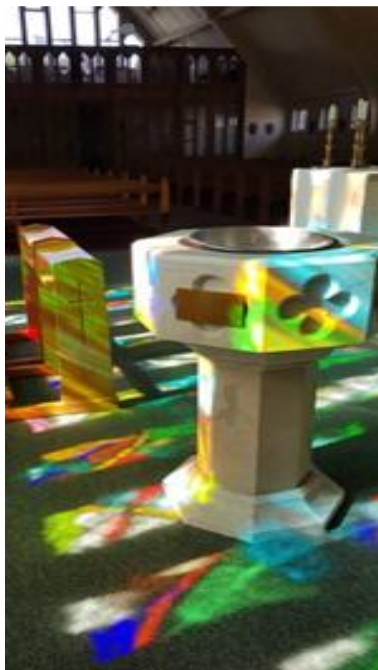
to truth and goodness. We need, with God's help, to look at what people can be and not simply at what they have been. Just as discarded paper can be

recycled and made into something new and useful, forgiveness enables people to reshape their lives. Often it takes courage to forgive those who fail when others are quick to condemn.

Forgiveness - given or received - allows us to look to the future, to become what we should be, regardless of what we have been. Forgiveness does more than 'wipe the slate clean'. As we are forgiven by God, we learn more about God's love for us, and as we are forgiven by others, we learn to value them.

God's love and mercy not only prevents our lives from being wasted, but makes them as good as, or better than new.

**Father John Blacker**



St Thomas More Church  
(© Raik Jarjis 2024)



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---

### **Penny Reader**

#### **Anglican Team secretary**

marlb.anglicanteam@tiscali.co.uk  
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512357; 07593 815609  
*(Weekdays, 0900 to 1300)*

### **Methodist Office Coordinator**

07564 082092  
office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk

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# News from the Churches

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## **What's on at Emmanuel Church Marlborough:**

Join us every Sunday at 4 pm for our weekly church service located on New Road in Marlborough, SN8 1AH. Our service includes crèche and Sunday School groups, followed by refreshments (for adults) and a sandwich tea for the children.

In addition to our Sunday service, we also offer various activities throughout the week including home groups in Marlborough, Pewsey and Ogbourne St George, as well as community groups.

More details from  
[www.EmmanuelMarlborough.org](http://www.EmmanuelMarlborough.org)  
[office@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto:office@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

**All are welcome to join us!**

## **Marlborough Anglican Team with Christchurch Methodist Fellowship:**

### **St Mary's 5pm Informal Worship**

**If you are new** to the area or thinking about the faith, please consider joining us at 5pm on Sunday at St Mary's. We are friendly, informal and open to God's Spirit. On the first Sunday of the month there is a family tea at 4:30pm followed by a service for all ages at 5pm. On the third Sunday of the month, we break bread together.

Energize, our young people's group, usually meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month during term time.

**All age worship for May is on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May**

## **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 Philps for more information [cphilps2@gmail.com](mailto:cphilps2@gmail.com)

### **Little Friends Toddler Group,**

Thursdays during term time, 10-11.30 am at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough, SN8 1AP. Come and enjoy free play, singing and story time, snacks for children and refreshments for carers. For more details, email [littlefriends@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto:littlefriends@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

### **Explorers**

Fridays during term time, 6-7.15 pm at the Wesley Hall, Oxford Street, Marlborough. Our kids' club for school years 3-6. Fun, games, tuck and a short Bible talk (bring 50p for tuck). For more details, email [explorers@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto: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](mailto:fridaynights@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

### **Sparklers**

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# News from the Churches

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Monday, 28 April, 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! See our Events Calendar at [emmanuelmarlborough.org](http://emmanuelmarlborough.org) for dates or email [sparklers@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto:sparklers@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

## **St Mary's Informal Worship All-age service**

11<sup>th</sup> May 5pm, St Mary's, Marlborough (with Children's tea at 4:30pm)

## **Midweek Activities**

### **Welcome Wednesdays**

A reflection, coffee and doughnuts every Wednesday, 10.30 am in St Mary's (see poster p.19).

### **Emmanuel Church Homegroups**

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

### **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](mailto:marlb.anglicanteam@tiscali.co.uk)

### **Emmanuel Ladies Bible Study**

Every other Friday during term time, 10 am- 11.30 am. Friends discovering God's truth in the Bible (All ladies welcome - onsite crèche available). For more details and dates, email [ladies@emmanuelmarlborough.org](mailto:ladies@emmanuelmarlborough.org)

### **Hope Explored**

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

## **Marlborough Churches Together**

Fraternal Wednesday 7th May

## **Other events**

### **Rededication of the St Mary's Organ**

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 6pm in St Mary's Church. Do join us for a celebration of the completion of the restoration and rededication of the organ in St Mary's Church. Please get the date in your diary. All are welcome to mark this occasion - full details of the event will be published nearer the time.



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# Gardening Association Plant Sale

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Are you looking for inexpensive plants to fill your garden? Then come along to Marlborough Gardening Association's highly popular annual plant sale.

It takes place in Marlborough Town Hall on **Saturday 17th May from 9.30am until 12 noon**. Be

warned. We usually have a queue forming ready for the opening! We will be selling perennials, shrubs as well as veggie, fruit and herb plugs, all grown by our members, so you can be sure they are suitable for the soil in this area.

Our members will be manning the stalls ready to discuss what you are looking for and give advice as to position and care of the plants. All perennials and shrubs will be clearly labelled with information on height, flowering period and colour. There will

also be a selection of house plants and pots on sale.

We are pleased to welcome Andy's Plants back to our sale for his third year. Andy will be selling a full range of reasonably priced bedding plants and perennials. If you miss him at the plant sale you can find him at Grove Farm,

Stitchcombe this coming season.

Any leftover plants received from our members will be donated this year to Coombe End House and Marlborough St Mary's Primary School.

Please note that this is a cash only sale. Don't forget to

bring lots of bags!



**Dorothy Aitcheson**  
Marlborough Gardening Association

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# Marlborough Churches Together

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## Usual Sunday Services Times

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### 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

4:30pm (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month) All-age worship with Children’s tea

### 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)

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.

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## FROM THE REGISTERS

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### Departed - We pray for the families of:

21/02/25	Neil Hall (77), Whitehorse Road, Marlborough	St George’s, Preshute
02/03/25	Jennifer Wright (71), Cromwell Court, Marlborough	St Mary’s, Marlborough
24/03/25	Kenneth Hope (97), Barrow Close, Marlborough	St Mary’s, Marlborough
23/03/25	David Hicks (90), Herd Street, Marlborough	St Mary’s, Marlborough
20/03/25	Derek Waters (90), St Johns Close, Salisbury	St Mary’s, Marlborough
31/03/25	David Dobie (91), Coombe End Court; St Mary’s, Marlborough	

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# Colour Fluorescence of the Birds-of-Paradise

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The Birds-of-Paradise are known for their spectacular and diversified mating-inspired colour displays, (Birds-of-Paradise Project), which are enhanced by generating bright green-yellow fluorescence.

Commonly known as biofluorescence, the phenomenon occurs when an organism absorbs light, transforms it, and emits it as a different colour. This has been the subject of a recent scientific paper published on 12 February 2025 in the journal of the Royal Society Open Science, *Does biofluorescence enhance visual signals in birds-of-paradise?* ( *Royal Society Open Science* )

This new research was carried out by scientists at the American Museum of Natural History and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and it confirms for the first time the widespread occurrence of biofluorescence in birds-of-paradise. The study by Rene P. Martin, Emily M. Carr, and John S. Sparks is based on Museum specimens collected since the 1800s. It was inspired by an initial study by John Sparks, in which bowerbirds and fairy

wrens failed to glow, but among birds-of-paradise, he found bright green-yellow fluorescence.

In the 2025 publication, the research team took a closer look at the biofluorescence in birds-of-paradise, which live across eastern Australia, Indonesia, and New Guinea, finding that the birds also fluoresce when exposed to UV light, not just blue light. This phenomenon is especially prominent in males, focused on their bright plumage and skin in areas that are highlighted during displays: the inner mouth and bill, feet, and feathers on the head, neck, and belly. In females, biofluorescence is usually restricted to plumage on the chest and belly. “These birds live near the equator, where there is an abundance of bright solar light year-round, and they live in forests where the complexity of light is significantly affected by differences in the canopy and where biofluorescent signals may be enhanced,” Carr said. It appears that birds-of-paradise can see these biofluorescent patterns, which enhance contrast against dark plumage and possibly play an important role in courtship and hierarchy.

**Raik Jarjis**

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# A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....

---

Gazing at the wonderful night sky recently I started pondering just how far away those stars are... the answers are totally beyond our normal terms of reference, so let's scale it all down a bit, well a lot actually.

If the Sun were the size of a cricket ball and were placed outside the Castle & Ball, Earth would be 8.9 yards away as a tiny pin head in the central parking area; and the diameter of the Solar System, including all the planets from Mercury to Neptune, would stretch from the Town Hall to St Peter's church. However the nearest neighbouring *star* (Proxima Centauri) would be almost as far away as Athens, and the North Star (Polaris) more than half way to the Moon.

Beyond this, distances scaled to the 'cricket ball' Sun are too enormous, so let us reduce our Sun to the head of a pin. At this tiny scale the distance to Sirius, the brightest star in the winter sky would be Marlborough to Newbury whereas to Rigel (the brightest in Orion) would be as far as Cairo. The nearest other galaxy (the blurry 'star' in Andromeda which itself contains billions of stars like our galaxy) would be 6.3 million miles from

our pin head Sun. That galaxy's true distance from the full size Sun is 14.9 Sextillion miles - that's 149 with 23 zeros and the true width across that tiny blurry galaxy is 891,585,792,000,000,000 miles. It all makes one feel very, perhaps 0.000000very small.

Light travels over 5.8 trillion miles a year, but it still takes time to get here such that the stars we see are actually 'history'. Sirius, is as it was in 2017, the North Star in 1595 and Rigel in 1165. These however pale into insignificance when we realise that light from the centre of our own galaxy left 30,000 years ago and from the Andromeda galaxy 2.5 million years ago, that's when Homo Sapiens was first appearing. Nearer home we see The Plough's seven major stars as they were at times ranging from 58 to 120 years ago. Thus those stars are not 'a group' at all, but widely separated in distance from us, the furthest (and brightest) being over twice as far away as the nearest. In fact, although observations and calculations reassure us, we don't truly know if any stars still exist....

**Peter Noble**

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All items for the June issue by Tuesday 13th May please.

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