
TOWER AND TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES



VOICES FROM THE PAST

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Front Cover: Kingsbury Street by Christopher Hughes.

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TOWER^{AND}TOWN

Voices from the Past

In this issue you will find a selection of pieces from previous editions that shed some light on the historic character of Marlborough through the experience and memories of people who have lived here. My thanks to everyone who has contributed, wittingly or unwittingly.

Some of the people speak for themselves and some emerge from interviews or tributes. A Marlborough emerges that underlies the town we know today, lives that were in all sorts of ways different from ours but recognizably the same.

This compilation arises from the conviction that, despite concentrating on what we see and do every day, we are not just creatures of the present.

Previous generations and the town they describe and the lives they lived reveal a recognizable past that is rich, and fascinating and valuable to discover.

If you have things to add or points to make about any of these pieces they will be most welcome. Please write to feb.editor@towerandtown.org.uk

You can unearth more from the online archive on the website of *Marlborough History Society*. The Society has a programme of lectures, and of particular interest this year perhaps will be David Chandler's lecture in September on the Free family. There are exhibitions of especial local interest, too, at *The Merchant's House*, which publishes an occasional journal with well-researched articles.

We hope that the new format of this edition looks good and helps you to enjoy it. If you have any comments, please send them to Sarah Bumphrey, chairman@towerandtown.org.uk

John Osborne
Editor

February Edition No. 755

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Marlborough Churches
Together



George Johnson

The late George Johnson was in conversation with the editor in February 2016. When he died his coffin was borne to the crematorium on a fire engine down the High Street and round the Court at the College to the respectful applause of those lining the pavement.

George grew up in Marlborough, the youngest of three children whose father was a painter and decorator. He was conscripted as a 'Bevin Boy' in the 2nd World War and did his war service in the mines of South Wales. There 'in the canteen' he met Nan, a miner's daughter. They married in 1948 after George was demobbed, a marriage that lasted sixty years. Back in Marlborough he worked as a painter for Eade's and they had their own house built and gave it its unpronounceable Welsh name.

In 1963 he went to work at the College and became general foreman in the estate department. After he retired, he continued as supervisor in the dining hall, where he was valued for his straight and easy manner with the pupils, to whom he was 'George'.

The Marlborough that George described has changed greatly, a town without the building firms (Ledleys, Burts, Eustace and Hilliers), and without many of the pubs and the plethora of small shops. He mentioned Hart's the bakers down The Parade, 'The Green Parrot' sweet shop

by St Peter's, and Miss Pearce's shop off The Green, where they sold 'general goods' and 'you could buy a gas mantle'. There was 'Whistling Jimmy's' shop in St Martin's...

George served for over thirty years in the local 'retained' fire brigade, staffed by volunteers, many of them in the building trade. Up to 1926 the fire engine was horse-drawn and during the 2nd World War the engine was 'a Fordson flat-bed lorry with a tank of water on the back - a Heath Robinson effort'. He and his colleagues were called out for the major fires that scarred Marlborough in our time: the tannery, where the water froze as they pumped it from the river; Dible and Roy's, where the Post Office and the One Stop shop are today; and The Polly, for which (George was reticent about his part here) he, Frank Odey and Bob Cox were awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery for rescuing the children upstairs. When George retired he was awarded the medal for long service and the BEM.

"How are you, George?" "Pretty good," he'd always say. Living until he was well past ninety, and much respected, he kept his steady outlook and his great sense of humour.

Marlborough's Fire Brigade – 1960s



This 1960s photograph, which we publish thanks to the kindness of Kevin Dickens, Trust Manager at The Merchant's House, shows from left to right: Tony Hillier, Joe Crook, Ron Jones, Jack Bull, David Jones, Frank Odey, George Johnson, David Ward, Ken Pike, Jim Timmer, Bill Cooper and Alan Smith, with Bedford and Commer engines behind.

There will be a Marlborough Fires display in The Merchant's House from 1 March and a week-long special exhibition in April.

A Marlborough Childhood

Mark Clements, a subscriber to Tower and Town in Yorkshire, kindly submitted his memories of growing up in Marlborough (*February 2016*). This is a selection.

Nearly all my family lived at that time in Marlborough – many aunts, uncles, cousins and my grandparents. It was handy for a school job to have an uncle who managed the tannery and another who ran Stratton and Son's grocery.

Mum and Dad had a corner store in Kingsbury Street, so we lived above that. Mum woke me and I stood in the window of our flat in my pyjamas, sadly watching the Polly tearooms blaze. We had Hillier's fruit and veg shop over the road with a stuffed pike in a glass case. The stuffed bream was in the companion Hillier's shop in The Parade. It was there I made my first foray into theft, taking a handful of child-height monkey nuts only for them to be discovered by Mum who marched me back across the road to give them back to Mr Hillier and say "Sorry".

My newspaper round comprised taking my sack to Mr Peter Flippance at the office on the corner of Kingsbury Street and Silverless Street. He printed off copies in his braces in front of you while you waited. If it rained Mum drove me round so that I wasn't a complete ruffy-tuffy.

Ringling the bells in St Mary's tower was another of my activities, until I realised

that Plain Hunt was the limit of my ability and I became slightly uneasy at the several tons of metal that I was controlling with the sally.

The old tin Scout Hut was still standing and they did their famous bonfires on 5th November. For the benefit of the person who shouted "Who did that?" forty five years ago, it was me who stupidly threw a firecracker onto the bonfire.

Where was Health and Safety, when we were able to buy catapults, peashooters, spud guns and a six-inch bowie knife for scout camp? I also melted lead in a saucepan to make ledgers. My loving Mum allowed us to range freely into the surrounding countryside with a "be home for tea". We took tin baths into the River Og and strapped oil cans together for a raft. I waded about in the River Kennet at Stoney Bridge and my other Nan took me in to dry my clothes by her fire before going home.

We bravely walked through the abandoned railway tunnel at Postern Hill and learned the true meaning of 'the light at the end of the tunnel'; it was cold, dark and took for ever to get through. At the other end we sat down while one of our number recounted the ghost train, which you could see if you returned at midnight on 25th October to where it had crashed and the passengers were killed. I never saw it... but I never went back at midnight.

Marlborough Folk Roots

Steve Knightley

'Winter into Spring' Tour

Sunday 30th March

St Peter's Church ,

Marlborough

Acclaimed singer-songwriter and former Show of Hands frontman, Steve Knightley, is back with his eagerly anticipated solo tour, featuring songs from the critically acclaimed 'Winter Yards' album.

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The Demise of the Jazz Festival

Well, it lasted thirty years and became the biggest event of its kind in England. Not bad for a small market town.

Thousands of people flocked here from all over the globe. The Arts Council reckoned it brought over half a million pounds into the town over a single weekend, during which over a 100 bands would perform. As *The Times* put it, "At the Marlborough International Jazz Festival you're never more than a yard away from a pint of ale or a note of music."

Major names featured in this little town, including Elkie Brooks, Darius Brubeck, Georgie Fame, Buddy Greco, Jules Holland, Humphrey Littleton, George Melly, Alan Price and Clare Teal. Artists came from more than sixty countries and it represented a start for many a talented musician.

My own favourites? It's a very difficult decision ... to me the most exciting artist we put on was L'il Jimmy Reid, the last of the great Louisiana blues singers. Real blues is a dying voice. It is the music of poverty, oppression, back-breaking work and discrimination. As these abuses have declined, so has the music that they begot, and so it was wonderful to hear the 77-year old Jimmy's vibrant guitar, gritty vocals and haunting harmonica. We'll never hear anything like that again.

So why has it all ended? It is a shame and, of course, a lot of people are bereft about it. The facts are well-known and need not be repeated. Suffice it to say that there is an increasing awareness that towns are not just for traffic. For the survival of the historic market town it is important to get people to go there and the Marlborough International Jazz Festival did exactly that.

Nick Fogg
August 2018

The Merchant's House

Michael Gray, the curator, spoke in 2017 about a discovery in The Merchant's House.

Shortly after The Merchant's House Trust moved into the property at 133 High Street, the volunteers began careful exploratory uncovering of the wall

surfaces. Each new paper had been laid on top of the previous layers, thus creating a historic stratigraphy. As the layers were peeled away, we experienced a time trail of interior decoration, which started with the orange/brown pub décor of the 1970s. We dug back from here to the florid Victorian layers and then to the pre-wallpaper

age where the surface was painted.

Eventually the original 17th century layers were revealed. This is the stuff of which architectural historians dream. The walls of the great staircase were painted in imitation of the wooden balustrading, an outstanding example of trompe l'oeil decoration, all painted in pale grey to resemble stonework.

Next we investigated the dining room. This was brilliant in every meaning of the word. Could the puritan Bayly family, builders of

the house, really have indulged in such a peacock-like display? Bands of coloured stripes, thirteen inches wide, were spaced around the room, dazzling in their boldness. It eventually dawned on us that the family, as silk mercers, might be paying tribute to the textile patterns with which they were familiar, or perhaps the scheme is a direct copy of a fabric in their possession, or maybe matching the curtains in that very room.

Lloran House

In July 2016 Joyce Brooks and Nick Maurice talked about the garden of Lloran House, now Rick Stein's restaurant.

The gardens of the properties on the south side of the High Street once ran all the way down to the River Kennet. Old Lion Court and the eastern end of River Park are where this garden used to be.

"The garden ran down to the river between Figgins Lane and the Ivy House Hotel. Behind the house, home to Doctor Maurice, there were lawns and flower beds. There was a greenhouse with grapes, a filbert nut walk and a kitchen garden supplying most of the vegetables for the house. Fruit trees and raspberries grew against Figgins Lane wall. They kept chickens and ducks. Near the river was a summer house and a wilderness area where trees grew wild. A wooden bridge crossed the river to the

public allotments, now replaced by the houses and gardens on the north side of George Lane." (Joyce)

"Dr Walter Maurice and his wife Caroline, my grandparents, introduced the first catalpa tree to England from the Far East, which still flourishes in the garden of Lower Lloran House. The herbaceous borders were magnificent, as was the nut walk where red squirrels were to be found and which led you to the river, where we canoed, tickled trout and paddled about as young children....then over the bridge to Duck's Meadow, full of wild flowers with a large pond in the middle, occupied by ducks, although the meadow was named after the Duck family of the toyshop (*at 114 High Street*) and Jimmy Duck, one time Mayor of Marlborough" (Nick)

Margery Pearce: Headmistress & Mayor

This article was written by Margery Pearce's niece, Janet Mcintosh, and was published in the Journal of The Merchant's House in 2020. We include excerpts below with the kind permission of The Merchant's House.

My early memories of St Mary's infant school include the horror of having to use the 'lav'. I would just get perched on the seat and there would be a whooshing noise as all the loos flushed at once. Each morning Mr Rushden arrived with his horse and cart and delivered a churn of milk, which was ladled out into chipped enamel mugs. Playtime was fun, as the older girls and the infants all played games together, circle and singing games like 'The Farmer's in his Den', and I remember the bigger girls as always kind to the tinies. Some of the children were considered undernourished and were given spoons of cod liver oil and malt.

In school, Margery was Miss Pearce, Headmistress, and not our aunt. She taught the top class, girls who were about to take the 11+, which we called 'the scholarship' then. Also in her class were several older girls who had not passed the scholarship but were too young to leave school. The wife of one of the College masters taught them many useful and practical skills. I remember they made mitts and slippers out of rabbit skins.

Church was an important part of Margery's life. Her father had been church warden at St Mary's for many years. Her mother, as nursemaid and under-governess at the vicarage (10, The Green), attended church every Sunday. Margery and her siblings went to Sunday school and church throughout their childhood and there were also prayers at bedtime and grace before and after every meal. This was still the regime at 25 The Green, our home, until my grandmother's death in 1949.

When she retired from teaching in 1957, Margery might have chosen a slower pace of life, but instead was elected to the Borough Council. She also began winemaking and joined the bowls club. In 1962 she became Mayor. This was a time of much change in Marlborough. In her opening address after election, she referred to the loss of passenger train services to the town, the takeover of the town's water supply by Swindon, the opening of the new Grammar School building and the construction of the M4 that would bypass Marlborough. In 1966 she served as Mayor for the second time and had the honour of becoming the first woman Alderman in the history of the town.

She died in February 1972. Her funeral at St Peter's Church was impressive, with her fellow councillors processing and the Mayor reading a lesson. It was a thanksgiving for a life of devoted service to her church, her family and her town.

The Town Mill Swimming Pool

In the late 1940s my Mum used to have swimming lessons in the open-air pool on the Town Mill site.

She was a student at the Grammar School - the red-brick building on the London Road that became St Peter's Junior School and is now being redeveloped.

As she walked over the bridge the derelict old mill was still there with the water wheel on the left. The pool was like a huge paddling pool on a metal framework with metal steps going up from the south side. The PE teacher stood at the poolside instructing and using a belt float on a rope to give any nervous child more confidence. The water was unheated and the class went shivering back to school to a French lesson.

I swam there with my sisters at Marlborough Swimming Club in the late

60s. It was started by Town Councillor and former Mayor, Bill Winchcombe, and others. After tea, we used to queue up with our parents to get in. Mum remembers a little girl looking at the temperature notice in centigrade and fahrenheit and telling her father that she was going in the fahrenheit end because it was warmer.

We had warm orange squash and crisps or wafer biscuits to warm us up as soon as we were dressed. As we progressed and competed with other clubs with heated pools we would take a cold shower before a race to give us an advantage over the 'softies'. In the hot summers of the 70s we went to the pool in the morning and stayed for hours. A colourful play area for toddlers had been put on the lawn with a paddling pool and swings, and the older kids sunbathed there.

Carrie

February 2016

MHS | Marlborough History Society

Talk: "Everywhere's History - The Wiltshire Victoria County History"

John Chandler – Local Historian and Publisher

The Victoria County History originated in the 19th century recording the histories of each county, town by town and parish by parish. Volumes of the VCH are available in the reference section of Marlborough Public Library, including the sections on Marlborough, Ramsbury, Aldbourne and the surrounding parishes covered in a volume (12) published in 1983. The speaker will describe the project's background, rationale and its value for local historians. Entry £5. Guests very welcome.

St Peter's Church - 7.30 pm, Thursday 20th February

Arthur Northcott and Thomas Maurice

To commemorate those from the Marlborough neighbourhood who lost their lives in the First World War, 100 years later Tower and Town published their names and brief details of their military service in lists compiled by Andrew Ross.

Arthur Northcott

In 1914, the battleship *HMS Bulwark*, moored at a buoy in Sheerness Harbour, was blown to pieces by an internal explosion. The disaster happened shortly after breakfast on 26 November. Of the ship's complement of 750 men only twelve survived. On board that day was Boy 1st Class Arthur Northcott, who lived at 28, St Martins. He was only sixteen years old when he was killed and had served in the Navy for just over a year.

Thomas Maurice

By strange coincidence *HMS Bulwark* was not the only ship to blow up in Sheerness harbour and claim the life of a Marlborough man. On 27 May 1915, *HMS Auxiliary Ship Princess Irene* was at anchor in the Medway estuary off Sheerness when she blew up.

It was a catastrophic explosion and the ship was blown to smithereens. Divers going down to the wreck found that practically nothing was left. Wreckage

was scattered up to twenty miles away: a little girl was killed and several other residents injured by falling debris.

Commander Thomas Maurice from Manton was one of those to lose his life in the disaster. He was the ship's wireless officer, had been in the Navy since 1891 and was thirty-eight years old when he died. A total of 352 people died in the *Princess Irene* explosion, including 273 officers and men and 76 dockyard workers. There was one survivor from the ship itself.

The names of **Arthur Northcott** and **Thomas Maurice** are on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, commemorating those missing at sea, and on the Marlborough Town War Memorial. Thomas Maurice's name is also on the Manton War Memorial and he is commemorated on a brass plaque in St George's Church, Preshute.

These two disasters were commemorated in Tower and Town in May 2015.

See also David Du Croz's articles in November 2018 and 2024.

The Common and Free's Avenue

My grandfather, Thomas Free, was Mayor of Marlborough six times. He had been brought up in Fyfield and enjoyed the close proximity of the Common to the Downs.

Thomas first suggested the planting of “an avenue of trees in the Rockley Road in commemoration of the Coronation” during his first Mayoralty in 1901. The Council were not enthusiastic, but said they saw “no reason why it should not be done”. In the event the trees were presented by Thomas and his wife Alice for the next Coronation in 1910 and this was augmented by the purchase of more trees by Thomas in 1924 and later by the family.

Thomas was also aware of the family's involvement in the establishment of the cemetery in 1854 his father and uncle were contracted “for fencing the piece of unconsecrated ground in the new (now the old) Burial Ground”. This consisted of building a wall of sarsen stone, cut and supplied by the Frees from the Downs above Fyfield, a wall which is still evident today.

Another family connection lies with the buildings which now form St Luke's Court. These were erected in 1837 as a workhouse by the Marlborough Poor Law Union, and became a children's convalescent home before being developed into retirement housing. The Master and Mistress of the workhouse were at one time the parents of Edna Scattergood, who became the wife of



Credit: John Osborne

The inscription in the pediment over the entrance block to the workhouse (now St Luke's Court), recording the date and the names of the builder (T. Willes) and architect (W. Cooper).

Eric Free, Thomas' son and also Mayor of Marlborough six times.

There is much more history to the Common. Before golf and rugby, it had been home to horse racing, football, cricket and hockey, and host to sheep fairs, bonfires and - between the wars - the landing of the new flying machines, when people could pay for a flight over the town. Originally it was used for cattle pasturage, with the herdsman blowing his horn at the top of what naturally became known as Blowhorn Street. In 1940 a hutted camp was established for the US Army and then from 1946 to 1965 these buildings were used for the Secondary Modern School.

Martin Crook

December 2012

Looking After Your Houseplants

Houseplants are fantastic any time of the year, but in February they are especially welcome. Follow these basic guidelines and your plants will thrive.

Over-watering is the most common cause of failure. Don't be tempted to water everything once a week as a routine. Put your finger gently into the top of the compost and if it feels moist leave it for a while until it feels dry. Thin-leaved plants need more water than thick leathery leaves, but cacti and succulents need to dry out completely between waterings. Until growth starts again in the spring, watering once or twice a month is usually sufficient for most plants.

Grouping several plants together is beneficial, as this creates a gently humid atmosphere around them. Positioning your plant is very important. Avoid direct sunlight on the leaves during most of the day as this will scorch them and the leaves will turn brown at the tip. West or East-facing windowsills are fine but strappy-leaved plants like *Beaucarnea* prefer sun, whereas bathrooms and kitchens are perfect for ferns and orchids.



Windowsills above radiators aren't ideal, but standing your plant on a layer of stones in a dish with water will create a good humid atmosphere.

Feeding your plant is important. Once a month during the growing season is ideal. Then stop during the winter. Liquid feed is the easiest to use: nitrogen makes leaves, phosphates make roots and potash makes flowers. Plants breathe through their leaves, so wipe off

dust regularly and check for bugs. A white fluffy patch indicates mealy bug, tiny black insects that jump or fly are thrips. Both of these are fairly common and easily removed by putting a plastic bag over your plant and spraying into it with diluted washing up liquid. Then tie the bag up and leave it for a couple of hours.

Garden centres will be getting full of exciting plants now, so whether you're a novice wanting to get started or an avid collector go and be inspired.

Carolyn Stimpson
Marlborough Gardening Association

Photo credit: Carolyn Stimpson

Clergy Letter: Living Water

“Water, water everywhere! Nor any a drop to drink...” This line from Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* reminds us that there are broadly enough resources for the global population. We have a super-abundance of it here in the West, while elsewhere others have perilously little clean water.

The world of the Old and New Testaments was, of course, Middle Eastern. If you had a source of good water, you did not waste it and used it with care.

Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman one day when she went to the well to draw water. Going against the norms (she was both a Samaritan and a woman) Jesus approached her and asked her to draw some water for him. Aware of how Jews and Samaritans regarded each other, she was amazed, and said so.

But Jesus, being who he was, saw into her heart and drew her attention to what he called ‘*living water*’. He spent two days with the people of her village, and a movement of God began among the Samaritans. This would have been an eye-opener to his disciples.

The concept of *living water* gives inner spiritual life and purpose, and has fascinated followers of Jesus. General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, would agree that you cannot speak of *living water* to people if you are

going to leave them physically uncared for. Feed them first, then share the good news. Many persuaded people in the 19th century that there was a God who loved them and wished to transform them.

In the Anglican deanery of Marlborough we have wished to bless the people of Morobo in South Sudan with a newly-bored water source. The difference between this and General Booth’s work is that the people who we wish to bless with fresh water physically are already mightily blessed spiritually. African Christians are beginning to re-evangelise us in the west. And we need this! Our own efforts in mission are weak.

They are very rich in *living water*, but not with sources of water. We have much more clean and safe water, but our levels of *living water* are perilously low.

Matthew’s gospel tells us that one day, “*when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’*”

Our help in raising and sharing faith - and we need help - will come from unexpected but bountiful sources. This Lent I prayerfully wish you to reflect on *living water*.

The Rev’d Pete Sainsbury

What's On in February

2nd Sunday 3.00pm

Marlborough College Concert Series:

Red Priest – A Baroque Extravaganza

Marlborough College Memorial Hall.

A thrilling programme of baroque masterworks performed in Red Priest's inimitable style. The programme will include: Vivaldi – Concerto in G minor 'La Notte', Telemann – 'Gypsy' Sonata in A minor; Fantasia for Violin, Bach – Preludio in E major; Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Handel – Recorder Sonata in B minor; The Harmonious Blacksmith Variations as well as works by Purcell, Cima, Ortiz, Couperin and others. To book: Marlboroughconcertseries.org

4th Tuesday 2.30pm

The Arts Society – Pewsey Vale

Bouverie Hall, Pewsey

The February lecture will be **Miniature Portraits – Tiny Treasures Close to Our Hearts**, speaker Cindy Polemis. Non-members welcome. £7 cash on the door.

6th Thursday 2.00pm

Marlborough Floral Club

Mildenhall Village Hall.

The Flower Arranger with Jackie Page.

£6 to attend, no pre booking necessary. Information from Micky Graham 01672 514301.

7th Friday 11.00 – 11.45am

Rally for the Palestinians. This is the third rally to show support for the Palestinian People. **See poster p22.**

8th Saturday 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Wantage Big Band

St Peter's Church

Under the inspirational leadership of Phil Singleton, Wantage Big Band will perform a repertoire ranging from Glen Miller classics to contemporary jazz.

Fully licensed bar.

Tickets £15

stpetersmarlborough.org.uk

12th Wednesday 6.45pm for 7.30pm

Marlborough Gardening Association

Marlborough Town Hall.

AGM and talk **Planting Up Seasonal Containers** with Karen Beasley.

Information on talks and events at marlbgaa.org.uk

16th Sunday 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Brilliant International Musicians Series:

Mishka Rushdie Momen (piano) and Catherine Lee (violin)

St Peter's Church

Tickets £15 (£10 for St Peter's members).

See www.stpetersmarlborough.org.uk/events for programme details.

20th Thursday 7.30pm

Marlborough History Society talk – Everywhere's History: The Wiltshire Victoria County History, Past, Present and Future.

St Peter's Church

See poster p9

What's On in February

(continued)

28th February 8.00pm

Miranda Sykes and Jim Causley

St Peter's Church

Two of the UK's most iconic voices have combined and are touring a brand new album 'The Last Of The Singers', a collection of traditional, self penned and contemporary songs bringing their magical voices together.

Tickets £21 from Sound Knowledge or marlboroughfolk-roots.co.uk

Coming up in March

Sunday 2nd March 3.00pm

Sinfonia Smith Square

Marlborough College Memorial Hall.

The Sinfonia will be performing together with the College's elite singers, Schola

Cantorum. Some changes have been made to the original advertised programme. Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture, Vaughan Williams Flos Campi (Soloist Philip Dukes), Beethoven Symphony No.7. To book: Marlboroughconcertseries.org

School Dates

Please see school websites for any updated information.

St John's School, Preshute Primary School and Marlborough St Mary's Primary School:

Half Term: Monday 17th February - Friday 21st February.

Marlborough College

Half Term begins 12noon Friday 14th February – 9.00pm Sunday 23rd February.

Linda Illsley

The Old Boathouse

Rachel Maurice (July 2017) explains the origin of Mustard Seed at the bottom of Waitrose car park.

The building now housing Mustard Seed was the boathouse on the river for the large house where Waitrose now is. The car park was the garden of the house and the old boathouse was exactly that. So under the flagstone floor is water. Sometime in the last century a cinema was built on the site of the house, and the boathouse became overgrown and fell into ruins. A year or so ago we had a

customer who had grown up in Marlborough and remembered how that area looked when he was a child. He remembered playing there and climbing an old wooden ladder inside the building.

Tom Seaman renovated the boathouse in 1987. Waitrose had opened in 1977 and with the car park there was an opportunity to 'do something' with the site. Tom sold the building as a shop and for a number of years it was a dolls' house shop. We still have people arriving expecting to find dolls' house furniture. Mustard Seed moved in in 1997.

A Good Read: Literary Crushes

St Valentine's Day. Bah, humbug, if you'll forgive me mixing my seasons. Yet in February a bookseller's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Love of fictional characters, that is, the people in novels who make us sigh gently to ourselves, gaze mistily up from the page and contemplate our Significant Others with a mildly critical eye, before tremulously Celia Johnson-ing ourselves into acceptance of our less-than-perfect lot. A crush, in short.

Well, this bookseller's fancy anyway. In order to write this timely and topical column I asked assorted friends and colleagues, "Who in a novel have you fallen in love with?" I was met with incomprehension, raised eyebrows (could it be they thought I was weird?) or maybe just a simple reluctance to expose their private selves. There's no need to be ashamed, folks, fictophilia is an established 'thing', but not recognised as a mental disorder by either the World Health Organisation or the American Psychiatric Association. We're fine.

My completely unscientific research has revealed that people are more inclined to a *tendresse* for fictional men. The only woman character anyone would own up to was the Princess Casamassima (Henry James), and on further acquaintance she

turns out to be rather annoying, which seems a shame. One friend admitted to having a bit of a thing for Gandalf (grandfather issues??) and Christopher Chant from Diana Wynne-Jones' *Chrestomanci* novels. The pirate from Daphne du Maurier's *Frenchman's Creek*, and Ross Poldark also featured, predictably but understandably. Niall from du Maurier's *The Parasites* is someone's fantasy, and more than one person mentioned Archie from *The Cazalet Chronicles*, because he is lovely.

So who makes my heart beat a little faster? My current fictional crush is Dusty Miller from *Small Bomb at Dimperley*, by Lissa Evans, funny, kind, confident and competent. I have long dreamed of the Emperor Vespasian as described in *The Course of Honour* by Lindsey Davis. I have been seriously in love with Lieutenant Lockhart from *The Cruel Sea* since I was about fourteen, and the only Austen hero I have much time for is *Persuasion's* Captain Wentworth. Naval types are obviously the chaps for me, because my very earliest True Love was, and remains, Captain Haddock. Yes, him from the *Tin Tin* books. I know, alcoholic, violent, unreliable, sentimental, altogether a nightmare. But for me (and Bianca Castafiore), he's The One. The heart wants what the heart wants.

Debby Guest

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Nature Notes: In Praise of Trees

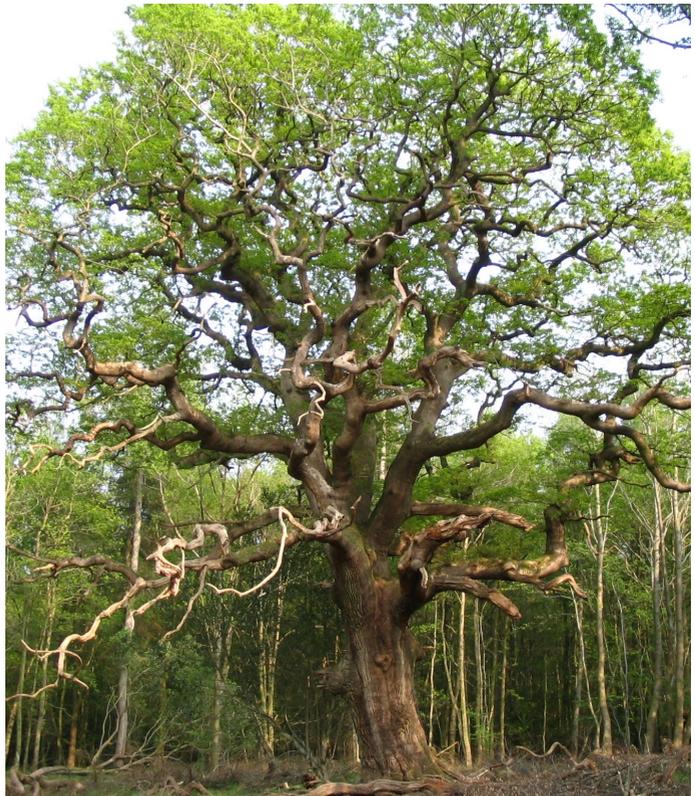
One morning in September the Sycamore Gap tree, which once stood in a dip next to Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, was chopped down.

Two men in their 30s from Cumbria were subsequently charged with criminal damage of the tree and to Hadrian's Wall. A much loved and frequently photographed landmark it was also the scene of marriage proposals, sentimental moments and the scattering of ashes. The toppling of the tree led to an outpouring of anger and astonishment: local people were utterly stunned and devastated at the damage to a tree that was a "symbol of the North East."

Trees can be established emblems and an enriching presence in our daily lives. Unlike birds, butterflies and other wildlife they don't move, but turbulent weather can make them bend and break. I think of one of the monumental oaks I used to pass by and admire on my birdwatching

walks through Savernake, the Crockmere Oak, is now lying uprooted and broken by the track. I concur with a local biker who wrote: "When I came across the fallen tree I had an immediate reaction of loss and sadness. The named trees of Savernake are like old friends to so many people." Sad to say it is the belief of some that other mighty oaks in the forest are under threat, like the old tree in Thomas Hardy's "The Woodlanders" that haunts Marty South's father as he nears his end.

On a more cheerful note canny birders know that certain species have their



favourite trees. In early spring a Great Spotted Woodpecker drums on the branch of a decayed tree and a newly arrived Willow Warbler utters his lispig song from a riverside willow. Nuthatches and Jays seek to build their cache of acorns from oaks in the autumn, Siskins and Redpolls feed on the seeds of alder and birch in winter. When beech mast litters the ground in parts of Savernake, Bramblings are spotted amongst the Chaffinches and patient searching beneath the hornbeams at the far end of the Grand Avenue can be rewarded with a view of the handsome but elusive

Hawfinch. Beyond Savernake there's a magnificent oak along the track from Ramsbury to Littlecote which an old woodsman reckoned was at least 400 years old judging by its girth, while on the cricket pitch at Avebury a copper beech, planted in Queen Elizabeth's coronation year, is as beautiful when in full leaf as any tree I know.

Robin Nelson

Photograph opposite: **Ayers Oak**
(named after a head forester)
Credit: Peter Noble

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office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk

Family News

Alan Crook died on 7 November 2024. He was highly respected in the town and the county especially for his work with the Marlborough Swimming Club. Starting when he took his own children David, Susan and Alison to the pool at Town Mill, he had taught swimming and life-saving, been head coach and was on the committee for 60 years. For many years he went to the pools at the Leisure Centre and the College at least five times a week. His wife, Joan, had told some people with a smile that she was a 'swimming club widow'. He worked at BT until he retired and was a keen gardener.

Naomi Painter

Simon Brett was an outstanding teacher of Art at Marlborough College and a practising artist whose lifetime's work and rare talent was wood engraving and book illustration, a craft he practised with deep intelligence, quiet speech and quiet humour. We extend our sympathy to his wife, Juliet, to Emily, their daughter, and to the rest of the family.

John Osborne

I was introduced to **Andrew Unwin** on first volunteering to help compile *Tower and Town*. He had been instrumental in upgrading and standardising the format and layout of the magazine, and I quickly learned to appreciate the quality of the style he had

championed. When some time later I took over the chairmanship of the magazine, he took me down to Reading to meet the printer and establish that relationship. Later, when bringing the printing operation closer to home and into the digital age, he supported the decision to switch to Originzone where we have remained ever since.

As his health deteriorated, he began to make use of Marlborough LINK in order to get himself to medical appointments, and as luck would have it, I was able to drive him to a number of appointments during many of which journeys he would break into song, often in his fluent Italian, revealing a fine tenor voice.

Angela and I had the pleasure of entertaining him to a number of drop-in lunches over the years and were always much entertained by his company. He and I were on opposite sides of the Brexit battlefield, enjoying many a ding-dong argument with no quarter given. We delighted in the fact that we were born within a month or two of each other and were students at Cambridge for the same three-year period; also that he was a cousin of Roger Ellis who had appointed me to teach at Marlborough College. He was kind enough to entertain us to lunch at Rick Stein's one day to meet his daughter Alexandra, who later sent us the news of his sad demise. We are the poorer for the loss of his large, generous presence.

Hugh de Saram

Family News

Dorothy Jane Blythe was born in Orrell, outside Wigan, in 1938. Her parents were from a modest background and had had no opportunity for a formal education. As a bright child, Dorothy was invited to try out bellringing aged 7 and thus started a lifelong passion. Her parents encouraged her to take the 11+ and she obtained one of the few places at the local grammar school, an experience which changed her life. After school she went on to Wigan Infirmary, training as a nurse and a midwife, being awarded the prize for top student.

Dorothy met her husband, Peter, at a university ball in Manchester. He had recently returned, fit and tanned from a backpacking holiday in France. It was love at first sight for them both. Following their marriage, they lived in Manchester, Droitwich and Runcorn, before Peter's job as a Civil Engineer brought him and their young family to the rapidly expanding town of Swindon. They moved to Marlborough, into the newly built Ducks Meadow, which they made their home for the next 52 years.

Dorothy joined the Young Wives and bellringing team at St Mary's. When the children started school, Dorothy went back to work as a staff nurse on the men's surgical ward at Savernake Hospital. She finished her career as theatre sister in the operating theatre.

Dorothy made her mark in the tower of St Mary's, being for long periods tower secretary and tower captain. She was the

local branch secretary and education officer and was a member of the Salisbury Diocesan Guild of Ringers for 50 years. Welcoming and supportive, she was highly regarded amongst the local bellringers, and rang many a quarter peal.

In retirement, Dorothy enjoyed looking after her two grandchildren and pursued her interests in reading, arts, bridge and textiles. In The Merchant's House, Dorothy worked on the intricate turkey work chair covers. She also enjoyed travelling, with a particular love of the Pyrenees and Australia, where she had lived for a couple of months in the late 70's supporting a sick relative.

Dorothy's sudden passing has been a shock to us all. She was active until the end, playing bridge three times a week, and went on holiday to Lancashire in the weeks before her death. She had a kindly and compassionate love of people and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Dorothy will be greatly missed amongst family, friends, neighbours and the bellringing community.

Peter Noble

Hungerford's Hidden Gem

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Owen & Jones in Hungerford has been owned by goldsmiths Stephen Jones and Gary Colbert- Owen since December 2020. Formally known as Furr & Co., they acquired the business from Greg & Rachel Furr after their retirement. Stephen and Gary have developed and expanded the company, creating a business that is known and respected throughout the wider area. They are recognised for their attention to detail and their commitment to customer service; as their business grows, so does their reputation.

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Pop in to see their fine jewellery collections, or view some of the pieces at:
owenandjones.co.uk.

Join for our 3rd rally to show solidarity for the Palestinian People

Friday, February 7th

11 - 11.45 am

'The Bulge' on the High Street,
(by the Whitehorse Bookshop)

For further information ring Jo
07419 3709980



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For more information please contact
cedric.hollinsworth@gmail.com

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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)

4:30pm (1st 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)

Important note: There will be no services at Emmanuel on Sunday, 16 February due to our Church Weekend Away.

Marlborough College Services are shown at the college chapel

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

IN CONVERSATION WITH SALLY COULTHARD

Friday 7th March at 7.00pm

Ogbourne St. Andrew Church (in aid of church funds)

If you were to choose 100 weird and wonderful objects to represent our rural past, what would they be? Join the acclaimed author of 'A Brief History of the Countryside in 100 Objects' in her engaging and often humorous journey through 12,000 years of British rural life.

Tickets £12 (incl. glass of wine).

Contact : 01672-512125 / maizey50@gmail.com.

Find out more on Instagram @salcoulthard or visit www.sallycoulthard.co.uk

Signed copies of Sally's 100 Objects book will be available to purchase at the event.

News from the Churches



MAPAG (Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group) AGM

Tuesday 4th February, 4.30pm

To receive an agenda please contact:
betty.dobson@btinternet.com

Thank you to everyone who generously donated to our Christmas appeal.



MCT: Marlborough Churches Together AGM

Wednesday 5th February in the Church rooms in Silverless Street, at 4 pm.

For the agenda please contact:
rachelrosed1@gmail.com

Quakers

Thursday 13th Feb 2-4pm
at Friends Meeting House

You are most welcome to join us for a showing of a film about a recent archaeological dig which took place in the grounds of Erlestoke Prison near Devizes. Much of the work was carried out by the prisoners.

This will be followed by discussion on the effects of the dig on rehabilitation for the prisoners involved and tea.

Marlborough Anglican Team

St Mary's 5pm
Informal Worship
sermon series on
Galatians 5:22 – 26 'The fruits of the Spirit'



Marlborough Anglican Team

If you're new to the area or thinking about the faith, please consider joining us. We are friendly, informal and open to God's Spirit.

Energize, our young people's group, meets on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sunday of the month.

All age worship: Sunday 2nd February, 5pm (tea 4.30pm)

We would be delighted to welcome you to our all age worship service continuing our look at Galatians 5:22-26 with Kindness. Please join us for a children's tea beforehand at 4:30pm, then our service starts at 5pm with songs, prayer and craft.



Welcome Wednesdays

Wednesdays at 10:30am
St Mary's Church, Marlborough

Please join us for a Thought for the day followed by coffee and doughnuts

MARLBOROUGH ANGLICAN TEAM

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News from the Churches

Emmanuel Church

EMMANUEL
MARLBOROUGH



All are welcome to join us every Sunday at 4 pm for our weekly church service located on New Road. 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. For more information and updates on our events, please visit our website at emmanuelmarlborough.org.

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

Sparklers

Monday, 10 February, 3.45-4.45 pm (Doors open at 3.30 pm) Wesley Hall

A monthly kids club for school years Reception to Year 2. Games, Snacks and Bible Stories!

Little Friends Toddler Group

Thursdays during term time, 10 to 11.30 at the Marlborough Community and Youth Centre.

Come and enjoy free play, singing and story time, snacks for children and refreshments for carers.

Explorers

Fridays during term time, 6-7.15 pm at the Wesley Hall.

Our kids' club for school years 3-6. Fun, games, tuck and a short Bible talk (bring 50p for tuck).

Friday Nights

Fridays during term time , 7.30-9 pm.

Our youth club for school years 7-11 at the Wesley Hall. Friends, fun & faith – everyone is welcome!

Midweek Activities

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.

Ladies Bible Study

Every other Friday, 10 am- 11.30 am. Friends discovering God's truth in the Bible. Onsite crèche available.

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!

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		Church Cottage, Silverless Street, SN8 1JQ	
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Website, searchable article archive

<https://www.towerandtown.org.uk>

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hugh@towerandtown.org.uk

Contributions and comments from readers are welcome.

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

All items for the March issue by Tuesday 11th February please.

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