

Englefield Parish News

February - March 2024



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Front cover: *Harbingers of spring: the first primroses photographed in March 2023 in the woods above Mayridge Farm.*

Englefield Parish News is published every two months and is distributed free to all households in the parish of Englefield. Contributions are welcome and can be emailed to catherinehaig@gmail.com or to rector@stmarksenglefield.org.uk, or handed in to the Village Stores by the 20th of the preceding month.

From St Mark's House

Hello Dear Readers!

I hope this finds you all well. I begin today with a small example of the blessings of Englefield village life. It was on a recent Tuesday morning that I sent the following text to 'Lovely Liz' (as I call her), at Englefield Stores:

Liz, random question! Do you have any large tomatoes in store? I'm taking Collective Worship (aka assembly) in school this afternoon and I've only got cherry tomatoes in my fridge!

Liz graciously gave me some large tomatoes and wouldn't let me pay.

'But why tomatoes for assembly?' you might ask! Well, assembly was about wisdom...errr okay...your follow-up question is, 'But what has a tomato got to do with wisdom?' I am SO glad you asked!



Well, a tomato illustrates the difference between *wisdom* and *knowledge* so very well:

KNOWLEDGE is knowing that a tomato is a fruit not a vegetable...but WISDOM is NOT putting it in a fruit salad!

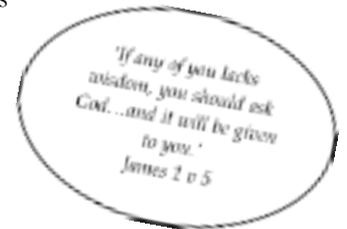
To know a fact is one thing, knowing how to use that information is wisdom.

I had told the pupils the week before about King David's son Solomon. When God had said to him, 'Ask for anything you want and I will give it to you,' Solomon, who knew he was very young to be ruling a kingdom, had asked for wisdom. God was pleased to comply because Solomon had not asked for long life for himself, or riches, or for victory over his enemies. And then we learned a memory verse - with actions of course :)

James chapter 1 verse 5

'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God...and it will be given to you.'

I don't know about you but I often find myself wondering what I should do about something or very often about someone. Whether it is about finance or family, spending money or spending time, we can often be uncertain what to do or say. Many are often despairing about the leaders of their countries and particularly the leaders of groups or countries who make war...So, instead of despairing of them, and instead of wondering and worrying about what to do ourselves, I want to suggest we all become like Solomon and ask God for wisdom...and give Him time and space to answer us.



Your Rector, Julia

Diary dates

West Berkshire Mobile Library: Wednesday 7th and 28th February, and 20th March, outside the Old Fire Station Nursery, Englefield, 2pm to 2.25pm.

Time to Pray: half an hour of prayer, Bible reading and reflection in the Englefield Chapel, first and third Mondays of the month, 6.00 - 6.30pm: 5th and 19th February, 4th and 18th March.

'Has Science Disproved God?': Talk by Dr Aldo Guiducci, Englefield Village Hall, 7.30pm refreshments, 8pm talk, 8.30pm Q&A, more details on page 10.

Shrove Tuesday, 13th February, and Ash Wednesday 14th February. Ash Wednesday service of communion at St Mark's at 6.30pm.

Evening Praise: last Sunday of every month, 6pm at Holy Trinity, Theale, next dates 25th February (see opposite) and 28th April (no service on Easter Day).

Flute recital by Nicola Gerrard: Saturday 2nd March, 4-5pm, at St Mark's, see page 5.

Mothering Sunday: 10th March, family service with posies at St Mark's, 10.30am.

St Mark's PCC meeting: Monday 11th March, 6.30pm, at St Mark's.

Holy Week: Palm Sunday 24th March; Maundy Thursday 28th March, Good Friday 29th March (for details of this service see pew sheet), Easter Sunday: 31st March.

Local contacts

Englefield Estate Office 0118 930 2504; office@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Estate Yard 0118 930 2538 maintenance@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Stores & Tea Room 0118 930 2479

Englefield Village Hall

Cobbs Farm Shop 0118 930 4064
Theale Medical Centre 0118 930 2513
NHS online coronavirus service 111.nhs.uk/covid-19 or call 111
Royal Berkshire Hospital 0118 322 5111
West Berks Community Hospital 01635 273300
Theale Pharmacy 0118 930 2542
Lloyds Pharmacy (Calcot) 0118 938 2265
NHS dentist Dentalcare, Pangbourne 0118 984 5894
West Berkshire Council 01635 551111 (out of hours 01635 42161)

Englefield Parish Council www.englefieldpc.org.uk/
Theale Parish Council www.thealeparishcouncil.gov.uk
Englefield Primary School 0118 930 2337; www.englefieldprimary.co.uk
Utility suppliers: Electricity - SSEN 0800 072 72; Oil - Ford Fuels 0148 872 829;
Gas - National Grid 0800 111 999; Water - Thames Water 0800 714 614;
Drainage - Total Drainage 0118 9421140

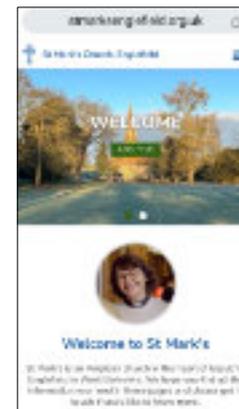
A new website for St Mark's

As you may have spotted, St Mark's has a new online look. The old website needed refreshing and the decision was made to do a complete redesign. A quickly assembled 'website build' team, consisting of Julia, Paul, Catherine, Ronan and myself, investigated various options before settling on a hosting service called <https://hubb.church>.

This company provides a specific service to help create church websites, and take care of all the technicalities as well as providing a choice of 18 different design templates. Their costs are low as they view good websites as being part of their mission for Christ.

The St Mark's team worked together for two weeks in November, creating the site with around 50 pages of text and photos. The new website can be viewed as effectively via a smart phone as from a personal computer, important these days as most web traffic is viewed from a smart phone.

The new website went live at the beginning of December in time to help promote the events up to and including Christmas (<https://www.stmarksenglefield.org.uk>).



Peter Hollands



Baptism and Confirmation

On Sunday 25th February at 6pm at Holy Trinity, Theale, during the service of Evening Praise, Bishop Tim Wambunya is confirming 11 young people and adults and baptising one in a pool. If you have not been baptised or confirmed and would like to be please get in touch with Julia to find out more.

Congratulations

To Denny and Peter Hollands on the arrival of grandson Micah, born to Annie and Jon on Monday 11th December.

Christmas collections

Over the Christmas period, collections at certain services were designated for two charities: PACT (Parents and Children Together), based in Reading, and the Salvation Army national appeal for the homeless. Donations from these services came to nearly £1,500, including donations by cash, payment envelopes, the contactless card reader and Justgiving. With the addition of Gift Aid and donations from the school carol service, this came to around £1,800 which will be topped up so that the sum of £1,000 can be sent to each charity. A big thank you to everyone for their generosity in supporting these excellent causes.

Ron Marillier, Treasurer

Star billing for the Newbury Show



Should you read the *Newbury Weekly News* online, you might have spotted a familiar Englefield resident in an article about the Newbury Show 2024. Trevor Allen and prize-winning Englefield Hereford bull, Tropic Thunder, took part in last year's Grand Parade of Livestock and featured in one of the pictures illustrating the article.

Dates for Newbury Show 2024 are Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd September.

RIP

Eileen Willans who died on Monday 13th November and whose funeral was held on Wednesday 6th December.

Hugh Simpson who died on 17th November and whose funeral was held at St Mark's on Thursday 7th December.

Ann Cripps who died on 23rd November and whose funeral was held on Friday 22nd December.



World Day of Prayer 2024

This year's service takes place on Friday 1st March at Burghfield Methodist Church, RG7 3DL, starting at 2pm. The service for 2024 has been prepared by the Christian women of Palestine and is entitled with poignant relevance, 'I beg you, bear with one another in love'. Please email office@stmarksenglefield.org.uk for more details.

Penny Savage



New Area Dean

The Rev Grant Fensome, Vicar of Basildon with Aldworth and Ashampstead, has been appointed Area Dean of the Bradfield Deanery. He succeeds Rev David Archer, Rector of Purley, who has held the post since 2020.

Let's Talk Theology

The new year started with the first Let's Talk Theology meeting on 17th January after which meetings continue on the second Wednesday of every month. On 14th February and 13th March these will be on Zoom, starting at 7.30pm, after which they will resume in person at St Mary's Sulhamstead from May onwards. For further details, contact carolboulter@ntlworld.com.



Save the date

St Mark's is hosting a flute recital by Nicola Gerrard on Saturday 2nd March, 4-5pm. Come and listen to Nicola's beautiful playing as she takes you on a journey with her flutes. She will be playing pieces by Telemann, Bach and Faure amongst others. She will talk about the origins of the pieces and the flutes they were written for, and a little about her life as a professional flute player. She has been first flute with the New English Orchestra since 1995 and regularly performs on radio and TV.

This will be a relaxing afternoon as you let the music wash over you and there will be an opportunity to buy Nicola's CDs if you would like to take her home with you!



Echo online

We're pleased to say that this year's Englefield Echo, the annual round up of activities and events on the Englefield Estate, is now available to read online.

It has been a busy year and the hard work and dedication of colleagues and partners has been invaluable and we have some inspiring stories to tell.

The challenges we all face are very real. But a number of innovative projects, from our journey to net zero, to measures to improve the habitat for wildlife, demonstrate what can be done to make a difference.

Use this link to read the Echo: <https://www.calameo.com/read/00513864608f2172cae32?authid=hfVkpQzHme6d>.

Edward Crookes, Estates Director

Over 60s fitness classes

Fun, friendly, gentle exercise classes, followed by refreshments, every Monday, 1.15-2pm, at Theale Village Hall, Englefield Road, Theale RG7 5AS. £5 per person, more information from Alison on 07969 210804.

Why give to your local Foodbank?

- 400% increase in take up since March
- 16 tonnes of food parcels a month (up from 4 this time last year)
- A growing need in Theale

DROP OFF LOCATION:
Holy Trinity Church, Theale

WHEN?
SUNDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS
10.30AM TO 4.00PM

West Berks foodbank



Festive celebrations!

November and December were a busy time indeed for us. Both the Store and Tea room were beautifully decorated, with the Store full of fantastic craft from a few very talented local ladies.

We started our days with breakfasts, hot drinks and cake for everyone to pop in and meet with friends or family, then at 11.30am the Tea room was turned around to host Christmas dinners with all the trimmings, then a choice of puddings, followed by tea and mints. Lastly but not least some quizzes and a good old sing song.

We have loved celebrating Christmas with you all. It was a truly magical time. We saw some of you with different loved ones three times over the festive period.

All in all, we served 28 turkeys and 2956 Brussels sprouts for Christmas dinners to a total of 614 people.

We would also like to apologise if we sang and made you do the actions for the 12 days of Christmas too 😊. It was great to see you in your Christmas jumpers, earrings, and headbands as well.

We are busy in the Tea room working on some maintenance and tweaking for the coming year and very much look forward to welcoming you all back on Monday 22nd January with the usual days and times of Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturdays 10-3pm.

Happy 2024 to you all.



Liz and team



On the snowman trail

The snowman trail in woodland around the Englefield Estate proved a big hit over the Christmas holidays thanks to all the hard work by Forestry Manager Richard Edwards and his team and beautiful decoration by local schoolchildren and community groups.

In all 19 wooden snowmen, made from timber sustainably sourced from Estate woodland and expertly designed and painted, were placed in woods at Mortimer West End, Mortimer, Silchester and Burghfield Common. The trail was free of charge and open to visitors to enjoy as many times as they wanted over Christmas.



The trail, measuring nine miles in total, proved popular with local families who took to the Englefield Estate Facebook page to record their experiences of finding the snowmen in their woodland glades. One intrepid walker who visited all 19 snowmen, posted: 'We loved them. Thank you so much for all the hard work – hope they'll be back for another season next Christmas.'

The snowmen were put into position on December 15th and taken down on January 8th, giving visitors ample time to explore the woods over the festive break and spot as many as they could.

Richard said: 'The trail is all about getting people out to explore the woodlands and enjoy some free festive fun and fresh air during the school holidays. We're glad people enjoyed seeing how many they could spot – and we loved seeing all the snowmen selfies!'

The Englefield Estate sends a big thank you to all eight schools that helped with the design and decoration of the snowmen. They were Burghfield St Mary's Primary School, Garland Junior School, Mrs Bland's Infant and Nursery School, Mortimer St Mary's Junior School, Mortimer St John Infant School, Silchester Primary School, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nerve Primary School and The Willink. Also involved this year were Beavers from 1st Ufton Nerve and Cubs from 1st Burghfield and Sulhamstead Scout Groups, as well as members of 2nd Silchester Brownies and young people from Stable Futures Amegreen Children's Services.

The Consecration Cross

We have been asked about the reason for the cross on the south-west corner buttress of the church (to the left of the main door). This cross is not strictly a 'Maltese cross' as it's often mis-called, but of a form of 'Greek cross' called a '*cross pattée*', a symbol associated with the Knights Templar although that is of no relevance here.



This appears to be one of a set of consecration crosses that were placed on church walls in the Middle Ages as visible evidence of the dedication of a newly-funded church to the exclusive service of God, symbolising the victory of Christ and providing a defence against demoniacal powers. It must have been cut out from the original church wall and placed here by George Gilbert Scott when the church was rebuilt in 1855, though it is actually placed too low down as it would originally have been about eight feet above the ground to protect it from defilement. Consecration crosses were enclosed in an incised circle that isn't present here but the rounded corners of the stone suggest that it may have been lost in the removal from the old wall.

The full set of consecration crosses numbered 24 with 12 around the outside walls and three on each of the inside walls. These were either carved in stone or cast in metal and all were painted red. At the consecration the bishop would anoint each cross with Chrism, saying the words, '*Santificetur hoc templum*' (blessed be this church). Each of the interior crosses was provided with a candle bracket, the twelve crosses with illuminated candles symbolising the world's enlightenment through the twelve apostles.

Richard Smith

Dear customers...

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for choosing us as your shopping destination, not just during the festive season but throughout 2023. Your continued support has enabled us to work with hundreds of small local producers, and we are proud to be part of a community that values sustainability and quality.

Shopping locally has many benefits, and we hope that you have experienced them too in the fresh local produce, sustainably sourced meat, homemade food, the extra tasty store cupboard essentials (and treats!), and unique Christmas food and gifts you purchased from us. We hope you and your loved ones had a wonderful Christmas filled with joy, laughter, and some absolutely delicious food and drink.

...Love from the team at Cobbs



Has science disproved God?

This is the intriguing title of a talk by Dr Aldo Guiducci, to be held on Thursday 8th February at the Village Hall (see the poster above). ‘It is not possible to be intellectually honest and believe in gods. And it is not possible to believe in gods and be a true scientist...’ So said the renowned chemist Dr Peter Atkins, emeritus Fellow of Lincoln College Oxford, adding, ‘Well it’s fairly straightforward: there isn’t one [a god]. And there’s no evidence for one, no reason to believe that there is one, and so I don’t believe that there is one. And I think it is rather foolish that people do think that there is one.’

In his talk, Aldo will set forth an alternative perspective in which he argues that, far from being irreconcilable enemies, belief in science and belief in God are not opposed. He will touch on the origins of science, consider why it is so useful to us, and unpack some thinking around proof, evidence and mystery.

Come along and bring any friends and family who might be interested - all the details are on the poster.



Happy new year from Five A Day!

Goodness, where did 2023 go?!

Since the last Parish News was published we have been busy planting the daffodils so should see a lovely splash of gold as spring sets in. We have already planted broad beans, garlic and onions as well.

The wreath making sessions were a huge success with 124 participants all supported by our fabulous volunteers. Some people were returning for their 8th year! One of the Sunday sessions has to be the wettest on record but everyone still managed to have a wonderful time.

Our new Development Officer Ali Luke started at the beginning of January although she has been working a bit behind the scenes before taking on the role completely. Ali will largely be looking at how to take the garden further with new sessions etc and looking at funding streams that could spark new projects aimed at groups we have yet to identify. A big welcome goes out to Ali as we look forward to working with her.

Nordic Pharma made a generous donation which has been partly used towards a new strimmer, the liner for the large pond and to replace our Grub Shack which has served well for the last 14 years!

The schools return in March so you will start to see our young visitors enjoying the garden again.

We recently attended the Volunteer Fair at the Corn Exchange in Newbury which was very well supported. They were celebrating their 50th anniversary and there was lots of interest shown by visitors to our stand. We hope to touch base with a number of people who discussed either visits or volunteering.

Our new website is up and running and we are busy adding new items to it. You can find it at www.fiveaday.org.uk.

The winter sessions for the Thyme Together group are taking place in the Village Hall and the group did participate in their own wreath making session in the garden on December 7th. Should you know anyone who might be interested in joining these free sessions for over 65’s please let them know about us. We can be contacted either by phone on 07555 184343 or email to info@fiveaday.org.uk.

If you are interested in any of the items mentioned, volunteering or know of a business who supports staff volunteering please email info@fiveaday.org.uk or call 07555 184343. Please leave a contact number where you can be reached.

Wendy Cadman, Five A Day management team member and trustee





From Englefield Primary School

'Sowing the Seeds for a Flourishing Future'

We have had a successful start to the term and after a lovely Christmas break the children are all settled and back into the swing of school life.

At the end of last term, we had a packed Christmas calendar starting with our Year 5/6 class who had a really enjoyable time at the Douai Abbey carol service



for local church schools. Annie and Amelia sang the opening verse of *Once in Royal David's City* with the rest of the class joining in for verse 2. Scarlet, Tess and Seb did the final reading with great diction and clarity. The class also sang our favourite, *Child in a Manger Born*. This was a super way to start our school Christmas festivities.



Next our Reception, Year 1 and 2 children performed their Nativity play *Christmas with the Aliens* to their families and the local community. They all did brilliantly. We also enjoyed a whole school trip to the Watermill Theatre to see *The Wizard of Oz*, together with various Christmas celebrations including our delicious Christmas dinner and to top it all off we had our very successful Christmas Fayre.

We were so proud of the beautiful singing of 19 of our pupils who turned out on a Sunday evening to be part of St Mark's candlelit carol service. We received some super comments and it was so lovely to be part of this special community event.

Twenty-seven of us had a wonderfully Christmassy time carol-singing to the local residents in Englefield. We started with a visit to Englefield House where we received such wonderful hospitality, and then visited many of our local friends who enjoy this annual event. Everyone was very generous both with contributions to our charitable collection and treats for the children.

Another wonderful annual event was our Santa Fun Run. The whole school headed out to the Englefield drive in full festive outfits. Some were more competitive than others but everyone had a jolly time and we raised just over £513 for school projects...amazing!



We rounded off the term with one of the most special events of our school year – the candlelit carol service. The church was packed and everyone appreciated the telling of the Christmas story through readings and songs. Thank you to Reverend Julia and everyone at St Mark's for making this annual event possible.



This term will be a busy one! We are looking forward to our boys and girls taking part in the 'under 10s' football tournament at The Oratory, and as the beautiful spring weather comes in, our Year 6s will be taking part in their Bikeability programme; this is always an exciting adventure! We also have a book fayre to look forward to and a 'break the rules' day organised by our PTA! Our term will be rounded off with music concerts, an Easter egg hunt and what will no doubt be a beautiful Easter Service at St Mark's.

Hilary Latimer, Headteacher



New faces at the Village Hall

We have had a busy few months in the run up to Christmas and bookings are coming in thick and fast for 2024!

We are delighted that Liz Wirth has kindly joined the Village Hall committee, we look forward to her bringing her enthusiasm and ideas on how to bring some more

community events and activities!

We are also delighted that Livi Macey has also joined the committee as our new treasurer. Livi is a qualified accountant and we are very grateful to her for volunteering to take on the role. We look forward to her keeping us on our toes!

We need to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing treasurer Nia Rands for all her hard work and putting up with us over the last nearly three years.

Please do contact us if you'd like to book the hall for any type of event. Thanks.

Englefield Village Hall Committee



Last on God's List

The vicar of a busy South London church was sitting at his desk one Monday morning hoping for a few quiet hours to work through his emails. Then the doorbell rang and there on the doorstep was a big, burly, menacing-looking man - in tears. His name was Jason Armstrong and he said he desperately needed help and wanted to become a Christian. David, the vicar, talked and prayed with him and sent him off with a copy of Luke's Gospel and an invitation to return. David thought he would never see

him again but Jason did return, again and again, and now, seven years on, is a powerful witness to the transforming love of God. He told his astonishing story at Evening Praise at the end of January but if you missed this, you can still catch up thanks to Clare Heath-Whyte's book, written with Jason, *Last on God's List*.

She describes Jason's upbringing on a rough council estate in South London. His father spent time in prison and was drunk and abusive at home. Jason himself was violent at school, left at 15 and got into drink, drugs and crime, serving time in jail. But through a series of events, his life was slowly but dramatically turned around as he was drawn to faith. The title of the book comes from his own belief that someone like him would be 'last on God's list'. It is a gripping read, pulling no punches, both shocking and uplifting. It is available from <https://uk.10ofthose.com/>, for £6.99, postage free.

Rethatching the Black Barn

Watching the Black Barn being rethatched over the last six weeks has been an amazing privilege. I know that when it was first thatched in 1998 we got rid of the rusty corrugated iron roof, restored rotten oak beams and replaced the chalk floor. BUT this time we were able to watch Jason with his son Scott, Richard and Dan. Two of them remembered doing the work for us the first time, but Scott had only just been born.

The straw that is used for a thatched roof is bundles of triticale, a cross between rye and wheat, noted for its length and strong stem, and grown organically. The triticale is harvested with a combine using a stripper header. Three men thatched the front of the Barn, using long ladders. They carried bundles of straw in one arm, gradually putting another coat over the old thatch, bit by bit, day after day. The weather was bad and yet they carried on, despite the exposed surface of the roof, determined to finish by Christmas. A bundle is held on with a spar, a length of straight hazel split and pointed at both ends and then twisted in the middle to hold the straw, rather like a hair grip. When it comes to the ridge a thick straw rope is made first. This is then covered with wetted straw so that it does not break, and folded over with many layers. Next it is held in place by more substantial lengths of split hazel fixed with spars.

To finish the roof, the coat is dressed to make sure it is even, and swept hard with a stiff broom. Then the vital part: the roof is covered with wire to stop birds and rats finding it a warm, secure place to make a home. Most of the grain has been removed from the straw, but anything left is quite tasty.

The art of thatching has been passed down from generation to generation, using the same tools and materials, going back centuries. Today a hand-held hedge cutter comes in handy, replacing hand shears when cleaning off the eaves. But what an opportunity it has been to watch craftsmen producing a thatch which has to keep the rain out for around a quarter of a century. And it really does look stunning. Thanks to the team who did the work and all those who supported with the cash needed to preserve the Black Barn at Rushall Manor in this Area of Outstanding Beauty, the Pang Valley.



John Bishop
www.rushallfarm.org.uk

Date	Sidesman	First reading	Epistle	Gospel reading	Prayers	Sacristan	Server	Sunday School and crèche	Cleaners
February 4th 2nd Sunday before Lent BCP	Paula Fenwick	Harry Benyon Proverbs 8:1,22-31 (Psalm 104)	Denny Hollands Colossians 1:15-20	Preacher John 1:1-14	BCP	Sue Smith	Paula Fenwick	Saffy O'Sullivan Meryl Bonser	Penny Norris Saffy O'Sullivan
February 11th Sunday next before Lent	Peter Haig	Graham Harvey 2 Kings 2:1-12 (Psalm 50:1-6)	Paula Fenwick 2 Corinthians 4:3-6	Preacher Mark 9:2-9	Catherine Haig	Penny Savage	Penny Savage	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Angie Higgins
February 18th 1st Sunday of Lent	Liz Marillier	Kahlen Spaulding Genesis 9:8-17 (Psalm 25:1-9)	Aldo Guiducci 1 Peter 3:18-end	Preacher Mark 1:9-15	Dinah Perkins	Catherine Haig	Denny Hollands	Harriet Harley and Saffy O'Sullivan Lizzie Reeves	Liz McKean
February 25th 2nd Sunday of Lent	Graham and Pauline Harvey	Jean Rothery Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 (Psalm 22)	James Meade Romans 4:13-end	Preacher Mark 8:31-end	Richard Benyon	Denny Hollands	Peter Haig	Saffy O'Sullivan Liz McKean	Pete and Carole Ford
March 3rd 3rd Sunday of Lent BCP	Penny Savage	Linda Price TBC	Carole Ford TBC	Preacher TBC	BCP	Dee Boddy	Paula Fenwick	Saffy O'Sullivan and Verity Walker Meryl Bonser	Peter and Catherine Haig
March 10th Mothering Sunday	Paula Fenwick	Dinah Perkins 1 Samuel 1:20-end (Psalm 34)	Lorraine Dehn 2 Corinthians 1:3-7	Preacher Luke 2:33-35	Saffy O'Sullivan Sunday School children	Penny Norris	Torquil MJ	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Penny Norris Saffy O'Sullivan
March 17th 5th Sunday of Lent	Peter Haig	Ronan O'Sullivan Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Psalm 51)	Graham Harvey Hebrews 5:5-10	Preacher John 12:20-33	Penny Savage	Sue Smith	Penny Savage	Saffy O'Sullivan Liz Reeves	Angie Higgins
March 24th Palm Sunday	Liz Marillier	Peter Haig, Paula Fenwick, Torquil MJ Liturgy of the Palms (Psalm 118), Philippians 2:5-11		Preacher Mark 11:1-11	Linda Price	Penny Savage	Saffy O'Sullivan	Harriet Harley Liz McKean	Liz McKean
Sunday 31st March Easter Sunday	Torquil MJ	Catherine Haig Acts 10:34-43/Isaiah 25:6-9 (Psalm 118)	Denny Hollands 1 Corinthians 15:1-11	Preacher John 20:1-18	Dinah Perkins	Catherine Haig	Paula Fenwick Peter Haig Penny Savage	Saffy O'Sullivan Liz Reeves	Pete and Carole Ford
Sunday 7th April 2nd Sunday of Easter/ Annunciation BCP	Graham and Pauline Harvey	Anne Edgar Acts 4:32-35 (Psalm 133)	Paul Myles Luke 1:26-38	Preacher John 20:19-end	BCP	Denny Hollands	Torquil MJ	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Peter and Catherine Haig
Sunday 14th April 3rd Sunday of Easter	Paula Fenwick	Carole Ford Acts 3:12-19 (Psalm 4)	Meryl Bonser 1 John 3:1-7	Preacher Luke 24:36b-48	Saffy O'Sullivan	Dee Boddy	Denny Hollands	Verity Walker Liz Reeves	Penny Norris Saffy O'Sullivan
Sunday 21st April 4th Sunday of Easter	Peter Haig	Mike Kimber Acts 4:5-12 (Psalm 23)	Dee Boddy 1 John 3:16-end	Preacher John 10:11-18	Catherine Haig	Penny Norris	Saffy O'Sullivan	Harriet Harley Liz McKean	Angie Higgins

If you have swapped duties, please contact Saffy O'Sullivan (saffyosullivan@gmail.com) and the churchwardens. Please send all prayer requests to Linda Price (pricelinda8@gmail.com).

Thoughts for the week

These reflections are just some of the short commentaries that are compiled by Aldo Guiducci each week on the readings in church. They are all available, week by week, on the pew sheets and on the church website.

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child (Luke 2:17)

The shepherds had experienced a life-changing episode on that first Christmas. One minute they were out doing their day job (in their case, day and night job), and the next their whole world was unexpectedly turned upside down. An encounter with an angelic being, literally lighting up their world with the glory of God, led them to seek out and find the baby in a manger. From then on, nothing was the same anymore. Two things stand out from Luke's account. First, that the angel provides them with the gospel message in a nutshell, rather than just telling them to go and find the baby; to paraphrase, 'Good news! A saviour who is also Lord has been born to you. You must go and see him!' Second, and importantly, what the shepherds did once they had met with Jesus. They didn't just quietly go back to their jobs as if nothing had happened; they spread the word about what they had been told about the child. In other words, they couldn't help but share the gospel message they'd heard – it had made such an impact on them. The challenge to us is the same: has our encounter with Jesus made such an impact on us that we can't help but share the good news we have found with others?

'Magi from the east came to Jerusalem, and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?' (Matt 2 v 1b-2a)

Have you ever wondered about these Magi (wise men), these foreigners, coming to see the infant Jesus? Why would they have even known about Jesus, much less come to see him and worship him? We have a glimpse here of God's sovereignty over the events of human history. Centuries earlier, his chosen people the Jews were exiled from their homeland, and taken into captivity in Babylon. This event, a calamity from the human perspective, nevertheless allowed the Jewish knowledge of God to travel outwards into the world, and inform the pagan nations about him. In these verses we see the result: that men who were not Jews would make the arduous journey to Bethlehem to rejoice over the birth of God's chosen king, and worship him. Jesus is king, not only over the Jews, but over everybody.

'Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.' (Rev 5 v 5-6a)

The 'apocalyptic' genre of writing is not one we are familiar with in the modern world, and as a result we often find it hard to understand. Revelation has been described as being written in 'picture language that cannot be pictured', and we see an example of that in this passage. We are pointed to look at a Lion, only to find that it is a Lamb. Not only that, but the Lamb looks as if it has been slain, yet is standing triumphantly on a throne. Were an artist to try to draw this imagery, they would quickly run into difficulty keeping things in balance.

The point here is not to try and resolve these tensions, but to understand the message that underlies them. The Lion/Lamb issue is a reflection of the unexpected nature of God's Messiah, who appeared on the scene in the first century and wrongfooted almost everyone. The Lion of Judah, God's triumphant king, who came to rescue God's people and win the decisive victory over God's enemies, was revealed to be the ultimate Passover Lamb, who won the victory by meekly suffering death on the cross as a sacrifice to redeem God's people. The Lamb was slain in weakness, only then to rise in glory three days later to take his place at the centre of all things, crowned with all authority and power. By this authority, he is able to open the scroll and seals, symbols of revealing and explaining God's purposes and plans for human history.

The focus John wants us to have as we begin to travel through the fantastic landscape of the revelation he describes is this: that Jesus is the lens through which it will make sense. Though often bewildering and strange, the book of Revelation has this common thread running through it: that Jesus, the Lamb, wins. This truth can comfort us as we turn from the book and see a world around us which is also bewildering and strange. The good news of Jesus makes sense of our broken world, and gives us a reason to have hope for the future.

You can find more of these weekly Bible reflections on the website www.stmark.senglefield.org.uk, under the Church Life tab. And, on the home page, under Latest Talks, you can listen to recordings of Julia's sermons which are uploaded to the website each week.



Introducing the Castle@Theale

The Castle@Theale is a new facility for secondary school children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. During 2023 it moved into the former Theale Primary School buildings which have been totally refurbished by West Berkshire Council to create a lovely learning space. It's been wonderful to watch the students enjoy their new environment.

Our vision is to create a happy, secure and stimulating learning environment which will encourage and challenge our learners to develop their skills and knowledge as far as they can and provide the best education possible.

The Castle School is a SEND school in Newbury that has been at the heart of West Berkshire for many years, supporting children and young people with a wide range of special educational needs. The Castle@Theale is the newest part of the Castle family and we benefit from a wide range of experience and skills from a diverse and multi-professional team. The Castle@Theale as part of the Castle School exists to provide a caring, nurturing and outstanding educational community for the learners of West Berkshire and beyond.

As well as enjoying the new school environment, students have been experiencing a variety of challenging and enriching learning opportunities, including sailing, climbing, therapeutic animal care and outdoor pursuits. These opportunities are an integral element of the therapeutic curriculum available to students.

There has been a lot of interest in the school as the building work has progressed and we are delighted at the warm welcome and the support we have received from the community.

The staff and students at the Castle@Theale wish you all a very happy New Year!

Caroline Whitlock, Deputy Headteacher

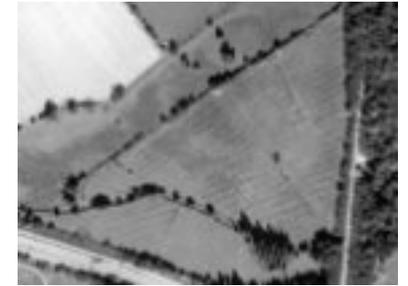
Connect and encourage

Bill Lowe from Christian Solidarity Worldwide was the speaker at St Mark's on Sunday 21st January. He spoke movingly about the advocacy work that CSW does to help those suffering persecution for their faith all over the world, stressing that everyone of every faith should be free to believe. He described how Pastor Lorenzo, a Christian pastor in Cuba, was arrested at a peaceful demonstration and is now serving seven years on wrongful, trumped-up charges, with devastating effects for him, his family and his church. He encouraged everyone to 'connect and encourage' by writing letters to those facing injustice for their beliefs. See the CSW website <https://www.csw.org.uk/getinvolved.htm> for more information.

The Dairies

A casual comment, made on a shoot day in the very wet season just ended, concerning the difficulties of 'picking-up' in the Ovens was well founded for that particular copse, alongside the road from the chalkpit to Lone Barn, at the corner where it crosses the river Bourne, was once part of the Englefield water meadows called the Dairies, perhaps created in about 1710.

The Dairies lay on either side of the River Pang behind Chalkpit Farm and stretched all the way from Hogmoor Bridge to just beyond Lone Barn. They are also criss-crossed by other streams that were an essential part of water meadow management. The quite small area of the Ovens (origin of the name unknown) is particularly well watered as it has the river Bourne for one boundary, the river Pang for an adjacent one and the confluence of the two at one corner. It also has other streams running through it.



Water meadows are very different from a simple flood plain, which since water meadows have long fallen into disuse is what many have become – hence the difficulties in the Ovens. Simply flooding an area of grass with standing water does not achieve the aim of keeping off the winter frost and encouraging an early growth of fresh grass in the spring, the reverse in fact since the stagnant water actually kills the grass. Rather, the aim of a water meadow is to maintain a shallow, constant flow of oxygenated fresh water over the ground and this requires a good deal of management by a man called a 'drowner'. Hatches in the side of the riverbank would be opened and a barrier raised across the main stream so that water would be directed into side channels, called a 'leats', 'top carriers' or 'mains' that reconnected with the river downstream of the water meadows. Water from the top carrier fed into many shallow grooves running along the tops of ridges across the field and from these grooves the water overflowed down the side of the ridges into drains at the bottom. These drains joined into a 'bottom carrier' or 'tail drain' that returned the water to the river via another hatch. Only the part of the Dairies laying to the north of the motorway near Hogmoor Bridge still shows this arrangement and can be seen clearly (if not without risk) from the Pangbourne Road flyover where it crosses the Pang. An aerial photograph provides a safer option.

That part of the Dairies nearer to Hogmoor Bridge were called 'feeding dairies' and used to provide the early grazing for the cattle while those towards the Lone Barn end were 'mowing dairies' allocated for hay making. Nearly all the parts at the Lone Barn end are now wooded but even in 1844 when the Dairies were still in use there were some coppices there, including the Ovens.

If the old field names Great Mill Ground and Little Mill Ground are anything to go by, the mill first recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 stood on the Pang in the Dairies, probably at the end of track that runs through Chalkpit Farm, shown below, to the river with Great Mill Ground on one side and Little Mill Ground on the other. There was also another mill near here called Farley Mill, pulled down in about 1700, and downstream of that, Tidmarsh Mill – not the present one made famous by Dora Carrington, Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Set – but an older one pulled down a few years after Farley Mill. There had also been for a time a third mill downstream from that.



In about 1700 a Captain Wilson built a new mill downstream of the Dairies and raised the riverbanks at this point. The barrier at the Dairies that, when raised in winter directed the water from the river into the top leat and through the water meadows, held up the flow to Wilson's new mill downstream and furthermore in 1749 Hogmoor Wood, upstream of where the top carrier rejoined the main river, also owned

by Capt Wilson, flooded. Wilson's bailiff broke down the barrier at the Dairies to let the water flow freely to the mill and legal action by Powlett Wrighte followed.

The river here was a popular spot for swimming both before the swimming bath was built by Richard Fellowes Benyon along Chantry Lane, and even afterwards by the men and older boys as the use of the bath was restricted to those at school or who had recently left (boys only until 1917 when the Girl Guides were formed and had use of it at certain times). The Rector notes the availability of the Dairies with some relief as '*...with 36 boys constantly bathing the swimming bath must be emptied rather frequently*'. The Dairies were available every day except Sunday but boys were cautioned against trespassing in the woods and fishing. They were also reminded of the need to wear bathing drawers, a pair of which could be borrowed for the season from the Workmen's Club. Some 20 lads and young men took advantage of the swimming there in 1891. At that time the Chalkpit Farm bailiff, Mr Hand, would close the barrier across the river to maintain the level upstream in the summer for swimming, even though at that time of year the river would normally be left to flow freely. By 1891, however, the side hatches were falling into disrepair and the level was raised for swimming on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only, the river being left to run freely the rest of the time again to avoid flooding the fields.

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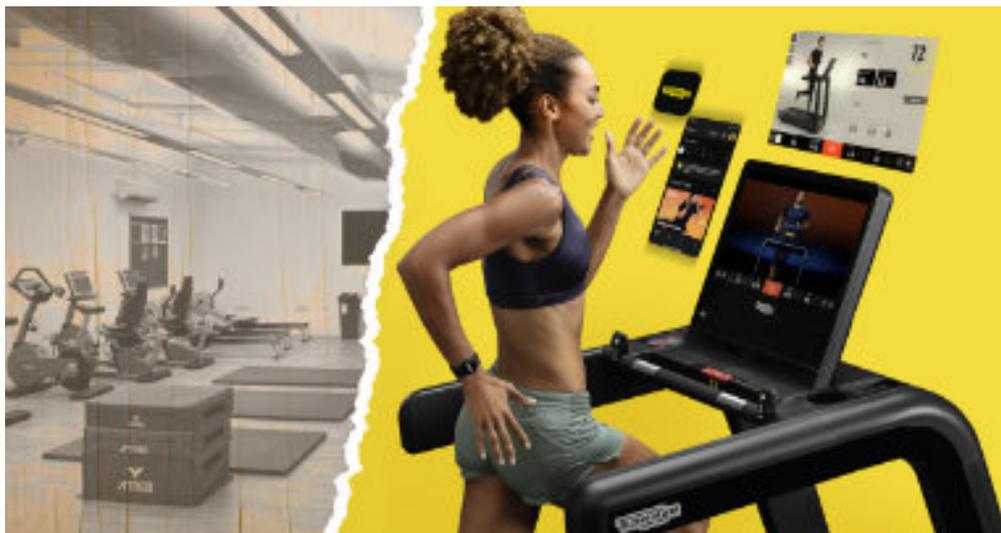
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