

Englefield Parish News

February - March 2026



The Parish of St Mark's, Englefield

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Englefield Parish Council

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St Mark's Church website:

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Front cover: First signs of spring - a clump of snowdrops photographed in the garden of St Mark's House.

Englefield Parish News

Englefield Parish News is published every two months and is distributed free to all households in the parish of Englefield. Contributions welcome, email catherinehaig@gmail.com or hand in to the Village Stores by the 20th of the preceding month.

From St Mark's House

Dear friends

As we navigate the heart of the winter season, our journey through the church calendar takes us on a profound transition from the 'light of the revelation of the Christ child' into the shadow of the desert.



February begins with the beautiful feast of Candlemas. This 'festival of lights' serves as our final farewell to the Christmas season. As we hold our candles, we remember Simeon's declaration of Christ as a 'light to lighten the Gentiles'. It is a poignant moment of spiritual transition; we turn our backs on the stable at Bethlehem and begin to set our faces toward the cross.

For many, February can feel like a bleak month, yet the appearance of the first snowdrops in our churchyard reminds us that God is always working beneath the surface, preparing the earth for a new beginning.

As we move through February, the focus of church life shifts significantly with the arrival of Ash Wednesday on 18th February. You would be most welcome to join us at 6:30pm for an informal communion when we also receive a cross of ash on our forehead. Lent is often misunderstood as a season of gloom, but it is truly a time of 'spiritual spring-cleaning'. The word Lent itself comes from the Old English word for lengthen, referring to the lengthening days of spring.

During March we also look forward to Mothering Sunday on 15th March, where we celebrate the nurturing love of God and the 'Mother Church'. At the end of March comes Palm Sunday on the 29th. This year British Summer Time begins as we begin Holy Week, the most sacred chapter of our year. We process, singing and waving palms, from the lychgate into church and then hear a retelling of Christ's journey to the cross. I encourage you to walk this path intentionally. Not jumping straight from the 'Hosannas' of the palms to the 'Alleluias' of Easter. Why not sit a while in the quiet of the 'upper room' or the shadow of 'the garden of Gethsemane'. We sit at 'the foot of the cross' from 2 till 3 pm on Good Friday, with visuals, words, music and silence.

Church is usually open every day from about 9am until dusk and during Lent there will be some resources for silence and prayer so do come any time for your own moments of peaceful reflection.

May these months be a time of quiet growth and deepening faith for each of you. With every blessing,

Your Rector



Diary dates

SDG Deanery lecture: Dr Jane Bywater on 'Dying Well: What Does it Mean to Me?', Tuesday 3rd February, 7.30pm, the Music Hall, Bradfield College, RG7 6BZ.
Let's Talk Theology, 7.30pm, second Wednesday of every month, at 15 Swallowfield Gardens, Theale, for more information contact Carol Boulter. Next dates February 11th and March 11th.
Shrove Tuesday: 17th February.
Ash Wednesday: 18th February, a short reflective service including silence, music and ashing, 6.30pm at St Mark's Church.
Evening Praise: last Sunday of every month, 6pm at Holy Trinity, Theale, next dates February 22nd and March 29th.
Mothering Sunday: 15th March, family service at St Mark's, 10.30am, with posies of flowers for mums.
St Mark's PCC meeting: Monday 16th March, 6.30pm.
Palm Sunday: 29th March, service at 10.30am at St Mark's, meet at the lychgate at 10.20 for procession with palms.
Easter Day; Sunday 5th April (see page 8 for details of services in Holy Week).

Local contacts

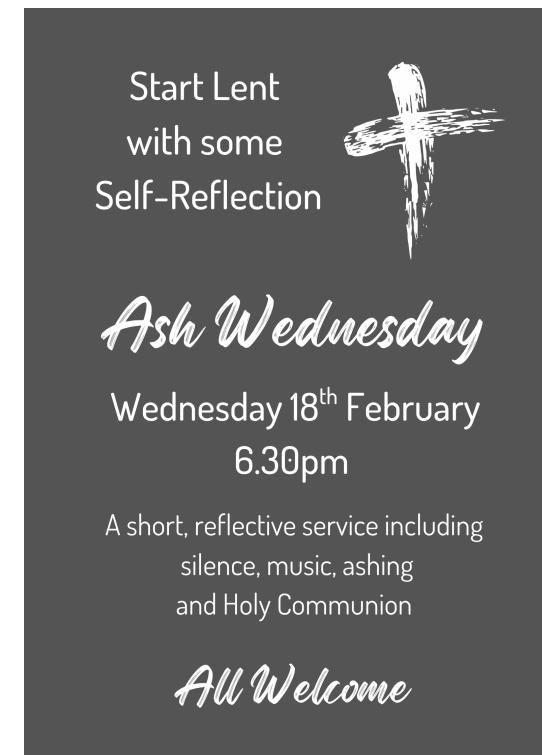
Englefield Estate Office	0118 930 2504; office@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Estate Yard	0118 930 2538 maintenance@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Stores & Tea Room	0118 930 2479 admin@englefieldstoresandtearooms.co.uk www.englefieldstoresandtearooms.co.uk/ https://www.englefieldvillagehall.co.uk/ info@englefieldvillagehall.co.uk
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) www.westberks.gov.uk/ www.englefieldpcc.org.uk/ www.thealeparishcouncil.gov.uk/
Englefield Parish Council	
Theale Parish Council	
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	

Congratulations

To Elizabeth Benyon on the arrival of her ninth great-grandchild, Eddie Eden, born 26th November to Rosie and Will, a first grandchild for Mary and Tom Riall.
To Joe Joslyn and Florence Quesnel who were married at St Mark's Church on Saturday 6th December.
To James Goodwin and Simone Cullens who were married at St Mark's Church on Saturday 20th December.

Christmas offerings

A big THANK YOU to all who contributed to our charity collection at Christmas. We totalled £1,182.13 with Gift Aid which will be split between the Salvation Army, a national charity dedicated to reducing, preventing and helping to end homelessness, and Faith Christian Group which supports the poor, needy and homeless of Reading. Many thanks also to Rosemary who coordinated all the money collected and claiming the Gift Aid.



Parish Council meetings

The next Parish Council meetings are on Thursday 12th March, 6.30pm, and Tuesday 12th May, 6.30pm.

The Annual Parish Assembly will be on Tuesday 12th May at 7pm.

All meetings will be at Englefield Village Hall. All residents of the parish are welcome to attend.

Mel Taylor, Parish Clerk, Englefield Parish Council



RIP

Sergeant Andrew Borthwick, who died 23rd November, formerly of the Rifles and 4 Ranger, whose funeral, complete with full military honours, was held at St Mark's on Tuesday 20th January.

Pam Plumb, who died on 21st December and whose memorial service was at St Mark's on Thursday 29th January.

Ted Holding, who died 30th December, whose funeral was held at West Berkshire Crematorium on Friday 23rd January.

Marion Morrison, who died on 31st December and whose funeral was held at West Berkshire Crematorium on Thursday 29th January.

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



'I will give you rest, come'

This is the theme for the World Day of Prayer 2026 service which will be held at St Mark's Church on Friday 6th March at 2pm, finishing with refreshments at 3pm.

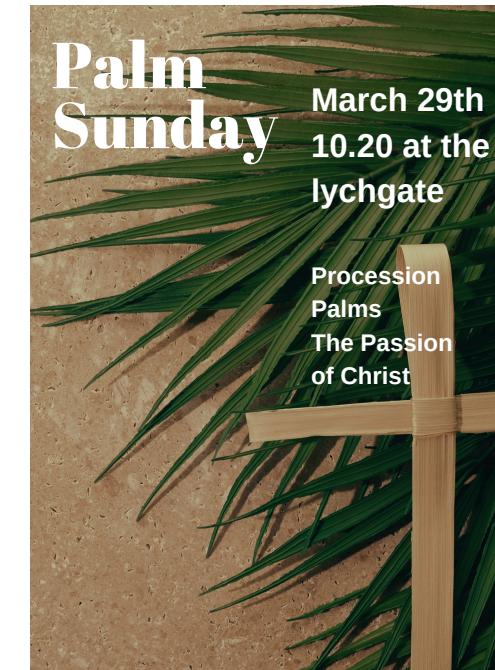
The service is centred on Matthew 11:28-30 and shares the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. You are welcome to bring a friend or neighbour and stay for refreshments afterwards. Parking in the front courtyard of Englefield House is available.



Penny Savage

Process of appointment

The Rt Rev Stephen Croft retires as Bishop of Oxford on July 31st. As part of the process of appointing his successor, the Diocese has created a short, anonymous survey asking for views and opinions to be included in the Statement of Needs. You have until 5pm on Wednesday 4th February to contribute - it consists of four questions and will take less than ten minutes to complete via this link <https://oxford.anglican.org/consultation>.



New clerk to the Parish Council

Hello everyone! I'm delighted to have joined Englefield Parish Council in October, taking over from Nia, who did a fantastic job supporting the Council and the community.

I've worked in local government for 23 years, specifically with parish and town councils, and I genuinely love the role. Local councils are at the heart of village life, helping the community from the ground up, and that's the part of the job I find most rewarding.

I'd really love to hear from residents, so if there's anything the Parish Council can help with, please do get in touch. You can reach me at our new email address: clerk@englefieldparishcouncil.gov.uk.

I'm very much looking forward to meeting residents and getting to know the village better in the months ahead.

Mel Taylor

Blue lights in Englefield

At about 3.30pm on Wednesday 14th January, the relative calm of the village was shattered when a tanker delivering heating oil accidentally spilled a few hundred litres of oil on to The Street. Fortunately, prompt action by the Estate's Maintenance Manager, Luke Wade, in calling the emergency services resulted in a very impressive blue light response from multiple fire engines and specialist units from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and the Police. They deployed specialist teams and equipment to remove the oil and clean the area, remaining on site until around 9pm. The Street was closed to traffic for a few hours but no significant damage, environmental or otherwise, was caused and the Environment Agency have since returned to check that all is well.

Englefield Estate



Save the date

The next Heritage Live summer concerts at Englefield will take place from Thursday 23rd July to Sunday 26th July. Headline acts this year include Richard Ashcroft, Ministry of Sound Classical and UB40. More details of the concerts can be found on the Englefield Estate website: www.englefieldestate.co.uk/whats-on/.

St Mark's Electoral Roll

The Church Electoral Roll holds the names and addresses of those eligible to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). Each year the Roll is revised and those already on roll need do nothing. If you would like to be added to the Roll, and are a regular worshipper, baptised and over 16, you can complete an application form between 19th February and 16th April. The new Roll is then published in church two weeks prior to the APCM. Forms are available from Richard Smith, our Electoral Roll Officer - richard.smith.upton@icloud.com (0118 983 3258) - or can be downloaded from the website www.stmarksenglefield.org.uk (under Resources).

All are invited to attend the APCM which will be held on Sunday 10th May following the morning service at St Mark's.



WILLOW PLANT SUPPORT WORKSHOP

After the success of last year's workshop we are delighted to offer another Plant Support session here at Five A Day Garden. Made from home grown willow, the plant supports are suitable for all types of plants.

The session will take place on Saturday 7th March 10am-1pm at Five A Day Garden. Refreshments will be provided.

The course will be run by Tessia and all materials will be provided. The cost per person is £40 payable by cash or card on the day. Please prepare to wrap up warm if the weather is cold as the session will take place outside.

Places are limited to 12 people for the sessions and will be booked on a first come, first served basis. If you would like to attend, please send an email to tessiewritten@gmail.com as soon as possible to book a place. Please let us know the number of places you would like to book and most importantly a contact number.

I look forward to your bookings!

Glen Higgins, Garden Manager
Five a Day Garden
The Street
Englefield RG7 6EL Charity number 1020446



HOLY WEEK AT ST MARK'S

MARCH 29TH
PALM
SUNDAY

Palm Procession
10.20am

APRIL 3RD
GOOD
FRIDAY

Prayers, Readings &
Music at the Cross
2-3pm

EASTER DAY
SUNDAY APRIL 5TH
10.30 A.M.
FAMILY COMMUNION

**CHILDREN'S
EGG HUNT**

ALL WELCOME!



A busy start to 2026

Happy New Year everyone!

We had a merry, super busy, festive November and December, celebrating over 600 Christmas dinners and Afternoon Teas with you all. The quizzes and props for 12 days of Christmas went down really well and it was hard to get Gertrude the cow back off some of our customers!

We have been busy deep cleaning and doing a mini Store refit too. Please have a look around the Store when you next visit to see the beautiful crafts we have on sale from local ladies, as well as local honey, bread and free range eggs. Janice and Sally are always on hand to make a sandwich for a takeaway lunch too. The 50% vouchers are going well in the Tea room too. Lovely to have a full Tea room, with friends and family meeting up to wash away any January blues!

We hosted a very special fond farewell tea party for Mary, who has lived in Englefield for 50 years. We will miss Mary, her stories of living here and of course Speedy, so much and wish her all the best settling in with her daughter Elsa.

Liz and the team

SDG Deanery lecture

The next Deanery Spiritual Development Group lecture is on Tuesday 3rd February at 7.30pm, when Dr Jane Bywater will be speaking on 'Dying Well: What Does it Mean to Me?' Jane is a consultant in palliative medicine, clinical lead for palliative and end-of-life care with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board. The lecture will be held in the Music Hall at Bradfield College, RG7 6BZ. It is open to all and everyone is very welcome. Parking is available by the Sports Centre.

Choral concerts

Newbury Choral Society's spring concert is on Saturday 28th March, 7.30pm at St Nicolas' Church, Newbury, featuring Carmina Burana by Carl Orff and Bruckner's Te Deum. Tickets are £19.80 adult, £11 for under 18s and students, available from <https://www.newburychoral.org.uk/>.

The Pangbourne Choral Society's spring concert is also on Saturday 28th March, in the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College, and will feature a performance of Bach's St John Passion. Details from <https://pangbournechoral.org.uk/>.



Tips from the Garden Centre

Christmas already feels like a distant memory, and we're busy getting everything ready for the new season. The greenhouses are being cleaned and tidied, and it's the perfect reminder that the same applies at home in your own garden. Any chance to get outside is a good one.

🍂 Tidy up and protect your plants. Clearing away fallen leaves and removing damaged foliage helps prevent infection and keeps plants healthy as they start to grow again.

✂️ Pruning time: Now is an ideal moment to prune fruit trees and any shrubs that flower later in the year. A good prune encourages strong new growth and better flowering. Climbers can also be tackled now, as it's easier to see where the stems run and shape them properly.

🌿 Reshaping overgrown plants: If something has grown far too big, don't hesitate to give it a firm trim to keep it compact. For plants that are out of control, it's best to reshape them over two years — half this year, half next — to avoid stressing them.

🥔 Start chitting your potatoes: It's time to begin chitting. We've got a wide selection of seed potatoes ready, whether you're growing in bags at home or planting out on an allotment. There's something suitable for every setup.

Austin Garden Centre Manager



Read the Englefield Echo online

We're pleased to share the latest Englefield Echo magazine which is now available to read online on our website: <https://www.englefieldestate.co.uk/our-publications>.

The annual review of 2025 includes updates from our team at Englefield, The Benyon Estate in London, and Glenmazaran in Scotland.

This magazine reflects our pride in tradition, but also how we embrace change, from moving to regenerative farming principles and adopting more electric vehicles, to creating new communities in old buildings. Most importantly it celebrates the people who live and work on the Estates, as well as those who visit, including school children, film crews and concertgoers.

We hope you enjoy reading the Echo, as much as we enjoyed collating it, and that it provides an insight into what we do and why.

Englefield Estate team

Planting again in 2026

Tonight, the moon was so bright that I could walk through the woods without a torch - just occasionally tripping over the shadow of a branch. It was very cold, but catkins are out on hazel trees and bluebells are just visible through their blanket of leaves. No winter moths tonight; the males normally flying high to meet their wingless mates at the top of oak trees, producing all those hungry caterpillars on threads of silk in the spring to feed broods of blue and great tits. It's peanuts and sunflowers in the garden for hungry birds right now. We have 20 collar doves arrive promptly at 8am to feed in the chicken run AND mice, rats and squirrels have returned. We saw nothing of them over last summer, too hot and dry so no food for Barn Owl broods. Let's hope it is better this year, especially in the garden.

As if to spur us on we have vegetable seeds galore. Just as well because last year's efforts were not very rewarding. 40 years ago we sold wheat from Rushall Farm for £150/tonne, and a good-sized tractor cost £12k. Today the price of wheat is £150/tonne (or 6p in an average sized loaf) and a tractor (quite a lot flashier) is £120k. And yet we in the garden (and Steve on the farm) will again plant our packet of carrot seeds, ignoring the real fact that the picture on the packet does not in any way resemble what we harvest.

For parsnips, last year I grew three seeds per compost-filled pot. As soon as the seedlings were strong enough I planted the whole lot in the garden without disturbing the roots. Then thinning, hoeing and watering over the whole summer with some success. But seasonal giveaways at Sainsbury's made my efforts seem FUTILE (although I did get the joy and satisfaction of enjoying the flavour).

So, we will plant again, ready for a very full year of children visiting, always learning from them how to meet the ever-changing environment they are growing up into. We look forward to those bluebells delighting the woods, with primroses in such bold clumps, and coppiced hazel thriving under the umbrella of oak and ash. And having done a 'Tree Safety Awareness' course and a 'Chainsaw refresher', there is plenty of work to do to give safe travel on the paths. The garden will thrive this year and my parsnips will shame the ones in Sainsbury's because of their superior size, texture, colour and flavour AND maybe the price of wheat will go up?

*John Bishop OBE
www.rushallfarm.org.uk*





From Englefield Primary School

'Sowing the Seeds for a Flourishing Future'

January is here once again and the evenings are getting lighter. The children are happy to be back at school and excited for the spring, there are already whispers of our annual Easter Egg hunt echoing through the halls.

We said farewell to 2025 with a host of activities and fun. FS2 and KS1 put on another production to remember, this time with their version of Christmas Counts. With tear-jerking humour they gave a beautiful performance demonstrating the story of the long journey Mary and Joseph took back to Bethlehem. We were all so proud of how hard they all worked, the effort they put in really showed to all who came to watch.

One of the things that stand out most about our Englefield pupils, particularly at Christmas, is their singing. We wowed the neighbours with our carols around the village. Years 5 and 6 stole the show with a wonderful rendition of *Child in a Manger Born* at Douai Abbey and our choir warmed the hearts of the elderly residents in two local care homes. Finally, the whole school filled St Mark's with music at our end of term carol service.



The beginning of this term was an exciting one, as we welcomed our new Headteacher Miss Galvin to the team and experienced the first snow of the year. The children were in their element building miniature snowmen using the natural resources around them and giving them names.

The children in Early Years have been having a wonderful time learning about the Epiphany and the Three Kings from the Nativity story. They thought carefully about what gifts they would give to baby Jesus, and I am sure he would be thrilled to receive the rattles, cuddly toys and other gifts they wrote about!

They have also welcomed in the new year with a spot of wassailing! They made their wassailing sticks from toilet rolls, filled them with stones and went out to tap the trees while singing a song to wake them in hope of good fortune for the coming year.

'Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too;
And god bless you and send you a happy new year,
and god send you a happy new year.'



Years 1 & 2 made the letters of their name using wool and put them all together to create this eye catching display. Theo said, 'We got wool and wrapped it around. I've never done it before but I loved it and I wish I could do it again!'



In Year 3/4 they are reading *Tom's Midnight Garden*. It's about a boy who goes to his Auntie's house because his brothers have the measles. While there he finds a magical garden where he gets up to all sorts of adventures. Louis said, 'I like the book because it is very interesting'. Ben said, 'It has lots of interesting things and lots of problems for Tom to solve, like the inside of the house keeps moving around.'



This term Year 5/6 had a fabulous morning at Pangbourne College learning about forensic science. During their morning they went in to a science lab where they had to solve the mystery of 'The Missing goldfish'. There were some suspects – Matron, Mr McCleod the History Teacher, the Bursar and his dog Teddy. Our children worked in teams to get to the bottom of it and after all their hard work they were rewarded with cookies. Yum!



Next week they will be off to Theale Green to watch the school performance of *Les Miserables* and are very much looking forward to it. In class they are currently learning about Ernest Shackleton and his explorations, creating beautiful journals as if they were journeying with him on his famous ship 'Endurance'. Alice said, 'I was Pearce Blackborrow, he was a stowaway! We love the story because it's so adventurous!'

Spring is a busy term here at Englefield and there is lots to be excited for! Our legendary football team are off to the Pokémon Tournament next week! We wish them the best of luck – not that they need it!

For KS1, Woodland learning is back in full swing. The little ones are making the most of our beautiful wintery Englefield to learn about how and why the trees lose their leaves before the first greenery of spring starts to reappear, and as the spring slowly creeps in, they might even be lucky enough find some shed antlers!

With spring comes Easter which means Easter productions, Easter crafting and that firm favourite amongst our children – our Easter Egg Hunt! It is also a time to reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and a time to appreciate new beginnings.





Happy New Year at Five A Day!

Garden: We sold quite a few pre-woven willow rings as well as foliage sprays in time for Christmas. The autumn-sown garlic and onions have been covered to deter vermin. We were very busy clearing beds for the winter, cutting the willow tunnel, coppicing the hazel and raking leaves. After all the preparation for the wreath-making workshops, we started replacing the well rotted woodchip near the raspberries which has been turned into a seed bed and we plan to continue with the work this year. The rhubarb has been given a helping of compost so fingers crossed for a good crop this year! The gardening volunteers are having a very well earned rest!

Thyme Together: Both groups have been very busy and have now finished until February. They harvested winter potatoes, lettuce and pak choi, planted up a strawberry tower, started working on the mosaic table which has languished in the craft tunnel for some years and even found time to visit Hilliers at Aldermaston. Thyme Together continue to run their free sessions on Thursdays – 10am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm. For details contact Ali on ali@fiveaday.org.uk or 07555 184343.

Volunteers: Glen, Ali and Wendy attended the VCWB Volunteer Fair on 10th January at the Corn Exchange in Newbury and we hope to have recruited some new volunteers as a result. It was very well supported with lots of interest. We are always looking for volunteers who may be able to support us at workshops, gardening or to help at the sessions during the week. You could have some very useful talents/skills!

Workshops and events: Wreath workshops took up a lot of time and were very successful. We are grateful to everyone who joined us and to the volunteers who helped at each session. We are making plans for this year's workshops. Currently we have a Willow Plant Support workshop on Saturday 7th March, 10am-1pm; two Willow Obelisk workshops on Saturday 21st March, 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm; and we will be organising another Bat Walk in April. Please check the website, social media and our notice boards in the garden for details. If you have any suggestions for other events in the garden please email 5adayevents@gmail.com.

Finally, if you shop online, please consider using Easyfundraising to help us raise funds for Five a Day. It costs you absolutely nothing and all you have to do is join and nominate Five a Day Garden as your favourite cause. If the seller you are purchasing from (such as Amazon) is registered on the site we get a percentage of your spend. We have already raised over £200 this past year from people who have signed up. You can find out more at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works/ If you are interested in any of the items mentioned, volunteering or know of a business which supports staff volunteering please email info@fiveaday.org.uk or call 07555 184343, or follow us on Facebook and Instagram @fiveadaygarden!

Wendy Cadman

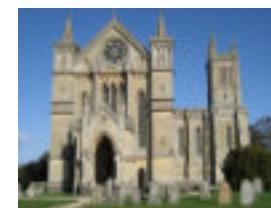
Five A Day Management team member and trustee

Farewell to Mary

Friends packed into the Village Tea Rooms last month at the kind invitation of Liz and the team to say goodbye to long-time Englefield resident, Mary Johnson, as she departs for a new chapter of her life living with her daughter, Elsa, near Bromley in Kent.

Mary and her then husband Anthony, with Elsa and son Adrian, came to Englefield over fifty years ago, initially to run the shop and Post Office. The family then lived at Kiln Copse on the road to Bradfield but after Anthony's death, Mary moved back into the village and has spent the last 26 years living at Number 21. At some point during that time, her next-door neighbour, one Terry Johnson, invited her to try her hand at playing bowls - and the rest, as they say, is history!

Mary was presented with a painting of Englefield with messages from all her many friends. She will be much missed but assures us she will be back for a visit - soon!



Groups at Holy Trinity

As well as the regular Connect bible groups that meet each week, Holy Trinity Church in Theale has now set up a twice-monthly lunchtime bible study on the Arlington Business Park (every first and third Wednesday of the month, 1pm to 1.30pm).

On the second Saturday of the month there is a men's breakfast and fellowship group at St Birinus House, 8am to 10am. The Connections over 60s group meets on the last Tuesday of each month at the John Cumber Hall 10.30am - 12.00pm. 'Explore' is for children in Years 6 - 9. It runs twice every half term, the first always being a movie night from 7pm to 9pm, and the second two weeks later being a youth club night from 7pm to 8.30pm.

Evening Praise continues on the last Sunday of the month, 6pm to 7.15pm. More information on all the above can be found on the church website www.holytrinitytheale.org.uk.

Sunday	Sidesperson	First reading	Gospel	Prayers	Sacristan	Server	Sunday Club and crèche	Cleaners
February 1st 4th Sunday of Epiphany BCP	Richard Benyon	Saffy O'Sullivan	Denny Hollands	BCP	Sue Smith	Saffy O'Sullivan	Liz McKean	Liz McKean
February 8th 2nd Sunday before Lent	Liz Marillier	Harry Benyon	Aldo Guiducci	Peter Haig	Penny Savage	Penny Savage	Saffy O'Sullivan	Peter and Catherine Haig
February 15th Sunday next before Lent	Penny Savage	Linda Price	Peter Haig	Saffy O'Sullivan	Penny Norris	Torquil MJ	Denny Hollands	Graham and Pauline Harvey
February 22nd 1st Sunday of Lent	Pauline and Graham Harvey	Richard Benyon	Mike Kimber	Paula Fenwick	Denny Hollands	Paula Fenwick	Meryl Bonser	Pete and Carole Ford
March 1st 2nd Sunday of Lent BCP	Paula Fenwick	Lorraine Dehn	Paul Myles	BCP	Sue Smith	Denny Hollands	Liz McKean	Saffy O'Sullivan Penny Norris
March 8th 3rd Sunday of Lent	Torquil MJ	Paula Fenwick	Torquil MJ	Catherine Haig	Catherine Haig	Peter Haig	Saffy O'Sullivan	Anji Higgins
March 15th Mothering Sunday	Linda Price	James Meade	Saffy O'Sullivan	Denny Hollands	Penny Savage	Saffy O'Sullivan	Denny Hollands	Liz McKean
March 22nd Last Sunday of Lent	Peter Haig	Ronan O'Sullivan	Jean Rothery	Linda Price	Penny Norris	Penny Savage	Meryl Bonser	Peter and Catherine Haig
March 29th Palm Sunday	Liz Marillier	James Bamforth	Meryl Bonser	Penny Savage	Denny Hollands	Torquil MJ	Liz McKean	Pete and Carole Ford
April 5th Easter Day	Penny Savage	Peter Haig	Harry Benyon	BCP	Catherine Haig	Paula Fenwick	Saffy O'Sullivan	Graham and Pauline Harvey
April 12th 1st Sunday of Easter	Richard Benyon	Graham Harvey	Aldo Guiducci	Peter Haig	Sue Smith	Denny Hollands	Meryl Bonser	Saffy O'Sullivan Penny Norris
April 19th 2nd Sunday of Easter	Pauline and Graham Harvey	Mike Kimber	Linda Price	Saffy O'Sullivan	Penny Savage	Peter Haig	Denny Hollands	Anji Higgins
April 26th 3rd Sunday of Easter	Paula Fenwick	James Meade	John Rothery	Catherine Haig	Penny Norris	Saffy O'Sullivan	Liz McKean	Liz McKean

Bible readings will be emailed to readers beforehand. If you swap duties, please email catherinehaig@gmail.com and the churchwardens (paulapaloalto@yahoo.co.uk and torquilmj@newburyweb.net). An up-to-date version of this rota, including any swaps, can be found under the Resources tab on the church website.



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Saturday 21st March 10am-1pm and 2-5pm at Five A Day Garden.

Refreshments will be provided.



The courses will be run by Catherine Stevens and all materials will be provided. The cost per person is £40 payable cash or card on the day. **Please prepare to wrap up warm if the weather is cold as the session will take place outside.**

Places are limited to 12 people for the sessions and will be booked on a first come, first served basis. If you would like to attend, please send an email to 5adayevents@gmail.com as soon as possible to book a place. Please let us know the number of places you would like to book and most importantly a contact number.

I look forward to your bookings!

Glen Higgins
Garden Manager
Five a Day Garden
The Street
Englefield RG7 5EL
Charity number :1202446

Thoughts for the week

These reflections are from the short commentaries 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.



Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented. (Matthew 3 v 15)

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance; of turning one's life around and going in a new direction. When Jesus comes to see him at the river Jordan, and asks to be baptised, John is confused. Jesus is the Messiah – why does he need to be baptised? There are a number of strands which are

woven together to give the answer to this. One is that Jesus was prepared to go into the waters of the river (which symbolised God's judgement) and emerge impregnated with God's new life; another that he was prepared to identify with the Servant motif, with the faithful remnant of Israel; yet another that by submitting to baptism, Jesus was acknowledging God's claim on him as on others for total consecration of life and holiness of character. A further reason links to his charge at the end of his ministry, when he urges baptism on his followers. He is giving us an example to follow, and we should be rightly suspicious of any argument that claims baptism isn't needed for Christians today.

Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him ... [God] told me 'the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' (John 1 v 32, 33b)

John's recognition of Jesus' identity was confirmed at Jesus' baptism, when John saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus in the form of a dove. The act of baptism is an important one, in which Jesus identifies with God's people and marks the beginning of his ministry. For God's people today, baptism remains an important part of their spiritual development, in which the water symbolises the cleansing from sin and rebirth into new life. We should note that there is a deeper truth that underlies this symbolism; as John testifies, it is Jesus who baptises with the Holy Spirit, and actually brings this new life. While affirming the importance of the act of baptism, we also recognise the greater importance of Jesus filling us with the Holy Spirit to enable us to live as his people.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' (Matthew 4 v 17)

There is an interesting contrast between Jesus' words and the experiences recorded in the Bible of people encountering manifestations of the kingdom of heaven. In both the Old and New Testaments, whenever people see visions of heavenly beings their response is one of terror (eg Isaiah 6:5, Revelation 1:17). Clearly in such moments, an awareness of our sin and unworthiness arises that is so strong, it drives us to hopeless fear. How comforting that Jesus should tell us to 'repent', rather than 'despair' that the kingdom of God has drawn near! Rather than the judgement we should expect, Jesus' message from the outset is that there is hope for restoration – that there is the possibility of redemption, of repentance (literally turning away from our old way of life), and the promise of new life in the kingdom of heaven. We would do well to listen to his call and seek to live lives of repentance, while there is still time.



The Top Park

During a pause in proceedings on a sunny winter's day, the view shown here led to thoughts of how long it's been that way. In detail, of course, the vegetation has constantly evolved and renewed but nevertheless might those oak trees be descendants of ones that were standing there when over on the other side of the hill the men of Englafelda under their leader Ethelwulf were driving off the Danish raiders from Reading on the last day of the year 870?



The view is of the north-western slope of the Old Deer Park (or the "Top Park") running down to the River Bourne (just below the bottom of the picture) and we can say that it was pretty much this way nine hundred years after the skirmish because we have the survey by Josiah Ballard for Powlett Wright in 1762 that shows this and the rest of park much the same as it is now. Ballard even helpfully sketched a few deer in the park on his map.

One difference is that then the track running across the bottom of the picture along the bank of the Bourne wasn't there. It was by 1844 though, for it is shown on the map accompanying the survey for Richard Benyon de Beauvoir by Phillips and Westbury in that year. The barn at Lone Barn (then called 'Bradfield Barn') had been built by then and the road extended to it from Chalkpit Farm and the chalkpit. At the barn the road turned left, ran over the hill and down the other side where it crossed the Bourne on a bridge then turned sharp right to run alongside the river (as shown here) to meet the road to Bradfield exactly where it does today. It appears from the map that in 1844 the road may have then been in general use although the description of the course of the new road from Chalkpit to Bradfield when it opened in 1855 describes it as a 'occupation road' - a private road solely for the convenience of occupiers of the land through which it passes. The road over the hill from Lone Barn remains today as an occupation road but with a newer section running along the Bourne parallel to the original.

The Old Deer Park lies on the ridge of high ground originally known as Mare Ridge, as was the farm at its foot, until it was 'gentrified' to May Ridge at the end of the 19th century. Despite this, the old local pronunciation of something like 'Mare-

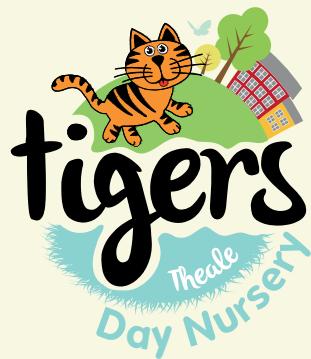
idge' or 'Merridge' persists even today, though used by only a few. The park is near the north-eastern end of the ridge, just before it runs down to the Pang valley and it is carved into by a boggy re-entrant from that direction. The north-western slope is steep and the ground is very broken and uneven so not suitable for cultivation.

Towards its south-western end the ridge overlooks the Kennet valley and the site of the old open fields that gave Englefield its name in Saxon times. At the north-eastern end it overlooks the Sulham valley, where it is likely that there were more open fields that were enclosed early, perhaps in the late 17th century, to create Chalkpit Farm. The two valleys intersect at Theale and both were defended in 1940 by the GHQ Stop Line. They would have been the 'killing ground' for troops on the ridge if an invasion had got this far. Probably the Sulham valley actually was that for the invasion that did get this far in 870, for this part of the park is known as the 'Battlefield' and commands an excellent view of the enemy approaching from Reading, though the view is marred somewhat today by the sight of the motorway and IKEA's big blue 'shed'.

A feature of the top park, now as then, is the 'dew pond'. It is not known if it actually is a dew pond proper, but it certainly fits the bill in being an artificially constructed pond on high ground to provide water for animals. True dew ponds seldom dry up even when springs in the valley are reduced to a trickle. The traditional method is to dig a hole somewhere where mist collects early on summer mornings. As with most old artificial ponds the bed is a layer of puddled clay but the secret of the dew pond is an insulating layer of straw or reed between the clay liner and the compacted earth beneath. Once the clay is dry, the pond is filled by rain or artificial means and the theory is that it then retains its water even in the driest summers by virtue of the temperature difference between the surrounding land and the insulated clay bed. During the day the land around the pond is warmed by the sun but the heat cannot get to the clay bed of the pond because of the insulating effect of the straw layer. When night falls the cooler water condenses moisture from the atmosphere and counteracts the evaporation during the day.

The dew pond sits at the edge of a flat grassy area that forms the top of the ridge, just as it was shown by Ballard, but no longer present is a tree-lined avenue that he showed running from the Long Gallery entrance through what are now (and perhaps were in 1762) the 'pleasure grounds' of Englefield House, up to a circular feature from where there is a view over the open green space. From this point, other avenues run in various directions, leading apparently nowhere except that two of them (at 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock) terminate at the road that then ran along the edge of the park towards Bradfield. This road was closed in 1855 after the road from Chalkpit to Long Barn was extended to Bradfield College. Mr Benyon made himself a new private coach road across the top park to a new lodge on Common Hill. The line of the old road is still visible and just as it leaves the Englefield House grounds the old Beenham Lane turns off it to the left, today providing a connection between the old park and the new one in front of the House.

Richard Smith



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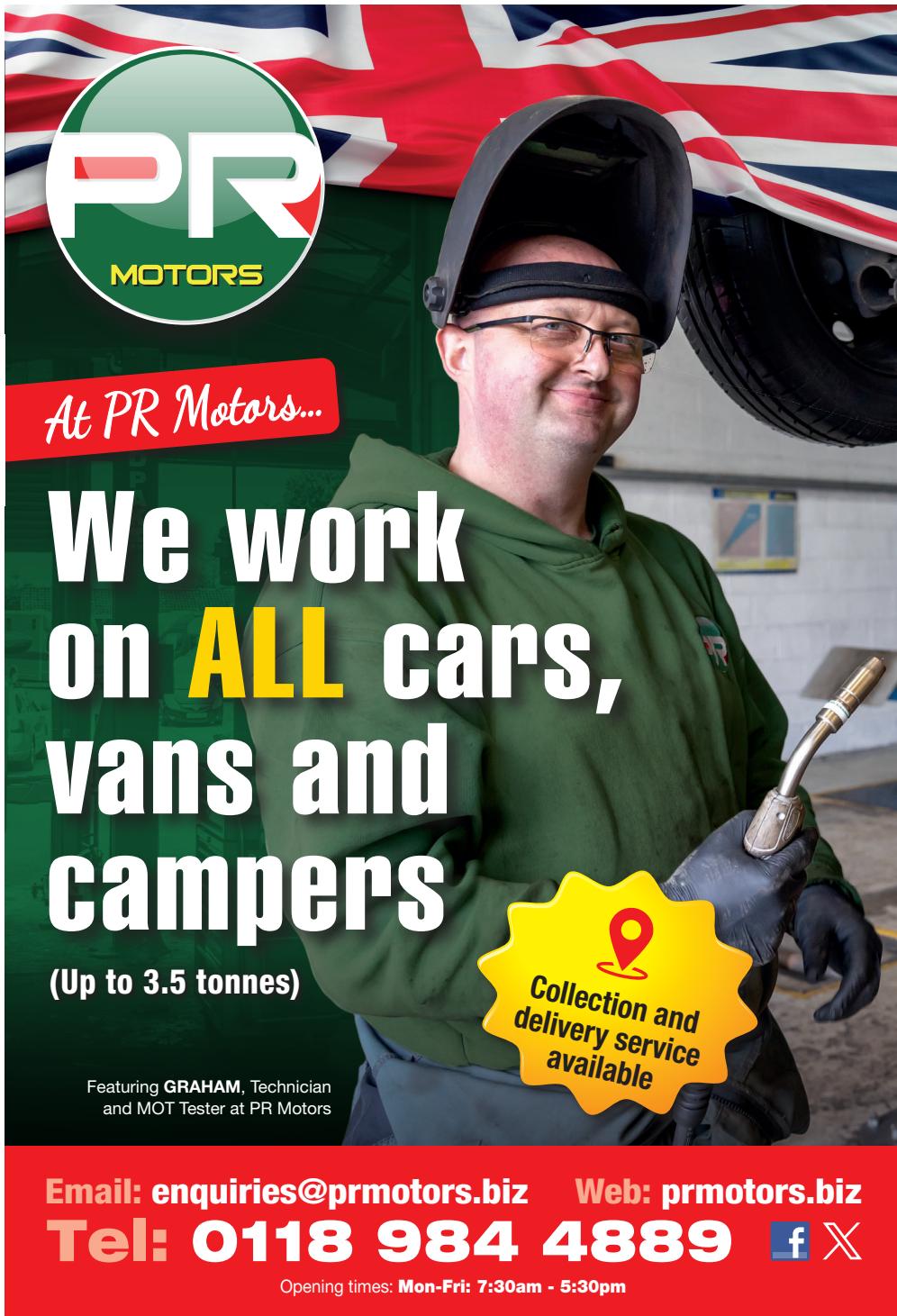
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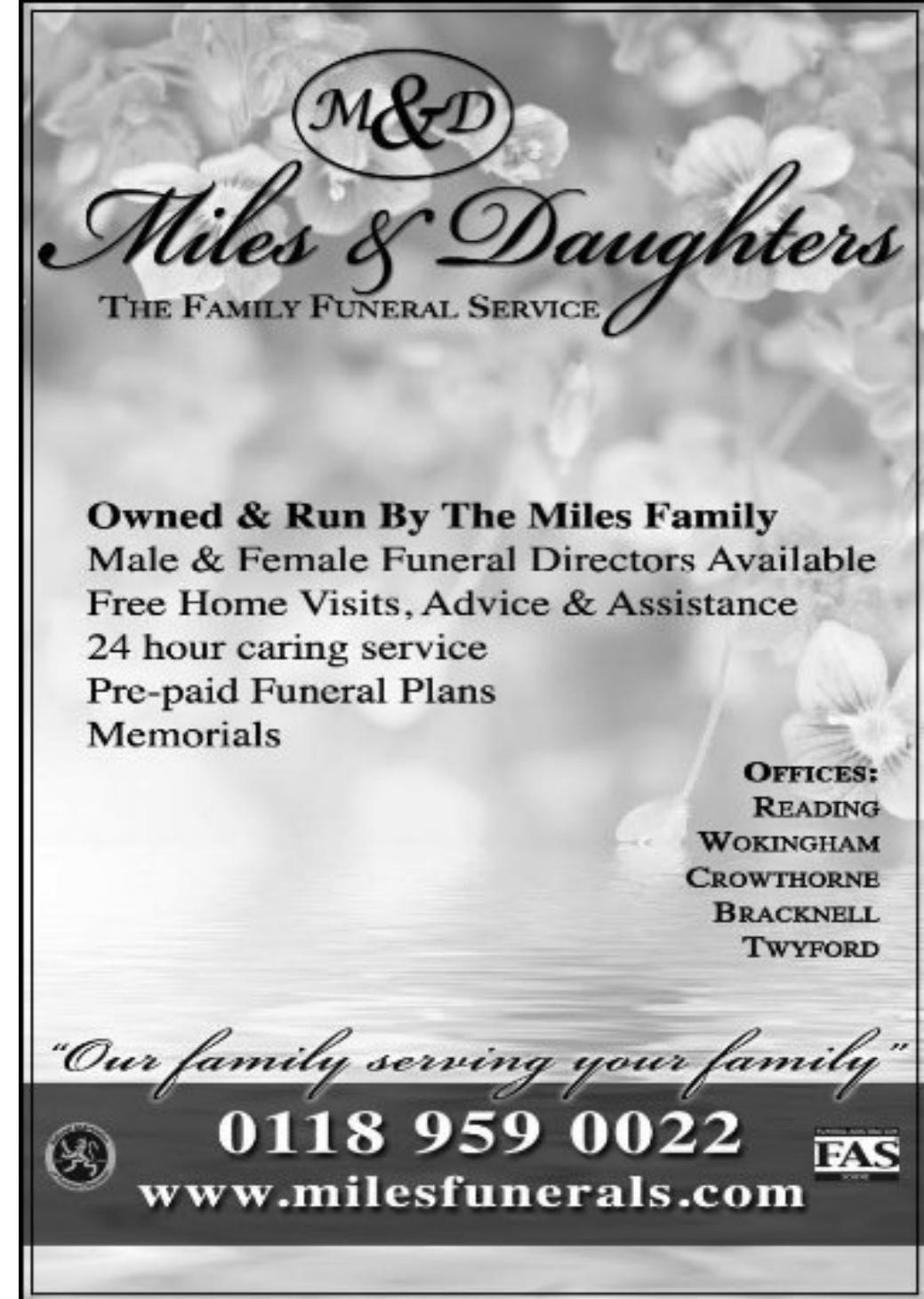
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