

March-April 2024

THE
GREATEST DAY
IN HISTORY:
The Easter Story



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make him known
every day

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This edition of the Magazine of the Parish of Wisley with Pyrford is being delivered to every household in the parish. It comes to you with our compliments because we want everyone to understand the significance of Easter.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are well recorded in the Bible by eye witnesses, some just ordinary people, others high government officials or religious leaders, all playing their part in events which have profound significance for mankind. His death was part of a divine plan whereby

Jesus would be sacrificed to absolve mankind from their sin. Those who decreed that Jesus should be executed were not to blame. It would be more honest to say that mankind is to blame:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. John 11:25

We have invited our contributors to imagine themselves as these eye witnesses and recount the Easter story in their own words – to express what they felt during those events in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago. They have much information to guide them as the Bible records these events in some detail.

The Reverend Canon Nicholas Aiken

Change is in the air within the church in Wisley with Pyrford. In April our Rector, The Reverend Canon Nicholas Aiken, retires from the ministry after 30 years of service within our parish. We who know him are very sorry to see him leave us but, in time, retirement comes to us all. We all wish Nicholas and his wife Hilary a very happy retirement. The process of appointing his successor is underway.

On Sunday 7th April at the Church of the Good Shepherd there will be a drinks party after the 10am service, followed by a Bring and Share lunch to mark his retirement and to thank him for his service to the church and the community. Nicholas will lead his last service, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, on Sunday 14th April.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Neither the editor nor the PCC accept any responsibility in respect of the goods or services advertised in this magazine.

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Please contact Carol Sandys in the Parish Office for any changes to be made to the Parish Directory (carol@wisleywithpyrford.org). Feb 2024

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The theme for the May/June Magazine is

'Challenges'



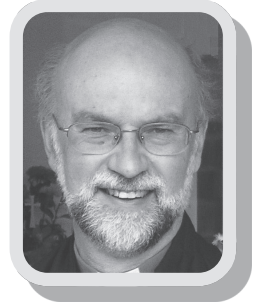
Be they large or small, we all face challenges in life. How do we face them? Do we benefit from them? How does our faith help us?

Please send your contributions on this or other items to eldon@phd-research.co.uk by 28th March

Dear Friends,

Believe it or not, this is my final Letter for the Parish Magazine!

Of course, this March/April issue coincides with the fact that Easter is very early this year, on 31st March, which is just about the earliest Easter can be. As you probably know, Easter follows the Jewish lunar calendar which determines the date of the Passover. Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples on that first Maundy Thursday before his trial and execution on Good Friday.



Over the centuries, the Church has discussed whether to fix Easter on the second Sunday in April but decided to stick to the movable Passover date because it coincided with the Last Supper. Christmas was simply the imposition of using a very popular pagan celebration which of course didn't have any known attachment to when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

The message of Easter stands the test of time. Those momentous events we still celebrate with gratitude and thanksgiving as we remember the tragic injustice of Good Friday and the wonder, truth and amazement of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. That is why the great acclamation rings out throughout the world that, '*Christ has risen; He has risen indeed. Alleluia!*'.

Happy Easter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas". A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

Yours,

Nick

The front cover of this month's magazine was designed by
Rosie Nightingale using assets from Freepik.com

Well done, good and faithful servant



**Thank you, Nicholas, for all you have
given us over the past 30 years.**

We wish you and Hilary a very happy retirement.

With grateful thanks, and much love from us all!

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Building Committee
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Helping Others
Mealmakers
Holiday at Home
Down Memory Lane
Women's Forum
God's Girls
Newark Group
Men's Curry Night
Parish Magazine
Sunday lunches
Amaha We Uganda

Woking Besom
Local charities
Breakthrough, EXP, Upper Room
Allsorts Holiday Club
Open the Book
Tots Praise
Staff and pupils of
Pyrford Primary School
Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies
Pyrford & Wisley Village Show
Friends of St. Nicholas' and
Wisley Churches
The congregations of
our three churches
Everyone supported through weddings,
baptisms and bereavement

The people of Wisley with Pyrford

Thank you!



Easter is a time of spiritual significance for Christians worldwide, symbolising redemption, renewal, and the triumph of life over death. Some 2000 years ago Jesus entered Jerusalem, welcomed by cheering crowds. But the religious authorities, led by Caiaphas the Chief Priest, wanted rid of him. Betrayed by Judas Jesus was arrested, taken to Caiaphas who handed him over to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate could find no fault with him, but anxious for a quiet life ordered his execution. Jesus was buried in a tomb but re-appeared on a number of occasions thereafter. Easter symbolises hope, renewal, and the promise of eternal life for believers in the Christian faith. Our contributors below record the events of Easter in their own words.....

A FACE IN THE CROWD

TRICIA POLLARD



Matthew 21

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.

If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

It is the time of Passover here in Jerusalem and it feels like the whole world is crammed into the city. This is always a busy and exciting time, but these past two days have been like none I have ever before experienced.

Two days ago, I was standing talking to my neighbours in our small village just outside the city, when I noticed two men untying my donkey and colt. Naturally I asked them what they thought they were doing, although they seemed vaguely familiar. They replied, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly." So now I understood. They were not thieves but disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

I have heard Jesus speak many times and even been witness to his miraculous powers. He is a prophet, and he is the Messiah, or so I believe, and he has come to save his people. There is that old Hebrew prophesy that our King would be coming and that he would be humble and riding on a donkey and a colt, the foal of a donkey. Could this be why he has sent for my colt and its mother? What an honour!

Today we waited in excited expectation and were soon rewarded by the sound of the crowds heading towards us from Bethphage, where Jesus was staying. People started to appear, shouting, waving palm branches, excited and joyous – almost triumphant. Then I saw him. Jesus, riding on my colt! The disciples had placed their clothes on the colt and others in the crowd had spread their garments on the road before them in homage. Nothing could stop me from joining the procession as it made its way to Jerusalem.

The crowds swelled as we neared the city and the noise was deafening as we shouted,

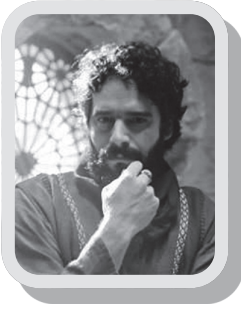
“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

People were jostling to see him, waving their palm branches, and even climbing trees for a better view.

As always at Passover, many strangers were in the city and most knew nothing of Jesus. People in the crowds, including me, were only too ready to tell them. There were some in the crowd who had recently been present at Jesus’ greatest miracle, when he brought his friend Lazarus back from the dead and, unsurprisingly, they could not help but tell everyone they met about their experience. Surely all would see that Jesus is no ordinary man.

And so, on a wave of human hope, joy and triumph, Jesus entered Jerusalem. And he entered it riding on my colt! I feel so proud and yet so humble and will not forget this day as long as I live.



**Matthew 26**

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests

and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Well that didn't go as planned did it? I admit I had become more and more worried about the direction that Jesus' mission was taking. And if I was worried, you can imagine how concerned the Zealot leadership had become, with no sign of any popular uprising and for that, they blamed me.

I was perhaps overly enthusiastic when I first heard Jesus teaching, but it did seem so exciting and revolutionary, that I believed we Zealots had found the man we had been looking for. The man that would lead the revolt against the Roman Empire, the one to whom the people would flock for law and justice, and who would become King in Judea, instead of Herod. And then I heard him say things like – “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” So I thought we were on safe ground with Jesus.

But it was never a real sword with him. I used to urge him to declare himself as King in God's new Kingdom of Judea, but he would just smile and say “My kingdom is not of this world.” And finally things came to a head a few days ago. What kind of Leader rides into his capital city on the back of a donkey and her colt? The people were excited though, but instead of calling for an uprising against the Roman garrison he went to the Temple, threw out all the traders, and started teaching.

It was time to look after myself I decided. To facilitate Jesus' arrest, the chief priests gave me thirty pieces of silver, which I was certainly going to need, as the Zealots were denouncing me as a failure and a traitor; and I would certainly have to put some distance between myself and the other Disciples. I didn't really think anything bad would happen to Jesus. But then I heard that he was being accused of blasphemy and the priests were calling for him to be executed, and I finally realised what would happen.

I felt so sick that I took the silver back, but it was too late. They were determined that Jesus should die and I realised I had helped to condemn an innocent man. So with every man's hand against me, and I knew that would be the new reality, my life was unlikely to be a long one. It didn't matter as now, I didn't want to go on living.

Wisley with Pyrford

**GOD'S
GIRLS**

March 2024 dates:

God's Girls Reading will meet on Zoom on **Monday 4th March** when we will discuss the second half of ***That Gentle Whisper*** by **Bill Cahusac**.

God's Girls Going Deeper will meet on **Wednesday evening 20th March** for coffee/tea at 7.15pm and teaching at 7.30pm when **Suzanne Lees-Smith** will be teaching on "**Wonder Woman Ways! Praying with Authority**".

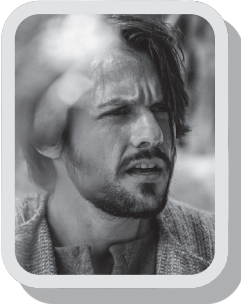
April 2024 dates:

God's Girls Reading will meet on Zoom on **Monday 1st or 8th of April (TBC)** when we will discuss the first half of ***The Secular Creed*** by **Rebecca McLaughlin**.

God's Girls Walking will meet for a brisk walk on **Saturday 27th April** at 8.30am for a prompt 8.45am departure, returning in time for the coffee and teaching.

God's Girls Going Deeper will meet on **Saturday 27th April** for coffee at 10am and teaching at 10.30am when **Diane Davidson** will be teaching us on the topic of **Vacancy: Where do we go from here?**

For more information or to sign up to receive updates, please e mail
godsgirls@wisleywithpyrford.org



John 16

Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.”

Well, the last few weeks have been quite a whirlwind – tell you that for nothing. I am Simon, son of John, aged 27. Known these days more often as Peter; Jesus said it suited me better. Said something about being a rock. So that was kind of cool.

We arrived in Jerusalem just before Passover. Word of Jesus had got out and he was welcomed like the Saviour he was now recognised as being. I must admit I did rather milk it. I mean, all that attention and all. Could go to a fisherman’s head. We had an amazing time; Jesus was at the very top of his teaching game. It was such a privilege to be with him. Actually with the Messiah – extraordinary.

But Jesus started talking again about going away. And then he predicted that he would be crucified. We all thought, “don’t be ridiculous.” He even said that I would deny knowing him. Unbelievable! But of course he was to be proved right. As usual.

Anyway, we found a place to celebrate Passover on Thursday evening, then strolled out to Gethsemane. There was a kind of weird atmosphere. Jesus seemed unusually quiet. And then it happened. We hadn’t noticed that Judas had disappeared, but he suddenly appeared in the garden. Followed by a large bunch of ruffians with clubs and swords and what-not. And before we could do anything, they’d dragged Jesus away.





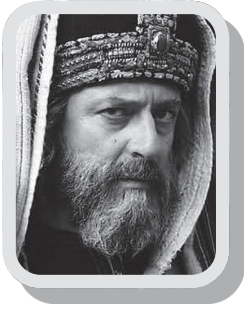
It can be a pretty dull job being a Temple Guard. Yes, I know it's a big responsibility but a lot of the time, we're just standing around. Take earlier this month for example, there was a new guy, name of Jesus, coming into the temple early each morning and preaching to anyone who would listen. There was quite a crowd, but very well behaved. They seemed to be lapping up what he had to say but it went over my head most of it. Not much to see here, I thought.

All that changed a week or so ago. Apparently, the chief priests were very unhappy with what the new guy was saying and they got talking to one of his cronies, Judas, who agreed to turn him in. I hear he was paid handsomely for his pains. Anyway, I got the order to bring a group from the Temple Guard and the High Priest's office and arrest this Jesus fellow.

So off we went to the Mount of Olives just after nightfall, with lanterns, torches and weapons. Jesus and his cronies were there but some of them didn't seem very alert, I think they'd been sleeping. Straight away Judas picks out Jesus and plants a kiss on his cheek. This was our signal to grab him but, as we moved in, one of Jesus's friends (someone said his name was Peter) drew his sword and sliced off the ear of my mate Malchus, who is in the High Priest's office. We hadn't expected that so we drew back for a moment only for Jesus to reach out, touch Malchus's ear and completely heal it. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.

Anyway, Jesus says he's the one we are looking for and there's no need for any violence. He tells his mates to put away their weapons and asks us why we have come armed with swords and clubs as though he were an outlaw or trying to lead a rebellion or something. He seemed quite placid but we weren't taking any risks so, after we'd arrested him, we bound him and marched him off to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest.

You know sometimes I do feel bad about it. He seemed such a decent guy and I wonder what he would have made of himself if we hadn't arrested him. Ah well, back to the old routine.

**Matthew 26**

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Extracts from Caiaphas' diary:

Tuesday

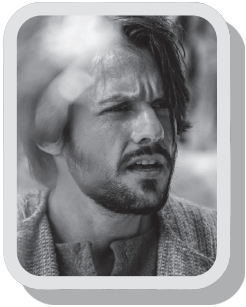
Jesus the Nazarene arrived in Jerusalem on Sunday, causing trouble. People are flocking to him – particularly after the Lazarus stunt last week when some said he brought Lazarus back from the dead – and Rome is getting twitchy. Don't want to make a martyr of him, but need to keep Rome off my back. Told the Supreme Council that it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation to be destroyed. I'll pin a capital offence on him and get Pilate to execute him. Pity I can't order that myself.

Friday

Jesus was arrested during the night (one of his so-called followers – a nasty little man called Judas – led the soldiers to him) and taken to Annas. I get on well with my father-in-law, but I wish he would accept that he's no longer the High Priest! Anyway, he got nowhere and sent him round to me at dawn. I grilled him and the fool claimed he was the son of God, which was all I needed. Sentence of death agreed, so straight round to Pilate to get him to authorise it. Got a good crowd of local loudmouths to gather outside Pilate's palace and shout the odds. Pilate was decidedly flaky and I had to hold his hand, but he could see which way things were going with the crowd and Jesus didn't do himself any good either – just stood there silently, as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. Pilate still tried to get the crowd to give Jesus a second chance, but they chose (with a little help!) some common murderer called Barabbas instead, so Pilate had no choice in the end and confirmed the death sentence soon after sunrise. He was nailed up at 9am and died at about 3pm. Just as well – if he hadn't died before sunset, we'd have had to take him down.

The rabble who follow him are mindless and ill-educated. There's no leader amongst them and they'll just slope off into the desert now. I don't think we'll be hearing from them again and the Nazarene will soon be forgotten.

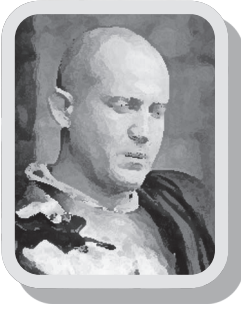
Big preparations for the feast tomorrow, what with Passover falling on the sabbath this year. Annas is coming over and I've had four sheep slaughtered. Hope the weather holds. Had an extraordinary thunderstorm this afternoon and the sky was as black as night. The big curtain in the temple was ripped apart by the wind.



I followed them to the courtyard of the high priest, Caiaphas, and snuck in the back. I couldn't believe what was happening. The council started accusing Jesus of all sorts of awful things. They spat at him. Hit him. By now, it was nearly dawn. The room was full of rage. Dangerous. So I nipped out quietly. People started to point at me and say that I was a friend of Jesus. And..... I..... denied all knowledge. It might have saved my skin, but the guilt was as good as a dagger through my heart.

And of course things went from bad to worse. I stood by in the crowds the next morning (suitably covered up, of course, like the loyal friend I was). I saw Jesus being taken to the Governor. I gasped as I heard of the outcome. "Crucify him." Surely not. "He is the Son of God!" I wanted to yell. But didn't. I wept like a baby when Jesus emerged, bloodied and beaten, to carry his very own cross of execution up the hill to Golgotha. And I looked away as he was nailed in place. And then he was gone. Dead. Our dear, dear friend. Our Messiah. It was over.



**Matthew 27**

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “You have said so,” Jesus replied.

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

I could have saved him. My wife has never stopped telling me so. I had the authority. I would have liked to have been his saviour; he was harmless enough and for a member of that pernicious race, there was something strangely attractive and beguiling about him.

The fact is that trouble had been brewing for some time. Some of my soldiers had been rather clumsy in enforcing imperial orders; the Sanhedrin was already on my back for that. The mob I now faced was baying for blood. I simply did not have the forces immediately available to prevent the situation getting completely out of control. Any support I might have called for from my superior and neighbouring governor in Syria would have come too late.

As prefect in Judaea I had been appointed with strict orders from the Emperor Tiberius to keep close control of a province which had always threatened rebellion. I could not afford to lose credibility in this and suffer a tactical failure in the eyes of Rome; besides, I still owed my sponsors a considerable sum for the purchase of the governorate. Clearance of my debts could only be achieved by serving out the full three years of my term.

Putting all this aside, however, there was something else that compelled me to act as I did. A voice inside my head insisted that it had to be. I was unable to explain this to the investigatory court who criticized me severely for my conduct. They now want me – an embarrassment – dead. Who will save me?

There are now reports coming out of Judaea: the man they called “the Christ” somehow survived the grisly death I condemned him to. Some are now claiming that he was resurrected. Surely impossible. Unless, unless, the man I sentenced to crucifixion was really the Son of God, as some now say he is. Impossible? Yet it might explain many things. And that voice is back in my head again; “it had to be”, it says.

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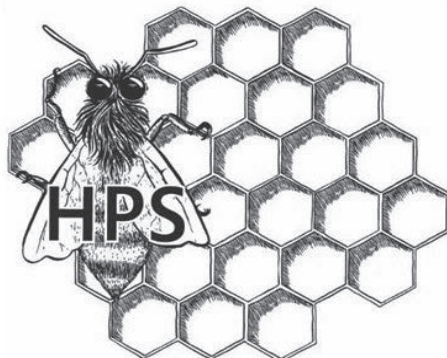
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4 th Sunday	10.00am	Morning Service
5 th Sunday	10.00am	Parish Communion
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5 th Sunday	6.30pm	Choral Evensong

WISLEY CHURCH

GU23 6QF

1 st 2 nd & 4 th Sunday	10.00am	Morning Worship
3 rd Sunday	10.00am	Holy Communion

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MARCH 2024

- 01 & 15 March Upper Room (school years 7-13): come & relax after school with your friends. Grab a toastie, play table tennis, football & snooker. Tuck shop will be open. The Good Shepherd Hall, 7.30-9.15pm.
- 05, 12, 19 & 26 March BreakThrough: boys only group (school years 7-13). Discussions & worship. Chill out & play table tennis, pool & football. The Good Shepherd, 7.30-9pm. Please contact anthony@wisleywithpyrford.org for details.
- 06 March Women's Forum: Spring Lunch outing at the Garden Room at Longacres (Bourne Valley), 12 noon.
- 06, 13, 20 & 27 March EXP: for those who have faith or are wanting to know what it is all about. The Good Shepherd, school years 6-9, 7.30-8.45pm & school years 7-13, 7.30-9.15pm.
- 07 March Men's Curry Night: with a Christian speaker. All men welcome. The Good Shepherd, 7.30pm.
- 08 & 22 March Youth Club Junior (school years 4-6): a chance to meet up with your friends & have lots of fun. Entrance 50p. Tuck shop available. The Good Shepherd Hall, 6.30-7.45pm.
- 21 March Newark Group Dinner: with guest speaker Bill McNaught. 'What is an eccentric?' Bill's talk looks at the results of a formal study on the subject & gives examples of some of history's strangest people and looks at a variety of odd customs. The Good Shepherd Hall, 7.30pm for an 8pm start. The contact is Richard Whitehill 01932 403240/
rwhiteh136@ntlworld.com
- 28 March Maundy Supper: Bring and Share. The Church of the Good Shepherd, 7.30pm.

Parish Prayer Meetings during March

Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays (Morning Prayer) on Zoom (Meeting ID: 895 8461 0678 Passcode: 337626)	8.30-9am
Tuesdays (a focus on children, youth, families) Emmaus Chapel	9-9.30am
1st Friday (Discipleship Prayers) 1 March on Zoom (Meeting ID: 876 2631 9454 Passcode: 443248)	8-8.30am
Last Monday (Parish Prayer Meeting) 25 March on Zoom (Meeting ID: 882 8041 9671 Passcode: 282670)	8-9pm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

APRIL 2024

- 03 April Women's Forum Quiz: a chance to get the grey cells working and have fun at the same time. Catch up with friends over tea and hot cross buns. A raffle will be held at this meeting. The Good Shepherd Hall, 2.15pm.
- 04 April Men's Curry Night: with a Christian speaker. All men welcome. The Good Shepherd, 7.30pm.
- 04 & 05 April Easter Fun Days: for 7 to 11 year olds, 10-4pm. Sign up via the Events page, www.wisleywithpyrford.org
- 18 April Newark Group Dinner: with guest speaker Steve Bird who will speak on, 'Arnhem - what went wrong'. The Good Shepherd Hall, 7.30pm for an 8pm start. The contact is Tony Williams, 01932 346815/agw25@btinternet.com
- 23 & 30 April BreakThrough: boys only group (school years 7-13). Discussions & worship. Chill out & play table tennis, pool & football. The Good Shepherd, 7.30-9pm. Please contact anthony@wisleywithpyrford.org for details.
- 24 April EXP: for those who have faith or are wanting to know what it is all about. The Good Shepherd, school years 6-9 - 7.30-8.45pm & school years 7-13 - 7.30-9.15pm.
- 26 April Youth Club Junior (school years 4-6): a chance to meet up with your friends and have lots of fun. Entrance 50p. Tuck shop available. The Good Shepherd Hall, 6.30-7.45pm.
- 28 April Sunday Lunch: The Good Shepherd Hall, 1pm. Book via Philippa Hewitt, 01932 400182/phil@rdhewitt.co.uk. Bookings taken from 1st April.

Parish Prayer Meetings during April

Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays (Morning Prayer) on Zoom (Meeting ID: 895 8461 0678 Passcode: 337626)	8.30-9am
Tuesdays (a focus on children, youth, families) Emmaus Chapel	9-9.30am
1st Friday (Discipleship Prayers) 5 April on Zoom (Meeting ID: 876 2631 9454 Passcode: 443248)	8-8.30am
Last Monday (Parish Prayer Meeting) 29 April on Zoom (Meeting ID: 882 8041 9671 Passcode: 282670)	8-9pm

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS: We offer our sympathy to the family and friends of:

08/10/2023	Dennis DALY	Age: 98
24/11/2023	Josie ANSELL	Age: 86
02/12/2023	Anna-Marie CROSSAN	Age: 54
18/12/2023	Thelma MEDHURST	Age: 95
13/01/2024	Roger ALLEN	Age: 78



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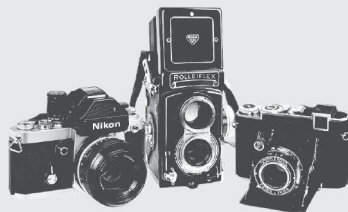
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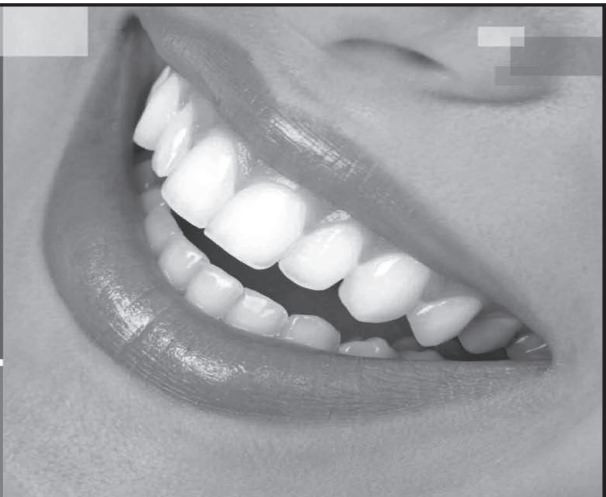
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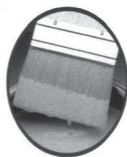
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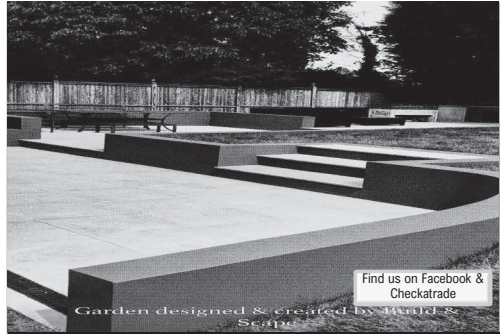
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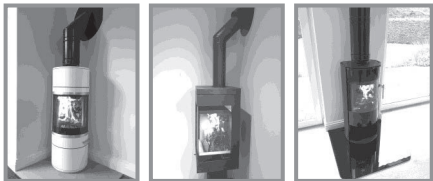


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Mark 15

Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.

The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

I sit chained in a damp dingy prison, waiting my fate. What fate you ask? Do you not know who I am? I am Barabbas, the finest (although some say shabbiest) rebellion leader against those pagan Romans, who demand we pay taxes to them to support their filthy government and its fake gods.

Now I just have to think of a way out of here before they can sentence me. But then I heard the crowds outside shouting out: "Release Barabbas." "Yes, we want Barabbas to be released."

Release me? What is going on out there, why are they shouting for my release? "Crucify him," "crucify him!" "Give us Barabbas and crucify Jesus."

They want to crucify this man Jesus and have me released? Are they mad? I have only heard good things about this Jesus. Out of the two of us I am the guilty one. I mean, I have murdered a man (or two). Surely that makes me guilty and the one who should be crucified?

But then again... If he isn't going to defend himself, and the people clearly love me, then who am I to stop him.. I mean sitting in this filthy squalor of a prison, no heating, no indoor plumbing, no food fit for human consumption, but also no hope of escape either. Hmmm, this man, he is my only way out of desperation, hopelessness, and the crime for which I have been charged.

Yes, the only way for me to be free without charge is if they take this Jesus and have him sentenced in my place.

A guard came in. "It's your lucky day, the people have pressed Pilate for your release. Jesus is taking your place."

I walk outside, the air is thick with hatred, no wonder Pilate gave in. There are so

many people, some cheering for my release others tearing their robes in anger toward this Jesus.

Pilate called out: “Here is your Barabbas. Take Jesus to be flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turn him over to be crucified.”

As Jesus is dragged away to be whipped, we looked at each other and, in that moment, I saw in his eyes no sign of hatred towards me, for my release. But one of compassion, of love. It’s strange, it is almost like he had planned this whole thing, that I may be released, whilst he willingly took my place of being sentenced to death so that I can live.



EASTER SERVICES 2024

28th March	Maundy Thursday
Good Shepherd, 7.30pm	Bring & Share Supper & Communion service remembering the Last Supper.
29th March	Good Friday
Good Shepherd, 10am	An Hour by the Cross. A special service for Good Friday.
31st March	Easter Sunday
Newark Priory, 6am	Dawn Service
Good Shepherd, 8am	Holy Communion
Good Shepherd, 10am	Easter Family Communion
Wisley, 10am	Easter Holy Communion
St. Nicholas', 11.30am	Easter Holy Communion



Luke 23

³² *Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.* ³⁴ *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

It’s a grim business dealing with a crucifixion – not something I have to do every day. We Romans conduct them in public, on a bit of a hill so that the locals see it and take note...

Three today, side by side. Two were known criminals and had it coming. The third was someone they called Jesus. I’d heard a bit about him. Some sort of religious trouble maker. There were stories about him performing miracles. It seems he’d upset the religious authorities and they wanted rid of him. They’d found him ‘guilty’ but I don’t know of what. Even our Governor, Pilate, couldn’t understand exactly what he’d done but I suspect for a quiet life agreed to have him executed.

Crucifixion is a slow and painful death. The nails through the hands and feet are bad enough, I suppose, but it’s usually suffocation which finishes them. Slumped forward they try to get a little more upright to help them breathe but eventually taking their weight on their feet is too much. We stick a spear in them at the end to make sure they’re dead.

Before the end the two criminals were talking to him. One said something like – if you are a king save yourself. (Some joker had forced a crown made of thorns on Jesus’ head.) The other said ‘we deserve this, he doesn’t.’ Quite generous thing to say when you are in great pain! Then he asked the Jesus fellow to remember him..... Jesus said ‘you will join me in paradise.

Actually I felt sorry for them – well, perhaps not the criminals. But Jesus seemed harmless really. Still, not my job to takes sides. If Pilate orders an execution I just get on with it and hope that people learn something from it. But I don’t suppose anyone will remember him.....

Job done – we cut them down and after a short while I went back to the officers’ mess.





John 20

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Well this has been the most extraordinary few days of my life – or frankly, of *anyone's* life.

I hardly know where to start explaining what's been happening.

I've been following Jesus around for quite a while now – since he made me well a year or two back when no-one else knew how to fix me. Although his main followers were men, unusually he didn't turn women away. But Jesus was always different – anyone could see that. His kindness, the way he healed people (including women, so there, Peter!), did amazing things that just can't be explained, and the stories he told us – people travelled miles to listen to him. He was a wonderful teacher and knew so much about God and the Kingdom of Heaven. It was so easy to just sit there for hours trying to take it all in.

Anyway – just a week ago he rode into Jerusalem with everyone cheering and waving and we all felt really good about it.

Then it all turned. I don't know why – it just all went absolutely horrible.

Soldiers arrested Jesus, he was put on trial and people voted to have him killed. Were they the same people who'd been cheering for him? I don't know, but it all happened very quickly and was really really terrible. Just a couple of days ago they made him walk outside the city to the place where they execute people. His mother and I and some of the others followed to see what was happening and....

MARY MAGDALENE – A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

PAULINE LANGFIELD

I can hardly bear to say it....they nailed him to a cross and left him to die. I didn't want to see it but I couldn't leave his poor mother and we all hoped he'd perform some sort of miracle and save himself.

But he didn't and that was the worst day of my life.

Now for the *really* extraordinary bit.

This morning a group of us took some spices to the tomb where his body had been put. How we thought we were going to move the stone from the entrance, I've no idea, but I suppose we weren't thinking straight. Well when we got there the stone had already been moved! We looked into the tomb and it was empty and well, I just burst into tears. Then I saw someone standing there and he asked why I was crying. I assumed he must be the gardener and I asked him what had happened to the body. But he spoke my name and suddenly I realised – it was Jesus! He was alive and he told me to go and tell the others.

We rushed to tell the men and of course they didn't believe us and had to go and see for themselves. (Peter – you have really got to start treating women as equal to men! Jesus did.)

This has all been so incredible and I hope we have the courage to tell other people about this because everyone should know and should pass on the message of Jesus being alive and about all the things he taught us. And who knows, maybe even people outside Jerusalem will hear about it and maybe some will still be talking about it in ten years' time!





'A Sword will pierce your heart' the old man at the temple told me many years ago and in these last few days I finally understood what he meant. From late Thursday evening when John knocked on my door with the fateful words – 'he's been taken' I knew a dread and pain that I had never experienced before.

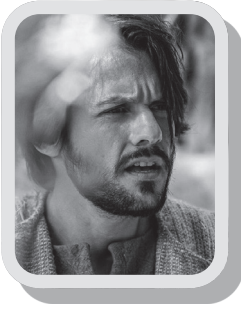
Every mother knows that their child is special and from the moment that the angel appeared to me to tell me I was having God's son, followed by his birth in the stable and the visitors (shepherds and Kings), I have known that Jesus' life would be unique and I was blessed to be a part of it.

The darkness and despair of Friday's execution was almost too much to bear, but I had to be there for my son. Witnessing his torture (that is the only way to describe what they did to him) nearly brought me to my knees, but a mother's love creates a resolve that can't be shaken. At one moment on the route to the hill where they crucified him, I caught his eye – the love still burned bright, despite his pain and suffering, it gave me the courage and a peace to carry on. The words that I'd heard over the years seemed to bubble up inside me – 'he will be great, he will reign, there will be no end to his kingdom' – I didn't understand, but they gave me an inner strength.

We reached the hill, others encouraged me to come away, but I knew I had to be there until the end and John stayed with me. And then Jesus looked straight into my eyes – 'behold your son' he said, and to John, 'behold your mother'. I knew he wanted us to let him go and love and care for each other as family.

Moments later he died and my world collapsed.

I don't know how I got through Saturday, it's a blur. But then Sunday morning came and my door burst open – 'He is alive, He is alive' – to begin with I couldn't comprehend what was being said, but then a warmth and certainty flowed through me as I remembered his words – 'I must go to Jerusalem and be killed, but on the third day I will be raised from the dead'. His mission was accomplished – we were saved and the world would never be the same again.



Later that evening, the gang gathered together in a little place we’d managed to find to hide away. Distraught. Heartbroken. Empty. Until..... on the Sunday morning, Mary and Martha came rushing back in saying that they’d met Jesus in the garden by the tomb. That he was alive. What?! And then he appeared, out of nowhere. He just said “Peace be with you.” He’d done it. All that talk about re-building temples in three days and so on. He’d been talking about himself! He had beaten death. Of course he had, he’s the Son of God. Oh,

me of little faith.

We’ve seen Jesus a few times over the past few weeks. It’s been a bit odd, to be honest. And of course, I was still feeling wretched about the whole pretending-not-to-know-him thing. I kept a low profile. I’d even gone back to a bit of fishing. To get away from it all, I suppose. But yesterday, after we’d had a dismal night catching precisely nothing, Jesus appeared on the beach. He told us to fish in a different bit of the lake, and our nets were bursting. Meanwhile, Jesus had calmly lit a fire and called us over.

I’m sure he looked straight at me. I thought, “oh well, here we go, it’s come-uppance time.” And then Jesus, in a loving way that only he can do, simply said to me “Come and have breakfast.” He even went back to calling me Simon, son of John. I had tears in my eyes as I sat with him. Tears of joy. Tears of forgiveness. And perhaps tears at the thought of what might happen next...



John 20

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

I, Thomas, am one of the disciples of Jesus and have had a great range of emotions over the last few days.

We were all shocked when Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver leading to him being crucified at Calvary. Judas then committed suicide at Akeldama having failed to save Jesus by returning the money.

At the time of the crucifixion and the following events I had been preaching in the south of the country so could only rely on information about the events from the other disciples.

I was in deep despair over the news of the brutal murder of my Lord on that Friday then puzzlement when I heard that my master's body had disappeared from the tomb on the Sunday evening.

Next came the news that Mary Magdalene had been at the tomb and seen two angels and then seen and spoken to Jesus who had appeared miraculously. The other disciples also witnessed Jesus a little later and rejoiced. Jesus had said "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you".

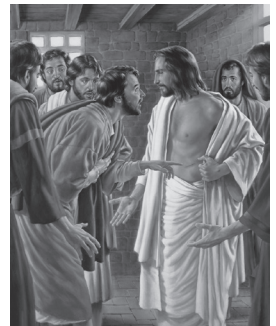
I found all this very difficult to accept initially, (hence the name sometimes ascribed to me of Doubting Thomas) and said "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side I will not believe".

A week later I was back from my travels and joined the other disciples. Although the doors were closed Jesus appeared. This was the second appearance and he asked me to check his hands and side. He asked me not to doubt and I said "My Lord and my God".

Jesus said "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe". I felt ashamed because of my doubts but elated to see my Lord.

Later myself and 7 other disciples tried to fish at the Sea Of Tiberius but were unsuccessful. Jesus appeared, for the third time, and told us where to cast the nets which then came in full. One of us said to Simon Peter "It is the Lord". Then Jesus said "Come and have breakfast" and we went ashore and ate bread and the fish with Jesus.

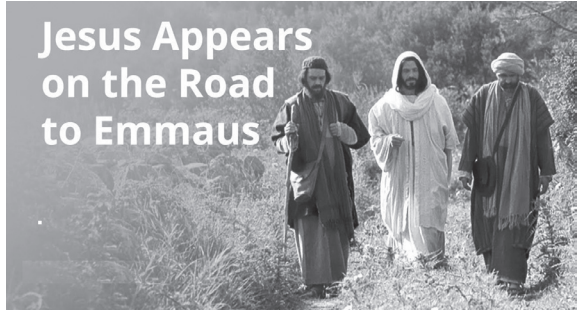
Jesus was to appear to us on various occasions over the next 40 days before he ascended to Heaven.



LUKE 24 ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.



He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.



I am delighted to be able to introduce the new church charity
– St Michael’s Church, Sheerwater

The project is to fund a new post, a community and family worker based at the church. St Michael’s is a shared Anglican and Methodist church with a very small congregation and our parish’s near neighbour. It is situated in the centre of the Sheerwater housing estate, only 1.8 miles from the Church of the Good Shepherd, although walking round the estate you notice how different it is to Pyrford.

Due to its severe financial challenges, Woking Borough Council has decided to end its development agreement with Thamesway, which was mid-way through the delivery of a 1,200 home, multi-phase regeneration scheme in Sheerwater. As a result there is a lot of uncertainty for the estate. Some residents have moved into new properties whilst others are living in partially boarded up blocks waiting to find out what the next stage is. One gentleman is the only person living in his block and it is all boarded up including the front entrance. The financial difficulties have also directly affected St Michael’s as they were at the planning stage for a Woking Council funded redevelopment at a cost of £1.85m. This redevelopment was for St Michael’s to become a community hub but the plug was pulled on the project just as the Church was preparing to move out, at Easter 2023. What the Church and the community needs now is Hope and hopefully this project and the support from the Parish of Wisley with Pyrford will provide them with Hope.

The new community and family worker will lead and develop further St Michael’s Church’s current work with families such as the present weekly Thursday Tots Praise and Tuesday Pop up Café. Both are very valuable outreach projects with huge benefits to the community. Tots Praise started off with three families attending on average and a year later ten families are now attending on a regular basis. One mother commented that it is the best church-based group for pre-school children that she has attended. The children love greeting and finding Polly Parrot. Suzanne Lees-Smith currently leads this and she is supported by various parishioners (Mike and Sue Widdup, Judith Vella, Claire Nix, Maggie Parsons and myself).

If you live in a small flat with young children in Sheerwater what you and your children need is space, a place which is comfortable, safe and warm. That is what Pop Up Café is trying to offer to primary-aged children and their families, once a week after school. Pop Up Café offers a space where children can relax, eat healthy

food, participate in crafts, play games and let off steam. We end the session with a Bible story. Parents and carers can also relax and have a drink. The café started welcoming 8 families (15 children) in November 2019. It had to pause due to the pandemic but activity bags were given to families on a weekly basis and since September 2023, 22 families have registered (45 children) and an average weekly attendance is 15 families (34 children). These sessions are so popular that it is hard to get the families to leave at the end of the session.

Caroline Oldroyd and I regularly help at these sessions. I recently asked the children why they enjoyed coming to Pop Up Café. Here are some of the replies:

“I love the colouring”

“It is very nice and you don’t have to pay for it”

“I like playing with the wooden bricks”

“I like the jigsaw puzzles”

“I like the cheesy puffs”

“I like playing games with my friends”

“I like the adult helpers”



The Parish of Wisley with Pyford has other links with St Michaels’. Diane Davidson spent several months at St Michael’s as part of her training programme. Katherine Gervasio, Anita Reynell, Jan and Ian Lipscombe lead the music for Sunday worship on a regular basis and Mike and Sue Widdup help at community lunches and worship there as well as at the Good Shepherd.

In addition to developing the current work the worker will also help develop St Michael’s relationship with Broadmere Primary School, and Bishop David Brown Secondary School. They will also work with the ministry team to explore ways to integrate families within the wider life of the church, and be actively involved in shaping the forward development of this outreach.

If you would like to know more about the project or St Michael’s please do not hesitate to contact Mike Widdup or myself. If you are interested in helping at Tot’s Praise or Pop Up Café do come along one week and see the session in action.

St Michael’s are thrilled that the Parish of Wisley has agreed to support them in this way and we look forward to providing updates on the project.

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Our Father in heaven, thank you for your great love to us, your children. Thank you that with you beside us we are not consumed or overtaken by events. Help us to cling to you in times of desperation; help us even to thank and praise you that you are strengthening our faith and reliance on you. Thank you for your faithfulness to each one of us. Thank you that we can always trust you. We praise your wonderful name.

A prayer for the needs of the World

Dear Lord the World seems in such a mess: the war in Ukraine, fighting in the Middle East, the slaughter of Christians in the Sahel region of Africa, the violence against ethnic tribes in Myanmar; the hunger and disease wrought by natural disasters and climate change. We find it hard to find your love in the midst of all this. We beseech you to guide and direct the peacemakers and restrain the hand of the wicked. Uphold those who mourn the loss of loved ones, provide for the hungry and sick, and enable the many agencies who seek to bring relief to the many desperate situations.

*Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.*

*Serve the Lord with fear
and celebrate his rule with trembling.*

*Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.*

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Psalm 2;10-12

A prayer for our Discipleship Network

Lord Jesus, we bring before you all the elements of the Discipleship Network in the Parish. We pray for the home groups: that individuals will be diligent in attending and reading and studying your word and applying it to their lives. We pray for Lectio Divina, the Music Group meetings, God's Girls mornings, men's curry evenings and men's Bible studies, the Parish Prayer Meeting. Lord, as we seek to follow and hear from you, we pray for the leading and guidance of your Holy Spirit in all that we do. Help each one of us to be faithful witnesses to you, drawing people into the church and into faith.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

Words for reflection as we look forward to Easter

My song is love unknown—
my Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh and die?

Here might I stay and sing—
no story so divine!
Never was love, dear King,
never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman



THE NEWARK GROUP
(For the Men of the Parish)

Thursday 21st March 7.30pm for 8pm dinner

English Eccentricity and Customs.

Bill McNaught



What is an eccentric? Bill's talk looks at the results of a formal study on the subject, gives examples of some of history's strangest people and looks at a variety of odd customs.

**Please book through Richard Whitehill
rwhitehill136@ntlworld.com or 01932 403240**

Thursday 18th April 7.30pm for 8pm dinner



Arnhem— what went wrong?

Steve Bird

Was the attack on Arnhem bridge in Holland in September 1944 90% successful, as Montgomery claimed, or a total failure as one of the generals who parachuted in subsequently stated? What were the causes of failure and success and should the operation have gone ahead at all?

**Please book through Tony Williams
agw25@btinternet.com or 01932 346815**

We meet in the Good Shepherd Hall £25 payable on entry Bar



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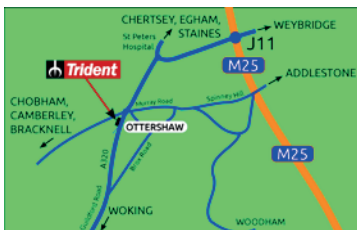
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