

St Mary's Parish Church
Whitegate



NEWS FOR JANUARY 2024



Our cover photo

The wintry scene for our first issue of the New Year features some of the newest houses in the parish, the first residents having moved into St Mary's Drive just 25 years ago this year. Whilst the houses are modern, the architecture speaks of an earlier age, with the colours, materials and style echoing features of the designs of John Douglas, the architect responsible for many Victorian buildings in the area.

For centuries, access to Vale Royal Abbey, and as it later became, The Great House, was via Vale Royal Drive, opposite the lychgate at St Mary's Church. Nowadays cars of course use St Mary's Drive, just at the entrance to the village, and Vale Royal Drive is an attractive place to walk, with footpaths leading off to left and right heading into Church Wood, to the houses, the Golf Club, to Vale Royal Locks or across to Mill Lane. A walk down to the locks on a bright and sunny winter's day brings many rewards.

Colours of Christmas

And if you are walking from the village in January, don't forget that the photo exhibition, Colours of Christmas, runs right up until 4th February and can be viewed any time The Mews is open. The First Thursday Café opens at 10.30 am on 4th January, so if you plan your walk for then, there'll be coffee and cake available too.

A verse for JANUARY

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3: verse 1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

2023 has been a tough year for many people and if we'd known then what we know now we might have done some things differently. Often we hear that "lessons will be learned", but do we want to become trapped by thinking only of what could have been, or what should have been done?

As we move into 2024, are we looking ahead with excitement to what this New Year holds, eager to embrace its opportunities and challenges? And, just as important, have we learned the lessons of 2023 – are we kinder and more loving because of past struggles, pain, disappointment and/or hardship? Are we more patient, when patience counts? More generous... more understanding?

But the writer tells us that there is a time for all things, a time to be merry and a time to be sad; and moreover that we are wise to plan time for these things, and not leave them to take their chance of finding time in our lives. It is easy for us as individuals and even as a Church to occupy ourselves so fully that we are too busy to follow up on the opportunities that God lays in front of us.

God has a plan for us, but we need to keep in touch with him via prayer to know what it is.

JRC

JANUARY Diary

JAN 3rd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee (<i>see back page</i>) Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
4th	10.30 am	First Thursday Café (<i>see back page</i>)	The Mews
7th	9.30 am 9.30 am	Epiphany Morning Prayer Storytelling Service (for families & young children)	St Mary's The Mews
9th	7.30 pm	St Mary's PCC meeting	The Mews
10th	10.30 am 12.00 noon 6.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Fabric & Churchyard Committee meeting	The Mews St Mary's The Mews
14th	9.30 am	Plough Sunday Plough Sunday Service	St Mary's
16th	1.00 pm 2.00 pm 2.00 pm	St Mary's Mothers' Union Lunch & AGM Pastoral & Fellowship meeting Bible Study at Commonsides	The Fox & Barrel, Cotebrook Dairy Cottage L.B. Methodist Chapel
17th	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	Tarporley G'dn Centre The Mews St Mary's
18th	2.00 pm	Mission & Giving meeting	Marton Sands House
21st	9.30 am 9.30 am	Epiphany 3 Morning Prayer Storytelling Service	St Mary's The Mews
22nd	2.00 pm	Mews Management Committee meeting	The Mews
23rd	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
24th	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
25th	10.30 am	Ladies' Burns Brunch (<i>see back page</i>)	The Badger Church Minshull
27th	7.00 pm	Burns Night Celebration (<i>see back page</i>)	The Mews or School Hall - <i>depends on numbers</i>
28th	9.30 am	Epiphany 4 Holy Communion	St Mary's
30th	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
31st	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews 12.00 noon
FEB 1st	10.30 am	First Thursday Café	The Mews
4th	9.30 am	Candlemas Family Service	St Mary's

New year reflections from the Vicar ...

As we begin a new year we wonder what it will hold for us. The past few years have been tough. As I write this the news is filled with images of war, the fighting between Israel and Gaza, the continuing conflict in Ukraine, and other acts of violence that don't make the headlines very often. In our daily prayers we remember those suffering from natural disasters which are reported but then the news moves on. We may not hear or see of the long-term hardship and suffering but we know it continues. As does, thank God, the work of agencies and individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes doing what is needed to make life better.



Also in the news is the enquiry into Covid with the inevitable wisdom of hindsight. One of the hard balancing acts was the need for lockdown against the inescapable harm and hardship such measures would cause. The daily news and briefings may be over but we witness the enduring trauma in mental health, missed education, social isolation and the devastating economic consequences.

Cast your mind back to autumn 2023 and ask when you noticed the first Christmas decorations in people's homes. Can you remember? For me it was 1st November, a house displaying both Halloween and Christmas lights. My inner Victor Meldrew rose to the occasion.

In 2023 I saw more Christmas decorations earlier than ever before, I wonder if that is a sign of people needing some tangible glimpse of hope in a world which seems so desperately sad?

New Year is meant to be a time of resolutions. Of course, we usually take these fairly lightly. Our resolutions are often to lose a bit of weight, tidy that cupboard we've put off doing for so long, walk the dog more often, be nicer to that miserable neighbour, to recycle more. Or maybe just to keep on top of the vicarage hedge this year.

To be resolute matters. To intentionally redirect our time, energy, money, makes a difference. To us. To others. To our world.

One reason for sadness is the fact that bad news seems overwhelming. But what if we could see behind the news, to observe not just the fleeting headlines but also the tireless resilience of those who work to make life better?

One of the joys of local community, and local church, are those hardy souls who quietly and patiently get on with doing things for others. They don't

make a fuss. They won't receive a medal. And they'll never be on the front page of the papers. But they make a difference.

T S Elliot observed that humanity cannot bear too much reality. That goes two ways. It is true that we are diminished by continual encounters with suffering, brutality and oppression. But it is also true that we overlook great joy and hope which quietly, patiently, not always successfully, but nevertheless with resilience, seeks to make life better. Sometimes most of all we cannot see this reality within ourselves.

I remember a radio interview way back in the 1990's when Liverpool's church leaders were asked what resolutions people might make at new year. Archbishop Derek Worlock spoke up. He said he wanted people to celebrate enduring commitment. The enduring commitment of others, and the enduring commitment within themselves. This, he suggested, gives us hope.

Paul.



JANUARY NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

□ Thanks

Continuing Paul's theme of commitment, we give a huge thank you to everyone who put so much extra effort into ensuring the success of all the events, activities and services in Whitegate over the Advent and Christmas season. The preparations and rehearsals, the decorating and the delivery of each item in our December calendar were much enjoyed and appreciated by all who took part. Christmas 2023 will stay long in the memory.

□ Snow Angels in The Mews

Snow Angels is a local social enterprise, based here in Mid Cheshire. They meet weekly in The Mews and here, the organiser, Izzy Jones, tells us what they do.

*"At Snow Angels our aim is to reduce social isolation for people aged 70 and over. We run a **'Keep connected cafe'** at Whitegate Mews every Tuesday, 10.30-12.30 and we charge £6. We work alongside Greenbank School who provide meals for us as part of their work experience. During the session we have a two-course lunch and sometimes enjoy a craft activity or a game; the group also enjoy unlimited cups of tea and coffee! If you would like to join us, please call 0300 666 6226.*



☐ Sidespeople and Coffee Rota at St Mary's

Volunteers are needed to fulfil these vital roles. The sidespeople are our meeters and greeters, the face of St Mary's when worshippers arrive for the service. Those on the coffee rota fulfil the same friendly role when the service finishes, making tea and coffee in The Mews. Neither job is onerous and more volunteers on the rotas mean everyone's turn comes round less frequently. Please consider volunteering so that we can continue to offer the warm welcome at St Mary's that we would all like to receive. You can speak to John Duthie or Anne Blayney about becoming a sidesperson and for the coffee rota, speak to Linda Pinder or to anyone on the team.

☐ Lent Series 2024: Symbols of Christianity

Our Lent Series this year will be focused on the symbols of Christianity. There will be five sessions looking at light, water, bread, the cross and fish. They will be led by Jane and John in The Mews on Wednesday evenings from 7pm for about an hour, starting on 21 February. The sessions will look at the significance of each symbol, both in the Bible and in Christian tradition, and encourage us to consider how they might help us on our Christian journey. Each session will be free-standing, so don't worry if you can't attend all of them.



☐ RNIB Stamp appeal

Don't forget to bring your stamps into church this month. The collecting box will remain until the end of the January.

Remember the golden rules:

1. Cut them out leaving a ½ inch strip all round
2. Put them in two envelopes, British & Foreign
3. No Post Office gold printed labels, thank you.



WHITEGATE WI

Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month; 7.15 pm for 7.30 start, in Whitegate Recreation Room. We start the New Year with a meal out. Please note it's on 10th January, **not** 3rd). To find out more, contact Alison: whitegatewi@outlook.com

☐ **Contacts**

Please note that only e-mail addresses for the Vicar, the News coordinator & the Mews Lettings officer are shown in the online version of the monthly News. If you need the e-mail address of one of the other Contacts, please phone them to ask for it.

<p>Vicar Rev Canon Paul Dawson 01606 889995 The Vicarage, Cinder Hill, Whitegate CW8 2BH vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com</p>	<p>Churchwardens John Duthie 01606 889836 Anne Blayney 01606 74020</p> <hr/> <p>PCC Secretary Roger Wilkes 01606 75738</p>
<p>Curates Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 Rev Jane Millinchip 07981 981293 Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970</p>	<p>Treasurer John Duthie 01606 889836</p> <hr/> <p>Children's Worker Teresa Finney 01606 889311</p>
<p>Safeguarding Officer Sue Whitehead 01606 852302</p>	<p>Mothers' Union Eileen Lees 01606 786895</p>
<p>Mews Lettings Andrew Millinchip amillinchip@gmail.com</p>	<p>"News" coordinator Christine Ball 01606 593260 chrisball2022@outlook.com</p>
<p>Musical Director Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772</p>	<p>Pastoral & Fellowship Committee Alan Newton 01829 760239</p>
<p>Church Flowers Pam Davies 01606 557833</p>	<p>Social & Fundraising Group John Blayney 07964 844642</p>

☐ **FEBRUARY 2024 NEWS:** Comments and contributions for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send to chrisball2022@outlook.com by 15th January.



LADIES' "BURNS" BRUNCH

Thursday 25th January 2024

10.30 am – 1.00 pm

At the Badger Inn, Church Minshull

£15

Please pay on booking or before 18th January
To book, sign on the list in church or contact

Chris Newton (01829 760239)

or Pam Davies (01606 557833)



JOIN US FOR THE *FIRST*
FIRST THURSDAY CAFÉ OF

2024

Thursday, 4th January
The Mews, Church Green, Whitegate
10.30 – 12.00 noon

Meet & chat over coffee & cake

See the Colours of Christmas photo exhibition



St Mary's Church Crafty Coffee Group

meets in
The Mews, Church Green
on Wednesdays
from 10.00 am-12.00 noon

We do various crafts and would like
to welcome new members, whether
you come for crafting or for coffee!

It's a good time for fellowship along
with a cuppa and biscuits.



Saturday 27th January
7.00 – 10.30pm

St Mary's Church Whitegate Social committee
In Whitegate School Hall or The Mews (dependent on numbers)
Commemorating the poetry of Robbie Burns

- A meal with Haggis and traditional vegetables
- Includes a Whisky and a Scottish dessert
- Poetry, entertainment and fun
- Vegetarian and alcohol free alternatives available
- Please sign up on the list in Church
or email John Blayney johnblayney2@gmail.com
- Tickets £15.00 in person from John Blayney, Elaine Campbell, Peter Lever or Peter & Pauline Hayward
- For more details John -07964844642 Elaine 01606888519