

St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



NEWS FOR APRIL 2025



Our cover photo

We are pleased to bring you a first glimpse of the new exhibition of photographs in The Mews, from Easter Sunday. 20th April, until the beginning of Advent. This soaring image of a great white egret and a little egret was taken by Julie Webb, at RSPB Burton Mere. The exhibition is entitled 'On eagles' wings', which is a reference to these lines from Psalm 91

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings

Bear you on the breath of dawn

Make you to shine like the sun

And hold you in the palm of His hand

It is an exhibition of photographs of birds put together jointly by Julie Webb and Jane Millinchip. Jane continues her reflections on this psalm in the verse below.



A verse for APRIL

Psalm 91: verse 4

“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart”.

The psalmist compares God’s protection of those who trust in him to the protection which a mother eagle gives to her chicks. This is depicted as the mother spreading the feathers of her wings over them.

Similarly, God symbolically covers us with his wings. This imagery echoes the cherubim (angels) who spread their wings over the ark of the covenant in Exodus 25. This verse reminds us of God’s steadfastness and reliability, which acts as a protective barrier against life's ups and down, and it sends us the message that, even when times are bad, we can have strong confidence in God.

SJM

APRIL Diary

1st	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
2nd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
3rd	10.30 am	First Thursday Café, <i>details page 12</i>	The Mews
4th	10.00 am	School Easter Service in Church	St Mary's
6th	9.30 am	Fifth Sunday in Lent Family Service	St Mary's
7th	The Vicar is on duty at Chester Cathedral as duty chaplain.		
8th	12.00 noon 2.00 pm 7.00 pm	Deanery Chapter meeting Bible Study at Commonsie Concert at St Peter's, <i>see page 12</i>	L.B. Methodist Chapel St Peter's
9th	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	Tarporley Grd'n Centre The Mews St Mary's
13th	9.30 am 6.30 pm	Palm Sunday Palm Sunday Service Service of words and music for Holy Week	St Mary's St Mary's
15th	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie St Mary's Mothers' Union meeting	L.B. Methodist Chapel The Mews
16th	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
17th	7.30 pm	Maundy Thursday Service of Holy Communion	St Mary's
18th	2.00 pm 7.00 pm	Good Friday Tenebrae Service Good Friday Meditation Service	St Mary's St Peter's
19th	9.00 am	Bishop Mark's Motorcycle fundraising ride for Democratic Republic of Congo	
20th	9.30 am	Easter Sunday Holy Communion for Easter Day	St Mary's
22nd	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
23rd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
24th	9.45 am meet 2.00 pm	Whitegate Amblers first walk of 2025 <i>Details, page 12</i> Fabric & churchyard committee meeting	Gresty's Waste car park (CW6 0SP) Marton Sands House
27th	9.30 am 2.00 pm for 2.30	Easter 2 Holy Communion Movies in The Mews: When Eight Bells Toll <i>Details, page 12</i>	St Mary's The Mews
29th	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
30th	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
MAY 1st	10.30 am 2.00 pm 4.00 pm	First Thursday Café Mission & giving group meeting Communications group meeting	The Mews Marton Sands House The Mews
4th	9.30 am	Easter 3 Family Service	St Mary's

April thoughts from the Vicar...

Easter falls late this year, Easter Sunday being 20th April. According to the Gregorian calendar the earliest date for Easter is 22nd March, but this isn't going to happen until 2285 so I don't think too many of us need worry about that. The latest date is 25th April, which will next occur in 2038. So this Easter being 20th April is certainly towards the later end of the scale.



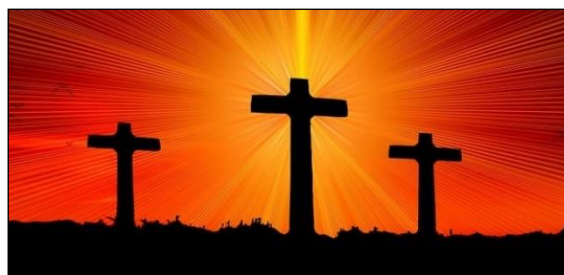
This doesn't guarantee good weather for Easter, I remember moving into a vicarage on 28th April in the midst of a blizzard. But the later date might mean that the humble Fritillaria might be in flower. Ronald Blythe reminds us, "It is named, they say, after a Roman dicebox, the kind they shook below the cross." Maybe a few Fritillaria might appear alongside the Easter lilies to remind us of this seemingly small detail?

That the soldiers drew lots for the clothing of victims of execution points to a willingness to overlook the rules when it came to doing away with those who challenged the state. In Roman law gambling was illegal, yet, since this was seldom enforced, gambling was popular. That soldiers on duty could cast lots so openly during a very public execution suggests a culture of contempt for those whose lives were being so hideously taken.

Crucifixion was designed to be a hideous death, slow and painful and public. The victim being nailed through the wrists (not the hands as art often depicts) had to hold their weight to prevent themselves dying through suffocation. This is why they broke the legs of the criminals causing them to die more quickly and not profane the Sabbath. The public nature of crucifixion was designed not only as a deterrent but also as a statement. Crucifixion was only done to those who didn't count. A Roman citizen would never be crucified. They might be executed but never by crucifixion.

We enter April still in Lent, traditionally a time of fasting and reflection. On Palm Sunday we have our usual morning services with a dramatic reading of the Passion Narrative. In the evening there will be a special service of hymns and readings for Holy Week at St Mary's at 6.30pm. The format is similar to our Advent Nine Lessons and Carols but the focus will be the Cross rather than the Crib.

Details of these, and other Holy Week and Easter services are in the Diary.



On Holy Saturday we are doing something slightly unusual this year. A group of Christian motorcyclists will be touring parts of the Diocese raising money to send a motorbike to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Africa vehicles are expensive and in many rural areas roads are impassible. A lot of medical care and supplies are carried to people by motorcycle. You can put a small capacity motorcycle on the ground for under £1,000 so the aim is to raise enough to send at least one, hopefully two, 125cc motorcycles to our Partners In Mission in the DRC.



If you would like to join in please speak to the Vicar. Or if you aren't a biker you can always donate £5 which is what we are asking of each rider taking part. You could be a 'Virtual Biker' for a day!

Back to flowers. People sometimes ask why we have lilies in church on Easter Sunday, and also during funeral services. As ever there is more than one answer. In paintings of the Annunciation Gabriel is often shown holding a lily as a sign of Mary's purity. The lily represents Jesus' innocence in life and in death. And also, the trumpet shape of the lily recalls the horns that herald the resurrection of Christ and the gift of life to all who call upon His name.

Wise and gracious flower arrangers snip the stamens out of the lilies to avoid careless clergy staining their vestments. This wasn't a problem when the altar was fast against the reredos and the clergy joined the people in facing east. The modern practice of pulling altars forward so that the priest faces the people means that clergy have to squeeze into a gap that was never meant to be there. Hence, they brush against the lilies behind the altar. Just one good reason to put altars back where they belong!



Many people will visit a church at Easter who seldom otherwise attend. Maybe they will discover the truth in a comment made by Queen Victoria, "The use of the Church was that it made one think of what one would otherwise not think of." Amen to that.

Yours
Paul

NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

☐ Pancake update

Thanks to all who supported our Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday. We had a steady stream of customers from opening time onwards and a great buzz of enjoyment and conviviality in The Mews, both in kitchen and dining room, as helpers and customers chatted and ate with many coming back for seconds and thirds. One young man, Jacob, declared that the vicar should become a chef when he grows up. We're pleased to say that £260.35 was raised in donations for Christian Aid.



☐ Pettypool Vocational College & Outdoor Centre

We recently welcomed Nadia McKane, from Pettypool, to St Mary's. She came to tell us of the work that goes on there to support young people with special educational needs and learning difficulties. As head of Marketing and Fundraising, she's well qualified to outline all the activities, training programmes currently available and to make us aware of the plans for the future. We are proud to have this college on our doorstep and to give what support we can. There is an opportunity soon for everyone to visit and explore more, for they are holding their Spring Fair on Saturday 10th May, 10.00am – 2.00pm. To find out more, visit their website: pettypool.org.uk/events/ and in the calendar, click on May.

☐ Church clock

At the recent meeting of the PCC, members discussed the quote received from the Cumbria Clock Company for the repairs to the clock's striking mechanism. Despite the considerable cost, £2,070 (+VAT), it was agreed that the work must be done and so the PCC has given the go-ahead. We wait to hear when the work can start.

☐ Last call for Electoral Roll forms

This is the year when our Electoral Roll is completely renewed and everyone must reapply. There's still time to pick up a form in church – ask a warden, a sidesperson, a member of the clergy, or Eileen Lees, our Electoral Roll officer and return your form to her by 12th April. The new roll will come into force at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Sunday 11th May.

☐ Mid Cheshire Foodbank

Items currently in short supply are: UHT Long-Life Milk, Coffee, Tinned Meat (Ham/Corned Beef), Jam/Marmalade, Deodorant (Male/Female).

Please remember the foodbank when you do your shopping, and bring your donations to church, placing them in the box by the choir vestry.

□ **Whitegate Amblers' first walk of 2025**

Don't forget that the first walk this year is on Thursday 24th April. All the details are in the mini-poster on page 12.

□ **Movies in The Mews**

Our next film is on Sunday 27th April. See page 12 for information about it. Apologies, for an error crept in to the list of dates for the rest of the year, published in last month's NEWS. The final film of 2025 will be on Sunday 30th November (*Not 1st December*).

Advance Notices: more information in May NEWS

▪ **Sunday 25th May – Rogation Sunday**

Traditionally a day when parishioners "beat the bounds", that is to walk the parish boundaries, praying along the way, asking for God's blessing on the land and the crops and thus, the well-being of the settlement. We shall be giving thanks for our land here in Whitegate and celebrating the investment of time, effort and funds by so many villagers to transform Whitehead Fields into a true beauty spot. Plants and trees provide homes for wildlife in abundance and we can all enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the place where loved ones are laid to rest.

▪ **Sunday 1st June – 3.00 pm at St Mary's**

An informal concert of light music performed on Handbells by DeciBells, featuring also, The Organist Entertains with Andrew Millinchip. Donations for the mission & upkeep of St Mary's.

▪ **Saturday 28th June – BBQ & Bands**

Preparations are well in hand for the extravaganza that will be the 3rd annual Whitegate Music Festival!



THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCHWARDENS. The Vicar writes...

St Peter's day this year marks the 40th anniversary of my ordination. There have been some significant moments over the past four decades. In various parishes we have undertaken three major building projects, two new schools and a new community hall. In all there was somewhere in the region of £12,000,000 of new resources brought into reality (and those were the days when £12 million was a lot of money!)

The most significant thing that ever happened was getting a group of teenage mums to begin a breast-feeding class. The local doctors were delighted and astonished. A group from the Dept. of Health came up from London. "How did you do it?" they asked.

"Ah ha! We had a secret weapon. A granny with a teapot."

Every wonderful thing has been a result of teamwork and at the heart of those teams were Churchwardens. I count myself deeply blessed to have been befriended and supported by the loyalty, faith, courage and tenacity of many Churchwardens. (Plus one who wasn't any of those things and threw a tantrum when asked to return a key they shouldn't have had – but that's another story.)

Keystones of the parish

Churchwardens are the fundamental foundation of the parish. You can have a parish without a Vicar, many do these days. You can have a parish without a church, my first parish worshipped at the end of a school hall. You can have a parish without many of the very important people we need such as Treasurers and PCC Secretaries. These people are important but they aren't legally essential for a parish to exist. But without Churchwardens you can't be a parish. A church without Churchwardens becomes a Chapel of Ease of a neighbouring parish and their PCC takes over the running of things.

Elected by church members

So, Churchwardens matter. But they matter far more than the strict legal requirements. Churchwardens are elected by the lay members of the church (so the clergy should not interfere) to share in the leadership of the parish and work alongside the Incumbent.

With specific responsibilities

Churchwardens represent the people and support the priest; they set a good example and are called to maintain dignity and peace in the church and churchyard, they make sure visitors are welcomed (not necessarily by themselves, but ensuring there are Sidespersons available), they support and care for the parish priest making sure he/she has the necessary resources, takes time off, is assisted in the administration of the parish.

Churchwardens maintain the Church buildings; they make sure the PCC has a means to keep the buildings properly maintained and heated, they open and close the church for services, they update the hymnboards and ensure legal requirements are met. They light candles.

Churchwardens ensure that the PCC has proper means to carry out its financial obligations, the day-to-day tasks are carried out by a Treasurer (or Treasurers) under the Churchwardens' oversight.

The Diocese takes Churchwardens very seriously. They are Bishop's Officers elected by the lay members and admitted to office at the Archdeacon's Visitation. Every year there are training courses for new Churchwardens.

Oiling the wheels of church life

Behind all the formalities are people of goodwill who generously give of their time to promote the life of the local church. They get to know people and places. Over time they know how to work that awkward lock used once every blue moon. They know the quirks of the heating system. They watch out for the Vicar going mad and gently intervene when necessary.

In the past it was not uncommon for someone to be a Churchwarden for decades. People enjoyed the role once they had got to grips with it. That longevity of service had its strengths but it also meant that the sharing of knowledge and experience was limited. These days Churchwardens, elected annually, can serve no more than six years. This enables a parish to have a group of people who know the ropes and who can support newly elected Churchwardens.

In our United Benefice the role of Churchwardens in opening and closing the churches is crucial. The clergy flit like butterflies from church to church (I'm being metaphorical here) so we rely on our Churchwardens to open the churches, ensuring they are ready for services, and closing up afterwards.

Sharing the load

We are committed to sharing the workload so each parish needs at least two Churchwardens, otherwise we are asking one person to do everything every week and that isn't healthy or even practical.

I meet with Margaret and our Churchwardens monthly. At our last meeting Sandra informed us that following her accident last year she will be unable to stand for re-election in 2025. This has been a hard decision not taken lightly. We need to elect a new Churchwarden at our Annual Parochial Meeting on 11th May this year.

Anne has indicated that she will serve one more year but will not be standing for election in 2026.

She looks after our Communications Committee which is no small task and she has also recently taken on being our Parish Safeguarding Officer, a very significant role. Again, this is a decision taken carefully and prayerfully. It is a healthy sign when the tasks of the church are shared amongst different people. It is not healthy when one person carries too much and does too many jobs.

With Anne and Sandra's blessing I am writing this now so our lay members are aware of our need to find two new Churchwardens over 2025 and 2026. This is particularly important because you will be aware that I am due to retire in 2026 and we want the parish to be well prepared.

Putting skills to good use – and discovering new ones

Over the past forty years I have valued the friendship and support of a wide range of Churchwardens. They have all had their own particular gifts and areas of interest. As volunteers their combined contribution to furthering the Kingdom of God has been magnificent. They have all found some bits of the job challenging to begin with but they have also found it deeply rewarding and have grown in experience and confidence. Each has brought their own peculiar gifts to the life of the local church.

Over the years I have developed an instinct which I believe is shared by many of my ordained colleagues. Where someone stands for election as a Churchwarden clergy will always support and assist them as they get to grips with the role. What clergy will not do is to step into the vacuum where a parish doesn't elect Churchwardens. Hence, we wanted to give advance notice for both this year and next.

Please give careful and prayerful consideration to who may be elected this year and next year. We are not looking for people who are perfect or who know all there is to know. Like many roles it a job best learned by doing it.

Yours

Paul.



www.whitegatemarton-parishcouncil.org.uk

ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING: Thursday 24th April 7.30pm – 8.30pm in Whitegate Primary School Hall.

Join us to find out what is happening in your parish and hear updates from local community groups and the police.

Contacts

Please note that only e-mail addresses for the Vicar, the Treasurer, the Safeguarding officer, 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 Anne Blayney 07815 713012 Sandra Paskin 01606 882031</p> <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>Church Flowers Pam Davies 01606 557833</p> <p>Children's Worker Teresa Finney 01606 889311</p>
<p>Safeguarding Officer Anne Blayney 07815 713012 safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com</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>Treasurer John Duthie treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com</p>	<p>Social & Fundraising Group John Blayney 07964 844642</p>

May NEWS: Comments and contributions for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send copy to chrisball2022@outlook.com by 15th April.

FIRST THURSDAY CAFÉ

The Mews
Church Green
Whitegate
CW8 2AY

Thursdays, 3rd April & 1st May

Come to The Mews, catch up with friends old and new & chat over tea, coffee and delicious homemade cakes



Everyone welcome!
10.30 am to 12.00 noon

ST PETER'S CHURCH ~ LITTLE BUDWORTH

Cantores ad Portam

CHESHIRE'S NEWEST CHAMBER CHOIR

with Andrew Millinchip (Organ)

Directed by John Naylor

"Old wine in new bottles"

A Concert of Choral and Organ Music

(including music by Mendelssohn, Franck, Mozart, Bach)

Tuesday 8th April 2025

7.30pm

Admission: £5 on the door

PROCEEDS TO ST LUKE'S HOSPICE

CARD OR CASH PAYMENTS ACCEPTED



Whitegate Amblers

Please join us as we restart our monthly walks discovering the beautiful countryside around the Village of Whitegate. All welcome, please text or phone me or just turn up on the day.

Date: Thursday 24th April

Time: Meet 09:45 - walk starts 10:00 (approx 2hrs)

Start: Gresty's Waste Car Park, on the left side of A54 going towards Kelsall (CW6 OSP).

Description: Walk over A54 towards Delamere. Good tracks - no stiles - gradual inclines - option to climb The Pale with views across Cheshire. Rest stop at Delamere Visitor Centre for coffee/snack-slight ascent and down back to car park.

Notes: We welcome well behaved dogs who can be kept under control all the times. Toilet at visitor centre. Option to walk half to end at visitor centre but you need to arrange in advance. If you want a lift from Whitegate please phone me.

Information call John Blayney (07964844642)

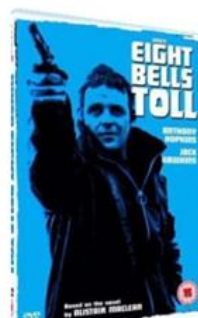


Movies in The Mews

Church Green, Whitegate
Sunday 27th April 2025

Refreshments from 2.00 p.m.

film starts at 2.30 p.m. prompt.



WHEN EIGHT BELLS TOLL (1971)

"The best spy thriller ever penned by the master of suspense"

"Young Anthony Hopkins is a true action hero"

Adapted from the novel by Alistair Maclean. Directed by Etienne Périer, starring Sir Anthony Hopkins, Nathalie Delon, Robert Morley & Jack Hawkins.

Anthony Hopkins plays a secret agent assigned to stop the ruthless pirating of millions of pounds of gold bullion. His search takes him to a small port in the Hebrides...

Sub-titled for the hard of hearing.
Suggested donation £5.00 per person

Book by signing up on the board in church, or contact Chris Ball:
01606 593260 mob: 07786 132938 chrisball2015@gmail.com