

# St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



## NEWS FOR MARCH 2026



## Our cover photo

Spring is springing. Despite the constant downpours – or perhaps because of them, a little stroll around the churchyard recently was rewarded with the sight of bulbs and bushes budding and blossoming in great profusion. And in just a few weeks now, we'll be putting the clocks forward, starting to experience longer daylight hours. Who knows, we'll maybe see more sunshine?

The first day of British Summer Time, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, is Palm Sunday. It's the day when, if the weather is kind, we start the 9.30 am service outside on Church Green, and with palm crosses held high, we process up to church, remembering Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, surrounded by crowds of admirers and well-wishers waving palm branches and laying them as a carpet at his feet as he passed by.

Just later in the same service, the emotions are very different as we read how Jesus was tried, mocked and crucified very soon after.

There'll be an evening service too on Palm Sunday. It is of course the start of Holy Week and Andrew Millinchip and the choir have already begun rehearsals for a special Passiontide Evening Service of hymns and readings at St Mary's at 6.30 pm on that day. Few village churches have been able to maintain such a rich choral tradition. Come and join us.



### A verse for March

Luke Ch 23: v 46

*Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.*

These are Jesus' last words from the cross. From the cross, Jesus has been able to show us what his teaching and life have really been about: turning the other cheek, loving our enemies, giving and forgiving. With his last breath, Jesus commends all that he is into God's love. There is a unique spark of life in each of us - our personality, our essence, our soul - and we can trust everything that we truly are into God's loving hands. Does anything else really matter?

SJM

## March Diary

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Lent 2/ St David</b> Family Service	St Mary's
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon 7.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Lent series 2: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.	The Mews St Mary's The Mews
<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30 am	First Thursday Café – <i>see page 12.</i>	The Mews
<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Lent 3</b> Holy Communion	St Mary's
<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Parish Ministry Team meeting	
<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon 7.00 pm	Men's Breakfast Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Lent series 3: Inspired by love and anger	Tarporley G'dn Centre The Mews St Mary's The Mews
<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	7.00 pm	Vale Royal Strings Concert – <i>see page 12</i>	St Peter's
<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Mothering Sunday</b> Mothering Sunday Service with distribution of posies	St Mary's
<b>17<sup>th</sup></b>	12.00 noon 2.00 pm 5.00 pm 7.30 pm	Deanery Chapter Meeting Bible Study at Commonsie Governing body meeting St Mary's Mothers' Union meeting: Lenten craft activity	L.B. Methodist Chapel Whitegate School The Mews
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon 7.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Lent series 4: Lo, he comes with clouds descending	The Mews St Mary's St Mary's
<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	9.30 am 2.00 pm for 2.30	<b>Lent 5</b> Holy Communion Movies in The Mews: The Penguin Lessons, starring Steve Coogan – <i>see page 12.</i>	St Mary's The Mews
<b>24<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon 7.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Lent series 5: My song is love unknown	The Mews St Mary's The Mews
<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 6.30 pm	<b>Palm Sunday</b> Palm Sunday Service with distribution of palm crosses Passiontide Evening Service	St Mary's St Mary's
<b>31<sup>st</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsie	L.B. Methodist Chapel

Limited space prevents us from continuing the diary into April but details of all services and events in Holy Week, from Palm Sunday until Easter Day on 5<sup>th</sup> April are displayed in The Mews and in St Mary's Church porch and will of course be listed in the April NEWS, out on 29<sup>th</sup> March.

## 2026 Annual Report

I hope you will allow me to present some thoughts by way of our annual report in our parish newsletter and magazine. It enables me to engage with a wider group of people than those who will attend our Annual Parochial Church Meetings which take place in April (19<sup>th</sup> at Whitegate, 26<sup>th</sup> at Little Budworth). Connecting with the wider community is what we are about. I am writing this for our March newsletter and magazine as Easter falls in early April and I would prefer to focus on that in our April editions.



One of the encouraging signs of our parishes is a growth of connection. We have seen this in how people have engaged with our commitment to maintain and promote rural festivals. Think of Harvest, Plough Sunday, Rogationtide. These have been joyful celebrations of the place of the church within the life of rural communities.

At Little Budworth we might also look to how we marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great fire at Oulton Hall. It was a massive privilege to be invited to play such a significant role in remembering that terrible event. At Whitegate there has been the annual music festival which has not only attracted a wider audience but has also made long lasting connections with local people. The work done around the churchyard, particularly in Whitehead Field, reflects a sustained wider relationship.

I am also thankful for the development of our monthly Family Services, whilst not quite matching St Peter's conversion of thousands in a day, our Family Services have quietly built a pattern of using festivals of the rural year to engage with a wider group of people. These have been complemented by Storytelling which is gathering a small but regular band of followers. I know from talking with parents that it is very much valued.

I am a firm believer in the view that one sign of a healthy church is that it has a fuzzy edge. I get cross when the ecclesiastical bean counters want me to 'count' the effectiveness of our churches in terms of 'signed up members'. Being a church is not about who is in and who is out. It is about being a community, and a place, where all feel welcome. It is about friendship rather than membership.

In writing my report for this year I must repeat my heartfelt thanks for those who give so generously of their time, energy and skills to enable us to do all the things that need to be done for our churches to be here. As someone once described it, "those who carry out the thousand and one tasks of the kingdom."

This army of the blessed includes those who serve as officers of our parishes, those elected to represent us on our PCCs, those who carry out the unseen (and often unsung) ministry of administration, those who work making music, those who make our churches beautiful, those who unblock drains and fix leaky gutters.

In expressing thanks I must of course include my colleagues in our ministry team, Jane, Teresa, John and Margaret. I am delighted that Margaret has been appointed to a post within this diocese and wish her well for her future ministry. She has been a blessing to us and will be a blessing to those God is sending her to work amongst. I would like to record my thanks for her friendship and support during the time she has spent with us.

As you know, it is my hope to retire sometime this year. At the time of writing we are in the process of buying a house but you know what they say about not counting chickens. One of the joys of living in tied accommodation is that you're made homeless when you retire! All of which means that there will be a vacancy and then a process of appointing a new incumbent. Please pray for those who will maintain our work and be involved in the appointment process. It is no light thing to take on.

As I was writing these words I received an email reminding me that when God calls people they don't usually say 'Yes' straight away. The prophets usually looked around them and thought God must have meant someone else – "surely not me"? "I'm not wise enough". "I don't have the right words". "I've no idea what to do". Indeed, as I've mentioned before, how do we know that Mary was the first young girl Gabriel knelt before? We don't. We just know she was the first to say 'Yes' to God's need. And I do mean need. I grew up singing the Patrick Appleford hymn based on St Teresa's prayer;

*Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

So please do give some serious thought and prayer about supporting the work of our churches. Another sign of a healthy church is that everyone does a little rather than a few doing a lot. If you don't mind me giving you a tip – when you're looking for a new vicar bear in mind that a wise candidate will soon suss if this is a church where people are involved, or not.

You will know that given our finances those representing us will need to consider whether to seek a full-time appointment or part-time. They will value your thoughts and input into this discussion.

One thing I do know is that those who do say 'Yes' to God's invitation find that God always equips them with what is needed. I have always been inspired by people who have taken on significant roles within the life of the parish church and risen to the occasion magnificently. Which is not to say they have always found it easy, the needs of a parish church are many and varied, but they have

discovered capacity and strength to do the tasks of the kingdom.

Allow me to answer a question I am often being asked, "Will you continue to take services once you've retired?" Well, not straight away. For very good reasons the Church of England requires all retiring clergy to not conduct services for at least six months. Personally I think it should be a bit longer. Living 'on the job' for over 40 years is a tricky thing to let go of. I remember when I was a curate my training vicar said to me, "God called you to be a priest. The Church will make you into a vicar. They're not the same thing."

So, I want to make space to rediscover that first calling, and if God wills it, to exercise it somewhere where we feel sent towards.

Yours

*Paul.*



## NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

### □ Lent Series 2026: Hymns

Have you ever wondered about the words we sing in church?

Hymns can be surprising! So during Lent why not join us for a series of short reflections looking at some well-known, and maybe the odd not so well known, hymns and their authors. The sessions will be in The Mews on Wednesday evenings from 7pm for about 45 minutes starting on 25th February. Each session will be free-standing, so don't worry if you can't attend all of them.

### □ Photos for forthcoming exhibitions in The Mews

The current fascinating and colourful display of pictures featuring churches and cathedrals from all over the world will remain in place till after Easter. Jane Millinchip and Julie Webb now invite contributions for the next exhibition, on the theme of "Our Animal Friends". The deadline for your contributions is Easter Day, 5<sup>th</sup> April. They plan to display that collection from early May.

By the autumn, Jane and Julie will be preparing the next presentation and for that they are asking for your photos evoking "Whitegate through the year": people, places and events throughout the seasons and the church calendar. The deadline for those will be the end of October so that the selection can be made, printed and hung by early December.

Our "Gallery Wall" in The Mews has become a decorative, informative and much talked about feature in the village. Start sifting and sorting through your own photographs now and send them to Jane. Don't forget that the resolution of your pictures needs to be good enough to print as an A4 copy. Email your offerings to Jane at [revdjanemillinchip@outlook.com](mailto:revdjanemillinchip@outlook.com)

## □ **Stop Press: road news**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, just as the March NEWS is being prepared for printing, the resurfacing work down Cinder Hill and past the church has finished and the road markings have been redone. It's a smooth ride through the village – but don't be tempted to put your foot down, for a new speed limit of 20mph is in place in the centre of the village. It would be a shame to save money on tyres but spend it on speeding fines!

At St Mary's, we much regret the cancellation of church and Mews activities in daytime hours during the half term week. Shrove Tuesday is just once a year, and we were particularly sad to have to cancel the planned pancake event, but we hope to find the opportunity for a different venture for Christian Aid, closer to Christian Aid Week.



## □ **Monthly NEWS by e-mail**

Copies of the NEWS are always available in church, in the porch and in The Mews, but if you would prefer to receive it electronically, then sign up to be added to the email circulation list. Just go to the church website: [www.stmaryswhitegate.org](http://www.stmaryswhitegate.org) and click on the pink button, top right on the Home page.

## □ **Weekly Reading Sheets: [www.stmaryswhitegate.org/](http://www.stmaryswhitegate.org/)**

Readings and prayers for services in March are on the website. Each service sheet contains the readings and prayers specific to that Sunday. If you don't see the sheets straight away on the Home page, click on the Blog button, top right.

## □ **[www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)**



Don't forget that St Mary's Church Whitegate is registered with easyfundraising. If you sign up, then each time you buy online, from many different shops and businesses, St Mary's will receive a small donation AT NO COST TO YOU! Sign up to support us at <https://tinyurl.com/mubythrp> or scan this QR code.

# Supporting St Mary's: Financial Overview and Appeal

## Financial Challenges at St Mary's

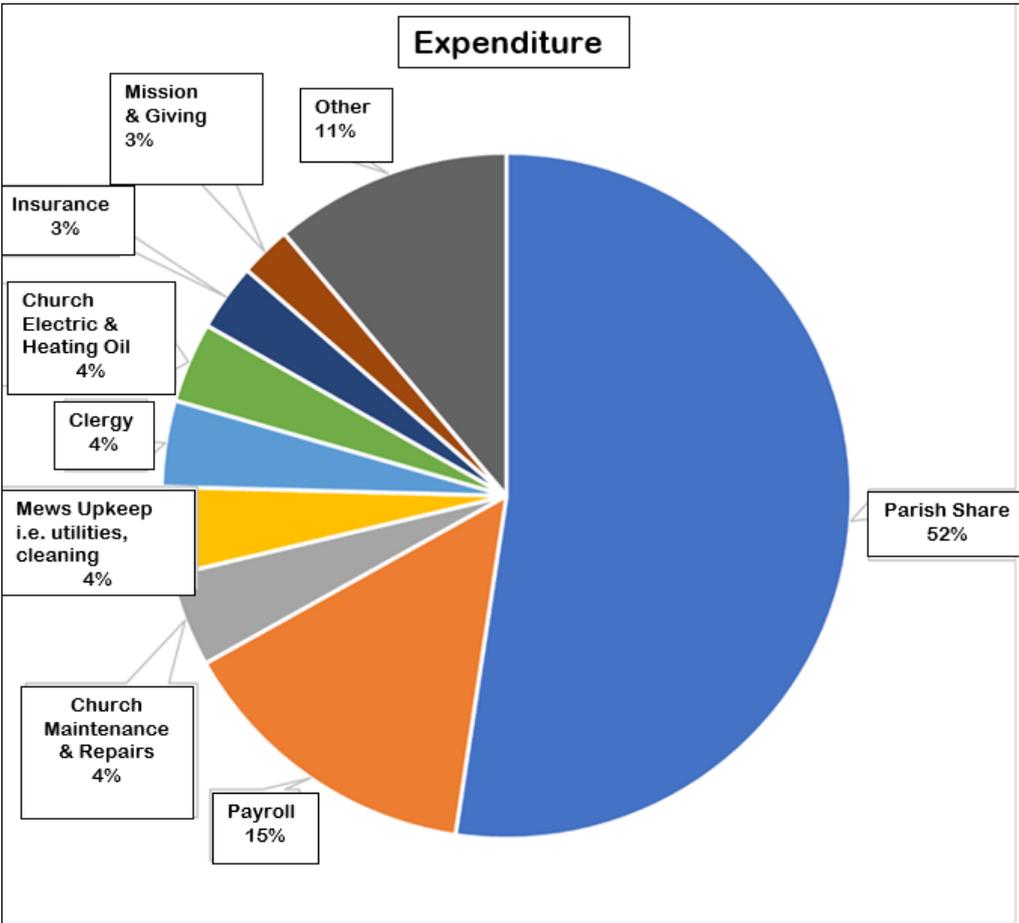
Like all churches, St Mary's faces significant expenses to ensure its continued operation and upkeep. The largest portion of our expenditure is the parish share, which predominantly covers the costs associated with clergy, as well as supporting the diocese's mission and ministry. Additionally, this contribution helps to sustain other parishes within the diocese.

In 2025 St Mary's paid a parish share of £53,304. It is important to note that this amount increases annually, placing additional pressure on our finances.

In addition, are the daily running costs of the church which are increasing and are beyond the control of the PCC. Together all of these costs mean that we are spending considerably more than we receive.

For example, in 2023 we spent £664 on electricity for the church, in 2025 we spent £1104. In 2024 we spent £1850 on oil to heat the church, in 2025 we spent £2747.

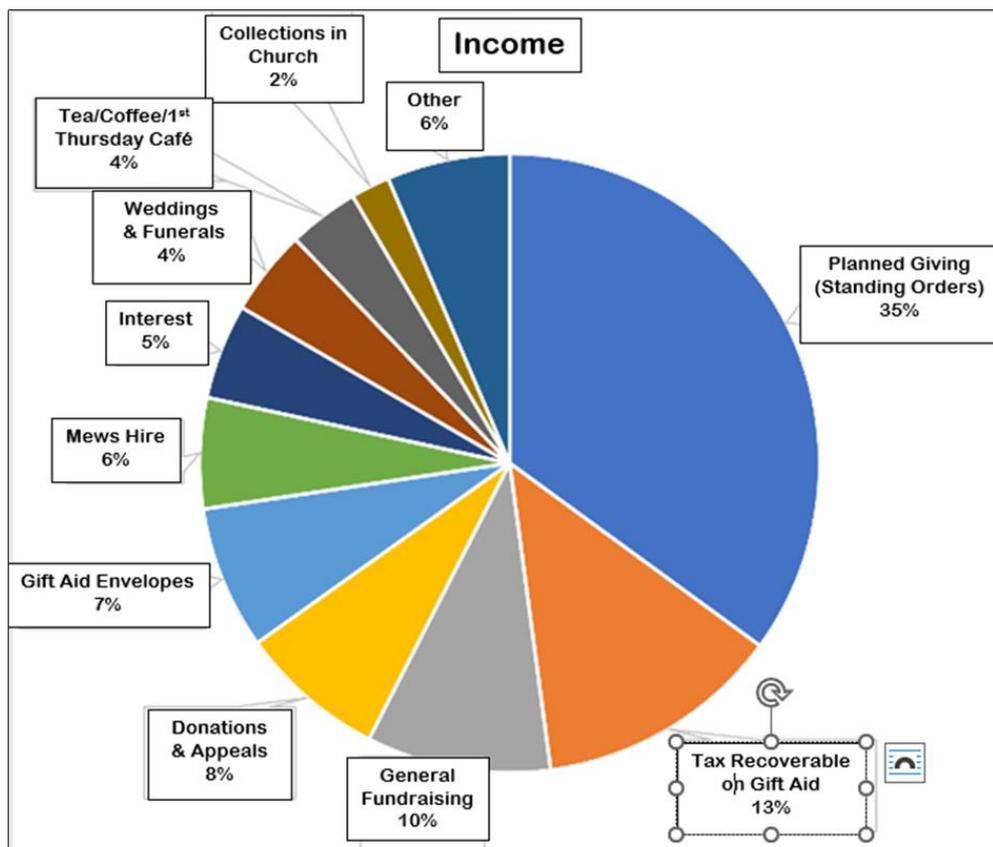
Gas and electricity for The Mews have increased every year from 2022 when we spent £724. In 2025 we spent £1687 and there are many other costs that present challenges to us.



## Sources of Income and Our Appeal

The principal source of income for St Mary's comes from planned giving, particularly through standing orders. To ensure the church's sustainability, we kindly ask you to consider setting up a regular donation if you have not already done so. For those who are already making contributions that way, we would be grateful if you could review your donation and, if possible, consider increasing the amount.

We are aware that some standing orders were set up several years ago and may have lapsed or be due for renewal. If this applies to you, we respectfully request that you consider renewing your standing order.



## Gift Aid: Maximising Your Contribution

If you are a UK taxpayer, Gift Aid allows St Mary's to increase your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. By simply completing a Gift Aid form, the church can claim this valuable benefit on your behalf.

## Conclusion

We sincerely hope you are able to support our efforts to keep St Mary's viable and functioning, so it can continue to serve and benefit the whole community. Thank you for your consideration and generosity.

If you have any questions or you would like to set up a standing order, please email [treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com](mailto:treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com)

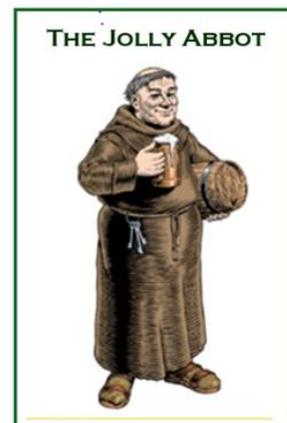
## ☐ **Moonlight in Chester Cathedral**

Artemis II will take off in a few weeks, allowing the next generation of space travellers to orbit the moon. We don't need to travel that far. Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon artwork remains in the cathedral till Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March. 6 metres in diameter, the moon that hangs in the south transept features detailed NASA images of the lunar surface. All manner of daytime and evening events are taking place by the light of the moon. Check the cathedral website to find out more: [chestercathedral.com/events/event/museum-of-the-moon](http://chestercathedral.com/events/event/museum-of-the-moon)

## **Advance dates for April...**

### ☐ **Music Night at The Jolly Abbot**

Many years have passed since there was a public house in the middle of Whitegate, but on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm we are converting The Mews into a pub for the evening, with a bar, nibbles, live music and an open mic for those who want to join in. More details in the April NEWS but to enquire sooner, email [johnblayney2@gmail.com](mailto:johnblayney2@gmail.com)



### ☐ **Whitegate Amblers restart in April**

The walking group enters its third season and plans are already underway for monthly treks from April through to October. It's a great opportunity to get out in the open air and appreciate the countryside around us in excellent company. Details of the first outing this year, on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, are shown on page 12.



### **A message from the Parish Clerk**

The parish council continues to report numerous defects within the parish. You can report road defects, public rights of way, grass cutting, fly-tipping and other matters directly with the local council using their online reporting tool: **Report-it** ([cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)).

Please don't ignore potholes or other defects; we must all take an active role in reporting them. If you suffer a flat tyre as a result of potholes, to ensure a successful claim you have to demonstrate that the council were negligent and were aware of the road defect. I encourage everyone to report!

## **WHITEGATE WI**

The group meets on the first Wednesday of each month, at 7.15 pm for a 7.30 start, in the Recreation Room. Visitors and new members are always welcome. There is a small fee for visitors, which covers refreshments. On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March, Kevin Reynolds will bring us, Dispelling Myths; An Introduction to Bats.

For more information, email [whitegatewi@outlook.com](mailto:whitegatewi@outlook.com)

## Contacts

In this online edition of the NEWS, many contacts prefer us only to show their phone number. If you need to e-mail them, please call them first to ask for the address.

<p><b>Vicar</b> Rev Canon Paul Dawson 01606 889995 The Vicarage, Cinder Hill, Whitegate CW8 2BH <a href="mailto:vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com">vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com</a></p>	<p><b>Churchwardens</b> Anne Blayney 07815 713012 Sandra Paskin 01606 882031</p> <hr/> <p><b>PCC Secretary</b> Roger Wilkes 01606 75738</p>
<p><b>Curates</b> Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970 <a href="mailto:revmargaret1@hotmail.com">revmargaret1@hotmail.com</a> Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 Rev Jane Millinchip 07891 981293</p>	<p><b>Church Flowers</b> Pam Davies 01606 557833</p> <hr/> <p><b>Children's Worker</b> Teresa Finney 01606 889311</p>
<p><b>Safeguarding Officer</b> Anne Blayney 07815 713012 <a href="mailto:safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com">safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com</a></p>	<p><b>Mothers' Union</b> Eileen Lees 01606 786895</p>
<p><b>Mews Lettings</b> Andrew Millinchip <a href="mailto:mewsbookingswhitegate@gmail.com">mewsbookingswhitegate@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><b>"News" coordinator</b> Christine Ball 01606 593260 <a href="mailto:chrisball2022@outlook.com">chrisball2022@outlook.com</a></p>
<p><b>Musical Director</b> Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772</p>	<p><b>Pastoral &amp; Fellowship Committee</b> Alan Newton 01829 760239</p>
<p><b>Treasurers</b> Gary Chadwick 07590 999169 Sarah Campbell Woodward 01829 760438 <a href="mailto:treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com">treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com</a></p>	<p><b>Social &amp; Fundraising Group</b> John Blayney 07964 844642</p>

**APRIL NEWS:** Comments and contributions for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send copy to [chrisball2022@outlook.com](mailto:chrisball2022@outlook.com) by 15<sup>th</sup> March.

# FIRST THURSDAY CAFÉ

The Mews  
Church  
Green  
Whitegate  
CW8 2AY

Thursdays 5<sup>th</sup> March & 2<sup>nd</sup> April

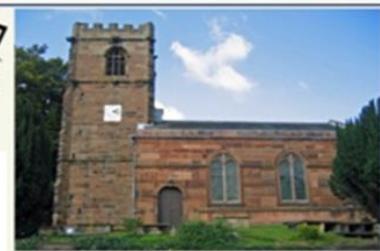
Come to The Mews, catch up with old friends & meet new ones. Chat over tea, coffee and delicious homemade cakes.



Everyone welcome!  
10.30 am to 12.00 noon



## VALE ROYAL STRING ORCHESTRA



St Peter's Church, Little Budworth CW6 9BY  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 7pm

A programme of Baroque music, featuring works by Telemann, Paganelli, CPE Bach, JS Bach and Vivaldi

Soloists: David Stockill & Ed Holmes

Conductor: Mark Lansom

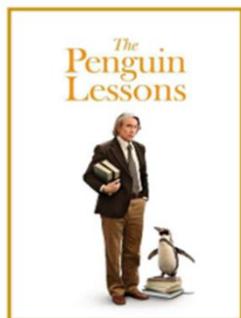
Buy your ticket at the door, contactless or cash, Adults £18, Children & Students £8

For further information:  
[www.valeroyalstringorchestra.co.uk](http://www.valeroyalstringorchestra.co.uk)



## Movies in The Mews

Church Green, Whitegate  
Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026  
Refreshments from 2.00 p.m.  
film starts at 2.30 p.m. prompt.



### THE PENGUIN LESSONS (2025)

**"Delightful without being schmaltzy"**

**"A gentle comedy that gives much to think about"**

Argentina in 1976. Based on a true story, the film was directed by Peter Cattaneo & stars Steve Coogan, Jonathan Pryce & Bruno Blas. This poignant "dramedy" follows an Englishman's personal and political awakening after he rescues a penguin from the beach during the cataclysmic period of dramatic change brought about by the coup d'état.

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](mailto:chrisball2015@gmail.com)

## 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 or just turn up on the day. Our first walk starts locally.

**Date:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April

**Time:** Meet 09:45 -walk starts 10:00 (2- 2 ½ hrs)

**Meet:** on the Green outside St Mary's Mews, Whitegate (CW8 2AY)

**Description:** Walk Vale Royal Drive, VR Locks and back. no stiles. Good underfoot but may be muddy.

**Notes:** We welcome well behaved dogs who can be kept under control all the times. Toilet at the Mews.

For more Info call John Blayney ( 07964844642)

