

# St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



## NEWS FOR MAY 2025



## **Our cover photo**

The fruit and nut trees planted last year are showing their true colours this Spring. This close-up of blossom on one of the apple trees is one of many glorious sights that have rewarded a little walk down to Whitehead Fields in recent weeks.

Towards the end of May, we reach Rogation Sunday, the day in the Church Calendar when we ask for God's blessing on the land and on the crops we grow. A special celebration is planned. Read John Blayney's invitation below.



### **Rogation Sunday -25th May BBQ Brunch**

Following the 9.30 am service and coffee there will be a picnic brunch at Whitehead Fields to thank the helpers who have worked so hard on the land. There will be a BBQ with bacon, sausage baps and burgers, cakes and prosecco. We look forward to bringing church members and volunteers together, celebrating what has been achieved and thanking all those who have helped. All are welcome! There will be a bowl for donations toward the costs.

### **Whitehead Fields & Burial Ground**

Over the last 2 years a local team of dedicated volunteers has transformed fields behind Whitegate church into an attractive and peaceful haven. The team has been keen to promote wildlife with spring flowers and fruit trees to attract bees. Members of the Church Wood Conservation Group have created benches for all to sit on and enjoy this spectacle of nature. In the dell there is even a little stream adding to the charm. Many local people come down to sit and enjoy the peaceful surroundings or just come for a walk.

## MAY Diary

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	10.30 am	First Thursday Café ( <i>See page 12</i> )	The Mews
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Easter 3</b> Family Service	St Mary's
<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 2.00 pm	The Vicar is on duty at Chester Cathedral Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 6.30 pm	Parish Ministry Team meeting Little Budworth V E Day 80 celebrations	
<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am – 2.00pm	Petty Pool College Spring Fair ( <i>See page 12</i> )	Pool Lane, Sandiway
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 11.00 am	<b>Easter 4</b> Holy Communion St Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting	St Mary's The Mews
<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside St Mary's Whitegate PCC meeting	L.B. Methodist Chapel The Mews
<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast ( <i>See page 12</i> ) Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	Tarporley G'dn Centre The Mews St Mary's
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 9.30 am	<b>Easter 5</b> Morning Prayer Storytelling Service	St Mary's The Mews
<b>20<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 2.00 pm	Parish Safeguarding Officers meeting Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>21<sup>st</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	9.45 am meet for 10.00 am start	Whitegate Amblers walk ( <i>See page 12</i> )	Adjacent to Leigh Arms, Acton Bridge CW8 4QT
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Rogation Sunday</b> Rogation Service Followed by coffee in The Mews and BBQ & Brunch in Whitehead Fields ( <i>See page 2</i> )	St Mary's
<b>27<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>28<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon 2.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Mothers' Union Deanery Festival Service	The Mews St Mary's St Mary's
<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>	7.30 pm	<b>Ascension Day</b> Holy Communion	St Mary's
<b>JUNE 1<sup>st</sup></b>	9.30 am 3.00 pm	<b>Easter 3</b> Family Service Informal Concert of light music, with DeciBells handbell group & Andrew Millinchip at the organ ( <i>See page 10</i> )	St Mary's St Mary's



## The Vicar's letter for May

*As you see from the May Diary, St Mary's Church will hold its Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> at 11.00am; it will take place in The Mews straight after the 9.30am service of Holy Communion. It's an important event in the church's calendar and we urge all on the Electoral Roll to attend. At that meeting, we need to elect 2 Churchwardens (assuming we wish to open every Sunday). We also need to elect PCC members and Deanery Synod representatives.*



*In place of his monthly letter, Paul has asked that we print here the report that he will present to the APCM on that day.*

Allow me to repeat an old joke about a vicar who needed to paint a church. They bought a large tin of paint, a paintbrush and a bottle of thinners. Halfway through the job it was clear that the tin of paint was going to run out so the vicar added some thinners to it and carried on painting. It soon became clear that even having thinned the paint it still wasn't going to be enough so they added more thinners. This continued with the vicar adding more and more thinners until the job was finally finished.

The vicar stood back to admire the work and saw that the church looked terrible. The first half was pretty good, but the sections painted with the increasingly thinned out paint looked dreadful.

They fell to their knees in prayer. "O Lord, this is a right mess. What should we do?"

And a voice spoke from the heavens, "Repaint, repaint, and thin no more."

Making things stretch too far is rarely, if ever, a good idea. I want to remind us of that story as we celebrate those who give of their time, skill, energy and dedication to God's work in our parishes. Those who carry out what has been described as "the thousand and one tasks of the Kingdom" are inspirational. Much of what they do goes on behind the scenes, unseen and often unsung. But without their commitment and tenacity and devotion (see below) our churches can't be what we want them to be.

I am reminded of something I read recently about how we describe what we come to church for. Some people call this activity 'churchgoing'. Some perceive a bit more and refer to it as 'worship'. I was reminded of the older term, seldom used these days, that when we come to church we do so for our 'devotions'. 'Devotions' is a very old-fashioned term but I want us to rethink its significance.

As a Canon of Chester Cathedral I spend one day each month as a duty chaplain. This is a wonderful experience which is best described as 'loitering with intent'. Just being there, being present in a sacred place, meeting people at random, has resulted in some incredible conversations and encounters.

Of the many people who wander into the Cathedral some are just 'going' as they would go to any significant public or historic building. Some do it out of habit, they are churchgoing. Perhaps they might even describe themselves as a 'churchgoer'.

Some come specifically to 'worship'. They enjoy the liturgy and music provided by the cathedral. They understand that the purpose of a cathedral, as with any church, is to be a place of worship. The daily prayers are said, the midday Holy Communion is celebrated, there is silence before and politeness afterwards.

And some come from 'devotion'. They sense a direct connection with God's presence which they cannot explain or describe. Their purpose in what they do is driven by devotion to God's love. Often those who most demonstrate a sense of devotion are not regular 'churchgoers'. They are quite often people who rarely step foot inside a church. But on this day, in this place, they sense an encounter with God which a personal experience.

Closer to home I sense that those who make our churches gateways to heaven are those who do what they do out of devotion. At this time of year, when we have to do the practical things that need to be done, let us recognize, cherish, and celebrate the devotion which upholds our life together. It is something beyond measure. "Devotion", it's a word we ought to use more often.

The past year has seen several of our most devoted people need to move away because they are also devoted to their families. This creates gaps in the thousand and one tasks of the Kingdom because there is much that needs to be done for a church to be open.

In some cases devoted people have taken on additional tasks which is kind and generous, but like the paint, stretching things thinly isn't a good idea. I want to encourage those who are holding our church together to not be like the vicar's tin of paint. Do not keep taking on more and more. Do not stretch yourself too thinly. It is not what God's calls us to be.

We, us, together, need to step back and see how things are. God has never wanted the church to stretch people to the point where what is done out of devotion becomes a burden too heavy to bear. Jesus told people to come to him because his burden was light and his yoke was easy.

The reality is that there is a burden; if we take on a task it needs to be done and done well. But it should not be too heavy. Jesus grew up in a carpenter's workshop yet he rarely spoke of things to do with woodwork. This has often puzzled me for I am also the son of a carpenter. I grew up knee deep in wood shavings. Why did Jesus speak more of agricultural images than those drawn from the skill of a craftsman?

So far as I can recall this reference to a yoke being easy is the only time he uses the carpenter's skills in his teaching. An 'easy yoke' is a well-fitting yoke. It takes a skilled craftsman to shape a yoke that fits well and enables the plough to be pulled without causing pain or injury to the valuable animal.

We need to shape the yoke God calls us to bear for his work to go forward. If we change, if the people doing tasks changes, then the shape of the task needs to change.

For example, we ask a lot of those who stand for election as PCC members. We are committed to enabling all our PCC members to undertake the Safeguarding training needed for the fulfilment of their duties. But not everyone is keen on online training resources so we will ensure we provide appropriate support and alternative ways of training.

Or, with two churches to open, and prepare, tidy up and secure, for services to take place we rely on at least two churchwardens in each parish. Maybe we could elect more and share the workload. Or maybe we could recruit a person or a team of people to do the things our churchwardens need to do. Or maybe we have fewer churchwardens and open our churches on alternate Sundays?

What we cannot do is simply carry on doing the same if people are not available. Doing that is like thinning the paint.

I have informed our PCCs of my intention to retire in 2026 so this year I hope we can work together to ensure we have confident, well-trained and well-resourced lay members to guide the parishes towards the next stage of God's work in this place. A key sign of a healthy church is a community that does a few things and does them well. The same holds true for ourselves.

My continuing thanks to my colleagues in our ministry team, our churchwardens, PCC members, those elected to various offices and those who behind the scenes look after our buildings, handle our administration, prepare music, offer hospitality, arrange flowers, care for our churchyards, ring bells, clean and polish, and ensure an endless supply of Jaffa cakes and Jammy Dodgers.

Paul.



## NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

### ☐ Thanks again

More thanks are due, specifically this month to all who planned, prepared and led our Easter services. St Mary's looked beautiful both inside and out. In that setting, the music, singing, prayer and worship were stirring and uplifting helping us to feel and understand the true meaning of Easter. We are fortunate to have such dedicated and talented people in our midst. Thank you.



### ☐ Birdwatching in The Mews

As advertised in last month's issue, Jane Millinchip and Julie Webb have drawn on their love of walking, bird spotting and photography to bring us a fabulous new exhibition on the "gallery" wall in The Mews. 34 superb photos featuring birds of coast and countryside, gardens and waterways. The exhibition will be in place throughout the summer months. Be sure to make an opportunity to call in and take a look.

### ☐ Peace Doves in the Cathedral

And from 2<sup>nd</sup> May through to 17<sup>th</sup> June, thousands of paper doves will come together in an inspiring installation in Chester Cathedral. Created by sculptor & artist, Peter Walker, each paper dove will be suspended from on high and bear a message of peace, hope and love from visitors, local community groups and school children. The installation has been touring our nation's cathedrals and we can catch it in Chester.



### ☐ Mothers' Union Deanery Festival Service

There is no meeting as such in May for our MU branch at St Mary's. Instead, on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May at 2.00 pm we shall be hosting the Middlewich Deanery Festival Service here in Whitegate Church. Led by our Assistant Curate, Revd Margaret Byrne, it will be a service of Holy Communion to which we shall welcome members from other branches in the deanery. During the service, new members from several branches will be formally admitted to the Mothers' Union. It will be a great occasion.

### ☐ Mid Cheshire Foodbank

Please continue to support our collection for the foodbank by bringing donations to church. Items currently in short supply are: Toilet Rolls, UHT Milk, UHT Fruit Juice, Tinned Meat & Tinned Tomatoes, Small bottles Vegetable Oil, Porridge Oats.



## □ Easter Ride-out is a roaring success

Those who read last month about Bishop Mark's motorcycling event, will be pleased to learn that it more than achieved its objectives. The initiative drew a turnout of more than 40 bikers from a wide area – with one riding all the way from Edinburgh to take part. Setting out from Church House in Daresbury, they passed through Frodsham and Ellesmere Port, stopped for a soup and sandwich lunch at Bishop's House in Chester and finished with tea and cake at Foxhill.

The original aim was to raise £1,000 to buy and pay for upkeep of a 125cc motorbike – an essential vehicle offering transport for education, healthcare and midwifery workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where such services are often provided by the Congo Church. In the event, the initiative has so far raised more than £6,000 – and the total is still rising.

If you would like to help by donating, just follow this link to give online.  
<https://tinyurl.com/bikingbishop>



Our Vicar, Paul Dawson, was one of the Riding Stewards ensuring the group's safety during the ride, and he sent us these photos.





## □ Christian Aid Week

This year the campaign runs from Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May. Donation envelopes will be distributed at St Mary's and will also be left in the church porch. Please take an envelope for your own donation and one for a family member or friend.



Bring your donations back to church or pop them through the letterbox at the Vicarage.

The poster figure for this year's campaign is Aurelia, a farmer in Guatemala who struggles to grow crops for her community because of the climate crisis, and with war, flooding, drought, earthquakes ..... there is need everywhere in the world. We can help to make a difference.

## □ Advance notices

Summer is a-coming in and there is plenty to look forward to in the coming months. See page 10 for four extra events in the parish in June and look in June NEWS (published on 25<sup>th</sup> May) for more information.



## A verse for MAY

Mark Ch 20: verse 30

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”***

What does it mean to love God with all your strength?

A minister defines it like this: “It means expending tremendous amounts of energy for kingdom causes. It means blood, sweat and tears. It means good old-fashioned hard work. Energy may be the least appreciated dimension of love because it’s the least sentimental, but how we invest our energy reveals our true priorities.”

We’ve got to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we’ve got to seize opportunities to serve. At the end of the day, God isn’t going to say “Well said, good and faithful servant” but “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Doing something for the kingdom can be as simple as babysitting for a single mum who needs a night out, serving in your local church, or volunteering at a local nursing home.

So what will you DO with your strength for God’s kingdom?

TMF



An informal concert of music on handbells  
with Andrew Millinchip on the Organ.



**Sunday, 1st June 2025**  
**3.00pm**  
**St Mary's Church Whitegate**

Donations for St Mary's  
Further information: Andrew Ball (07398 295239)



# VALE ROYAL STRING ORCHESTRA

Strings at Vale Royal Abbey  
Whitegate, CW8 2BA

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025 7pm**

**Purcell:** Virtuous Wife Suite  
**Bridge:** 3 Idylls  
**Coleridge Taylor:** Novelletten  
**John Ireland:** Concertina Pastorale

**Richard Adamson** Conductor

Buy your ticket at the door  
Adult £18 Concession £8

For the improvement of facilities at  
St Mary's Church, Whitegate

[www.valerovalorchestra.co.uk](http://www.valerovalorchestra.co.uk)



**making music**

**WHITEGATE VILLAGE GREEN**

# LIVE MUSIC FESTIVAL



## BBQ & BANDS



**SATURDAY 28 JUNE**  
**2.45 PM TIL 8PM**



**Adults £10**  
[£12.50 ON THE DAY]  
**Children £5**

FOR TICKETS, SCAN QR CODE OR CONTACT  
**JOHN BLAYNEY 07964 844642**

Limited chairs available: so feel free to bring along  
your own chair or picnic rug.

Note: children must be supervised at all times.

Profits to fund St Mary's Church repairs.



**THE ALVANLEY ARMS**  
Cotebrook

## Gentlemen's Dinner

*Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June - 6.30 pm*

Enjoy a delicious meal in  
convivial company

Sign up & pre-order on the notice boards in  
St Mary's and St Peter's or contact Alan  
Newton: [acenewton513@gmail.com](mailto:acenewton513@gmail.com)  
**01829 760239**

## 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><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> <p><b>PCC Secretary</b>            Roger Wilkes 01606 75738</p>
<p><b>Curates</b>            Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802            Rev Jane Millinchip 07981 981293            Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970</p>	<p><b>Church Flowers</b>            Pam Davies 01606 557833</p> <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:amillinchip@gmail.com">amillinchip@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>Treasurer</b>            John Duthie  <a href="mailto:treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com">treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com</a></p>	<p><b>Social &amp; Fundraising Group</b>            John Blayney 07964 844642</p>

**June 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> May.

# FIRST THURSDAY CAFÉ

The Mews Church Green Whitegate CW8 2AY

Thursdays, 1<sup>st</sup> May & 6<sup>th</sup> June

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

**FREE ENTRY**  
DONATIONS WELCOME

# Spring Fair

10 AM - 2PM

**SATURDAY 10TH MAY**

HOMEMADE CRAFTS  
LOCAL PRODUCE  
RAFFLE & TOMBOLA  
FOOD & DRINKS  
GAMES & ACTIVITIES

PETTY POOL COLLEGE  
POOL LANE, SANDIWAY  
CW8 2DR

IN SUPPORT OF OUR PROJECT  
LEARN HIVE APPEAL

Petty Pool

## Men's Breakfast

Once a month, at  
Tarporely Garden Centre

Join us for a great value  
breakfast and chat in  
friendly company

**9.00 am**

**Wednesday  
14<sup>th</sup> May**

Sign up at St Mary's  
Whitegate or St Peter's  
Little Budworth,

or contact Alan Newton on  
01829 760239  
[acenewton513@gmail.com](mailto:acenewton513@gmail.com)

## Whitegate Amblers

Please join us for our monthly walk discovering the beautiful countryside around Whitegate. If you'd like to come, please text or phone or just turn up on the day.

**Date: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**  
**Time:** Meet 09:45 -walk starts 10:00 (approx. 1 ¼ hrs)  
**Start:** Park on the road beside The Leigh Arms, Warrington Road, Acton Bridge, CW8 4QT  
**Description:** Canal and lanes walk visiting the picturesque village of Little Leigh. Delightful route with easy walking with one sloping steps with handrail. No stiles. Can be bit muddy if wet  
**Notes:** We welcome well behaved dogs who can be kept under control all the times. Toilets in pub. Some may like to have a snack in the pub after. If you can't find a lift from Whitegate please phone me.  
Information call John Blayney ( 07964844642)