

St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



NEWS FOR
APRIL 2026



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Our cover photo

Taken on 13th April last year, Palm Sunday, at 6.14 pm. The long shadows show the sun getting lower and making its way round to the west. What a glorious sky! The cherry trees coming into full bloom indicate we'd had some good weather prior to that too. Eddie and Liz Stamper were certainly enjoying their walk up the path.

As the April NEWS is being prepared for printing, it has been sunny and bright recently too and the 15 volunteers who joined the churchyard working party on Saturday 21st March made the most of it, being able to finish their hard day's work with a BBQ down on Whitehead Field enjoying the late afternoon sunshine. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Wishing all our readers a very Happy Easter.



A verse for April

Matthew Chapter 24:v 4

Watch out that no-one deceives you, for many will come in my name proclaiming, "I am the Messiah".

In the last few months domestic and global politics have changed with frightening speed. Who would have imagined American troops being told that they and the chaos in the Middle East were all part of God's Divine plan for Armageddon and the imminent second coming?

Rest assured these are false claims. Matthew 24 tells us that the disciples had asked Jesus about the second coming - when would it be and what will be the signs? Jesus told them that neither he nor the angels - but only the Father - knew when this would happen. There will be no signs or warnings but it will be when we do not expect it. Remarkably little is said about Armageddon in the Bible but it says nothing about a battle - yes the forces of evil will be gathered, but they will vanish in the presence of Jesus.

Today's chaos should not be interpreted as an indication of the end of the world being imminent. As Christians we have the expectation, based on God's promises in the Bible, of a certain future, very different from our current lives, when Jesus returns in Glory. Be prepared for that, but be on the lookout for those who would deceive us.

JRC

April Diary

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1st | 10.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon | Whitegate School Easter Service Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) | St Mary's The Mews St Mary's |
| 2nd | 10.30.am 7.30 pm | First Thursday Café Maundy Thursday Holy Communion | The Mews St Mary's |
| 3rd | 2.00 pm 7.00 pm | Good Friday Tenebrae Service Good Friday Meditation Service | St Mary's St Peter's |
| 4th | 10.00 am | Bishop of Chester's Motorcycle Ride to raise funds for motorcycles for the Democratic Republic of Congo | |
| 5th | 9.30 am | Easter Sunday Family Holy Communion followed by Easter Egg Hunt | St Mary's |
| 7th | 2.00 pm | Bible Study at Commonsides | L.B. Methodist Chapel |
| 8th | 10.00 am 12.00 noon | Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) | The Mews St Mary's |
| 9th | 2.00 pm | Fabric & Churchyard Committee meeting | The Mews |
| 12th | 10.30 am | Easter 2 Benefice Holy Communion Service, with Sunday School, to mark the Revd Margaret Byrne's last service with us. With Lunch together in the School Hall to follow. | St Mary's |
| 14th | 2.00 pm | Bible Study at Commonsides | L.B. Methodist Chapel |
| 15th | 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 |
| 19th | 9.30 am 9.30 am 10.30 am | Easter 3 Morning Prayer Storytelling Service Annual Parochial Church Meeting | St Mary's The Mews The Mews |
| 21st | 2.00 pm 7.30 pm | Bible Study at Commonsides St Mary's Mothers' Union meeting: Music with Handbells | L.B. Methodist Chapel The Mews |
| 22nd | 10.00 am 12.00 noon | Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) | The Mews St Mary's |
| 23rd | 9.45 am meet | Whitegate Amblers | The Mews |
| 26th | 9.30 am | Easter 4 Holy Communion | St Mary's |
| 27th | 7.30 – 8.30 pm | Whitegate & Marton Parish Council host Annual Village Meeting | Whitegate School Hall |
| 28th | 2.00 pm | Bible Study at Commonsides | L.B. Methodist Chapel |
| 29th | 10.00 am 12.00 noon | Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) | The Mews St Mary's |
| 30th | 2.00 pm | Mission & Giving group meeting | Marton Sands House |
| MAY 3rd | 9.30 am | Easter 5 Family Service | St Mary's |

April letter from the Vicar...

Easter!

A long time ago there was a man called Abram who was married to a woman called Sara. They were prominent and wealthy people in the ancient city-state called Ur. Life for Abram and Sara was good. They held high standing in the one of the earliest of human civilizations. However, like many human civilizations, Ur had a dirty little secret, it's wealth and privilege were built upon violence, exploitation and oppression.



One day God told Abram and Sara to turn their back on their life of comfort and riches and set off into the wilderness. No longer would they enjoy the protection of an army. No longer would they live in a fine house with good food. No longer would they be looked up to. They were asked to trade all that in for just one thing: the promise that wherever they went, God would be with them. Their life would be one of wandering, setting out into the unknown with no clear destination.

Madness!

Yet these important people of high standing did not just disappear. Had they stayed in Ur, history would almost certainly not have recorded their existence. By stepping into the unknown, exchanging security and comfort for a single promise, they became the foundation for God's journey with his people. And their names are venerated by Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Jesus asked much the same of his friends, and for the same reason.

In Easter we have God's promise. Not to be protected from the hardness of the world, nor to live in splendour and style. Simply the promise that if we choose to walk this journey God will be with us, and through us he will do amazing things.

This will be my eighth Easter at Whitegate and Little Budworth, the forty-first since ordination and the sixty-fifth since I entered this world in a Roman Catholic maternity clinic. Your numbers will differ but the fact remains that God's promise is as valid today as it was 4,000 years ago.

God invites us to journey with him.

One of the most powerful moments in our Holy Week journey is when members of our church community read the story of God's journey with his people, and one by one the Tenebrae candles are extinguished. 'Tenebrae' means 'shadows'. It is a very simple service which recognises the darkness of our world.

Being a Christian does not mean always walking on the sunny side of the street. It does not mean life will always go well. Sometimes being a Christian means grasping life's thorns. But we have God's promise. Endure, persist, keep the faith, walk the longer road, do not be afraid to enter the places of darkness. As the Psalmist reminds us, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Easter is glorious – but it is rooted in darkness. New life is given – but at the cost of a death. The risen Lord meets his friends around a charcoal fire. It is the second charcoal fire. The first was the one at which Peter denied even knowing him. This isn't just a 'happy ever after' story. Easter joy is deeply rooted in the darkness of the shadows. Those willing to walk with God will find that his promise endures.

Paul.

NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

☐ Invitation to Margaret's Farewell Lunch

As you may already be aware, our Curate, Revd Margaret Byrne will be leaving our Church Family in April. The Churchwardens of St Mary's and St Peter's would like to extend a warm invitation to everyone for a bring-and-share lunch, held in celebration of Margaret's dedicated time and journey with us. This event will take place immediately after her final service with us, providing an opportunity for all to express their gratitude and wish her every success for the future. The lunch is scheduled for Sunday, 12th April, following the 10.30am Service at St Mary's. It will be held in the School Hall, which is located adjacent to the Mews.

To assist with catering arrangements, it would be helpful to know how many people plan to attend. If you wish to join us—and we sincerely hope you will—please add your name to the list at the back of the church. If you would like to contribute a dish to the lunch, kindly place a tick beside your name. There is no need to specify the type of dish you intend to bring. Dishes may be savoury or sweet; please keep portions to finger food size. (If you are unable to add your name to the list in church but wish to attend, please contact Sandra via email at sandra.paskin@btinternet.com She will ensure your name is added to the list).

☐ Photos for The Mews Gallery

A reminder that Easter Sunday, 5th April is the deadline for your photos of "Our Animal Friends", the new exhibition to be mounted in May. Email your offerings to Jane at revdjanemillinchip@outlook.com



□ Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This year's APCM at St Mary's is on Sunday 19th April and will take place in The Mews, with coffee, at approximately 10.30 am, immediately after the morning service in church. It is a meeting to which everyone in the church family is invited. The Annual Report, consisting of updates on activities covering all aspects of life at St Mary's will be delivered and discussed and everyone on our electoral roll is entitled to vote in the election of Churchwardens and members of the Parochial Church Council. Nominations are invited now for 2 Churchwardens and 4 PCC members. The forms are available in church. Do ask yourself if you could take on one of those roles – as the Vicar pointed out in his letter here last month, the responsibility is much lighter when it's shared by many. Please make it a priority to attend the APCM.

□ Evening at the Jolly Abbot postponed

We regret to say that the evening opening of the Jolly Abbot (aka, The Mews) announced in the NEWS last month for Friday 10th April, has had to be postponed. Keep a watchful eye on the newsletter and the website in the coming weeks for a new date.



□ Our Churchyard

Churchyards provide a unique space within the landscape. They are primarily places where those who await the final resurrection rest in peace. For those of us who await that next step in our journey towards God, churchyards are places where we can remember loved ones who have gone before us. As space set aside, churchyards are also places where nature can thrive. At times the local fauna can be very badly behaved, rabbits eating flowers and moles digging up vases spring to mind. But I suppose we have to accept they were living there before we built the churchyard. Where churchyards set space aside to allow flora to have an uncut space this can benefit both wildflowers and insects. We try to keep a careful balance between cherishing nature and maintaining our churchyards in a neat and dignified manner.

As with all public space churchyards are subject to certain rules for the benefit of all. These are primarily the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations. Those responsible for churchyards are required to exercise their duties evenly and without fear or favour.

For all the great joys and benefits of churchyards they do at times present a less happy burden for the officers of our parishes. Sometimes people think the rules apply to everyone else but not to them. They can be quick to take offence when asked to remove items that should not be there. At other times people add floral tributes or things such as Christmas wreaths but never return to clear them away. Removing rotting tributes and disposing of large amounts of plastic waste is not much fun. I am grateful to those who give of their time and energy to keep our churchyards dignified and safe.

Very occasionally we have more serious issues. This happens when people remove things from other people's graves, which causes great distress for families. Fortunately, this is rare but it does happen. Mostly when it happens we eventually usually discover it is someone within the family who is misbehaving, but not always. There are times when officers of the church need to remove items that are not compliant (e.g. glass ornaments), or which are broken, faded or inappropriate. But no-one else other than church officers or family members should be removing items from graves.



When things go wrong people are understandably upset. However, this is no excuse for speaking to our volunteers or staff in a manner that is rude, disrespectful or aggressive. I regret having to make the point that this kind of behaviour is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any encounter which becomes aggressive will be recorded and reported. Such events are extremely rare but they can have devastating consequences for the volunteer on the receiving end of such behaviour.

I hope we can maintain our churchyards as dignified, peaceful, safe and sacred places. We aim to show respect for both the living and the departed. It is always a careful balance which we take extremely seriously.

Paul.

□ **Parish Litter Pick**

W&MPC volunteers were out bright and early on Sunday 8th March taking part in the annual litter-pick.

As I left home about 8.55 to drive down to St Mary's, I saw two high-vis jackets heading down Whitegate Road to the bridge. They had already filled at least one bag, which was tied up and deposited at the bottom of Cassia Green for collection later. At 10.15, as I headed to Little Budworth, other people were out on Grange Lane and around The Beeches and an hour later, coming home from bellringing, there were more litter-pickers along Clay Lane, and piles of bags at salient points along the route awaiting pick-up. It's clearly a marathon task.



It's shameful that it's necessary, but thank you all, for your dedication to keeping the parish clean and rubbish free.

Chris Ball

□ **Whitegate Amblers set out again on 23rd April**

The walking group enters its third season and those keen to take part should meet at The Mews at 9.45 am for a walk that will head up Vale Royal Drive to the locks. See page 12 for more details.

□ **Charity support from St Mary's**

In Chapter 6 of St Matthew's Gospel we are warned against boasting of our good deeds, but we are posting this little update, not out of pride but simply wanting everyone to know the charities we have supported recently in your name!

The Mothers' Union at St Mary's has filled three "Bags of Education" for the charity Door of Hope. The bags contain exercise books, pencils, pens, crayons, rulers, rubbers etc. All the stationery items needed by schoolchildren everywhere. Our parcel weighed 5.4 kilos and the contents will be distributed to children in Eastern Europe, children who live in grinding poverty, who without the means to buy these items, are not allowed to attend school. This charity is one supported by Mothers' Union across the Diocese of Chester.

Two more charities have recently been supported by St Mary's Mission & Giving group on your behalf. Readers will perhaps know that the policy at St Mary's is to donate 5% of income from free-will giving and fundraising to other causes needing our help. The Mission & Giving group met in February and decided to favour two international charities, Embrace the Middle East and Christian Blind Mission (CBM), each of which received £449.50.

The CBM, in their message of thanks, confirmed that our church donation will benefit from their Easter scheme of 100% matched funding being offered by a group of their sponsors. This means that our donation to them will help twice the number of people in the world's poorest countries.

To find out more about these charities we have supported, take a look at these links: doorofhope.co.uk cbmuk.org.uk embraceme.org

□ **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 and click on the pink button, top right on the Home page.

□ **Weekly Reading Sheets: www.stmaryswhitegate.org/**

Readings and prayers for April services 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

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.



ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

Monday 27th April, 7.30 – 8.30 pm
in Whitegate School Hall

W&MPC invites all residents to this event, at which our councillors outline all that has been achieved during the past year and look also to the future. In addition, it's an opportunity to hear from representatives of other groups in the local community, giving an update on their activities. There's a great deal going on; come and meet other residents and find out more about it.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES at our Libraries

The closest libraries to our parish are all offering events for children during the Easter holidays.

Winsford Library invites youngsters drop in any time from 10.00 – 4.00 for Classic Console Games on 2nd, 7th, 8th, 9th & 10th April.

Northwich & Sandiway Libraries have a range of Spring Craft, Construction Club, Rhyme Time & Puzzles and Games for infants, toddlers and primary age children.

Tarporley Library has similar Spring themed activities for tots and primary age during the week after Easter.

Check dates/times on cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/libraries
Click on Library events & activities.

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.

As well as the monthly meeting there's a range of specific interest groups you can join, from darts, through crafts, books and walking and many others. For more information, email whitegatewi@outlook.com

Movies in The Mews Programme for remainder of 2026



Sunday 17th May: 2.00 pm for 2.30 pm start

The Choral (2025), written by Alan Bennett & Stephen Beresford & starring Ralph Fiennes, Alan Armstrong & Simon Russell Beale.

A choral society's male members enlist in World War I, leaving the demanding Dr. Guthrie to recruit teenagers.

Sunday 12th July: 2.00 pm for 2.30 pm start

The Salt Path (2024), directed by Marianne Elliott, written by Rebecca Lenkiewicz & Raynor Winn & starring Gillian Anderson & Jason Isaacs.

A couple lose their home and later discover the husband has been diagnosed with a terminal illness as they embark on a year long coastal trek.

Sunday 13th September: 2.00 pm for 2.30 pm start

The Greatest Showman (2017), directed by Michael Gracey & starring Hugh Jackman, Michelle Williams & Zac Efron.

Celebrates the birth of show business and tells Phineas Taylor Barnum, who rose from nothing to create a worldwide sensation.

Sunday 22nd November: 2.00 pm for 2.30 pm start

Witness (1985), directed by Peter Weir & starring Harrison Ford, Kelly McGillis & Lukas Haas.

While protecting an Amish boy and his mother, a detective is forced to seek refuge within their rural community

Suggested donation, £5 per person, to include refreshments prior to each film. Booking will open 3 weeks before each date. Sign up in church or contact Chris: chrisball2015@gmail.com 01606 593260

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.

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| Safeguarding Officer Anne Blayney 07815 713012 safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com | Mothers' Union Eileen Lees 01606 786895 |
| Mews Lettings Andrew Millinchip mewsbookingswhitegate@gmail.com | "News" coordinator Christine Ball 01606 593260 chrisball2022@outlook.com |
| Musical Director Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772 | Pastoral & Fellowship Committee Alan Newton 01829 760239 |
| Treasurers Gary Chadwick 07590 999169 Sarah Campbell Woodward 01829 760438 treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com | Social & Fundraising Group John Blayney 07964 844642 |

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 2nd April & 7th May

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



Men's Breakfast

Once a month, at
Tarpорley Garden Centre

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

9.00 am

**Wednesday
15th April**

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

or contact Alan Newton on
01829 760239
acenewton513@gmail.com

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 always
welcome new members, whether
you come for crafting or for coffee!

It's a good time for fellowship along
with tea/coffee/biscuits.

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 23rd 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)

