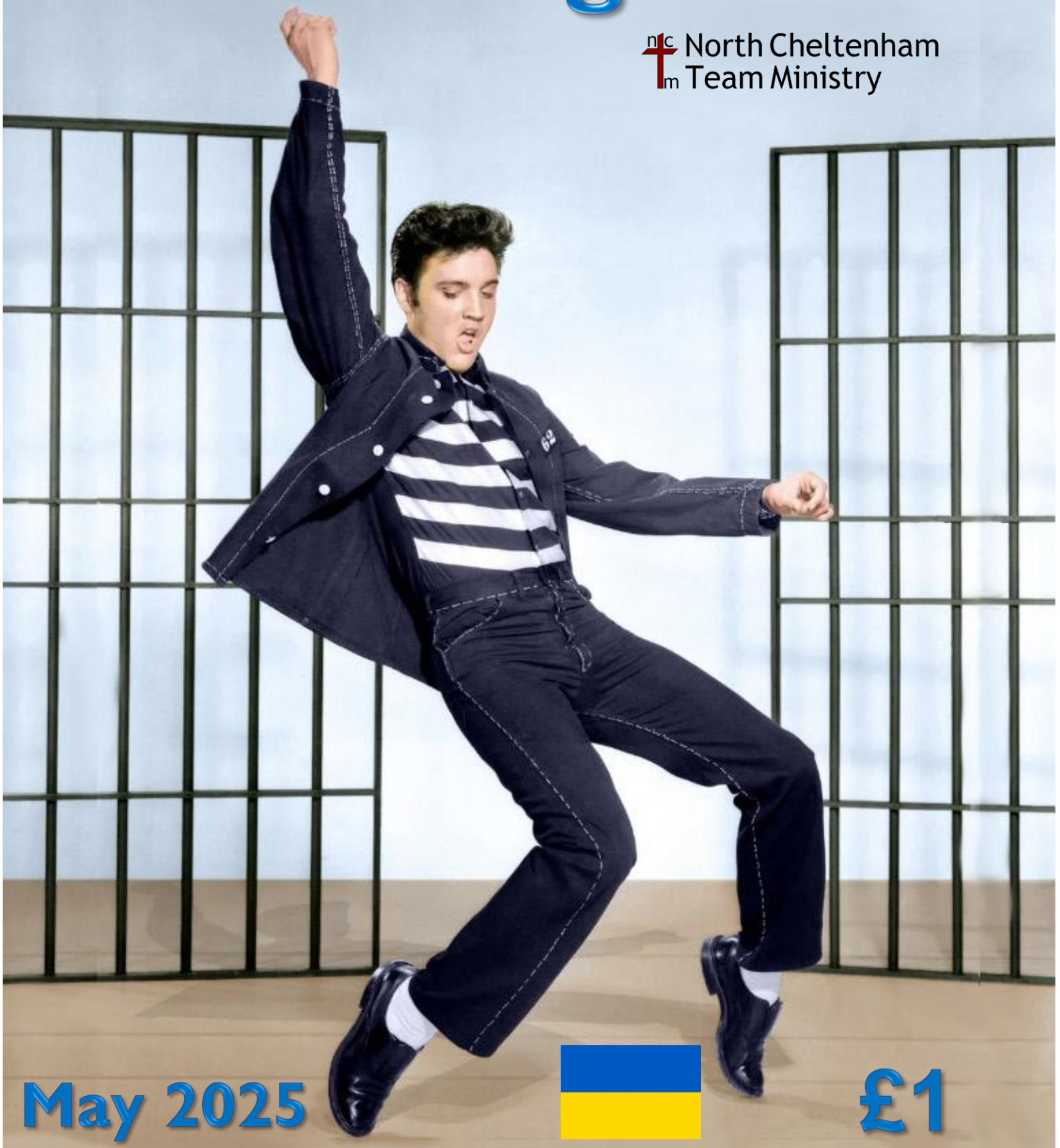
www.prestbury.net

Prestbury Parish Magazine

nc North Cheltenham
tm Team Ministry



May 2025

£1

Parish Directory

Team Rector
Revd Nicholas Bromfield 01242 232883
The Rectory, Tatchley Lane GL52 3DQ
nick.bromfield@northchelt.org.uk

Team Vicars
Fr David Lawrence-March
8 Boulton Road GL50 4RZ
fatherdlm@icloud.com

Revd Jacqueline Henson 01242 220053
The Rectory, Rectory Lane, Swindon Village
Cheltenham GL51 9RD

Team Deacon
Revd Jennifer Wood 01242 700128
jennifer.wood@northchelt.org.uk

Reader
Linda Biggs 01242 510856
linda.biggs@northchelt.org.uk

Churchwardens

St Mary
Stewart Wright 07711 887317
stewart.wright@prestbury.net

Helen Mann 07814 638990
helen.mann@prestbury.net

St Nicolas
Janet Waters 01242 678458
janet.waters@prestbury.net

Jackie Smith 07593 444023
jackie.smith@prestbury.net

Margaret Compton 01242 235359
margaret.compton@prestbury.net

PCC Secretary
Stella Caney 01242 676143
stella.caney@northchelt.org.uk

PCC Treasurer
Philip Lasseter

Team Office admin@northchelt.org.uk 01242 244373

5 High Street, Prestbury, Cheltenham, GL52 3AR

When the office is unattended please leave a message on the answerphone

Baptisms (Christenings) & Weddings

may be arranged with the Team Office *(contact details above)*

Other Pastoral Matters & Reconciliation (Confession)

please contact one of the clergy *(telephone numbers above)*

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editors, the Clergy, the Parochial Church Council, or of any authoritative body of the Church of England

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary and St Nicolas Prestbury Cheltenham - Registered Charity No 1130933

continued inside back cover

Cover Picture:
Elvis Presley in Jailhouse Rock

CELEBRITY

There are two celebrities I can immediately think of who were from Prestbury, one whom I knew in the 1950s and again in the 1970s, and one whom everyone knew and idolised one hundred years beforehand. Let's begin with the more recent.

MARY EYRE was a worshipper at St Mary's and lived in Shaw Green Lane with her mother who was an international hockey referee. When my daughter Nicola was a pupil at Charlton Park Convent (now St Edward's) from 1972 – 1979, Miss Eyre was her games mistress. Before that, she played hockey for England sixteen times from 1945 to 1951, scoring 17 goals. She competed in the Wimbledon Ladies' Doubles nine times between 1949 and 1957, reaching the quarterfinals four times. In the 2006 New Year Honours she was appointed an MBE for 'Services to Sport'. Later in life, she was made President of the East Gloucestershire Hockey Club in the Old Bath Road. Not tall and slim like Martina Navratilova or Maria Sharapova, but of medium height and built more like a weightlifter. I can boast of being a victim of her strength. My mother, aunt, mother-in-law (founder member) and girlfriend (Pam) were all staunch members of Prestbury Women's Institute, and so was Mary Eyre. When men were needed to help out, I was often roped in to several of their WI events and activities, the main one that comes to mind was an Elizabethan Pageant held in about 1950 in the grounds of Pigeon House, Southam, the home of a Miss Ratcliff, the Prestbury WI President. Pam and her mother dressed up accordingly and took part in the country-dancing while I was obliged to learn Morris-dancing! This should have been named 'Morris-fighting' because we leaped about with long staves, bashing whoever happened to be opposite us and who tried to do the same to us. We skipped up and down and in and out, with tiny bells strapped to our shins and a large white handkerchief in our free hand, which was waved about, I imagine to distract our opponent (hardly a partner) who was trying to whack us. It was good fun, and I must say a wonderful way of keeping fit!

One painfully memorable day, I took my girlfriend to a country-dance party at the WI Hall. When the MC announced the next dance as 'The Dashing White Sergeant', a progressive dance, we took our places in the line-up. So did Mary Eyre. When my turn came to partner her, she grabbed me in a vice-like grip and swung me round like David did with his sling when he faced Goliath. At mid-swing, Mary let go of me and like the stone from the sling, I shot across the WI hall and into a pile of stacked chairs, all of which fell on top of me - and there I lay staring up at this Prestbury celebrity, wondering what on earth had happened! Our first Parents' Evening at the Convent, some twenty years later, involved ten minutes or so talking to each of Nicola's teachers about her progress in English Literature, History, German and so on. When it came to games (PE), I confess I cannot recall exactly what she said about Nicola, apart from being very athletic. All I remember was a rather frightening vision of Miss Eyre that returned to me of her ferocious country-dancing strength and her ability to throw all ten and a half stone of me across to the other side of the WI Hall! Having said that, she was a very popular teacher at the school and with her celebrity status, was an excellent role model for the pupils to aspire to.

Now to one of the most important celebrities who has ever graced the world of sport, FRED ARCHER. Idolised all over the country throughout his life, in the mid-1800s Archer was a jockey like no other, before or since. Just to get a glimpse of him as he alighted from the trains which took him to race-meetings all over the United Kingdom, crowds gathered on railway platforms wherever he went.

Fred Archer was born on 11th January 1857 at St George's Cottage near The Wilson in the centre of Cheltenham. A few weeks later when his father became licensee of The Kings Arms, the family moved to Prestbury and took up residence at this inn, which catered mainly for the local racing community and its followers. Archer's father, William, was a steeplechase jockey and won the 1858 Grand National on Little Charley, trained by William Holman on Cleeve Hill and owned by Mr Christopher Capel of Prestbury House in The Burgage. Fred's elder brother was also a steeplechase jockey and was tragically killed in a race at Cheltenham in 1878.

Fred Archer's links with Prestbury remained strong throughout his short life. Christened at St Mary's on 12th April 1857, over the years he made close friends with the vicar, John Baghot de la Bere. Every November he returned to Prestbury where he enjoyed riding to hounds with The Cotswold Hunt. My wife's great uncle, Henry Parker, was valet to Archer.

When he was eleven years old, in February 1868 Archer moved away from Prestbury to be apprenticed to Mathew Dawson, a leading flat race trainer whose stables were at Newmarket. Before that, when he was eight, he rode in his first race. It was in an orchard behind The Plough Inn in Mill Street and he was beaten by an older boy. His pony was second, he cried all the way back home to The King's Arms and remained a bad loser for the rest of his life. Archer won twenty-one Classic races and six Derbys, five of them at Epsom and the first at Prestbury, when he was eleven years old. This was a donkey race from Southam, along the (untarmacked) main road to Prestbury, the winning post being where the church shop 'Dearly Pre-Loved' now stands. Roads in Britain were of gravel and stone pre the early 1900s, so I imagine the 'track' would have been quite hazardous. The race was organised by The Prestbury Village Club, run on Whit-Thursday 1868 and called The Prestbury Donkey Derby. This Fred won on a donkey called 'Southam Lass' which was once owned by Lord Ellenborough. The prize for the winner was a new bridle, most likely made by the village saddler, William Griffin, whose home and workshop were at Delhome Cottage opposite the War Memorial. My wife's parents bought this property in 1930 and it is where my wife lived from babyhood until we married in 1955. (Indeed, much of our courting took place on a settee where Mr Griffin once had his workbench!)

Fred Archer became champion jockey in 1874 aged 17 and remained so for the next 13 years. In 1884, his baby son died a few hours after birth and in November of that year his wife died suddenly after the birth of a daughter. Archer fell ill on 4th November 1886, on the 8th contracted typhoid fever and in a fit of depression shot himself aged only 29. During his distinguished career he rode 2,748 winners, one in every four rides being a winner, which is a very remarkable feat.

When the news of Archer's death was announced, the whole country went into mourning. Half-muffled peals of bells rang from most church towers. The Reverend John Baghot de la Bere, the vicar of Prestbury, helped officiate at the funeral which was held at All Saints Church in Newmarket where Fred was laid to rest alongside his wife and son. The vicar would, without any doubt, have made certain the bells of St Mary's rang for his friend.

Racing memorabilia has always been in demand and anything at all to do with Fred Archer, especially so. Many years ago, knowing I was one of those collectors, a friend of Pam's mother gave me a little book which was about 6" x 4" and held about 50-70 pages. Written anonymously by someone calling themselves 'A Cheltonian', it was titled 'The Three Archers' and told the stories of Fred, his father and his brother. The unusual thing was that it was written when all three were alive. It was a cheap-looking publication, and I expect few were printed. Anyhow, some 12 years ago, to satisfy my curiosity, I had it valued by a specialist valuer/auctioneer. He'd never seen one before and estimated a figure of £300 with a reserve of £250, so I decided to put it up for auction and see what happened.

No one, I thought, will pay that much for this unattractive little booklet and I quite expected it not to reach its reserve. How wrong can one be? The auctioneer phoned to say it had been sold, not for £300 but for £900! I wish I'd kept it now!

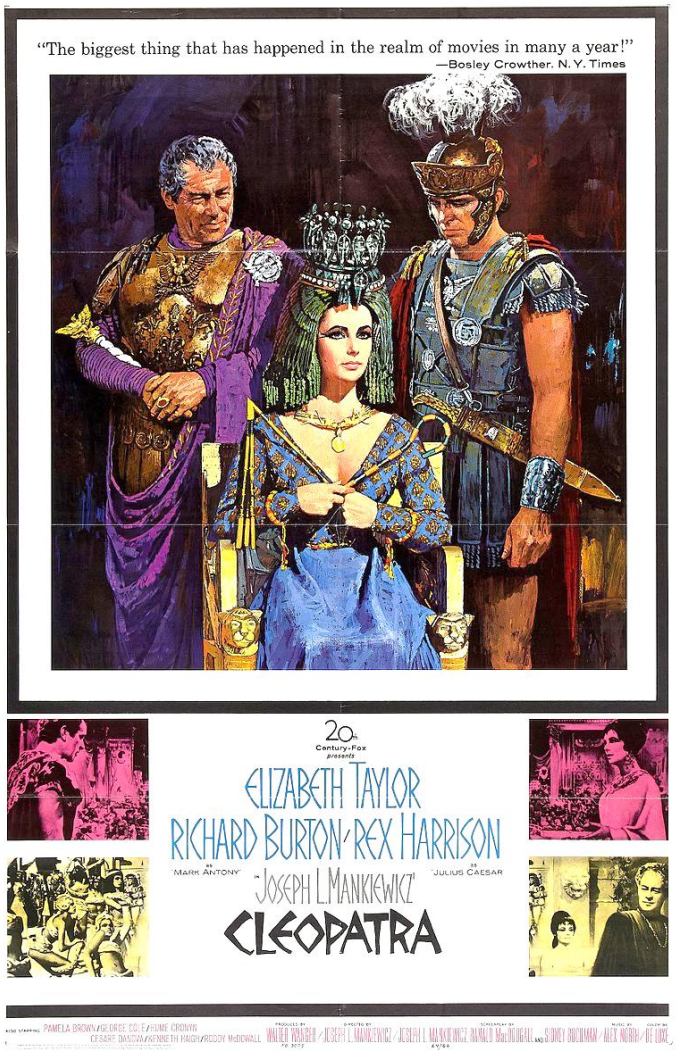
I have always loved Prestbury village and have found it fascinating over the years to have met or read about so many interesting personalities.

Bernard Parkin

The Kings Arms, Prestbury ~ home of
Fred Archer, Thirteen times Champion Jockey
born 1857 ~ died 1886

"In this Prestbury Inn lived Fred Archer the jockey
Who trained upon toast, Cheltenham Water and coffee.
The shoe of his pony hangs up in the bar
Where they drink to his prowess from near and from far,
But the man in the street passes by without knowledge
That 'twas here Archer swallowed his earliest porridge."

CLEOPATRA & ANTONY



My first encounter with that celebrity couple Antony and Cleopatra was probably through the Hollywood film called *Cleopatra* (1963) starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, another couple of celebrities who had an adulterous affair (or 'erotic vagrancy' according to the Vatican Newspaper) and subsequently married. The lavish film cost an estimated $44 million and almost bankrupted the Fox studio. The team of multiple scriptwriters and rewriters was indebted to Plutarch, among others, as was an earlier scriptwriter called William Shakespeare in his double tragedy of doomed middle-aged love across the ancient Mediterranean worlds of Egypt and Rome, *Antony and Cleopatra* (c 1607). Indeed, I remember writing an undergraduate essay on the play which I called 'Cleopatra's Allure'.

The ancient story has been mined by many other writers too, such as George Bernard Shaw in *Caesar and Cleopatra* and a spoof version of the film appeared as *Carry on Cleo* in 1964. The subject was recently in the news again when there were plans to cast Israeli Gal Gadot and British Adele James in two separate new films about Queen Cleopatra VII, the last Pharoah of Egypt. Complaints were made demanding that the role should go to a genuine Egyptian but pedants and historians were quick to point out that the Ptolemies of Egypt were Macedonian Greeks in origin.

So what were Antony and Cleopatra really like? One piece of plausible contemporary evidence appears on a rare silver coin probably minted at Antioch. The die-engraver has produced a medal-like image of both rulers on the one coin and here are their likenesses:

After the glamour of stage and screen, these effigies come as something of a surprise. The tetradrachm dates to 34-32 BC and it sold recently in America for just under $100,000. Cleopatra VII is presented on the obverse wearing a diadem, necklace and embroidered

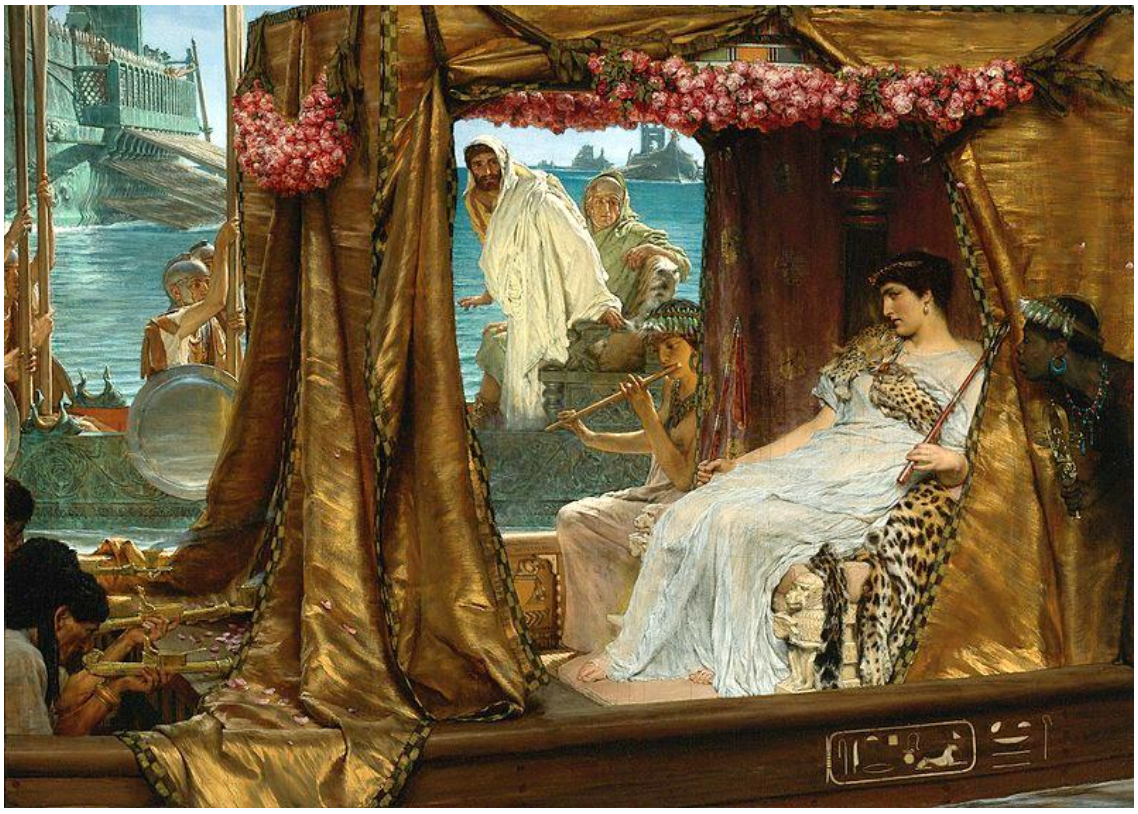
dress with the Greek words Kleopatra Queen Young Goddess, while bareheaded Mark Antony on the reverse is a Victorious General and Triumvir. The expert cataloguer comments as follows:

> 'The talented die engraver has taken particular care to give Cleopatra a powerful, almost masculine profile to complement Antony's pugnacious portrait. Ancient historians note that Cleopatra was not incomparably beautiful (although none suggest she was anything less than pleasing to gaze upon), but her remarkable mind, her musical voice, and the vast wealth of her kingdom made her irresistible to two of the most powerful men of the age: Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.'

Without attempting to go into any of the complex history of the time, how did Antony and Cleopatra meet? Plutarch has a powerful description of their first meeting on the River Cydnus at Tarsus, which William Shakespeare appropriated and adapted from Thomas North's translation (1580). Spoken by Roman officer Enobarbus, the relevant speech begins:

> The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
> Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. &c

This famous passage presumably helped to inspire the late Victorian painting (1895) by Alma-Tadema now in a private collection in New York.



Laurence Alma-Tadema The Meeting of Antony and Cleopatra 41 BC

Just after the assassination of Caesar, Cassius in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* says presciently and vaingloriously:

> How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown.

By contrast, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Queen dreads being an object of captive scorn to contemporary Romans:

> Saucy lictors
> Will catch at us like strumpets, and scald rhymers
> Extemporally will stage us, and present
> Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I' th' posture of a whore.

It is a reminder that, in Shakespeare's day, a youth would have acted the part of Cleopatra and, more generally, that celebrity and allure can also have galling and damaging consequences. Recently, both a moody, drunken Burton and a flamboyant, vampish Taylor have been represented on the London stage in a compelling new play about performing *Hamlet* called *The Motive and the Cue*.

> And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

Duncan Forbes

Writing for this Magazine

I am always pleased to receive articles of interest to our readers. They may be of anything to do with our churches or of Prestbury and the community. There is also a theme each month which can give potential writers a little nudging thought from which an article may develop. Suggestions for themes are welcomed. Such themes may be and often are widely interpreted. For instance, there was a while ago a theme of 'Doors'. I was delighted to be offered an article about Diana Dors!

A typical page of text has about 540 words. Illustrations may be included but these eat into the number of words that fill the pages.

Copy may be submitted in Microsoft Word files or as text files preferably by email sent to *magazine@prestbury.net* (almost anything I can open on my PC). There is no need for authors to spend effort on layout as I usually reset everything in house style (but articles submitted with layout in roughly what is in mind are appreciated).

Ed

This month's theme Is **CELEBRITY**.

There are also reminiscences of events of World War II
in recognition of the 80th anniversary of VE Day

Advertisements

Not many people know this ……..

Elvis started his working life as a sailor. In his late teens and early twenties, he worked on cruise ships. One of his many jobs was to drive the lifeboats, when they were being used as tenders, to take the passengers ashore when the ship could not tie up alongside. Often, the sea was a bit unsettled, and passengers in his tender became nervous. To entertain them and take their minds off the 'Shake, Rattle and Roll' of the boat, he started singing songs that he made up as he went along, usually based on something he could see around him. For example, tender number 3, his favourite tender, had safety bars across the windscreen to prevent damage from flotsam should the lifeboat be used for its intended rescue work. These bars gave the impression of a prison and so apparently led him to begin to put together the initial phrases of 'Jail House Rock'. These words, when crooned in his deep voice, both calmed and entertained his passengers and they arrived at the quay side hale and hearty and ready for the nearest 'Beach Shack'.

On another occasion, he had taken a break and purchased a pair of suede shoes, immediately replacing his steel-toe-capped 'Big Boots' with these, which, of course, was against regulations. Somehow, however, he snuck into his tender without the shore master noticing. On helping the passengers step from the shore to his tender for the return journey, and well pleased with his new purchase, but not wanting anyone to step on them, he started to cobble (they were new shoes) together the opening words of 'Blue Suede Shoes'.

The number 3 was, from his childhood, Elvis' favourite number, and so he always asked the duty officer for permission to drive this tender. This tender was not popular with most of the sailors as it had an errant steering system which led many of the naturally superstitious sailors to call this tender, 'The Devil in Disguise'. This meant that there was never competition for this tender. Now, as time went on, Elvis became very attached to his boat and began to consider it his personal launch, and he learnt its errant ways. It is said that Elvis eventually had little 'Trouble' steering it, and he was often heard to mutter "I got wise, so don't mess around with me". Indeed, passengers who had travelled with him were so taken by this charismatic singer and the calmness of the sailor/ boat synergy that they began to queue for his boat and refused to travel in any other.

One day, however, this led to a queue all around the promenade deck of the cruise ship and the Captain was concerned that the tender operation was taking too long. He came down to the deck to find out what was going on. On being told the story of Elvis and Tender No.3 he used his authority to force his way aboard. He accosted Elvis and demanded to know what was going on. Elvis explained how errant the tender had been and how he had built a relationship with it and invited the Captain to join them (not that a Captain requires an invitation to join a tender; it is his or hers to command after all). As they sailed ashore, he began to sing to his boat, 'You're the Devil in Disguise'. The passengers applauded, and many drew the Captain's attention to the brilliance of his sailor.

The story goes that after Elvis came off shift (watch) that day, the Captain sent for him. He settled him in an easy chair in his day-cabin; gave him a pink gin, and began to extol his virtues as a singer.

"You and I could become wealthy. I know many people, in many ports all around the world; with your voice and my organisational skills, we can make a fortune".

"No!" replied Elvis, "I cannot do that."

"But why not lad? It would be so easy and we would live away from this ship and the sea."

"No Captain, I just cannot do it."

"But WHY NOT BOY?"

"Because Captain, I 'LOVE m'TENDER'."

Anon

Submitted by John Moles to the Editor 01.04.2025

Footnotes:

Releases by Elvis:

Shake, Rattle and Roll 1955
Jail House Rock 1957
Beach Shack 1966
Big Boots 1960
Blue Suede Shoes 1972
Trouble 1975
You're the Devil in Disguise 1968
Love Me Tender 1956

Marle Hill WI

Marle Hill WI met on Monday 7 April 2025 with a very interesting speaker talking about his life as a Trugger. Whilst he talked about his life, he sat and made a lovely trugger for the garden and had several of his examples on show.

Members were reminded of the dates for the monthly meal out, knit and natter and the book club.

Our next meeting is on Monday 12 May 2025 at St Nicolas Church Hall at 7:30pm. This month's meeting will be a discussion on our National Resolution going forward to the National Annual Meeting in June. The resolution is "Bystanders can be Lifesavers".

Visitors are very welcome to attend. Come and see what we have to offer and have some ME time.

Sue Davies, Marle Hill WI

trug *n.* shallow oblong garden-basket usually of wood strips [perhaps dialect variant of TROUGH]

I THOUGHT MY UNCLE WAS IRISH !

My Mother, so I recall was for ever filling boxes with certain types of tinned food. I was not very old and really did not fully understand what this action was all about. One thing that did stick in my memory was this …. There was always a Red Cross on the wrapping paper.

Let's go back a few years, before I was thought of, my mother was one of four children. three girls and one boy. They all grew up; the girls were successfully launched into a worthwhile career, namely nursing. The youngest, the boy, he was called Barnard. When the time came for him to seek employment, times were especially hard. the country, nay, the whole industrialised world was in the depth of a massive recession. Uncle Barnard as he later became, was able to assist on the farm where his Father was employed. This was a farm that bred cattle and produced milk, not exactly what Uncle was particularly switched on by. Where and when would Uncle find employment

Later we read that he was employed as a Tailer?? In due course Uncle conceived the idea of following a military career. This is how it appeared. He fancied the idea of joining a Guards Regiment. As we all know, it is a requirement to be of a certain height to be a guardsman. Oh dear, Uncle was below the stipulated height figure, what on earth could he do?

We know now that he was able to join the Irish Guards because their specified height was a little lower. So he joined as a Private and proceeded to pursue a career in uniform.

Wind the clock forward a few years to 1940 when Uncle was stationed in barracks in the south of England. At that time of the war things were in rather a bad shape for we British. All kinds of rumours were being circulated about what was taking place over the other side of the English Channel.

As I mentioned above Uncle was in the south, in the Tunbridge area actually in what sounded like a makeshift base. Wild rumours were rife and it was claimed German paratroopers had landed near the Kent coast. It was not true. What was true was the Germans had arrived in the Netherlands.

Oh heck... action stations. The Dutch Government were appealing to our Government to aid in the rescue of the Dutch Royal Family and certain Government and Civil Service staff.

A battalion of the Irish Guards, that's our Uncle, were ordered to embark at Dover and hot foot it over to the Hook of Holland which in actual fact was a village with a quay at the time. Upon arrival all was quiet but far away in the east could be seen flames caused by the German attacks; Rotterdam actually.

Whilst the Guards were unpacking kit, some vehicles arrived but not the Dutch Royal Family; they had already departed for the safety of England. Other Dutch Government staff were embarked and the following day all the guardsmen were ordered back home to their barracks.

They hardly had time to sit back for a smoke when orders were received from on high to get ready to cross the Channel to Boulogne.

Irish Guards soldiers plus other detachments plus as much kit as could be loaded on the ship embarked and set off for Boulogne. It was really a fruitless operation. In short my Uncle and his soldier comrades were barely settled into their attack positions when the Germans arrived.

For a short period the British did believe they were in a position to push back the German advance, but no, it was hopeless. All hell broke loose and for the following hours, a pitch battle commenced. Royal Navy Destroyers berthed in the harbour joined in the fray with their massive guns blazing. A few hours later, during which time sadly there were many casualties on both sides, orders were received to withdraw aboard the ships. Very sadly my Uncle's unit was overrun by the attacking German Infantry and were cornered in a railway yard. As a result they were all captured along with many other Irish Guardsmen.

From then on, his war was over for he was sent east and from that fateful day in May 1940 until May 1945 he was interned in a POW camp. This was why Mother was despatching those food parcels I mentioned at the start of this narrative. All I recall was that she sent tinned tomatoes and other foods suitable to be in tins. Uncle was in a bad way at times and lost much weight.

OK … come the war's end. One day at that period in time, I recall I was just setting off walking to school when a soldier came towards us; he paused as we met and in a different accent addressed little me.. "Excuse me young man, please can you direct me to Mrs Woodcock's house?" I said.....back over there pointing to house No 30. I hadn't a clue who this soldier was and hurried off to school. Remember, in those wartime days, so many adults were walking the streets wearing military uniform, it is difficult to comprehend such a scenario nowadays. To us small children, this was normal life.

Later in the day I returned home from school, entered the house and who should be sitting in the living room but this same soldier!

Mother came through and explained to me that this was my Uncle Barnard, well it took me a few moments to take on board what I was told. I may have met him in earlier times but of course I was a tiny baby then.

Returning to this (to me) unusual accent; because Uncle had served in the Irish Guards for nigh on 15 years, he had of course mixed in the company of mostly Irish soldiers and began to speak like his fellow companions. He was born and bred in rural Berkshire.

Following the war Uncle continued a career in the Irish Guards and initially was stationed in Germany. I have little further knowledge of his career movements until he retired in his mid fifties.

Looking back and with hindsight, I am selfishly thankful I was born at a time in history when there were no wars requiring the young folk of this country to be conscripted into uniform.

Nigel Woodcock

Churchyard Tidy-Up Morning

A coffee break and chat are an essential part of our churchyard tidy-up mornings! Thank you to everyone who came along to trim, weed and sweep, the churchyard in preparation for Easter.

Helen Mann

Easter Dawn Celtic Communion

Twenty one of us and three dogs braved the freezing cold wind on Cleeve Hill, to celebrate Easter Day with a dawn Celtic communion. This year there was enough natural light so that we didn't need torches but alas, despite the sun having risen over the horizon, it was nowhere to be seen! It was good to gather together in this way, while much of the world was still tucked up in bed, then head home for a hot drink.

Helen Mann

Erecting the Cross at St Nicolas

In time for Palm Sunday were Liz Steel, Martin Ford, Gill Wood, Brian Wood giving encouragement and Janet Ford behind the camera. As Holy Week progressed the palm leaves were replaced in turn by a red cloth and a white cloth.

Easter Cross and Flower Display in St Nicolas

MY UNCLE ROBIN - RAF Sergeant

My softly spoken quiet Uncle Robin lived in a cottage on the Muncaster Castle Estate at Ravenglass in the Lake District. This country man worked on the estate as a game keeper. Life changed for him when like many others he was called for war service. I have a brief memory of him when I was five years old and on holiday at Ravenglass with my Cumbrian family. I can remember thinking how handsome he was in his blue uniform. We had to wait until the end of the war before our families could get together more. Now it's time to move on to 1967 when I met Nigel and I think most of you that know him will know what is coming next.

OVER TO NIGEL – Chatting with my Uncle and researching plus knowledge of these things.

At the time of call up he elected and was accepted into the RAF. It is not clear what his function was at the beginning of his service. In about the end of 1941 we know from conversations with him that he trained as a Pilot and was considered a suitable candidate to fly Fighter aircraft. Following a period of flying training he was posted to a Spitfire Squadron.

In early 1942 the War Cabinet made a decision to mount a rescue operation to help the plight of the population of the island of Malta - let us say probably around 150,000 souls – they were literally starving due to the Italians and Germans preventing supplies from reaching the island. They were unable to survive foodwise on what they grew locally. So …. Here is a somewhat convoluted description …

At the behest of the War Cabinet in the summer of 1942 the RAF and the combined Royal and Merchant Navies mounted a massive operation code named "Operation Pedestal" The idea was to go "Mob Handed" in a naval manner. This was an operation that had to succeed since thousands of lives were at risk. It was a really serious situation.

Over a period of months and in deadly secrecy like many ops. during war time, a scheme was devised involving many departments culminating in organising a huge convoy of vessels.

This massive assembly totalled upwards of sixty ships of all different types and sizes. There was every type of vessel - Battleships, Aircraft Carriers, Cruisers, Destroyers, Armed Escort ships plus a higher proportion of Merchant Vessels transporting all manner of cargoes especially fuels…namely petrol, diesel, paraffin, coal, food commodities, etc., etc., thousands of tonnes of the stuff. The convoy originated in Glasgow.

What has all the above to do with Uncle Robin? Here we go - He was selected along with perhaps approximately forty other fellow Spitfire pilots together with their aircraft aboard

an Aircraft Carrier. The plan was to transport a number of Fighter Aircraft to Malta, with others to follow, to engage the enemy and guard the island from raiders in the Maltese area. The enemy were in the main based in Sicily about 60 miles to the north of Malta…that's about 15 minutes flying time in a Spitfire. In fact, most of the area bordering on the Med was occupied by the Germans at that period in history. The RAF were already operating in this Maltese airspace from makeshift airfields flying slower obsolete aircraft that were being destroyed by superior enemy aircraft. Something had to be done and quickly. Remember 'Faith, Hope and Charity'.

Back to Uncle Robin steaming along in this massive convoy. When this huge fleet of vessels were progressing to the east of Gibraltar, the enemy were on to it and all hell broke loose. From the north and south enemy aircraft were on the scene plus Italian and German submarines. It was insufferable and over the next two weeks or so, our ships were in dire straits. Many of our vessels were sunk or damaged and sadly there was much loss of life.

The plan for the RAF Spitfires was this..... when the convoy was about 5 or 6 hundred miles from Malta and at around 3.00 am, the Spitfires would begin taking off from their carrier. The pilots were given a course to fly and ordered to climb to a height of about 28 – 30 thousand feet. This it was hoped would minimise their chances of being hit by anti-aircraft guns and other enemy interference. Uncle Robin and his fellow pilots were not well versed in carrier take-offs and the Spitfire was not intended to spend its service live operating from Naval Carriers. Suffice to say without going into technical detail, all the aircraft were safely launched and arrived at their destination. Later of course, more RAF aircraft were flown out to the Mediterranean "Theatre of Operations".

We will stay with Uncle Robin. He was based on Malta for a period of time. He was successful in destroying enemy aircraft that were attempting to attack Malta for which I believe he was decorated.

Thank you, Nigel.

This story concludes when my Uncle was back home in England at the conclusion of hostilities. I recall listening in to conversation between Uncle Robin and Nigel; Robin said..... "The Spitfire was a pilot's aircraft – a big reliable 27 litre Rolls Royce engine up front, a bullet proof windscreen and a nice armour plated chair to sit in for protection".

I have often commented that I could not believe that Uncle Robin flew round the skies shooting the enemy down; it seems totally not like the gentleman I knew.

Saying this one day to an ex-RAF friend of Nigel's, he said "The RAF would have loved him. Being a game keeper, he would have a good eye and be an accurate shot."

So that answered that question.

It was a sad day when I lost my Uncle Robin but I was so proud of him.

Gill Woodcock

Advertisements

To advertise your business please contact advertising@prestbury.net

A MEMORY OF VE DAY, 8th MAY 1945

My first job after leaving school was as trainee architect to Ellery Anderson, Roiser and Falconer, architects to churches and cathedrals far and wide and in particular to St Mary's, Prestbury. I joined them on 2nd January 1945, and it is through them that I was introduced to St Mary's by being given the job of surveying the church and making detailed drawings. I was 15-and-a-half, and it was four weeks before I began that task that Victory in Europe was declared.

Ellery Anderson had recently died and 'Jim' Roiser had become senior partner. He shared directorship with his junior partner, one Peter Falconer, who was the one who held the most qualifications. Peter was young and wild and a member of the Home Guard Motorcycle Unit during the war. He knew my father well.

After seven months I left the architects and went into engineering, which was far more lucrative, but those seven months had been very interesting and a good grounding. That is the background to my lasting memory of VE Day.

As soon as it was announced that the war was over, Mr Roiser called me into his office. 'Come here lad', he commanded, as he plunged hand into pocket and brought forth a sixpenny piece. 'We must celebrate!' he announced. 'Go round to the Cadena (a smart confectioner in The Promenade and opposite the Neptune Fountain) and buy five sticky buns.' Roiser was going to treat the entire staff of five to a sticky bun, one each for the two partners, one for Miss Jefferies his secretary, one for the boy senior to me and one for me! On my return to 12 Imperial Square, the senior partner held out his hand for the penny change and the junior partner began to eat his bun before the rest of us.

For added interest, Peter Falconer, when he branched out on his own, was engaged several years later by The Prince of Wales to advise and suggest alterations to Highgrove House, which in 1980 he had just purchased. The pediment and open balustrades on the roof surmounted by urns were Peter's recommendations and were readily accepted by Prince Charles. Those additions transformed Highgrove House.

In 2005 Pam and I went to see Peter's own gardens in Minchinhampton which were carpeted with snowdrops and open to the public. We met and I said, 'You won't remember me ….' But before I finished the sentence, he butted in 'You're Bernard Parkin, you worked in the Imperial Square office and your Dad taught me how to use the Bayonet when we were in The Home Guard!' After a sixty-year gap he remembered every detail, even the celebratory sticky buns on VE Day! 'What wonderful memories', said Peter as he offered me some of his snowdrops which he was selling in aid of something or other. How right he was!

Bernard Parkin

John Alexander Roberts 1918-1994

Like so many young men who went off to fight in the war, they did not talk about it. Growing up I knew very little about the years my father spent in the navy until my son, Tom, came home from junior school wanting to know if there was someone he could interview about the war. They were 'doing' WW2 as a history project.

So, when my parents next visited Home Farm we sat at the kitchen table, and my father produced a small black and white photograph of a magnetic mine exploding inside Genoa harbour, medals, and memorabilia from the mess rooms of MMS172, the minesweeper on which he spent 2 years in the Mediterranean.

However, it was a sepia-coloured print of HMS Sumba that caught Tom 's eye and the story unfolded.

In 1942 the Sumba sailed to the Arctic as part of the convoy PQ13 to join the Russian fleet at Murmansk for mine sweeping duties. My father was just 24 and chief officer under the command of Lieutenant Commander Bill Peters. After the voyage he wrote a diary recording the hardships faced by the crew of 19, six of whom had never been to sea before! This is a brief extract:

"On 22nd March 1942 Sumba sailed from Seydisfjord in NE Iceland to join a convoy to N. Russia and to act as a rescue ship. A head-on gale on the 24th resulted in everything above water being coated in ice which got so thick that the ship was top-heavy. It was only the nerve and seamanship of Commander Peters that saved the ship and crew when he decided to turn that top-heavy ship in mountainous seas and run before the wind while all hands knocked off the ice from wires and woodwork. The other minesweepers in the convoy simply disappeared presumably they had turned over with all hands lost in the ice floes that cover the Barents Sea in March.

"On March 26th the supply of fuel was coming to an end and not a ship in sight. An S.O.S. radio signal brought the destroyer escort leader who supplied 30 tons of oil, fresh bread, mail and a bottle of Scotch! Some days later Sumba tied up in Polyarno submarine base in N. Russia. The ship was later handed over to the Russians. Most of that voyage was done with water pouring in everywhere, the galley was useless, and food was corned beef and rum, but the worst problems were those of chlorine gas from the battery room and the bitter cold and ice on deck."

For many decades the bravery of all those who sailed on the Arctic convoys, 78 convoys in all, between August 1941 and May 1945, was not recognised. Then in 2013 the first Arctic Stars were presented to 40 WW2 veterans. I applied on behalf of my father and his medal was awarded posthumously.

80 years on it is important to remember them and to tell their stories.

Jane Banwell

Forthcoming Events

A Joyful Celebration of Eastertide

Sunday 11 May at 18:30 in St Nicolas Church

With readings, reflections and Taizé chants

Tewkesbury Choral Society

www.tewkesburychoral.org.uk

Directed by John Holloway

John Rutter Magnificat
Karl Jenkins The Armed Man

Hannah Davey Soprano

Regency Sinfonia

Saturday 17th May 2025 at 7.30pm

Tewkesbury Abbey

Tickets (unreserved) £20 from Society members, the Abbey Shop 01684 856148, Alison's Bookshop at the door

and on line at www.ticketsource.co.uk/t-c-s Accompanied school children free

Bereavement Friendship Group

We will be meeting in St Mary's Church, Prestbury on Monday 19 May at 2.15-4pm

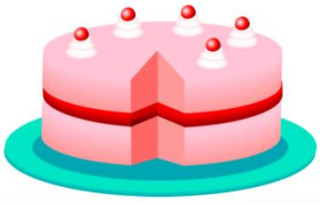
If you have lost a loved one and would like to talk to others in a similar situation, please come along. You will be most welcome, whether you are new or have come before.

Light refreshments will be provided.

Marion Povey

Welcome on Wednesday

Wednesday, 21 May at **2.30pm in the St Nicolas Room**. There will be home-made cakes, tea or coffee for £2 and the chance to meet friends and have a friendly chat. So please come along, maybe bringing a neighbour?



Prestbury Open Gardens

Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 June,
1 - 5pm

Supporting St Mary's Church, Prestbury and the Prestbury Memorial Trust

Volunteers needed!

Can you help for a couple of hours on either day?
We are looking for people to assist
putting up signage, serving teas and ice creams,
directing visitors and helping in car parks.

If you can help, please contact
jane.bradbury@mac.com

Tickets covering both days:
Adults £7.50 (accompanied children free)
on sale on the day
or
from Dearly Pre-loved shop, Prestbury High Street
from mid-May

www.prestburyopengardens.org

KW SHARPENING SERVICES

At KW Sharpening we can provide a professional service to sharpen almost all bladed items be it Garden Tools, Kitchen Knives or Chainsaws. We use the latest machines to give you the best service and sharpest edge for your tools. We pride ourselves on having 133 5 Star reviews on Google. If in any doubt, please give me a ring to discuss your sharpening needs.

We specialise in the following:

- Dog Grooming Scissors and Clipper Blades
- Horse Clipper Blades
- Clipper Servicing
- Hairdressing / Barbering Scissor
- Carpentry Tools Chisels, Planer Blades etc..
- Circular / Chop Saw Blades

Please give me, Ken a ring to arrange a booking, and subject to prior workload most jobs are done in 48 hrs.
If an item is needed urgently, I keep slots available for a same day service and if the workload allows it can be done whilst you wait.

Unit 15 Space Business Centre, Tewksbury Road (Behind Homebase) Cheltenham GL51 9FL
Call: **07379 422942** Email: **ken@kwsharpening.co.uk**
Instagram: **@kw_sharpening** Web: **www.kwsharpening.co.uk**


Charlton Kings Choral Society
Gilbert & Sullivan
TRIAL BY JURY
John Qualtrough (Judge)
Helen Wright (Plaintiff)
Ralph Barnes (Defendant)
David Smith (Counsel)
Samuel Taunton (Usher)
Michael Garland (Foreman)
Elgar
FROM THE BAVARIAN HIGHLANDS
Arthur Bliss
O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD
John Wright (conductor)
Fiona Brown (piano and organ)
Saturday 24 May 2025, 7.30 pm
St Philip and St James Church, 60 Grafton Road,
Leckhampton, Cheltenham GL50 2DD
Book now:
ckcsonline.org.uk/concerts
Tickets £20 (including programme)
Under 25s in full-time education £10
Registered Charity No. 291743 www.ckcsonline.org.uk

Charlton Kings Choral Society Concert

Saturday 24 May at 7.30 p.m.

St Philip and St James Church, Leckhampton

Our concert is a rather light-hearted departure from our usual repertoire and highly suitable for a summer's evening.

Sir Arthur Bliss O give thanks unto the Lord

Marking the 50th anniversary of the composer's death, this short, joyful anthem was written to mark the 400th anniversary of the granting of a charter to the island of Sark.

Sir Edward Elgar From the Bavarian Highlands

Written in the 1890s when Elgar and his wife Alice were holidaying at Garmisch in Bavaria. She wrote the words, and he composed music that reflects some of the Alpine scenery and way of life, marking a very contented period in their life.

Gilbert & Sullivan Trial by Jury

A short comic opera, written and first performed 150 years ago, in 1875. Typical of the G & S partnership, the plot is ludicrous, the music full of good tunes, and it pokes fun at the hypocrisy of those in power.

Gill Smith

ROGATION PROCESSION Wednesday 28th May

Do join us at 6pm outside the main entrance porch to St Mary's. Weather permitting, we will take a leisurely stroll, approximately 1 mile, around the Mill Street area, asking for God's blessing on farmers, farming and the whole of creation. Our gentle chatter and joyful singing will be accompanied by the evening birdsong and we will visit some beautiful spots along the way. There will be some uneven ground and we will be on our feet for roughly an hour. Please be prepared for that, and we may well retire to the Plough afterwards for sustenance! See you there.

Helen Mann

CHURCHES COUNT ON NATURE WEEK
Saturday 7th - Sunday 15th June

The Week will kick off with a children's nature activity morning in the churchyard 10am -12noon on Saturday 7th, with a self-led nature trail which will be open to all for the whole week. The Junior School Year 3s will visit during the week and we hope to have a speaker for the adults one evening mid-week. Proceedings will be rounded off with the (social) bat and moth count on the evening of Saturday 14th and creation prayers on the Sunday 15th. Please mark the dates in your diary and please consider helping, especially with the children's events. For info contact me on 07814 638990

Helen Mann

TIMES OF REGULAR CHURCH SERVICES

St Mary's Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0800	Said Eucharist
	1st Sunday	0930	Breakfast Celebrate! – All-age worship
	Other Sundays	0900	Breakfast Celebrate! at Infant School
		1100	Sung Eucharist
	1st Sunday	1830	Evening Prayer at Capel Court
	2nd Sunday	1700	Benediction
	Other Sundays	1700	Evening Prayer
Thursday		1030	Said Eucharist

St Nicolas Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0930*	Sung Eucharist
Tuesday		1000	Said Eucharist

All Saints Church, Pittville

Sunday		0800	Holy Mass
		1030*	Solemn Mass
	1st & 3rd Sunday	1730	Choral Evensong and Benediction
	Other Sundays	1730	Evening Prayer and Benediction
Wednesday		1830	Holy Mass
Thursday		1115	Holy Mass
Friday		1200	Holy Mass
Saturday	1st Saturday	1000	Holy Mass for Our Lady of Walsingham

St Lawrence Church, Swindon Village

Sunday	1st Sunday	0930	Family Communion
		1700	Evensong
	2nd Sunday	0930	BCP Holy Communion
	3rd Sunday	0930	Holy Communion
		1700	Evensong
	4th Sunday	0930	Holy Communion
	5th Sundays	1000	Benefice Holy Communion alternates with St Mary Magdalene

St Mary Magdalene Church, Elmstone Hardwicke

Sunday	1st Sunday	1100	BCP Holy Communion
	2nd Sunday	1100	Family Service (no communion)
	3rd Sunday	1100	Holy Communion
	4th Sunday	1100	Holy Communion
	5th Sunday	1000	Benefice Holy Communion alternates with St Lawrence
Wednesday	2nd Wednesday	1900	Celtic Evening Prayer
Thursday	4th Thursday	1900	Celtic Communion

* These services are usually streamed on the internet. These and other services are recorded so may be accessed later on the Team's YouTube page -
https://www.youtube.com/NorthCheltenhamTeamMinistry

Parish Directory *continued*

Children's Work
Linda Biggs 01242 510856
linda.biggs@prestbury.net

Safeguarding Officer
Linda Biggs 07769 581822

Parish Magazine
Editor: Brian Wood 01242 515941
magazine@prestbury.net
Advertising: Richard Johnson 07535 417828
advertising@prestbury.net

St Mary's C of E (VA) Schools
Executive Head Teacher: Mr Matt Ferris
01242 383817

Hall Letting
Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane 01242 239590
bookings@prestburyhall.com
St Nicolas Hall, Swindon Lane
hallhire@northchelt.org.uk

Parish Giving Scheme
76 Kingsholm Road,
Gloucester GL1 3BD 0333 002 1260
info@parishgiving.org.uk

Copy Dates and Themes for Future Magazines 2025

Issue		Copy Date		Theme
June	Sunday	11	May	Pet Hates
July	Sunday	15	June	Camping
August	Sunday	13	July	Photographs
September	Sunday	17	August	Routine
October	Sunday	14	September	Crafts
November	Sunday	12	October	Avenues
Dec / Jan	Sunday	16	November	New Year

Prestbury Parish Magazine is usually published on the last Sunday of the month. The copy date is usually the Sunday 2 weeks before this, but there may be scope for some flexibility.

Copy may be sent in a clearly marked envelope to 'Prestbury Parish Magazine'
2 Honeysuckle Close, Prestbury, Cheltenham, GL52 5LN
or preferably by email to **magazine@prestbury.net**

May 2025 Magazine Theme: Pet Hates
Please send copy by Sunday 11 May 2025

THE ROYAL OAK
CHELTENHAM

AWARD-WINNING FOOD

CASK ALE, CRAFT BEER & CIDER

BEAUTIFUL BEER GARDEN

Planning an event or party?

Ask us about
The Pavilion, our versatile
private hire space.

royaloakprestbury.co.uk

royaloakprestbury@butcombepubs.com

01242 522344

@royaloakprestbury

The Royal Oak, The Burgage, Prestbury,
Gloucestershire, GL52 3DL

BUTCOMBE
LOYALTY CLUB

25% OFF FOOD AT THE ROYAL OAK

All day every Wednesday for Butcombe Loyalty Club members

Join the club:
butcombe.com/loyalty

Scan to download the Butcombe Loyalty App