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Prestbury

Parish Magazine

North Cheltenham
Team Ministry



September 2026



£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
revjacquelinehenson@gmail.com

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
Margaret Compton 01242 235359
margaret.compton@prestbury.net

PCC Secretary

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

PCC Treasurer

(vacant)

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*)

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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:

The Irish on St Patrick's Day

in the St Nicolas carpark during the Cheltenham Festival in 2022

by Brian Wood

Poems from Clare Wyatt

September is St Mary's patronal. It is also the anniversary of when I first came to St Mary's, over half a century ago.

St Mary

Dear Lord, we give thanks for all Mary has done,
She cared for Jesus when He was young,
Hers were the hands that helped Him to walk,
She heard His first words when He started to talk.
Mary was the woman who Jesus called Mum,
However that was said in His native tongue,
She was with Him right up to the end.
For Ever His Mother, For Ever His Friend.

My First time at St Mary's

I came to St Mary's in '75.
We had a wee mite who we wanted baptised.
I thought that before I asked for such grace,
It would be better to show my face.
So I duly turned up at 11.00 o'clock,
Then I was in for a bit of a shock.
They came in with incense to the fore,
I very nearly went out of the door,
But I stayed in my pew for I was no fool,
Besides, I had been to a Catholic school.
I looked at my book and was relieved to see
That it was *Copyright C of E!*

Postscript

After attending several services at St Mary's I talked to Father Ian Hazelwood. He came to see us at home, and as a result Angela Clare was baptised later that year.

Clare Wyatt



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The Theme this month is
IRELAND

IRELAND

There is no doubt that Ireland is a very beautiful country. Pam and I had the good fortune to be close friends with an Irishman who lived in Tewkesbury but had a cottage on the coast of southern Ireland at Inchydoney, near Cork. He was very keen that we should spend a week with him there while he drove us around all the places of interest. Everywhere we went, it was "Hello Simon, how are you?" It seemed that there was always someone who was pleased to see him. That holiday was crammed full of interest, kindness and Irish humour. I shall write about Irish humour rather than the magnificent scenery.

When I first visited The Emerald Isle, I remember sitting in a bar behind a healthy-looking pint of Guinness, when a man came and sat next to me. We began talking, never a problem with the Irish, and the subject of racing cropped up. "It's me ambition to go to Cheltenham for the Gold Cup!" he announced. "Have you ever been there yourself?" I told him that "meself" had been going racing at Cheltenham since the age of four, had witnessed Golden Miller winning the third of his five Gold Cups (1934) and for the ten years before we were married, my home was less than 100 yards from, and overlooking, the 3-miles hurdles start. Impressed, he called over to three friends, "I have a man here from Cheltenham, so I have, come over and join us!" From that moment on, I was treated like a long-lost friend!

In 1972, when our daughter left her junior school and started at Charlton Park Convent (now St Edward's), Pam and I attended our first parents' evening and sought out the headmistress, a replica of Mother Theresa and very Irish, as were many of her staff. "How is Nicola settling in, Sister?" I enquired. "Ah, she's all right, so she is", was the reply. I asked if she could tell us a little more and she said, poking me in the chest with her forefinger, "No! You tell me Mr Parkin, is Tommy Carberry going to win The Gold Cup?" That was music to our ears, and we knew our daughter was in the right school! Of course, Nicola came home with lots of amusing stories. Here is one of them:

Every year in March on the Monday before the Cheltenham Festival, pupils would arrive back at school, look out of the classroom windows overlooking the lawns and lake beyond, and see exactly what they had come to expect. "*Beside the lake, beneath the trees...*" there were not daffodils fluttering in the breeze, but Irish priests upon their knees! A scruffy old caravan had arrived overnight, which the girls knew always contained a number of Irishmen wearing dog collars. There was much speculation as to what went on when the priests returned each day from the racecourse, but the girls noticed that the nuns always had a twinkle in their eye and a spring in their step during that particular week!

One day, when I visited Ireland, arriving at Dublin airport, I made my way to the car hire firm. Handed a form by the clerk, I was asked to fill it in before they would let me have a car. Having done so, the clerk checked the tick boxes and stopped when he came to 'occupation'. "I can see you're an artist, Sorr? I'm afraid we cannot let you have a car." "Why ever not?" I queried. "Because Sorr, artists are very dodgy people, very dodgy indeed." I explained I had to be at Navan racecourse and that it was business, not pleasure. "Can you not be something else?" asked the clerk. "Well," said I, "I'm also a photographer." He told me they hire cars to photographers all the time. Tearing up the first form, he gave me another, which I filled in to his liking. With that, he unhooked a bunch of keys and led me to a nice new car. I was pleased to know that in Irish eyes, photographers were decent people!

Stewart Peters, a local racing historian, has written 3 books which I was asked to illustrate with photographs. A very engaging writer and clever with the layout of his books, Stewart drew the line at public speaking. In 2006 the latest of the three, 'The Hennessy Gold Cup', was launched at Donnington Park Hotel near Newbury, but when asked to stand up and introduce his work, he failed to do so, as his nerves got the better of him. As I had much to do with the book, I was asked to stand in. I had made no preparation for this but knew my subject well, so with willingness boosted by the support of three Dubliners who had joined me at my table, I did as requested. Normally when asked to perform, I did so with scribbled notes and a jug of water to hand. This time it was straight in at the deep end with neither, after a dinner where a very acceptable red had been served. With the enthusiastic encouragement of these three Irishmen, I rose to my feet, very much in racing-mode. As it happened, I had my audience roaring with laughter from the outset and I hoped very much that laughter was with me and not at me. When I sat down, everyone else stood up and clapped with great enthusiasm. I think the company of those three Irishmen and the fact that my usual water was changed into wine were major factors to everything going so well!

Do any readers remember John Fogarty? He was the popular Irish gentleman who kept the Bakery Stores in the High Street (now Prestbury Village Stores). Although a staunch Roman Catholic, he was a regular recipient of the Sacrament here at St Mary's and his grave is in the churchyard towards the end of the footpath leading from the church porch to the Kings Arms. In the days when The Queen Mother attended the Festival, John flew both the Irish flag and the Union Jack from poles on the thatched roof of his shop. He was very loyal to the Crown. Each year during race week, the Queen Mother's driver would make a detour on the way to the racecourse and pull up outside the Bakery Stores so that she could talk to John and his wife Anne. I used to lend John large, framed photos I had taken of Her Majesty for him to decorate his shop windows. He insisted on giving me a bottle of wine in return. As I made my way to his wine racks, he would say "Take the best one you can find Sir Bernard!" Always he gave me this title making certain he had at least one of his customers within earshot! A lovely example of his Irish humour.



"WHEN IRISH EYES ARE SMILING!"

The Irish began to come to the Festival at Prestbury Park in 1947, 1948 and 1949, in the days when the Irish steeplechase champion, Cottage Rake, ridden by Aubrey Brabazon won his hat-trick of Cheltenham Gold Cups. They came in small numbers then, but now it is an annual pilgrimage of many thousands. Cottage Rake was so popular in Ireland that the Irish racegoers brought to Prestbury Park a poem dedicated to their hero which they chanted:

*Aubrey's up, the money's down.
The frightened bookies quake.
Come on me lads, let's raise a cheer.
Begad, 'tis Cottage Rake!*

Racing at Prestbury would not be half as fun without the happy enthusiasm of the Irish, to be sure!

Bernard Parkin

Ireland was not quite as we imagined

Have you ever been across the sea to Ireland? That question seems to ring a bell in my memory! Well... to answer the question: **yes**, I — or rather we — have visited the Emerald Isle twice. (Are we supposed to say “two times”? Or is that the BBC trying to be super-correct?)

If you fancy the idea of checking out what it looks like before setting off to visit, I have a suggestion: drive north on the M6 and find your way into Scotland. When directed, turn left and wind your way over to the Mull of Kintyre. Perch on the edge of the cliff on tiptoe. If the weather is kind, you may just catch a glimpse of the Emerald Isle shimmering in the haze in the far distance.

Now, many of us who have never visited said country will have an image in our mind of what we think it is, and the same applies to the people who inhabit it. My former personal image was of a country where it was always raining, and also a very poor country... not true. It was perfect weather when we visited, and I think it has obtained much benefit by sucking in all that membership of the EU has to offer. There are no signs on the surface that folk are wanting any more than over here in our country.

On the first occasion we took an aeroplane and landed at an airfield named Derry, formerly a British base during WW2.

On the final run-in — in cockpit speak they say “on finals” — we flew directly over a former airfield named RAF Ballykelly. Now... remember where you are. I kid you not: traversing one of the runways was a railway track! I spied it with my own eyes from about 1,000 feet above. Now that must be a first. Furthermore, I was told the train took precedence over aircraft, which does rather surprise me.

Just imagine: you are returning from perhaps a 12-hour surveillance flight over the Atlantic, or maybe more. Suddenly the flight engineer shouts a warning above the roar of the four R-R Griffons: “Look out, Skipper! The signals are at green, so a train is due — we will have to execute a go-round!”

The RAF Avro Shackleton, based at the above airfield, was capable of staying aloft for maybe longer than the above length of time. It was an aircraft familiar to Northern Irish folk.

We were on a journey to visit close friends with roots in Donegal. What a varied and rugged landscape. It is most certainly worth the effort to sample its delights. Actually, it never rained — yes, really!

Let us pause for a moment here... the history of Ireland has always held a certain fascination for me. During my time at school, we spent a while learning about the history of the country. Its history is long and involved, and my memory is somewhat faded. As with many European regions, Ireland was invaded by various other nations, and a bit later the English decided it was their turn to travel over. Religion was involved, and without getting too political, I don't believe we covered ourselves with glory — that is a matter of opinion.

What most of us do know, of course, is the terrible potato famine in the 1850s. This caused thousands of deaths and was absolutely tragic. It also triggered mass emigration to countries such as the USA and the UK.

Much more recently, in the period following WW1, the Irish people voted to run their own show, so to speak, and war raged between the British Army and the local forces. Eventually peace was restored, and Ireland became independent of Britain, excepting a small area in the north of Ireland.

Now, in the present time, there exists some disquiet about the political situation in the north. When we travelled through Londonderry (Derry), we were aware there was a remote possibility of a quarrel, and an atmosphere was detectable. Why, and with whom, was not too clear.

The second time we were to visit the country was via a cruise from Avonmouth. We sailed across to France and were taken by coach to visit the stunning gardens created by Monet, thence up the North Sea to the Shetlands. We then continued south along the west coast of Scotland with intermediate stop-offs on the way to Belfast. We cannot really talk about this city, save to say we had a most incredible visit to the Titanic Centre. You see, we are discussing Ireland, and the above city is in Northern Ireland — not quite the same, although many people would love the two countries to join together.

Our final call was in Ireland, of course: Cork. We enjoyed a delightful experience. Our ship was met by a coach. In due course we were driven at a sensible pace in a westerly direction, closely following the coast. We were struck by how green the landscape was (maybe not so green as I write!).

Opportunity was offered to dally a while and take in the countryside. Eventually we arrived in a typically attractive Irish village where we came to a halt, very appropriately, outside a pub. This was to be our lunch stop.

My host was welcoming towards us... well, he had to be! An interesting period was spent in conversation with the locals. I have to confess I was not too clever at understanding what they were saying to us! Never mind — the time went all too rapidly and soon we were on our way, Cork-bound.

At some point our driver pulled in opposite a sight none of us expected. Standing on a plinth at the roadside was a full-size model T Ford car. It was a replica constructed in an aluminium-alloy material. Many folk on our coach alighted and were photographed sitting in the car.

We were told the reason for this display was quite simple: in this village were born the parents of the one and only Henry Ford — yes, really. They emigrated to the USA, and the rest is history.

So you can understand from the above account that Ireland was not quite as we imagined!

Nigel Woodcock

MR YEATS AND HIS BEASTLY COINS



Soon after the Irish Free State was declared in 1922, there was a move for an individual Irish coinage. Under the Coinage Act 1926, a five-man committee was formed to select new Irish coins. The chairman was the poet and Senator William Butler Yeats who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, and he declared that coins were 'the silent ambassadors of national taste'.

Instead of the imperial head of King George V, the committee chose the heraldic Gaelic harp for the obverse of all six coins, although they kept to British sterling denominations from half-crown to farthing. For the pictorial reverse images, they chose animals associated with Ireland, namely: the horse, salmon, bull, wolfhound, hare, chicken, pig, and woodcock, or in other words creatures associated with farming and hunting, given that Ireland at the

time was a largely agrarian country. The Catholic lobby wanted saints but it was felt that such images might be turned into religious medals. As Yeats said, they wanted something 'elegant, racy of the soil and utterly unpolitical' and therefore 'decided upon birds and beasts ... what better symbols could we find for this horse riding, salmon fishing, cattle raising country?'

The committee solicited appropriate designs from various individuals and then selected anonymously from the sixty-six or so submitted. They found that they had voted unanimously in each case for the 'incomparably superior' and bold work of one particular designer: Percy Metcalfe (1895 – 1975), a Yorkshireman born in Wakefield, and then aged 32. Enlisting after only one term at the Royal College of Art, Metcalfe had served in the Royal Field Artillery and suffered such a severe leg injury in 1916 that he had become a medallist rather than a sculptor, because he could not stand for long. His striking designs meant that the new Irish coinage for the Free State was designed by an Englishman and made at the Royal Mint.

Unwelcome outside interference and delays meant that at one stage the entire committee resigned as one and had to be persuaded to resume work. Eventually, in 1928, the new coins were issued to some predictably reactionary comments. Soon known as the 'Barnyard Collection', they were described variously as 'beastly' and the 'pagan coinage' was condemned in the USA for lacking 'any reference to Almighty God'. The Pig and piglets image on the halfpenny came in for particular opprobrium and was a gift to cartoonists. Nevertheless, the new coins also had many admirers and Yeats described them as 'a coinage of unusual interest and beauty'. In a 1928 article called 'What We Did or Tried to Do', he said that the coins would appeal to those who would look at them longest, namely 'artists and children'.

Only 6001 proof sets of the 1928 'Barnyard Collection' are said to have been minted and sold for £1 by the Central Bank in a green leather presentation case labelled in gold lettering STAORSTÁT ÉIREANN and IRISH FREE STATE. Viewed now almost a hundred years later, Percy Metcalfe's distinctive designs seem clearly modern, and forward-looking. There is neither line nor land in his watery florin design for the silver Atlantic Salmon and on the copper farthing the elusive woodcock flies free in mid-air. It is significant that some of his admired designs survived the introduction of the euro in 2002 and Metcalfe's emblematic animals even seem to be forerunners of the conservationist reverses on the current coins of King Charles III, now cash is no longer king.

Duncan Forbes

DORGAN'S GARAGE

In the hired Volkswagen Golf, we drove back to the Dingle Peninsula to collect the car. At Camp, after Tralee, we stopped at Fitzgerald's overlooking Brandon Bay shimmering in the September sunshine.

'We serve food from 12.30.'

'Can we have two coffees now?'

'Certainly, and you can look at the menu. What coffee would you like? Two Americanos?'

'Two cappuccinos, please.'

'I'm just finishing the Specials Board now.'

We stirred our coffees and looked at the sunlit view and two walled sheep pastures leading down to the foreshore.

'What would you like to eat now?'

'A special toastie, please.'

'And I've been tempted by something on the Specials Board. One of Mary's mutton pies served in broth.'

'Good choice.'

They arrived about fifteen minutes later. The mutton pie floating in clear broth looked like a clawless crab and tasted superbly nourishing.

We arrived at Dorgan's dusty Garage at about 1:30 for a 2 o'clock meeting with Mr Dorgan Snr. who said 'I'll be there.' He was nowhere to be seen and the folding door of the repair shop was closed. A foreign-sounding man was spraying the bodywork of an old car and stopped to help me and another customer, a white-haired old man in a black hat. It was a hot day and the bracken-covered hills opposite looked like a postcard in the September sunlight. Eventually, John Joe Dorgan emerged and opened up the folding door. I reminded him of my name and said,

'I've come about the Volvo S40 you had to collect on Monday.'

'Oh yes.'

'And thank you for all you've done for us.'

He held out his hand and shook mine.

'No problems. It's all good.'

First of all, however, he could not find the car key. He presented me with a strongbox full of keys.

'Can you recognize it here?'

I looked at about a dozen car keys.

'Sorry. I can't see it there.'

He removed the top tray and in the box underneath there were about twenty more car keys and fobs.

'It's got a leather tag on it.'

I looked through the mess of keys.

'I can't see it. Perhaps it's in the car.'

'May be so it is.'

He went to look inside the dusty teal Volvo and returned.

'The key's in the car.'

'So what do I owe you? For the insurance, I need a bill that itemises the breakdown collection and delivery of any spare parts separately.'

In his antiquated office, with paper memorabilia on the wooden walls, he opened an oil-stained, red hardbacked notebook and turned to the relevant page.

‘For a car collection west of Dingle, I charge 150 euro. I hoped to drive the car myself but I had to call my son Sean because it didn’t sound safe.’

‘That seems fair enough.’

‘The CV joint had lost its cover and so it was leaking grease and was dry. So I repaired that and put a new cover on it. That’s 130 euro.’

‘I understand.’

‘And it’s another 50 euro for attending to the back wheel that had worked loose and the nuts needed tightening.’

‘We are most grateful and we depend on your expertise. Many thanks, Mr Dorgan.’

‘How would you like to pay?’

‘With a card if possible.’

‘The machine is here. Do you know how it works?’ he asked holding up a card machine and a flex.

‘You’ve asked the wrong person. I’m hopeless with things like that.’

The machine said 4% in green.

‘Unfortunately, my son Sean is in Cork today and my other son is not in the garage.’

‘How else can we pay?’

‘Look I trust you and you can ring up and pay me later.’

‘My wife may have enough in cash. I’ll see.’

I returned from the hire-car with 350 euros in notes to find Mr Dorgan chatting to an elderly customer in colourful trousers who said,

‘There’s a man here with wad of money in his hand he wants to give you.’

John Joe smiled and we went into his office where I counted out the notes.

‘One hundred. Two. Three. And fifty. No change. The thirty euros and the bottle of wine are to say thank you.’

‘Well, that’s very kind. I shall certainly get scuttered tonight.’

As we emerged into the sunlight to shake hands, he said,

‘I also sing songs you know and you can see them here on YouTube.’ He showed me a picture on his phone.

‘You said you’ve been doing this for fifty-five years.’

‘Yes, I have. Here’s a photograph of me and mother and father on their golden wedding. That’s me and my nine brothers and sisters.’

‘Did your father start the garage?’

‘No, I grew up on a farm but I always liked singing when I was young. I was born in 1951 and I picked up the songs from the radio when I was meant to be milking the cows. I played the guitar and mouth organ.’

‘Like Woody Guthrie.’

He grinned.

‘Or Bob Dylan later on.’

‘I sang in the pubs and now my sons have put me singing online.’

He produced his mobile phone and some YouTube images came up.

‘They wanted someone to sing in the school who knew songs about the revolutionaries so I sang one for them. Here it is.’

‘Which revolutionary did you sing about?’

‘Michael Collins.’

'I've just been reading about him.'

'Have you now?' he said with a twinkle.

Soon after that we parted company and I doubt we shall ever meet again. His kindly affability and expertise seemed to belong to another century and his old-fashioned generosity to a world elsewhere. As Seamus Heaney's father is said to have said, 'Good manners and common sense can take you a long way.'

Duncan Forbes



John Joe Dorgan sings about Michael Collins on YouTube.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTDn6fkXMN0>

IRELAND

I have enjoyed 3 holidays there but not in recent years. My memories of the people were friendly, hospitable and had a good sense of humour. The pace of life seemed slower and even the cows seemed content!!!!

On one occasion we were self-driving and had to cross the 'border'....out came the Gardai with loaded pistols. Once we convinced them we were tourists, all was well ...of course that was not long after all the horrendous problems! I visited the Waterford Crystal factory, also the Guinness works (not my tippie) but interesting. We were lucky because on each occasion the Irish Sea was fairly calm...I am not keen on choppy waters.

The Emerald Isle was very green.!!!...then.

Marilyn Powell

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Coffee and Cake at the Royal Oak

In August **Prestbury Memorial Trust** held its summer fund-raiser in the Pavilion supported generously by Matt, the landlord of the Royal Oak. The event raised £600 for Trust funds which will be used to maintain the minibus and to organise activities such as the Sit & Fit sessions and day trips. It was lovely to see our members and many local supporters of the charity enjoying their morning coffee. Sue and Jenny ran a successful tombola, Sue, Stella and Penny sold the ever-popular jams and chutneys while Sally and Ruby served the cakes. From the Trust, a big thank-you to all our helpers!

Please go to www.prestburymemorialtrust.org.uk for more information about the Trust and to contact our Warden, Jenny.



Praise in the Park

Sunday 2 August 2026, 3pm - Swindon Village Park

Praise in the Park was a fabulous event on Sunday 2nd August. Held in Swindon Village park in glorious sunshine, over 120 people gathered from across the North Cheltenham Team to sing favourite hymns, accompanied by the Cheltenham Salvation Army band. Refreshments were enjoyed afterwards in the Village Hall. Enormous thanks to everyone who helped out to make this such a success.



Hidden with Christ

Father Richard Rohr is an American Roman Catholic writer who belongs to the Christian mystical tradition which is gaining traction right now. In our own town we have The School of Contemplative Life which offers much on-line help with mastering mysticism and meditation and helps us in how we can discover our true identity in God.

The issue of personal identity might be higher in the public imagination than at any time in recent history. In terms of nationalities alone, whether you are Irish, English, Welsh, Scottish, French, Ukrainian, American, Columbian, Singaporean, we have all nationalities and more, visiting and worshipping at our churches here just in recent weeks!

Richard Rohr pursued this in an article in 2025 and what follows is a summary of his most helpful position. The great thing about it is the sheer relief we receive when we can surely depend on Christ in God to look after our identity, instead of mirrors, the opinion of others or official documents. Rohr writes from a position of radical inclusion of all, because our identity is cemented so deeply in Jesus Christ. I am sure too, that this is part of that marvellous spontaneous joy which Bernard Parkin discovered in his fellow human beings on his trip to Ireland, described elsewhere in this magazine!

Richard Rohr says: 'There is only one question we must definitely answer: "Who am I?" Or, restated, "Where do I abide?" If we can get that right, the rest largely takes care of itself. Paul answers the questions directly: "You are hidden with Christ in God, and Christ is your life" (Colossians 3:3–4). Every time we start judging ourselves, we can ask, "Who am I?" The answer will come: "I am hidden with Christ in God in every part of my life. I am bearing both the mystery of suffering humanity and the mystery of God's glory, which is precisely the mystery of Christ."

Rohr continues and this is best read slowly fully to absorb the goodness of his words:

'God looks at us and always sees Christ, and God thus finds us always and entirely lovable. God fixes God's gaze intently where we refuse to look, on our shared, divine nature as God's children (1 John 3:2). Hopefully, one day our gaze will match God's gaze. We will find God entirely lovable and ourselves fully lovable in the same moment. Why? Because it's the same set of eyes that is doing the looking: "All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).'

The famous French priest, St John Vianney (also known as the Cure d'Ars) wrote about a French farmer who didn't come to services, but who could often be found on a pew. When asked what he did there, he replied, "Nothing. I look at Him and He looks at me."

Richard Rohr reminds us that all we have to do is receive God's gaze and then return what we have received. He continues: 'We simply complete the divine circuit, "love returning love" as my father St Francis of Assisi showed so well. This is our spiritual agenda for our whole life.'

The good news is that we are saved by standing 'consciously and confidently inside the force field that is Christ', not by always getting it right in our inner selves. Rohr emphasises: 'We're too tiny, too insecure, too ready to beat ourselves up. We don't need to be correct, but we can always try to remain connected to our Source.'

What an enormous relief this is! We cannot ever really fall apart because “we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God,” as Paul so beautifully stated (1 Corinthians 3:23). In the end we remember that we are all saved by mercy in spite of ourselves. And ‘that’, Rohr concludes, ‘must be the final humiliation to the ego.’

And so, we see that our holiness is really only God’s holiness. It is a taking part in love, a mutual indwelling, not an achievement or performance on our part. “If anyone wants to boast, let them boast in the Lord,” Paul shouts, probably with some insistence (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Fr Nick



St John Vianney

What can happen when joining the Civil Defence

It was WHEN.....

in 1962; when our uniforms were covered in brick; concrete dust, and 'blood' caused by shifting, by hand, at least one ton of rubble, and broken concrete, to 'rescue' eight people from 'pockets' in the rubble, that this incident took place.

I had spent an hour in a makeshift tunnel of joists and bits of board deep beneath the rubble, as I cut through a steel stanchion which lay across a woman's upper legs and lower abdomen, using an oxy-acetylene cutter.

This necessitated my cheek resting on an asbestos blanket between my head and her thighs, as I cut through the steel stanchion with an oxy-acetylene cutter.

My companions had been similarly engaged lifting floors with improvised jacks, hastily assembled from broken rafters with brick rubble for a fulcrum, after which someone brave or foolish enough crawled into the cavity. (Health and safety did not apply to our work in those days.)

It was mid evening, we had stopped at the camp kitchen and eaten, a good helping of stew, on an enamelled plate using our folding multi-cutlery kit, from our 25 kg. backpacks. At least the cooks did not stint on rations, and we now looked forward to a 'good night's rest' on the hard floor of our three-tonner Bedford lorry, wrapped in our grit filled, 'blood' covered blanket, used earlier to drag casualties from tunnels to a stretcher. These were our personal blankets and you never let anyone 'borrow' them.

WHEN

The cheery voice of our ex-petty officer's voice announced "Fancy a wet, lads?! Get in the 3 tonner, let's go to the docks in Bristol, I know just the place!"

So dirty, scruffy and stinking of sweat, we ended up in a spit-and-sawdust bar, in a dimly-lit street in Bristol docks. Our clothes were not out of place amongst these tough stevedores and dock workers and, yes, the floor was covered in a thick layer of sawdust, and, yes folks, sorry, but large amounts of phlegm were being gathered and ejected. The language, every guttural statement of it being prefixed and suffixed with a blasphemy!

WHEN.....

The door opened and a young 18-year-old (at the most) lady entered immaculately dressed in her Salvation Army uniform, complete, in those days, with the bonnet.

'Oh!', I thought 'Does she have any idea of what she is walking into?'

The pub fell silent, she proceeded round the bar room with her tin and her copies of 'The War Cry'. EVERY single man, and it was only men in the pub, bought a copy and put money in the tin.

I already held the Sally Army in regard but since then I have held them in the very highest regard.

This article was inspired by Praise in the Park, Sunday, 2nd August 2026, led by the Cheltenham Salvation Army band.

Footnotes:

Why were we crawling through rubble tunnels? Four of us, 17-year-olds, had seen an advert for volunteers to join the Civil Defence (CD). Having signed up we were sent to the Heavy Rescue Division, and received twice weekly training in driving heavy goods vehicles, dumper trucks and mechanical diggers, in exchange for fitness training which consisted of shifting two tons of rubble, by hand, 100 feet one way on Monday and 100 feet back on Thursday!

A CD Heavy Rescue backpack contained:

Pick axe, folding trenching tool, shovel, heavy-duty saw, 20m thick climbing gauge rope, blanket, basic first-aid kit of wound dressings and bandages, debris gloves, and a Röntgen meter in case of nuclear fall out. We also had a triangular bandage, (normally worn as a neckerchief, to soak up sweat and act as a dust mask if required, and a sling if a casualty required it!) The pack was in three inter-folding heavy canvas sections that could be opened and laid out on the ground making all the items readily available. General kit consisted of: 'Tin' helmet with miners' lamp, British Army water bottle, steel bradded army boots.

The Casualties Union provided the trapped casualties, brave people who volunteered to be buried beneath rubble and experience danger in having oxy-acetylene cutters near their bare skin. The 'blood' was provided by the union.

My friends and I were lucky, we were never called upon to carry this out in reality. I am deeply moved when I see, so often on television, rescue teams searching through the rubble of earthquakes and worse still, almost, war zones, which are entirely man made.



John Moles

LIVERPOOL AND IRELAND DISCOVERED

I was born in Liverpool a year before the end of World War 2 and so am a true Scouser. Scousers are named after a stew meal of potatoes, carrots, onions and lamb, a staple meal of working people in Liverpool. Liverpool became the second most important port of the UK especially for goods from the Americas and the Commonwealth. It suffered as a port considerably when UK joined the EU Common Market.

The Port, the Docks, Ship Builders and Repairing and the railways supporting them were major employers. In its population of 750,000, as it was in my younger years, were very significant communities; from Ireland, north and south, Wales, Chinese, Caribbean the latter from shipping. We used to say Liverpool was the Capital of Ireland or the Capital of Wales. Did you know that at Liverpool Pier Head the River Mersey is a half a mile across to Birkenhead and the Wirral?

There was antagonism between the communities based on centuries' hostilities and religion, the Catholic and Protestant divide. This was seen in the areas where the communities lived. It spilled over into which docks people worked in or didn't. Even to the Football Clubs Liverpool and Everton.

On Liverpool City Council there was a Protestant Party group allied to the Conservative Party. Labour had Catholic support. That was how it was when I was elected in the early 1970s to Liverpool City Council as a Liberal representing a working-class area in which I lived. The Protestant Party declined as the Liberal ascendancy cut across the old divides. Even the religious animosity reduced greatly as the main churches realised they had more in common than divided them. Much was done by the friendship and close co-operation by Bishop of Liverpool David Shepherd (former cricketer) and RC Metropolitan Archbishop of Liverpool Derek Worlock.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland still were a great cause of concern throughout the years and lessened when both Ireland and the UK were part of the EU. I had not visited either part of Ireland. In the latter part of my accountancy work in Liverpool I visited Dublin on a short audit project. I was employed by Grant Thornton Liverpool office and there my colleagues decided to call me Ted (My name is Edward, everyone calls me Eddie)... the Irish client's staff insisted on calling me Ned! I didn't mind ...they were most hospitable!

Phyllis and I moved to the Midlands in 1977, a work move, and I visited Northern Ireland with the Leicestershire Organists Association visiting various churches and cathedrals there, Anglican and RC, staying in Armagh where the father of one of our members had been Armagh Church of Ireland Cathedral Organist. At all the churches, the hospitality was great..... we even visited Bushmills Distillery too.

My closest pal and relative was my younger cousin, Frank Doran. We grew up as brothers. His mother was one of my mother's sisters and his father was from Dublin. When he was 21 I encouraged him to stand for Liverpool Council. He was elected and served 40 years becoming Lord Mayor and an MBE 'for services to the people of Liverpool'.

Frank died 4 years ago. Prior to that we had talked of visiting Dublin together but sadly that did not happen. Subsequently, I thought about visiting Ireland. Phyllis and I had a city break in Dublin last year and thoroughly enjoyed it. Lots of atmosphere, crowds of tourists. We

took a train down the coast and then visited various coastal towns. Irish coffee, draft Guinness, the Irish songs in the pubs made a real carnival atmosphere. I did read up on some of the independence history; the role of the British in history over the years had been appalling. We, though, found the people very hospitable.

This year we went on a week's cruise from Southampton round Ireland.....up the Irish Sea round the top of Ireland and coming down the west coast past a very rugged coastline, visiting Killybegs, a very important fishing port with a fine fleet of modern fishing boats, Galway, a very vibrant city with a real carnival atmosphere, plenty of tourists and International Art Exhibition, plenty of pubs advertising Irish Coffee, Guinness which we sampled. The final call was at Cobh, Port of Cork, and we took the train into Cork....a nice city centre with modern shopping.

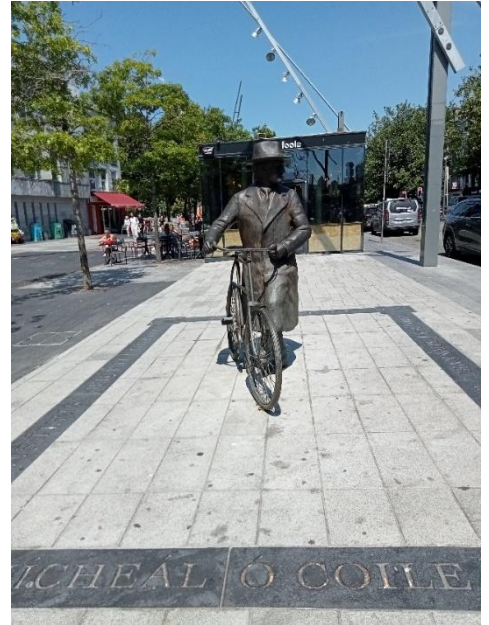
There are monuments to the Independence Movement in the cities, such as the statue of Michael Collins in Cork, but also of the British dominance that was. In Dublin City two Church of Ireland (Anglican) Cathedrals, in Cork the Church of Ireland Cathedral. It's good the old religious structures and authority have waned, and people no longer see each other as enemies. The Irish contribution to Liverpool, I have seen in a new light.

I took some photos but they were of Irish coffee or Guinness, of pubs festooned with bunting.....

All worth another visit!

Eddie Bestwick (alias Edward, Ted, Ned)

PS. In Dublin we did visit Trinity College; in Cork we didn't have time to visit Jamieson's Distillery but I bought a litre as a souvenir.



Ireland with an AI spin

Nichola and I have just returned from a family holiday in St Ives, a wonderful time, enriched by sharing it with Molly who is seven and Martha who is four.....I can bore you with pictures! As we returned from one Celtic region, we arrived home on the same weekend as the editor's deadline, this month's subject "Ireland". I have only made a handful of short visits to Belfast, Cork and Dublin, always on business so have little to write about. In recent weeks I have been exploring the use of AI and been astonished at how powerful it is, a colleague recently drafted a response to a commercial tender by typing the questions into "Claude", I was amazed at the quality of the results. For amusement (and to speed my way to Ed's deadline!) I asked what a 67-year-old man would find interesting in Ireland, this response was returned in about 15 seconds. Those readers more familiar with the Emerald Isle will be able to tell me if this is a good agenda for an Irish holiday.

A man of 67 from the southwest of England would likely find Ireland fascinating for three big reasons: its deep history, its dramatic landscapes, and its cultural familiarity, with a twist. Ireland feels close to home yet meaningfully different, a blend of Celtic heritage, Atlantic scenery, and storytelling traditions that resonate strongly with many British visitors.

1. Ancient history that goes far deeper than Britain's

Ireland's prehistoric and early-Christian sites are astonishingly old and remarkably intact.

- Newgrange (Co. Meath) a 3200 BC passage tomb older than the pyramids, famous for its winter-solstice alignment.
- Hill of Tara, the legendary seat of Ireland's High Kings, rich in mythology and panoramic views.
- Rock of Cashel, a spectacular medieval fortress and cathedral complex.
- Glendalough, a serene monastic valley with a round tower and lakes, ideal for gentle exploration.

For someone from the southwest, a region steeped in its own Celtic past, Ireland's ancient sites feel like meeting the "older cousin" of Cornish and Devon heritage.

2. Coastlines and scenic drives that rival Cornwall and Devon

If he loves the sea, cliffs, or coastal drives, Ireland offers world-class routes:

- Ring of Kerry: mountains, lakes, Atlantic views, colourful villages.
- Sleat Head Drive (Dingle) wilder, quieter, and full of dramatic cliff scenery.
- Cliffs of Moher & Burren coast, iconic cliffs paired with surreal limestone landscapes.
- Wild Atlantic Way, 2,500 km of coastal touring, perfect for picking a favourite region.

These drives feel familiar to someone from the southwest, but bigger, emptier, and more rugged.

3. Culture, music, and storytelling

Ireland's cultural life is warm, accessible, and deeply rooted in tradition

- Traditional music evenings in pubs across Galway, Clare, and Kerry offer gentle, early sessions ideal for older travellers.

- Gaeltacht regions (Connemara) let visitors hear Irish spoken daily and experience Celtic culture in its living form.
- Heritage tours in Dublin, Waterford, and Kilkenny bring genealogy, medieval history, and emigration stories to life.

For someone who appreciates history, community, and a good story, Ireland is a treasure trove.

4. Gentle, senior-friendly ways to explore

Ireland is particularly well-suited to travellers who prefer comfort and steady pacing:

- Scenic train journeys (e.g., Dublin–Galway, Cork–Killarney).
- Accessible castle and garden walks at places like Powerscourt and Kilemore Abbey.
- Lake cruises in Killarney or on the Shannon.
- Private driver-guides for relaxed, tailored days out.

These experiences suit someone who enjoys scenery and culture without strenuous walking.

5. A sense of shared heritage but with a different flavour

For a man who has lived his whole life in the southwest, Ireland offers:

- Familiar Celtic roots but expressed through Irish myth, music, and language.
- Landscapes that echo Cornwall and Devon but feel wilder and more untouched.
- A neighbour's history seen from the "other side of the Irish Sea," enriching perspective on Britain's own past.

*Claude
Submitted by Chris Horswell*

I, too, have been using AI in this magazine

Occasionally I receive articles which have less-than-perfect punctuation. It takes a lot of effort to get these corrected for the benefit of our readers who have come to expect the best.

Instead of spending time correcting everything at the risk of missing some errors I thought I would try AI (artificial intelligence). My new laptop has Windows 11 and Copilot installed. I asked Copilot to correct the punctuation of an article. A few seconds later it returned the corrected article. I cut and pasted the result into this magazine, much quicker than doing the job myself.

Trying to be polite, I thanked Copilot and wrote that the result was brilliant. Copilot replied with gratitude and was effusive in its praise for the style of the article; being easy to read and humorous and that the writer clearly had much of interest to convey. Well well!

On an earlier occasion I sought Copilot's help in repairing a faulty computer which was continually restarting, frustrating efforts to do work. I was told what to try and to report the effect of this. After several iterations the computer was mended!

Brian Wood, Editor

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Dearly Pre-loved

Thank you all for your continued support of our Charity Shop.

We are always very short of hangers for trousers, I attach a photo if you would like to take a look and wondered if you had any spare at home we could have. The clip ones.

I DON'T need any other kind of hangers as we have lots!

(When Julia says lots, she means **LOTS!** – Ed)

We are always looking for good quality clothes, especially winter clothes, bric-a-brac and small items of furniture.

Please spread the word to friends and family and think of us if you're having a clear out. The Shop is enormously successful because we keep our prices really low, and in doing that we have a very high turnover, so we are continually looking for new quality stock.

Thanks again,



Julia Martyn-Jones

Marle Hill WI

Marle Hill WI did not meet in August we just went on a trip to the Amazon Warehouse in Swindon. It was a very interesting experience seeing how it all went from the beginning when an order was placed to the packing and distribution. I would recommend anyone going on this tour. We then went for a bit of retail shopping at the Swindon Outlet centre and after a spot of lunch we hit the shops. All in all, a wonderful day.

Our next meeting is on Monday 7 September at St Nicolas Church Hall. We have invited two members from surrounding WIs to attend and celebrate our Birthday. Our speaker is Daiziel Ellis, a very talented poet.

Do come along and see what we are all about.

Sue Davies, Marle Hill WI

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Forthcoming Events

Volunteers' bring-and-share afternoon tea

Sunday 6 September 2.30pm

Everyone from across the team, who volunteers in some way to assist in the life and maintenance of our churches, is invited to the afternoon tea at St Nicolas Hall. This is a chance to say a huge thank you for all that you do. Please share this notice with anyone who volunteers but does not necessarily attend church.

For info contact – Helen 07814 638990

RIDE AND STRIDE Saturday 12 September 9.30am – 4.30pm



Ride and stride is the annual fundraising event for Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust. Half the money raised remains with the trust and half is returned to the parish. Participation in this event may be helpful when we apply for grants from the trust in order to carry out repairs to our churches. This year we will be doing a **sponsored exercise-bike ride** outside the charity shop in Prestbury High Street. It would be good to have more people actively participating, there is a sign-up sheet in St Mary's porch for you to reserve your half-hour slot (or more). Money may be donated on the day or details of our Just Giving page will be available shortly.

For info contact – Helen 07814 638990

Bereavement Friendship Group

**We will be meeting in St Mary's Church, Prestbury
on Monday 14 September 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.

Sue Challenger

Welcome On Wednesday

**Wednesday 23 September 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? Give it a try!

Please note the change of date.



TIMES OF REGULAR CHURCH SERVICES

St Mary's Church, Prestbury

Sunday		0800	Eucharist
	1st Sunday	0930	Breakfast Celebrate! – All-age worship
	Other Sundays	0900	Breakfast Celebrate!
		1100	Sung Eucharist
	1st Sunday	1830	Evening Prayer at Capel Court
	2nd Sunday	1800	Benediction
	Other Sundays	1800	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
Weekdays			Holy Mass usually on 3 days, check noticeboard
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 Sunday	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
Thursday	2nd Thursday	1900	Celtic Evening Prayer
	4th Thursday	1900	Celtic Communion

* These services are usually streamed on the internet. These and other services are recorded so may be accessed live or later on the Team's YouTube page -

<https://www.youtube.com/NorthCheltenhamTeamMinistry/streams>

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
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 2026

Issue		Copy Date		Theme
October	Sunday	13	September	Scotland
November	Sunday	11	October	Wales
Dec / Jan	Sunday	15	November	Memorials

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**

October 2026 Magazine Theme: Scotland
Please send copy by Sunday 13 September 2026
or very soon after



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