

Chronicle

THE MAGAZINE FOR

JANUARY 2024

THE CHIRBURY HILLS



GROUP OF PARISHES



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Find us via <https://www.achurchnearyou.com>, on Facebook at “Chirbury Hills Parishes” or via the Deanery website <https://pontesburydeanery.org/>



GROWING CONFIDENCE IN THE WORD OF GOD

Saturday 13th January 2024
9.30am - 1pm

St George's Church, Pontesbury

Keynote speaker:
Rt Revd Richard Jackson,
Bishop of Hereford

GROWING TOGETHER
Year of Faith 2024



See posters on church notice boards
for details of how to book!

A special service for

CANDLEMAS

at Chirbury on

SUNDAY 28TH

JANUARY

at

3.00 PM

**MUSIC AND READINGS TO
CLOSE THE SEASON OF
CHRISTMAS AND
EPIPHANY**

“Countryside Church”

**COMMISSIONING OF KAY
YEATES AS LAY MINISTER**

THE CHIRBURY HILLS GROUP OF PARISHES

is part of the Pontesbury Group Ministry, and comprised of the parishes of **Chirbury, Marton, Middleton w Corndon Marsh, and Trelystan & Leighton.**

Rector: Revd Bill Rowell (See details below).

Worship Leaders: Kay Yeates and Ann Rowell

At each church, contact the wardens as follows:

Chirbury - Tony Sheppard (01938 561821);

Marton - Maureen Jenkins (01938 561645);

Middleton - Kay Yeates (01938 561640) or

Emma Bailey-Beech (01686 669971);

Trelystan - Janet Jones (07967 312460);

Leighton - John Markwick (01938 555043) or Sally Beech (01938 554942).

TO CONTACT THE RECTOR - Revd Bill Rowell's home address is 17 Croft Road, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7QD. He will also be happy to meet by arrangement at any of the churches of the Group. His home phone number is 01938 552064, and mobile 07711 298104. Or you can email Bill at his home address

wkrowell@btinternet.com, or work address

rector.chirburyhillsparishes@btinternet.com

Links to contact Bill are also available via our "A Church Near You" pages on the web, the Pontesbury Deanery website, or our group Facebook page (see front cover of this magazine for details).

COVID PRECAUTIONS

Covid restrictions are mostly lifted, but we still need to take hygiene and safety seriously. Please continue to use the hand gel provided as you enter and leave our churches, and allow people to keep a social distance if they wish - we know that a number of church attenders remain in the vulnerable category. Masks remain available and advisory, but no longer need to be worn. At most communion services we are now using the common cup, in which case please simply leave the rail after receiving the bread if you do not wish to receive from the chalice. At some services communion wafers tintincted with a drop of wine may still be used. If you experience symptoms that may be Covid within a week of being in church, or test positive, please tell us straight away by contacting the Rector or a church warden.

We're still hoping to find new **TREASURERS FOR LEIGHTON AND CHIRBURY**. We've people in both churches happy to do the legwork - paying money in etc, but we need someone who can keep the books! If you could help, please let us know - training given!

Items for inclusion in the February magazine should reach the Rector by Sunday 21st January at the latest, please.

St Podwell's





"I don't really care how he got in, just tell me how on earth you're going to get him out!"

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH:

Please consider giving a regular gift to your church via the **Parish Giving Scheme** - an easy way to support your church by Direct Debit. The Rector, church wardens and treasurers will be glad to provide further details.

SUNDAY SERVICES IN JANUARY

<i>DAY</i>	<i>TIME</i>	<i>CHURCH</i>	<i>SERVICE</i>
Sunday 7th	10.00 am	Leighton	Holy Communion
Epiphany 1	11.15 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion
	6.00 pm	The Marsh	Evening Prayer
Sunday 14th	9.30 am	Marton	Holy Communion
Epiphany 2	11.15 am	Middleton	Plough Sunday
Sunday 21st	10.00 am	Middleton	Holy Communion
Epiphany 3	11.15 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion
	3.00 pm	Trelystan	Service of the Word
Sun 28th	9.30 am	Marton	Holy Communion
Epiphany 4	11.15 am	Leighton	Morning Worship
	3.00 pm	Chirbury	Countryside Church at Candlemas

<p>Come and join us for</p>  <p>10.30 am - open and free to all!</p> <p>(Followed by midday prayers)</p>	<p>At Chirbury Church on Tuesday 9th January</p>  <div data-bbox="845 901 1002 1069" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Followed by Midday Prayers</p> </div>
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MIDWEEK SERVICES *Holy Communion unless otherwise stated*

Monday 1st January - The Naming of Jesus: 10.30 am at **Chirbury**

Saturday 6th January - The Epiphany: 10.30 am at **Leighton**

Tuesday 9th January - Midday Prayers: 12 noon at **Chirbury**

Tuesday 23rd January - Holy Communion: 10.30 am at **Chirbury**

Friday 2nd February - Candlemas: 10.30 am at **Leighton**

Tuesday 13th February - Midday Prayers: 12 noon at **Chirbury**

Wednesday 14th February - Ash Wednesday: 10.30 am at **Chirbury**

Nature Notes . . . Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe

Walking up through Bronybuckley Wood on a cold but clear morning in the weeks before Christmas, I found myself reflecting on the three evergreens that (along with the fir or spruce of the Christmas tree) are synonymous with the season. The temperature in the wood was a degree or two higher than in the frosty open fields beyond, so my feet squelched into a soft mulch of leaves, mostly beech. Although the trees were bare and black, the dominant colour at eye level was still green: Winter had yet to touch the luxuriant fronds of the woodland ferns, and there was plenty of holly, here and there dotted with red berries, and some ivy too (though no mistletoe).

These three midwinter evergreens were decorations in our homes long before the Christian era. The Church readily adopted holly and ivy, just as it appropriated the date of the Roman midwinter festival as a celebration of the birth of our Lord. Holly in fact lends itself very readily to the Gospel message, as traditional words like the “Sans Day Carol” remind us: “Now the holly bears a berry as white as the milk, and Mary bore Jesus, who was wrapped up in silk.” Its bright green in the midst of winter speaks of eternity, and its thorny leaves represent the crown placed on Jesus’ head, while its berries are of course the red of blood: “Now the holly bears a berry, as blood is it red, so trust we our Saviour, who rose from the dead.”

Interestingly, the carol also suggests that holly bears a berries “as black as the coal” and “as white as the milk”- which it doesn’t, but ivy and mistletoe respectively do, so the carol seems quite happy to mix all three, as might we when making Christmas wreaths and garlands. Both these berry-bearing plants play an important part in providing winter food for birds and other wild creatures, as well as being important shelters (ivy especially) for overwintering insects. The late flowers of ivy are also an important food source for many insects as the year draws to its close, including the aptly named ivy bee, active from September to early November. This bee feeds chiefly on ivy nectar, and times the emergence of the adult bees to coincide with ivy flowering. A comparatively new arrival on the British scene, it has been slowly spreading north since around 2001.

Berries provide a nutritious lure, to ensure the seed inside gets deposited away from the parent plant. Mistletoe, however, is a semi-parasitic plant that needs to find its way onto a tree, where, once rooted, the seed can sprout to make a green ball of mistletoe in the crown of the tree. How to achieve this? Inside its waxy, white berry, the seeds are coated in a goo that sticks to the beaks of birds, which then try to wipe this off on a branch; the gluey pulp around the seed then hardens to fastens it in place, where its roots can penetrate the bark. Mistletoe’s long association with magic and mysticism meant that, unlike holly and ivy, it was not welcomed as a church decoration. York Minster was one exception - there was a tradition there that mistletoe was carried to the high altar on Christmas Eve. Incidentally, if you go kissing under mistletoe, a berry should be removed each time. And when they’ve all gone, the kissing has to stop!

DEANERY THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Year of Prayer transitions to Year of Faith

In early December I had the privilege of joining others in St Peter's Church in Hereford to hear Archbishop Justin Welby and Bishop Richard Jackson talk about prayer. It was a wonderful conversation to witness. The warmth of their relationship, and their respect for each other and candour shone through, and it was a delight to see. For me it was one of the highlights of the year of prayer.

I was particularly struck by their faithfulness and honesty and also by Archbishop Justin's commitment to studying the Bible - he is always working through a book using a commentary - and his commitment to prayer. He prays faithfully every day, with others, but also by himself, and often in tongues. He prays all the time - seeking God's will for everything that he does, continually asking for God's help, whether it be for a difficult meeting, or for a person who he has met who needs God's love and grace. His compassion, his reliance on God, his dependency on God's guidance and support was very evident.

He said that it seems God often puts us in posts/jobs/situations in which we cannot rely on our own strength and therefore must rely on God. I realised that often I have tried to do something in my own strength and got worn out! I need to follow Archbishop Justin's example and pray more. And also study the Bible more!

As I write this the Diocesan year of prayer comes to a close and will be followed by the year of faith which will be kicked off by Bishop Richard at a diocesan study day at St George's Church, Pontesbury from 9.30am-1pm on Saturday 13th January 2024. This is in our deanery and will be a great way to start the year.

Do come along and be encouraged by it. Bishop Richard and Dr Amy Orr-Ewing will be speaking. Dr Amy is an international speaker and author and is passionate about presenting and defending the Christian faith in a way that engages with culture. It promises to be an enriching day. Do put it in your diary. And continue to pray and enjoy the year of faith!

Revd Graham Phillips

January PCC Meetings - CHIRBURY: Monday 15th, 7.30pm, at Tony Sheppard's Home; MIDDLETON: Tuesday 30th, 7.30pm, at Judy Vicary's home.
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From the Dean of Hereford

Dear Friends,

I'm wondering if like me you might be looking forward with some trepidation to what the New Year might bring. After all, it seems that many of the things we took for granted might be rather less secure than we thought. That realisation can be ground-shakingly alarming, or it can make us count our blessings and realise what we have.

My mother has advanced dementia, and my father is creaking from every painful joint and needs oxygen if he exerts himself. It occurs to me, as I watch them struggle- and many dear church members in similar wise- how little gratitude I have felt for the ability simply to jump in the car and go to the supermarket or take a quick walk into town entirely free from pain. I have never really thought to be thankful for this.

We humans are a grumbly glorious bunch who spend a lot of time and energy wanting what we don't have and forgetting to be actively grateful for what we do have. Not one of us will keep all the possessions that we have now or all the people that we love now or the health, hair or dress-size that we have now!

Here is my New Year's Resolution. I intend to stop as often as I can (which will not be often enough!) and ask myself what I have that I would miss dreadfully were it to be taken away. I cannot think of a better way of focusing on what I am deeply thankful for;

- A body that still functions without much fuss.
- A roof over my head and a job that pays the bills.
- A pesky cat who walks all over my laptop, activates factory reset and inserts random strings of characters into my emails - but who loves me devotedly.
- My husband, parents, and children.
- Faith in Jesus Christ and the purpose He gives me.
- The people with whom I live out that purpose.

None of these can be taken for granted. Ask a Ukrainian or a resident of Gaza or someone diagnosed with a terminal illness. So, as you look into the New Year, why not make gratitude your resolution and give thanks to God from whom all blessings flow?

Dean Sarah

BE RESOLVED! *Bill writes . . .*

As we begin a new year, and one that could be quite decisive for our churches, let's think about how we can resolve to look after our own spiritual health and that of our churches, by (1) making more time for prayer (2) attending church services more regularly (and not just in our "own" church), and (3) looking again at how and what we give.

Caring for God's Acre - WINTER MOTHS

When the nights are long and cold, we do not think of seeing insects, but spare a thought for the Winter Moth which can withstand freezing temperatures and can be seen on the wing between October and January.

For many of us, we see the Winter Moth in car headlights when driving in small lanes after dark, it is pale brown in colour and can be seen fluttering. They are attracted to light however, and so will come to a moth trap if you want a closer look. Winter Moths are widespread, occurring in many places with trees and shrubs, so not particularly a churchyard species but, as with so many other creatures, churchyards will be a haven for them, particularly if they provide a space away from artificial lights which can be so disorientating to insects.

Unusually, females cannot fly, they have small stubby wings and are dark grey, giving them camouflage as they clamber up tree trunks to summon males. The females attract a mate by giving off pheromones, which draw in the flying males. Their eggs are then laid on the bark of the tree and don't hatch until spring, when tiny green caterpillars emerge. The caterpillars feed on tree leaves, eating a range of species including oak, sycamore, beech and willow. Caterpillars can also travel from tree to tree by spinning long threads of silk which act as a sail, carrying them through the air.

In the spring Winter Moth caterpillars are an important food for woodland birds, particularly the tit family. In January there is less food around and these small birds can be seen searching within the crevasses and nooks and crannies of trees for a range of adult invertebrates including Winter Moths, and also the overwintering larvae of other species.

Why not take a torch-lit walk and see if you can see a Winter Moth or even, if you are lucky, a female on a tree trunk. Alternatively wait for spring and look in April or May for the caterpillars chomping leaves, or a bluetit eating a caterpillar! The caterpillars are tiny, green and have a dark stripe on the top of their bodies. If you care for a church or churchyard then please consider the insects when planning outdoor lighting, having dark areas or lights which go off for part of the night can be beneficial to many species.

All the best, Harriet Carty - Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor

SAINT OF THE MONTH - PAUL: 25TH JANUARY

January 25th marks the feast of the Conversion of St Paul - he is also remembered, with St Peter, on 29th June. Usually saints' days focus on their death (this is particularly the case for martyrs, for obvious reasons), but Paul's conversion, on the Road to Damascus, is such an important event in the life of the early Church that it merits a day of its own.

Prior to his conversion, Paul was known as Saul. Born in Tarsus, in what today is part of Turkey, he would have been Greek-speaking, and was, according to the Acts of the Apostles, a Roman citizen. His family were probably well-to-do rather than, say, aristocratic, but the young Saul was schooled as a Pharisee, one of the main religious parties in Jewish life at that time. A number of Pharisees became followers of Jesus, but most were bitterly opposed to his teachings, and to what was happening in Jerusalem after the first Easter Day, as Peter and the other apostles preached on the streets and in the temple, and gathered followers for the "New Way" of Christ.

Saul saw it as his duty before God to oppose what was happening. In Acts, Luke tells us that Saul was present as Stephen (see last month) was martyred. He probably then travelled around synagogues rooting out those who had accepted the apostles' teaching, before asking for permission to travel to Damascus (which like his birthplace in Tarsus was part of the Roman province of Syria) to do the same.

It was on his way there that he encountered Jesus on the road, as described by Luke in Acts 9, and, in a less detailed way, by Paul himself in chapter 1 of his letter to the Galatians. The story of how he was rendered blind and helpless by his encounter with Christ is dramatic and moving. Ananias, a Christian disciple in Damascus, was called to be the agent of his healing, restoration and baptism.

It may well be that what Paul had seen and heard as he witnessed the stoning to death of Stephen had already had an impact on him; what was certainly true is that he wanted with all his heart to do God's will - he just hadn't realised what God's will actually was - until forced to do so in this very traumatic experience. From this point on all of Paul's ministry was focused on Christ. To the Galatians he writes, "God forbid that I should boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world!" (Gal 6.14)

Paul's realisation that the good news of Christ had to be taken out into all the world led to conflict with those among the Jerusalem Church who believed that to accept Jesus those were not Jews needed to accept circumcision and become part of the Jewish faith. Even Peter seems at one stage to have wanted to hold this line; but an agreement was reached that allowed Paul to evangelise freely among the Gentile (or non-Jewish) communities, founding churches in Corinth, Philippi and elsewhere.



Our next Countryside Church event will be at Candlemas, on 28th January at 3pm. See the front page of this magazine for details.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

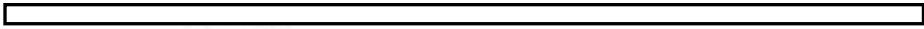
A classic prayer for peace, as the New Year begins:

**O God the King of righteousness,
 lead us, we pray, in the ways of justice and peace.
 At this moment of opportunity and challenge,
 inspire us to break down all tyranny and oppression,
 to gain for every person their just reward,
 and from every person their due service,
 that each may live for all,
 and all may care for each,
 in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

William Temple

FROM THE REGISTERS
 Ashes of Mr John Hudson were interred at Chirbury on Monday 4th December; and the funeral of Mr Tom Owen, who grew up at Trelystan, took place at Emstrey on the same day. We send our sympathies to both families.

THANKS to all who donated to the collections for the work of Embrace in the Bible Lands. We have been able to send £150 to this cause. Thanks too for your continued support for our local foodbanks (the Christmas collections from Middleton will support the work of the Bishop’s Castle Foodbank).



Candlemas things to do and make, games, stories and songs - at Chirbury Church on 3rd February, 10.30 till midday. Children must be accompanied throughout by a parent or other responsible adult.



NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

The track down to Trelystan Church was back in use in time for the Christmas services, though some ditching and hedging work remains to be done in the field, and will wait until the Spring. The necessary works have been carried out promptly, and should be proof against further storm damage.

The gas heaters in Chirbury church have now all been serviced and checked over, and the church was nicely warm for the Lessons and Carols service, which was very well attended, and included six items from the Benefice Choir. Thanks also to Philip Harratt for playing the organ at that service and at the Coffee Morning on the previous weekend.

£100 from the collection at the Lessons and Carols has been sent to support the work of Embrace in the Middle East, at a time of such great tension and suffering there. A further amount will be sent following the retiring collection at other Christmas services.

Children from Chirbury School have made lots of angels, which are all on display in the church. We will be giving some small prizes to two or three really outstanding angels, but - partly because they were all lovely - we'll also be giving a sum to each of the four classes, to be spent on books. See back page for a picture of a few of the best!

The dance at Marton on Friday 8th December made a profit of £668, which was divided equally between the church and the village hall. The coffee morning at Chirbury was well attended, and made £433 for church funds. Middleton's coffee morning at Montgomery Town Hall made £570. The Christmas concert at Leighton given by Concord raised £380. Many thanks to all who worked hard to ensure these events went well! Thanks also to all who helped clean and decorate our churches for Christmas - they all looked lovely!

Please note that the third edition of the popular Leighton calendar is still available, with some great colour pictures of the village and surrounding countryside. This costs £6 and supports the church and the village hall, and can be obtained in church or at Alexanders of Welshpool.

Kay Yeates has satisfactorily completed her course of studies and the Safeguarding training required, and can now be commissioned as a local lay minister. This is scheduled to happen at a group service on 28th January for "Candlemas Sunday", when we will be joined by Revd Elizabeth Wild, the local ministry officer for our diocese.

Mark Hackney's time with us in Pontesbury Deanery as Intergenerational Missioner has now come to an end, and he has moved to take up a similar role with the Pool and Tanat/Vyrnwy Mission Areas in St Asaph Diocese. Mark's wife Lizzie continues to work for Hereford Diocese, of course, and we will no doubt continue to keep in touch with Mark too. We are very grateful for his work here, and his enthusiasm, good ideas, and store of resources!

This Month and into February . . .

My current licence as your Rector expires at the end of this month, and, while Bishop Richard has indicated that he's happy to renew this for a further year, I shall be stepping down at the end of this year. In last month's magazine, I included a "wish list" of things I'd like to have accomplished or at least begun during the year . . . more about this below!

- Bill Rowell, Rector

Lent

begins on Wednesday 14th February:

There will be a service of Holy Communion at Chirbury at 10.30am and Evening Prayer at Leighton at 4.00pm. A Lent Course is planned that will focus on images of the cross from around the world. This will probably be on Monday evenings - more details in the February magazine.

The Hereford Passion

Hereford Cathedral will be staging its own theatrical production of the Passion in March 2024, performed by members of the local community and telling the story of Jesus' final days, leading to the crucifixion. The production will take place in the nave of Hereford Cathedral at 7.30 pm on Friday 8 and Saturday 9 March 2024, and will be directed by Canon James Pacey who joined the Cathedral Chapter as Chancellor in June of last year. Tickets are £8 for adults and £6 for children (the production is suitable for children aged 8 and above). The Rector would be interested in organising a trip to see the play if there is sufficient interest.

GROUP MEETING

PREPARING FOR VACANCY

The Deanery Chapter, Pastoral Committee and Synod will be involved in discussions regarding pastoral provision within the Deanery over coming weeks, partly because of the vacancy from this month in the Ford and Alberbury group of parishes, but inevitably also with this group in mind, since your present Rector's licence will be renewed only for a further year. This means that we need as a group to also be thinking about how we work together now and how we can do this better, about the present strengths and weaknesses of our churches and the challenges we face both within our churches themselves and as regards the wider communities our churches serve, and how we can plan and prepare for - firstly - making the most of this year as a mission opportunity; then - secondly - to ensure that our churches can remain viable and active through a period of interregnum; and - finally but very importantly - to agree on a vision of how we want ministry to be offered here in the future. See also the "Wish List" in last month's magazine. Please reserve Tuesday 20th February as a probable date for an evening Open Meeting - more on this in next month's magazine.

SOME PICTURES FROM NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER . . .



*Left: Remembrance at Chirbury
Below: Crib figures at Priest Weston,
before glazing and firing*



Left and Below: The Christmas Crib at Middleton



Below: Concord after the concert at Leighton



Above: Some of the angels made for Chirbury Church by children at Chirbury School