

Chronicle

THE MAGAZINE FOR

FEBRUARY 2024

THE CHIRBURY HILLS



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



Blessing the ploughshare, soil and seeds at the Plough Sunday service at Middleton.

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).

Local Lay Minister: Mrs Kay Yeates.

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 wafers intincted by the priest 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 still need new **TREASURERS FOR LEIGHTON AND CHIRBURY**. If you think you could help, please speak to the Rector or Wardens.

Items for inclusion in the March magazine should reach the Rector by Sunday 18th February at the latest, please.

St Podwell's



"I asked what they were giving up for Lent, and they all said 'Church'!"

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.

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

<i>DAY</i>	<i>TIME</i>	<i>CHURCH</i>	<i>SERVICE</i>
Friday 2nd The Presentation	10.30 am	Leighton	Holy Communion
Sunday 4th 2nd before Lent	10.00 am 11.15 am 6.00 pm	Leighton Chirbury The Marsh	Holy Communion Holy Communion Holy Communion
Sunday 11th Next before Lent	9.30 am 11.15 am	Marton Middleton	Holy Communion Family Service
Shrove Tuesday, 13th	12.00 noon	Chirbury	Middy Prayers
Ash Wednesday, 14th	10.30 am 4.00 pm	Chirbury Leighton	Holy Communion Evening Prayer
Sunday 18th Lent 1	10.00 am 11.15 am 3.00 pm	Middleton Chirbury Trelystan	Holy Communion Holy Communion Holy Communion
Sun 25th Lent 2	9.30 am 11.15 am	Marton Leighton	Holy Communion Morning Worship
Tuesday 27th	10.30 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion
Friday 1st March	10.30 am	Leighton	St David's Day Service

<p>Come and join us for</p> <p>Coffee Cake and Chat</p>	<p>10.30 am - open and free to all! (Followed by midday prayers)</p>	<p>At Chirbury Church on Shrove Tuesday 13th February</p>  <div data-bbox="848 1236 1002 1404" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Followed by Middy Prayers</p> </div>
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Nature Notes . . . Lapwings

Driving between Forden and Chirbury early in the New Year, I was delighted to see a flock of maybe thirty or more lapwings flying towards me over the fields to the right of the road. This was a tiny flock compared to the hundreds I used to see in Lincolnshire when I lived there, but still more lapwings than I'd seen together in a while locally. Lapwings can often be found flying in flocks outside the breeding season. They can have a black-and-white impact in flight, as their white underparts become obvious, and they are quite distinctive in flight, in a rather ragged formation, with slow, lapping wing beats.

This is not actually a black-and-white bird, of course. The white underparts show in flight, as does black and white on the tail, of which only the black tip is visible when the bird is on the ground. The face is black and white, and both sexes have the distinctive long black crest. But it's the iridescent green of the upperparts that makes this such a handsome bird, with a purplish sheen on the wings, together with its bright orange-chestnut feathers under the tail.

Lapwings are members of the plover family, and the bird is also given the name Green Plover. A better known name, though, is the Peewit, for its distinctive cry. In Lincolnshire, they were Pyewipes. The name Lapwing comes from the flight, but, it seems, not from its lapping flight in those winter flocks (that's what I'd always thought), but from its twisting, diving display flight in the breeding season, via the Anglo Saxon "hleapewince", literally meaning "run and wink".

Lapwings used to nest in numbers on farm land, and a few still do, mostly on permanent pasture. They are ground-nesting birds, and a friend to the farmer, given their love of leatherjackets and other pests. Changing farming practices mean that lapwings now mostly nest on marshy land, and many marshland reserves will make special efforts to provide and protect suitable habitat.

As ground-nesters, the eggs and young are vulnerable to predators, but lapwings are vigilant parents, and neighbouring birds will join forces to drive off crows and other possible threats. The nest is hardly more than a scrape in the ground, but the eggs are well camouflaged. As usual with waders, the hatchlings are active and mobile almost as soon as they emerge from the egg.

Lapwings have reduced greatly in numbers in recent years, but are still found throughout the UK and Ireland, with additional birds arriving for the winter, though some of our nesting birds may also migrate further south in cold weather.



DEANERY THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH - GREG SMITH

My oldest son's in-laws supposedly left their Methodist Church in South Wales and have subsequently been dechurched because they were always being asked for money. I know nothing of that church's circumstances, but inevitably my sympathies are with their Minister. It's true: the Church always needs money. We have to pay our ministers (not very much I promise you); mend leaky roofs and attend to the repointing of buttresses (I didn't know that was a thing until I was ordained); pay increasingly extortionate energy bills, insurance and all those consumables (bread, wine, candles, paper, coffee and biscuits).

Sometimes, we ask for money directly. I suspect the days when the Rector has the temerity to pass the plate around twice because there are insufficient contributions the first time round, are now gone. However, I once spent a sabbatical attending a Pentecostal Church in Bedworth and recall that the exhortation prefacing the passing round of the plate was as long as the sermon (and they preach for a long time in Pentecostal churches). We produce leaflets, publish targets, and mention casually in sermons how much the church is affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Indirectly, the message can be even louder. An exhausting programme of social events often proclaims not so much that we are a church that likes to have fun, but rather we are a church that needs money. The inevitable raffle is the clincher.

And so it is that people who never set foot in church will proclaim confidently that "the church is always after our money".

What if we were to be more effective in telling a different story? In response to a God who gave us everything including His own Son (Romans 8:32) we are a church that overwhelmingly gives to our community rather than takes from it. This generosity is exemplified by the building being available for funerals and weddings irrespective of whether a family attends church or makes a financial contribution to it. That building is likely to have been lovingly cleaned and decorated with flowers arranged by a team of volunteers, freely giving of their time.

By the same token, the church runs toddler groups and foodbanks; offers bereavement support and drop-in groups. Its ministers visit the sick, support our schools, counsel the distressed and pray for their people, all freely given. These are things that people take for granted or are unaware of. How do we therefore persuade people to say, "the church is always after our money so that it can continue to exhibit such reckless generosity to our community"?

Revd Dr Greg Smith, Rector of the Pontesbury & Stiperstones groups

Deanery News editor: Alison Bebb - alisonbebb5@gmail.com - Items for inclusion to be submitted by 10th of previous month please.

From the Archdeacon of Hereford, Ven Derek Chedzey

Ash Wednesday this year will fall on the 14th February which of course is also St Valentine's day! Ash Wednesday is traditionally the beginning of Lent and this has been marked over the years as a period of self-discipline, fasting and spiritual journeying. It is a period of penitence and self-examination and seeing ourselves from God's perspective. Even if we don't have a strong faith, we have learnt through the work of Educational Neuroscientists that intentional self-reflection helps us to learn and enhances how we apply, transfer, retain and recall new ideas and information.

The Bible recognises that as we go through life we will be tempted and tested and that our response to those times will help to shape the depth of our spiritual lives. I am often astounded by the way many Christians have been shaped by sermons and theology that promise good things but never talk about the cost of following Jesus. The writer and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this a theology of cheap grace.

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Lent gives us an opportunity to realign our lives with God's values, it gives us a prolonged and focussed time to reflect and pray and to read the bible and deepen our faith. The 40-day period is time enough to build in new habits and actions into our lives, which will have a lasting effect.

With ongoing war in Ukraine, the conflict between Israel & Hamas and so much uncertainty in our world I am finding that there is a great deal of anxiety in society about the future and a sense of aimlessness and general anger and tiredness. Lent gives us as Christians an opportunity to give these feelings back to God and to ask him to heal and restore us. It is also, as Paul reminds us, a time to recognise that our human experiences are common and that whilst heightened by the personal challenges or world events, are not unique to us but the difference is that our faith will endure.

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." [1 Corinthians 10:13]

As Christians, whilst we can use this time for reflection, we also know how the story ends and we have an enduring hope within us because Jesus has conquered death and brought forgiveness to us. We are forever Easter people who live in the light of the resurrection, and we can mark Lent because of his sacrifice for us. The rhythm of the spiritual and liturgical year is a helpful tool to remind us that there is a cost and a purpose to our faith, which is not about self-benefit and self-fulfilment but about generosity, servant heartedness and a simple humbler faith. As Christians,

we have a message of hope for a better future and Lent gives us the perfect opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds to share the good news.

Caring for God's Acre - A PARLIAMENT OF ROOKS

Although February usually feels far from spring, it is the month when rooks usually start to build their nests, although sometimes they start in January. Many churchyards contain rookeries, situated within tall deciduous trees and a great deal of fun can be had in watching the antics of the rooks. Rooks make their nests from small branches and twigs and can be seen flying in with suitable material but also pinching particularly nice ones from the neighbours! A winter storm can seriously disrupt this nest building activity and send them back to the beginning with a great deal of chatter and fuss.

Rookeries may contain a few nests or sometimes up to a thousand and, once established, a rookery may last for centuries in the same location. Rooks are sociable and as well as nesting together they often feed in groups, eating a wide variety of foods including invertebrates pulled from the soil by their large, strong beaks. They will also eat fruit, seeds, acorns and grain and can visit garden bird feeders, taking hold of them with their feet rather like a parrot. Mixed flocks of rooks and jackdaws can be seen flying around, calling prior to going to roost. The collective nouns for a group of rooks are a parliament, congregation or clamour!

Rooks and crows can appear quite similar until you look and listen closely. A rook has a domed forehead and greyish face, its leg feathers give it 'baggy trousers'. Crows are sleeker, tend to nest singly and are often seen in twos or threes but rarely in larger flocks. Both birds have a cawing call, but crows have a harsher note and tend to repeat the call three times, whilst rooks use a wider variety of sounds and pitches including some clicks and wheezing sounds. Rooks and crows belong to the Corvid family which also includes ravens, jays, magpies and choughs. Take a look at the Caring for God's Acre website for a Spotter's Guide to Corvids.

Please let us know if you have a rookery within your local churchyard or cemetery and take a moment to think how many generations of rooks may have nested there.

All the best,

Harriet Carty -
Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor



SAINT OF THE MONTH - POLYCARP: 23RD FEBRUARY

Izmir in western Turkey is a bustling modern city, the third largest in the country. In the early days of the Christian Church it was known as Smyrna, and it was then a city of some influence too, in the eastern Roman Empire.

Polycarp, active in the Second Century was respected as a scholar, and helps link the Church of the first Apostles with that of the Christian Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries. Born in about the year 70, Polycarp was a Christian from his childhood, and was probably a pupil of the Apostle John. His most important writing was his Letter to the Philippians, in which he refutes the heresy known as Gnosticism, whose adherents claimed many of the events of the Gospel narratives to be imaginary, and whose practices focused on the acquisition of secret and arcane knowledge (gnosis).

In his Letter to the Philippians Polycarp quotes often from the Letters of St Paul, and stresses the importance of Paul as a primary authority of the Church. His influence helped ensure that Paul's writings became essential within the formulation of Christian theology. Polycarp also quotes from other New Testament texts, including passages from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, and the first letters of St Peter and St John. He is therefore an important witness to the writing and distribution of these works.

Polycarp became Bishop of Smyrna, and, towards the end of his life, he visited Bishop Anicetus in Rome, to discuss with him the date on which Easter should be celebrated. The Roman Church and that of Asia Minor disagreed on this, and Polycarp wanted to avoid a schism that would divide the Church. In the event, the two bishops found they could not reach agreement on a date, but they agreed instead that Rome and Asia Minor would follow different practices, without falling out over it.

Polycarp was around 86 years old by this time. When he arrived back in Smyrna, he was arrested by the Roman proconsul of the city, during one of the frequent persecutions of Christians, regarded by the authorities as members of a politically dangerous cult. The story of his martyrdom was written by the church in Smyrna as an open letter that was sent round to all the churches of Asia Minor. The Martyrdom of Polycarp is one of the earliest known Christian documents of this nature.

The proconsul had no desire to put an elderly man to death, and urged Polycarp to make a declaration that the Emperor was lord. He refused: "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" was his response. He was executed by being burned at the stake, in the year 155. Irenaeus, one of the Christian Fathers (c.140-203) wrote about Polycarp - not only of his conversion to Christianity and consecration as a bishop, but that he had personally met with many of those who had themselves seen Jesus.



Our next Countryside Church event will be a special service for MOTHERING SUNDAY, 10th March, at Middleton Church (11.15 am). More in next month's magazine.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

A prayer for the beginning of Lent:

O Lord and Master of my life,
 take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
 But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
 Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions,
 and not to judge my sister or brother,
 for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages.
 Amen.

St Ephraim (a 4th Century Christian from Syria)

FROM THE REGISTERS

Many people will be sad to hear of the passing of Jim Evans, and will remember him as a countryman, a keen sportsman in younger years, a very able auctioneer, and a familiar figure in Leighton village and church.

His funeral and memorial service were due to take place on Saturday 27th January, as this magazine went to press. Our sympathies and good wishes to Pauline and all the family at this time.



THE REAL EASTER EGG



Dark (RRP £5.50)

Includes a large 24 page Easter story-activity book, prize competition and a super thick dark chocolate egg.



Original (RRP £4.50) Case of 6 £27

Includes a large 24 page Easter story-activity book, prize competition and a super thick milk chocolate egg.



The Real Easter Egg Fun Pack (RRP £5)

Includes an Easter story activity poster, six milk chocolate eggs with a lovely creamy taste



Special Edition (RRP £9.99)

Includes an Easter Blessings milk chocolate bar, a designer Easter card and a luxury milk chocolate egg

KAY YEATES is ordering eggs from the Meaningful Chocolate Co., and would be happy to add your order to her list, which will save the cost of delivery. Call her on 01938 561640.

Great Fairtrade chocolate eggs that also tell the Easter story!

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

Further gifts at Christmas have enabled us to send another £50 to Embrace, the Christian charity working with children and families in the Bible Lands, bringing the total sent to £150. Thank you to all who contributed!

A well-attended service on January 14th at Middleton celebrated Plough Sunday, including prayers for all who farm our land. We said a prayer of blessing over representative seeds, soil and a ploughshare (supplied by Tony Sheppard). These were brought into church at the start of the service by Lucy Bailey-Beech, Aster Meyer and Tony Sheppard.

The angels made by children from Chirbury School will remain in Chirbury Church until Ash Wednesday. One priority for the school at present is to encourage children to read more books, so £50 has been given as a thank-you to each class, to be spent on books.

Deanery Synod meets via Zoom on Thursday 8th February, beginning at 7.00 pm. Speakers will be the recently appointed Mission Enabler - Social, Joe Simons, and Rosa Speyer, one of the two Parish Giving Advisors. See the weekly sheet for the joining details (visitors are welcome), which we've not yet released, as the Rector's Broadband is not very healthy at present (but should, we hope, be upgraded by then)!

We are planning a programme of special events at St Michael's, Chirbury through the Spring and Summer, which will include a "Historic Chirbury" open day at the church, pencilled in at present for Saturday 29th June. We shall also be having some concerts in church, beginning next month - look out for details!

Lent activities (see back page) will once again include the popular Lent Lunches at Marton Village Hall, organised by St Mark's Church. The first of these will be on Ash Wednesday itself, 14th February, and they will then take place on every Wednesday through Lent, the last one being on Wednesday 27th March. This will be at 12.30 for 1.00 pm, a simple but hearty lunch of soup, bread and cheese, and the cost per lunch is £7.

It is a very long time since there was last a wedding at the Marsh Chapel, so we are delighted that Charlotte Bowes will be marrying Rory Bennett there on Tuesday 2nd April. The chapel may once have been licensed for marriages, but isn't now, so they needed to apply for a Special Licence in order for the service to take place. This has now been granted, so we're looking forward to a special day. Church members and neighbours are very much invited to join the family in church for the service.

Due to a family event, the Messy Church meeting originally planned for Saturday 3rd February will now take place on Saturday 2nd March. Its theme will be "Messy Spring", and we will have activities and crafts for Spring, Mothering Sunday and Easter. It will run from 10.30 till midday, and will be in Chirbury Church unless otherwise advised.

This Month



St David's Day
Holy
Communion
at Leighton:
Friday 1st
March,
10.30am.

PCC Meetings in February:

LEIGHTON PCC - Monday 12th February, 7.00 pm, at Gravel Lodge.

TRELYSTAN PCC - Sunday 18th February, after church, in the Church Hall.

Sunflowers

It may seem a bit early yet, but - given a spot of decent weather, you can plant your sunflower seeds at the end of this month or the beginning of March. Seeds were handed out at our service on 28th February, but they remain available through this month - why not have a go and see if you can grow the tallest?

SPONSOR THE VICAR

Revd Bill will once again be doing a Lenten sponsored thing (probably involving walking), to raise funds for this year's Lent appeal by USPG, the Anglican mission society founded by Thomas Bray (born in Marton and christened at Chirbury), for which Bill worked for some years. Sponsor forms will be available in each church.

GROUP MEETING

PREPARING FOR VACANCY

I had hoped to gather people together on Tuesday 20th February, to talk about how we can prepare ourselves during this year for the vacancy that will happen in twelve months' time. However, this date is now needed for an equally important meeting elsewhere, so please book instead Tuesday 5th March, for an open meeting, with refreshments. Everyone is welcome!

More about the programme and content of the meeting in Sunday notices through February, and in next month's magazine. *Bill Rowell*

The Gathering

AN EVENING OF PRAISING AND WORSHIPPING GOD
MARTON VILLAGE HALL - EVERYONE WELCOME!

Tuesday 27th February - Refreshments at 7.00 pm
Worship at 7.30 pm

Keeping Lent



Lent is an important and special time for Christians. As a fast, it recalls the forty days spent by Jesus in the wilderness, preparing himself for mission. A fast, though, is more than just a diet. The idea is that we give up things that may have become too important in our lives, in order to focus more clearly on God. And we do this in the context of a time of prayerful devotion to our Lord. We may well take things on, maybe supporting a cause or charity, or beginning some new area of work. In the early Church, Lent was a time when new Christians learned about the faith, in order to offer themselves for baptism at Easter.

Our keeping of Lent begins with services on Ash Wednesday, 14th February, at Chirbury (10.30) and Leighton (4.00). During Lent there will be a Sunday sermon course on "How to Read the Bible", and there will also be a Lenten study group. At present this looks like being on a Tuesday afternoon - please look out for final details on the weekly sheets in church or on "A Church Near You".

There will be Lent Lunches at Marton (in the Village Hall) on Wednesdays, and there are a number of special services during Lent, including the special service for Mothering Sunday (10th March) at Middleton (11.15), which will be one of our series of "Countryside Church" services. On Palm Sunday (24th March) there will be a Group Holy Communion service at Leighton (11.00), the only morning service of the day, and a Sacred Concert at Chirbury (6.00), at which there will be music and readings, including anthems by the Benefice Choir. Remember also the Hereford Passion at the Cathedral, on 8th and 9th March.

The usual services and events of Holy Week will happen, including the Good Friday Walk, and on Easter Day there will be a service in each parish.