

Chronicle

THE MAGAZINE FOR

APRIL 2024

THE CHIRBURY HILLS



GROUP OF PARISHES



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HAPPY
EASTER!

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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 (01938 561640).

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).

INFECTION PRECAUTIONS

Outbreaks of Covid and flu over recent years remind us we still need to take hygiene and safety seriously. Hand gel remains available in our churches, and as we meet please allow people to keep a social distance if they wish, since some of our church attenders may need to guard against infection because of existing health conditions.

At services of Holy Communion we are now using the common cup. If you do not wish to receive from the chalice, we recommend that you leave the rail after receiving the bread. We still ask that if you experience symptoms that may be Covid or test positive within a week of attending church, that you let us know 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 May magazine should reach the Rector by Sunday 21st April at the latest, please.

St Podwell's



"I'm beginning to think we might be taking being family friendly in our worship just a little too far!"



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 APRIL

<i>DAY</i>	<i>TIME</i>	<i>CHURCH</i>	<i>SERVICE</i>
Sunday 7th	10.00 am	Leighton	Holy Communion
Easter 2	11.15 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion
		<i>There is no service this Sunday at the Marsh Chapel</i>	
Tuesday 9th	12.00 noon	Chirbury	Middy Prayers
Sunday 14th	9.30 am	Marton	Holy Communion
Easter 3	11.15 am	Middleton	Family Worship
	6.00 pm	Leighton	Evening Worship
Saturday 20th	10.30 am	Chirbury	Messy Church
Sunday 21st	10.00 am	Middleton	Holy Communion
Easter 4	11.15 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion
	3.00 pm	Trelystan	Service of the Word
Tuesday 23rd	10.30 am	Chirbury	Holy Communion*
Sun 28th	9.30 am	Marton	Holy Communion
Easter 5	11.15 am	Leighton	Morning Worship
	1.00 pm	Leighton	Christening

* For St George's Day.

<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 Tuesday 9th April</p>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>Followed by Middy Prayers</p> </div>
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Deanery News editor: Alison Bebb - alisonbebb5@gmail.com - Items for inclusion to be submitted by 10th of previous month please.

Nature Notes . . . Earthworms

Almost every time I've gone out for an early morning walk recently, I've come across worms along my way, many of them, sadly, dead or dying. The reason is clear - you've only to take a step or two into a field to realise how drenched with water the soil is. Water squelches everywhere. I've written before that worms need to surface when the soil is waterlogged, because otherwise they would drown (and that reason is repeated in a new book I've only just read). This may be true to some extent, and if there's extensive flooding, but I'm changing my mind about this matter - earthworms can survive in water for up to two weeks. We drown in water when our lungs fill with the stuff, but worms don't have lungs. However, some species need more oxygen than others, particularly at night, so may have to surface after heavy overnight rain.

I was also told that worms surface to escape from moles. Perhaps the drumming of heavy raindrops might sound like moles to them? Maybe, but I can't think that would explain the sheer number of worms that surface after rain.

A more likely explanation is simply that it's hard work squirming your way through the soil, and that becomes more so after rain when existing burrows collapse and the soil is sticky. Worms can move quite quickly on the surface, but it's usually not an option, as they need to keep moist and would dry out quickly. After rain, though, they can move through the moist vegetation with ease, covering greater distances in, for example, their search for a mate. Unfortunately their journeys take some of them onto roads or paths where progress slows up and they may well dry out. Good news for the birds, though.

A worm is a worm, you may think - but earthworms come in different sizes, fit into different habitats, and feed in different ways. Anecic worms make deep and vertical burrows as permanent shelters, and, as well as feeding on the soil, feed on leaves etc on the surface which they drag into their burrows. *Lumbricus terrestris*, our most common worm, behaves in this way. These are the worms that leave casts on the surface. Endogeic worms move around more, making horizontal tunnels, and feed on the soil. Both these types of worm help improve soil tilth and breathability. Epigeic worms stay on the surface or in very shallow tunnels, breaking down leaf litter and other organic matter. All of them play some part in keeping our soil healthy.

There are 29 native species of earthworm in Great Britain, out of several thousand around the world. The Giant Gippsland earthworm of Australia can reach a length of six feet, and be as thick as a human forearm. *Lumbricus terrestris* (the lobworm) is our largest species, and can be about a foot long when on the move. Recent data suggests a worrying drop in earthworm numbers, 30% being one figure quoted. This needs to be taken seriously - our earthworms are vital for a healthy soil.

DEANERY THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH - BILL ROWELL

April - a month that contains the birthdays of my sister, my best friend at school and my first serious girlfriend . . . and usually Easter Day too, though not this year (just). And of course, it's the month that starts with April Fool's Day, with all those far fetched articles in the papers, and junior members of one's family trying to catch you out (but only before midday).

And, since the day is really called All Fool's Day, it's a useful reminder that all of us get things wrong or behave foolishly at some point in our lives. It's a feature of our modern society that we delight in manufacturing celebrities, placing them on pedestals, and then crowing with delight when by some slip or foolish word they prove themselves unworthy of the honour. So really, it does us good to be reminded, just now and then (and maybe by those junior members of our families), that in fact we're ALL fools.

The Psalmist tells us (Ps 14.1) that "the fool says in his heart, 'there is no God.'" We might perhaps be tempted to laugh and sneer at such a fool, but we shouldn't. For that's any one of us, at some time or another, for all our piety the rest of the time. We may say with our lips that there is a God, but at those times when we choose our own way instead of his, in our hearts we're saying something else. "He who gives God second place, gives him no place."

Which is why the cross: it isn't only those jeering godless folk out there who hammered in the nails, it's us too. And it isn't only those jeering godless folk out there who need to be saved from their foolishness, it's us too. God's only Son dies because some part of me keeps saying, in my heart, "I'm all that matters" (which is Psalm 14.1 put another way). That cross convicts me as a fool of the worst sort, for my foolishness is fatal.

I can't escape from my sin; again and again I'm caught out. I may think I'm doing all right, till pride trips me up and reveals me as a fool. But, hallelujah! - the tomb is empty, the grave clothes are no longer needed, and God's love, gracious and triumphant, does what all the world's wisdom could never do: it saves me - and you - from ourselves. The fool may say, "There is no God," but the God who is, from eternity to eternity, loves us even in our foolishness.

So: "When the Lord restores his people's fortunes, let Jacob rejoice, and let Israel be glad" (Psalm 14.7b). Amen.

From the Archdeacon of Ludlow

April marks the 100th anniversary of the first broadcast by a monarch of the United Kingdom, when King George V opened the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in north London in April 1924. The speech lasts about six and a half minutes, and you can hear it in all its scratchily-recorded glory on YouTube.

I wonder if anyone then had any idea how much broadcasting would change in the coming century? We now take for granted the fact that we can see and hear almost anyone in public life at any time thanks to a 24-hour media. TikTok and Instagram have brought broadcasting within reach of any of us with a smartphone.

Communication seems to be hard-wired into us as human beings. That shouldn't surprise us, because our God is a God who communicates. Back in the earliest chapters of Genesis, it's the voice of God that brings creation into being. When Jesus is awoken by his terrified disciples in the middle of a storm, it's his words shouted into the tumult that calm the winds and the waves. When the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles at Pentecost, they speak the message of Christ crucified and risen in words their hearers can understand.

The story is told of a rabbi who could never get further in his reading of the Scriptures than Genesis 1:2, "And God said." The wonder of a God who speaks was too much for him to take in. I wonder if that's why we love podcasts, audiobooks, and the radio so much – because it's as if someone were sitting next to us and chatting? As if we're listening in on a conversation that we're invited to be part of? I wonder, too, if that's why words can wound us as well as heal us – because they go deep into the heart of our being?

The apostle James talked about the power of speech, how hard it is to tame the tongue, and how inconsistent we are when we say, "Praise God," in one breath and in the next run down another human being. Those are challenging words in an era where talk is easy, but we do well to take them to heart.

There are other times when we are slow to speak, perhaps out of anxiety or fear. Once such time can be when we try to talk about our faith. In this, our Diocesan Year of Faith, we are all encouraged to have confidence that the story we have to share in our Christian faith is one people want to hear, and to become more comfortable talking about our faith.

We may never become those who broadcast to the world, as King George V did 100 years ago, but I wonder how we could learn to "broadcast" our faith in simple ways, and speak words of life to those who are longing to hear them?

Ven Fiona Gibson.

Caring for God's Acre - WILD DAFFODILS

At this time of year, the yellow trumpets of daffodils brighten up even the dullest spring day. Most of what we see are planted garden varieties, but a real treat is to find wild daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*).

Once widespread, the wild daffodil is now much rarer, having mysteriously declined during the 19th century. It now has a disjointed distribution – for instance it is found mainly in south Devon, pockets of the Black Mountains in Wales, stretches of the Gloucestershire-Herefordshire border country, the Sussex Weald, Farndale in Yorkshire, and the Lake District. Elsewhere, even in suitable habitat, it only occurs in small patches, many miles apart. For example, in churchyards.

The wild daffodil's status as a popular flower was particularly celebrated in the area around Newent, Dymock and Ledbury on the Gloucestershire-Herefordshire border which acquired the nickname of 'The Golden Triangle.' In the 1930s the Great Western Railway ran 'Daffodil Specials', from London for weekend tourists to walk amongst the 'golden tides' and to buy fresh bunches at garden gates. Many farmers and orchard-owners used to have them as a cash-crop, harvested on a 'Pick Your Own' basis. At the end of April, the meadows went back to their function of growing hay or fruit.

A 1930's guide to a village in the Golden Triangle wrote: They are picked by the local women and children and were sold to an agent, who sends them to South Wales, where they find a ready sale for Mothering Sunday and also for Palm Sunday, for many places the old (Welsh) custom of 'flowering the graves' on that day still persists. The daffodils are also sent to northern industrial towns. *Information from Flora Britannica by Richard Mabey*

How to spot a wild daffodil - The wild daffodil is smaller than horticultural varieties, with paler petals and a deeper yellow trumpet-like tube. The leaves are grey/green, flattened and around 15mm wide. It is relatively short (30-35cm) and forms clumps which carpet the ground. A top tip is that unless there are several hundreds of them looking particularly small and washed out, they probably aren't wild! Please help us to map the churchyards containing wild daffodils by taking a photo on the iNaturalist app and posting it on our Beautiful Burial Grounds project within iNaturalist.

All the best,
Harriet Carty - Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor

SAINT OF THE MONTH - GEORGE, PATRON OF ENGLAND (23RD APRIL)

Last month I wrote about Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, an army chaplain through the First World War; this month's saint also has military connections, both in his own life, so far as we know it, and in his becoming Patron of England: St George.

His life, so far as we know it: in fact, nothing of George's life can be established for certain. The tradition is that he was born in Cappadocia (now in Turkey), became a Roman soldier, and was tortured and martyred in the persecution of Christians ordered in 303 by the Emperor Diocletian. There is no doubt that there were Christians who served in the Roman army, who would have been particularly vulnerable to persecution, given that they were in the service of an Emperor who claimed godly status. George's remains were taken to Lydda (now Lod, in Israel), the homeland of his mother, and later placed in the church that was built in his name there.

From the 6th century, George began to be revered as a warrior saint, and among the stories told of him was the one everyone remembers - that he slayed a dragon, saving the king's daughter from otherwise certain death. This was in Libya, and in return for George slaying the dragon, the king promised that his nation would adopt the Christian faith. There are a number of dragon slaying myths, including the legend of Perseus, who was said to have rescued Andromeda from a sea monster near Lydda. It may be that this story became attached to George, and given a Christian setting.

George was known as a saint in England in Saxon times, but his cult was greatly popularised at the time of the Crusades. George was supposed to have aided the Frankish forces at the Battle of Antioch in 1098, and returning Crusaders brought such stories back with them to England.

King Edward III (1327–77) made George patron of the newly founded Order of the Garter, and it was probably this that led to his formal adoption as patron saint. The tomb of one of the first Knights of the Garter, Sir Richard Pembridge, can be seen in Hereford Cathedral. George was regarded as protector of a number of medieval states, such as Portugal, Genoa, and Venice, and is also patron saint of Georgia. He is often depicted in art wearing knightly armour, his breastplate marked with the red cross on a white background that features as the flag of both England and Georgia (the Georgian flag having also a smaller red cross in each of the four quadrants).

By the time of the Reformation the cult of St George was fading, but has found something of a popular revival in more recent times, as demonstrated by the strong opposition expressed in many quarters regarding Nike's new England shirt. His feast is now once again given major status in the current Church of England calendar, having previously been relegated to a minor celebration.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH

A prayer of Christina Rossetti:

O Lord, seek us, O Lord find us
in thy patient care,
be thy love before, behind us,
round us everywhere.
Lest the god of this world blind us,
lest he bait a snare,
lest he forge a chain to bind us,
lest he speak us fair,
turn not from us, call to mind us,
find, embrace us, hear -
be thy love before, behind us,
round us everywhere.
Amen.

Christina Rossetti is remembered in the Church of England calendar on 27th April, and is regarded as one of the finest poets of the Victorian era. She was born in 1830, and her Italian father was also a writer of poetry, while her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was one of the leading Pre-Raphaelite artists. Christina Rossetti's poetry was greatly influenced by her Anglo-Catholic faith, and her works are still much read and used (and, in the case of "In the Bleak Midwinter", sung).

The Good Friday Walk *See also back cover*

Note - "From the Registers" is held over until next month's magazine.

A number of our regular walkers weren't able to join us this year, for various reasons, and there were other Good Friday activities in the Stiperstones group of churches, which meant it didn't seem appropriate to make the ascent to Shepherd's Rock as in previous years. A shorter route was decided on, so that we walked more directly from Hope to Shelve, via Santley and Shelfield. In the end (see below) we were quite glad NOT to be "up top".

We still managed a decent crop of walkers, most walking the whole route, while some joined for part of it. Services included the "Last hour on the cross" service led by Revd Fran Brealey at Shelve, who, with Revd Greg Smith, also led the usual 12 noon service at Hope. The Benefice Choir sang at an earlier than usual closing service at The Marsh at 4.30 pm. Excellent refreshments were provided by David and Veronica Yates at our first stop on Stapeley Common, and the folk of Hope, Shelve and The Marsh churches.

We set out in bright sunshine, but that didn't last through the afternoon! An ice storm with added thunder and lightning made our journey through Shelfield to Shelve an interesting one! It's also fair to say that this was the muddiest walk ever (or at least, in recent years!). Thanks to all who took part, and to all who helped feed us and provide for us, and to worship leaders and readers, musicians and singers! There are some photos on the back cover, taken by David Yates, Emma Bailey-Beech and the Rector.



A SPECIAL WEDDING

As this edition went to press, we were preparing for the first wedding in a very long time to take place at The Marsh Chapel. More about this in next month's magazine!

A programme of Countryside Church worship events is being prepared for the Spring and Summer. The first of these will be at The Marsh Chapel on Rogation Sunday, 5th May (see the short notice on the following page), but we hope also to have a Spring flower event in Leighton churchyard, and maybe some Spring lambs as well - watch this space. There will of course be the midsummer service at Mitchell's Fold Stone Circle, and another pet service is also planned. We shall also be arranging a little pilgrimage to the holy well in Middleton parish, which used to be visited in Victorian times. Details of what's planned will be ready for the May edition of this magazine.

News . . .

THANKS as ever to everyone who helped clean, prepare and decorate our churches for the Easter Day services. Every church looked lovely!

ANNUAL PARISH CHURCH MEETINGS (APCM's) will be taking place over the coming weeks. Please note that these are meetings for everyone who considers themselves part of the church, not just another meeting of the PCC. It's our annual opportunity to hear how things are, to plan ahead, and of course to elect wardens, PCC members and other officers. Please do attend yours if you can!

SARAH'S CONCERT in Chirbury church on 13th March was a lovely occasion, with many well-loved songs presented by the very talented Sarah Williams and her equally musically creative friends. Over £600 was raised for the church - thanks to Sarah and her friends, and to everyone else involved in organising the event.

The SACRED CONCERT at Chirbury on Palm Sunday evening was (alas) less well attended, but was a lovely way to begin Holy Week, with anthems from the Benefice Choir, readings and hymns. Thanks to Owen and to all the choir, and to everyone else who took part.

LENT LUNCHESES at Marton raised a total of £1,322.50 - thanks to all concerned!

This Month

Sunflowers

Sunflower seeds are still available - pick yours up from church any time through this month!

Rogation Sunday

Special "Countryside Church" service at The Marsh Chapel on Sunday 5th May, as we give thanks for the land around us - 6.00 pm.

SPONSOR THE VICAR

Revd Bill's Lenten sponsored thing has raised £290 so far for USPG's Lent Appeal, with a little more still to come in. He walked 242 miles, and managed to lose 10lb in the process. He is now intending to walk another 200 miles in the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost, this time to fund work with families and children in our parishes.



An enjoyable Easter Messy Church at Chirbury included making Easter nests, decorating sheep biscuits, and much more besides, including preparing the Easter gardens for Middleton and Chirbury churches.

The next Messy Church at Chirbury will be on Saturday 20th April, 10.30-12 noon; as ever, children attending must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout. The Easter garden at Leighton was prepared by the children who came to hunt Easter eggs there on Easter Eve. We aim to start a Messy Church in Leighton too, from this Spring - probably on a Sunday afternoon, starting at 4.00 pm. Look out for details on the church notice board and elsewhere!

EVENING SERVICE recommences at Leighton this month, 6.00 pm on Sunday 14th.

The Gathering

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

**Tuesday 30th April - Refreshments at 7.00 pm
Worship at 7.30 pm**

ANNUAL MEETINGS THIS MONTH: CHIRBURY, 8TH APRIL AT 7.00 PM; LEIGHTON, 15TH APRIL AT 7.00 PM. BOTH MEETINGS TAKE PLACE IN CHURCH.

Have you seen a Curlew?

Curlews are returning to our local landscape, please help Curlew Country's essential Curlew recovery work by reporting any sightings in and around your parish!

Follow this link to our website or scan the QR code to report a sighting!

<https://curlewcountry.org/report-a-curlew/>



Or call Amanda Perkins on **07458147161** or email: curlewcountry@gwct.org.uk for more information.



Preparing the Easter gardens at our Easter Messy Church morning.



THE GOOD FRIDAY WALK . . .



Upper left - walkers assembling after a welcome tea or coffee at David and Veronica's.

Upper right - plodding on through the hail between Hope and Shelve (still smiling though!).

Lower left - the sun was shining again by the time we arrived at Shelve church (hot cross buns here).