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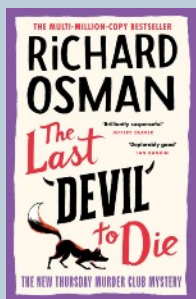
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A magazine for the parishes of Bunbury and Tilstone Fearnall



Follow Bunbury Church on Facebook

Lent Series

Rowan Williams' beautiful book will shape this year's Lent series - a series of 5 short reflections following the 10am Midweek Communion service at St Boniface.

Wed 28th Feb: Christian faith and the common good

Wed 6th March: Forgiveness

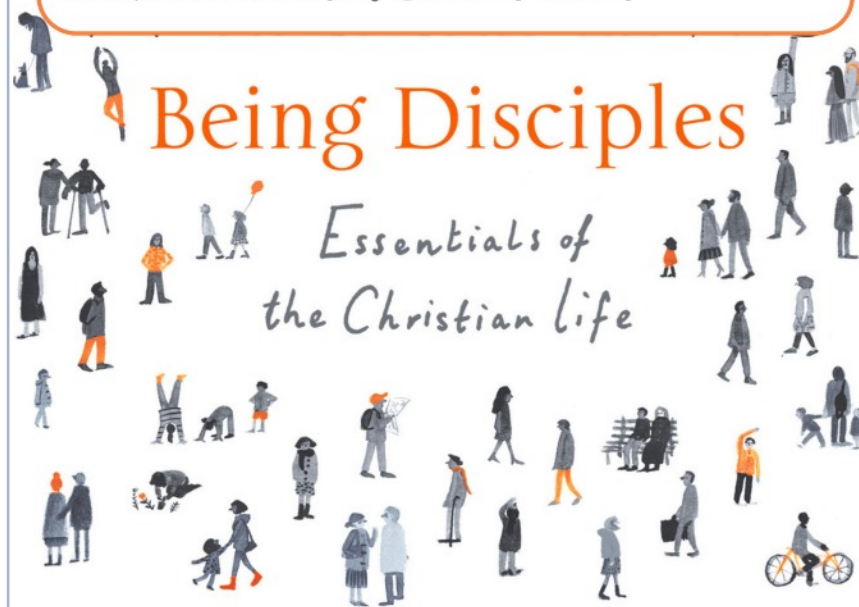
Wed 13th March: Faith, hope and love in tomorrow's world

Wed 20th March: Holiness

Wed 27th March: Staying spiritually healthy

Being Disciples

Essentials of the Christian life



A series of short talks with a simple aim: to help us see more clearly, love more dearly and follow more nearly the way of Jesus Christ.

Who we are

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You can also read The Link online at:
www.stbonifacebunbury.org

Community news

Congratulations to **Laura O'Callaghan and Jonathan Crank** who were married at St Boniface Church on 22 December.



Christmas at St Boniface

Rev Tim and his team would like to thank all those who prepared the church for Advent and Christmas, all those who made it beautiful and clean, all those who brought music and words to the services, and who, together, made it the very special place it is for the village and all our visitors.

The Bunbury Gardening Club will be holding their regular monthly meeting at the Village Hall on Tuesday 20 February at 7:30pm. In preparation for the Annual Show on Saturday 7 September, our guest speaker, Mr Frank Forest will be making a presentation entitled, "I'll show you mine if you show me yours - judging and exhibiting". For more club information contact Margaret Bourne on 01829 260944 or email:mjbourne249@tiscali.co.uk or join Bunbury Gardening Club facebook page.

Bunbury gardening club 2024 Dates:
16 January — Quiz & fizz
20 February — Judging & exhibiting (Frank Forest)
19 March — Sweet peas (Phillippa Cooper)
16 April — Our garden (Neil

Holding)

21 May — Gardener's question time
18 June — Garden party & plant stall (Kath's)
16 July — T.B.A.
20 Aug — Visit to Len's Allotment
7 Sept — Annual Village Show (Village Hall)
15 Oct — Flower Workshop
19 Nov — A.G.M & Gardener's Supper

Bunbury WI meets on the second Thursday of the month at Bunbury Playing Fields Pavilion starting at 7:30pm.

Members enjoyed an autumn lunch on 30 November and New Year lunch at The Tollemache Arms on 11 January. At the meeting on 8 February Dr Karen Castle will present "How I ended up in prison". Guests and new members always welcome.

For further information contact Lynda Davies 01829 260084

A message from Mairi Harris, Poppy Appeal 2023 Organiser, Royal British Legion Bunbury Branch

On behalf of the members of the Bunbury branch of the Royal British Legion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents and businesses of Bunbury once again for their generosity and support during the 2023 Poppy Appeal.

As a village we donated a total of £4,434.84. This included a door-to-door collection (apologies if we didn't catch you in and many thanks to those who helped to collect!), static boxes in various businesses and pubs in and around the village and the Church collection on Remembrance Sunday. It also included several independent

A word from the editor

Welcome back everyone!

As the team prepares this month's link, snow is on the ground and the fete committee had their first meeting. This year's fete will be on 6 May. Please keep the date in your diaries. We will be looking for volunteers to help set up beforehand, dismantle on the day and run stalls. This is a major fundraising event to look after the beautiful building of St Boniface that is such a major feature of the village.

donations and the money raised through the sale of Poppy Wreaths for the following organisations in the village: Bunbury Guides, W.I., Bunbury Parish Council, Haughton Parish Council and Bunbury RBL. These were laid at the War Memorial on the Church gates on Remembrance Sunday. Thanks also to the pupils and staff of Bunbury School who also gave generously.

Unfortunately, as the village no longer has a Scout Group, we were unable to count on their support this year. In previous years they have helped to clear

the War Graves in the cemetery and placed a poppy on each. They have also organised street collections outside the Co-op. The group is a loss to the village and let's hope it will reform and flourish.

The total amount collected has been sent to the National HQ of the RBL and will help to provide important and life-changing support for individuals and families in our Armed Forces Community.

Thank you all once again for your invaluable support. (Please see page 4 for important news about RBL Bunbury Branch.)



TIM HAYWARD

Your Vicar

Essentials of the Christian life

Rowan Williams' book 'Being Disciples' will shape this year's Lent Series — a series of five short reflections following our Midweek Communion services beginning on Wednesday 28 February and finishing during Holy Week on Wednesday 27 March.

Whether you are just starting to explore the Christian faith, or have been a follower of Jesus for years the aim of the series is quite simple: to help you see more clearly, love more dearly and follow more nearly the way of Jesus Christ.

Midweek Communion starts at 10:00am every Wednesday and is a short 25 minute service and the Lenten reflections that follow will last approximately 15 minutes and be followed by coffee and refreshments.

Wednesday 28 February: Christian faith and the common good
 Wednesday 6 March — Forgiveness
 Wednesday 13 March — Faith, hope and love in tomorrow's world
 Wednesday 20 March — Holiness
 Wednesday 27 March — Staying spiritually healthy

Church diary for February

Sunday 4 February	8.00am BCP Communion 9.30am Morning Worship 10.30am Holy Communion & Forest Church 11.30am Morning Worship	St Boniface St Jude's St Boniface Calveley
Wed 7 February	10.00am BCP Communion	St Boniface
Sunday 11 February	9.30am BCP Communion 10.30am Morning Worship	St Jude's St Boniface
Wed 14 February	10.00am BCP Communion with ashing (optional)	St Boniface
Sunday 18 February	9.30am Holy Communion 10.30am Sunday Brunch 6.00pm Evensong	St Jude's St Boniface St Boniface
Tuesday 20 February	2.30pm & 7.30pm Contemplative prayer	St Boniface
Wed 21 February	10.00am BCP Communion	St Boniface
Sunday 25 February	9.30am Morning Worship 10.30am Holy Communion	St Jude's St Boniface

Our prayers

We pray for the many people whose lives have been torn apart by conflict, especially in Ukraine, Gaza and Israel.

We pray for those who have died, those who are grieving, the injured, and those now without food, shelter or medical supplies. Strengthen and support the work of all relief organisations.

We pray also for those who have the power to bring peace. May they be touched by a spirit of compassion and kindness.

Amen

The copy deadline for the March issue is Friday 19 February The magazine should be delivered from Saturday 24 February. Please send notices to parishlinkeditor@stbonifacebunbury.org

Mike Rogers



Whose time?

Some of you may well be familiar with that little piece of doggerel that runs:

*Patience is a virtue
possess it if you can
often found in women
seldom in a man*

There is of course another version which I much prefer; it runs thus:

*Patience is a virtue
virtue is a grace
and Grace is a little girl
who doesn't wash her face!*

Whichever version you subscribe to, in my mind patience is inextricably linked with waiting and we do seem to spend an extraordinary amount of our time waiting, at the doctors, in supermarket queues, for a train, bus or plane or sometimes, just for the postman or plumber to call — and some of us are good at it, whilst others, not so...

Our lives are governed by time. Timescales in our world are set by the changing seasons, the passing years, the days, weeks and months of the calendar, or the hands of the clock. In these latter terms, this month, February, is the shortest month of the year although because 2024 is a leap year, this year it is extended by one day.

But the same is not true of God's life — his is timeless. As far as I am aware, God has no calendar nor does he have a clock and the ecclesiastical seasons we observe, seasons marked by the changing liturgical colours in church, are a human construct.

Instead, God has a plan of which we are each a part and in which we each have a part to play. And if you do no more in your waiting time than remember before God those who are in need or who are less fortunate than yourself, and let's be honest, in our world today there is no shortage of candidates, then you will have contributed to that plan.

Having done that, you then might want to ponder on some words from Psalm 27, written perhaps more than 2500 to 3000 years ago; they are as true today as they were then:

Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart.

Remember, God's time is not our time – so be patient and use the waiting time you are given to best effect, not for yourself, but for others.

The Future of the Bunbury and District Royal British Legion



In common with many other organisations, the Bunbury and District Branch of the Royal British Legion is beginning to struggle to find willing volunteers to take on some of the essential roles necessary to guarantee its continued existence in its current form.

The Royal British Legion has recognised this as a problem at a national level; in fact, there are nine other Branches in Cheshire alone who are finding it difficult to recruit key officers. As a result, a scheme has been put in place whereby a Branch may elect to ask to become a County Supported Branch.

If it were to be approved, the Bunbury and District Branch would continue to exist and function but rather than be self-supporting in its governance, it would be supported by the staff at County level.

Under such an arrangement (and most importantly), the local Branch would continue with its support to members who have served in the Armed Forces and their families. In addition, Branch members could still meet as a Branch, the right to parade its standard would remain and it could host the Annual Poppy Appeal in its area. As far as the Branch's funds are concerned, these would be transferred to and managed by the County treasurer but ear-marked for use by the Branch.

The alternatives are somewhat unpalatable. The Branch here in Bunbury could either close or join with a neighbouring Branch. Both options would mean that the Bunbury and District Branch standard would be laid up in St Boniface and therefore not be available to be paraded in the church on Remembrance Sunday or to be present at the funeral of a Legion member. Given that it is possible that there has been no time in living memory when the Royal British Legion has not been present in this village, such a course of action would be a tragedy.

As a consequence, the decision was taken at the recent Bunbury and District Branch Annual General Meeting to ask the Royal British Legion officers at Cheshire County if this Branch could move towards becoming County Supported. Overall, the change would have little impact on the outward appearance of The Royal British Legion in Bunbury, but it has the great benefit that the Bunbury and District Branch could continue to honour the twin aims of supporting its members and providing comradeship, aims that lie at the heart of the Royal British Legion's purpose.

Further details of this proposed change in status will be circulated to all members of the Bunbury and District Branch of the Royal British Legion in due course.

Mike Rogers
President Bunbury Branch RBL

“Just one thing” for a healthier life: Dance and drink coffee!



Our well-being expert brings us more ideas from the successful Radio 4 series

Dance

Recreational dancing can improve your memory, mood, immune system, and heart and brain health. Dr Julia Kristenson of the Max Planck Institute, who began life as a dancer and became a neuroscientist, has researched its benefits extensively. Even ten minutes a day of vigorous dance can lead to a 76% decrease in your risk of developing dementia, reduce anxiety and depression and improve cognitive skills including memory, attention and multi-tasking ability. Dr Julia says it gives better sleep quality, lowers stress hormones and protects against cardiovascular disease, and improves general heart health as it elevates the pulse rate to over 140. She says it also improves our interoceptive ability — our awareness of how we feel inside — which links to better emotional health and increased empathy towards others. Dr Mosley previously reviewed the benefits of music, and dance seems to add to the social aspect — moving in synchrony with others helps us to bond with them — as well as the fitness aspects; the fact that it improves posture and flexibility will not be a surprise. Dr Julia says that humans seem to be the only animal which has a specific neural link between the ear and the large muscles of the body — hence the innate desire and ability to dance. So get on your dancing shoes, turn up the music and dance!

Drink Coffee

Coffee is the second most popular drink in the world (after water) and here in the UK we drink 95 million cups a day. Most of us are aware of its stimulant abilities; many a student has used it to stay awake into the early hours to finish an

assignment. It originated in Ethiopia when (according to legend) a goat herder noticed that one of his goats had been eating the plant's berries and seemed to be unusually energised. Caffeine is produced by the plant as an insect repellent but when consumed by mammals it produces increased alertness and mood. Coffee also contains polyphenols which are antioxidants that work as powerful anti-inflammatories and protect against various illnesses. Caffeine is absorbed rapidly in the body, and levels peak about 1 hour after consumption; it works directly on heart and muscles to improve workout performance — strength, speed and stamina — and also improves our motivation to exercise, and our cognitive ability and mood. Caffeine also stimulates brown fat which burns calories by generating body heat, and can reduce abdominal fat and total body fat. And by interfering with adenosine (which builds over the day and causes sleepiness) it keeps us awake. There are some downsides to caffeine; if we have a fragmented night's sleep and then drink a strong coffee on an empty stomach, it seems to interfere with blood glucose level regulation which is not desirable, so it's important to eat breakfast and let the carbohydrates be absorbed first. More than 6 or 7 cups a day means it becomes a strong diuretic and dehydrates us; too much can also increase blood pressure and disturb sleep; and, like any drug, if we use it regularly we tend to need more over time to have the same effect. So the optimum is a maximum of three or four cups a day of coffee for improved mood, performance, alertness and protective effects, and none after 4pm if it tends to affect your sleep. Enjoy...

Just Sing!

Just Sing is the name of Bunbury's own Community Choir. We meet to sing (and have fun) every Monday evening during term-time, at Bunbury School, at 7.30pm. Come along to any of these sessions to join in and see if you like it; the first one is always free so no pressure at all; you don't need to be able to read music and there are no auditions. Our age range currently is 30 to 80 but any adult is welcome, of any age and gender.

Readers of “Just one thing” will know that listening to music can reduce our blood pressure, heart rate and breathing rate, and has been shown to reduce anxiety in patients undergoing chemotherapy. If you sing along to music you like for five minutes a day the positive effects are greatly enhanced, and if

you sing in a choir the effects are greater still. Singing releases dopamine, a feel-good hormone, and natural endocannabinoids; 30 minutes of singing increases their levels by 40% — they increase immunity, reduce stress feelings and hormones, improve mood and lung function, and improve memory in dementia patients. It also reduces snoring, improves posture and reduces chronic pain. Many GPs across the country now prescribe singing in a choir as a treatment for chronic pain. Of course there are also social benefits to singing in a choir: reducing isolation and increasing self-confidence, and studies have shown a 40% reduction in symptoms of postnatal depression. So the message is, everyone should sing, even if it's in the shower or the car, and if you can hold a tune then join a choir.

News from Bunbury School



Bunbury Aldersey Primary School has been a UNICEF Rights Respecting School for a number of years, after achieving the bronze and silver awards in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Since then, the school has worked incredibly hard to ensure that the principles behind being a Rights Respecting school are embedded and are a golden thread which runs through the culture and work within school.



In the Autumn term, the school was assessed for the Gold Award and was successful in achieving the award. This is a fantastic achievement and demonstrates that the ethos that the school works so hard to develop is intrinsic to everything we do — the curriculum, behaviour, personal development and most importantly relationships within school.

Being a Rights Respecting school has enabled the children to be able to articulate:

- That they know and understand the UN convention on the rights of the child and can describe how it impacts on their lives and on the lives of children everywhere
- That they are safe and protected and know what to do if they need support
- That, as a school, we prioritise their social and emotional wellbeing
- That they are included and valued as individuals
- That they are involved in making decisions about their education
- That their views are taken seriously
- That they have taken action to uphold their rights and the rights of others both locally and globally

The report highlighted many strengths of the school. It explained that rights learning is embedded across all areas ensuring all children receive a rich curriculum, and that there is a strong

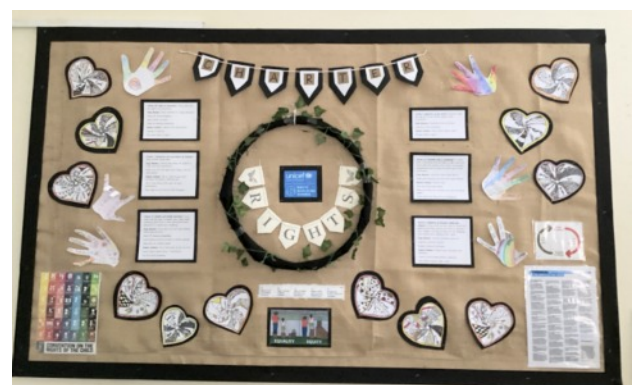
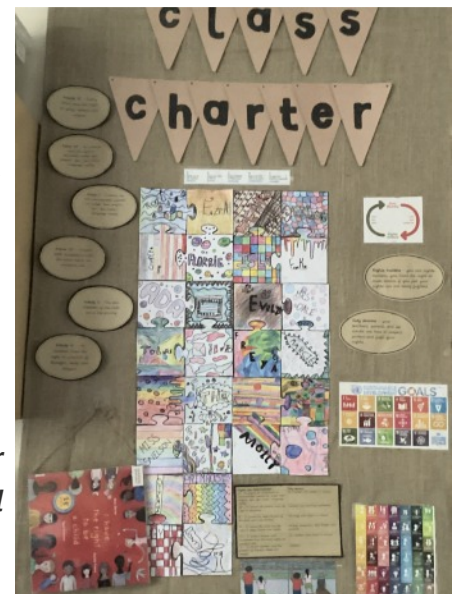
desire to develop children's understanding of inequalities around the world and the actions they can take to address these.

The school was also commended for relationships which are positive and founded on dignity and a mutual respect for rights. It was clearly evident that children's rights are embedded across the school and

underpin every facet of school life at Bunbury. Naturally, such an accreditation would not be possible without the whole staff team working together to ensure our approach is consistent, valued and upheld by all. The staff work immensely hard at supporting the school's vision to achieve such awards.

As we move forward into 2024, we will continue to ensure that any future actions will help us to maintain and build upon our practice at Gold Level.

Nic Badger
Principal



Sky notes: February

As the winter chill lingers in February, the night sky unveils a captivating celestial display for stargazers. Grab your telescope or binoculars, bundle up, and prepare for a stellar journey as we explore the astronomical highlights of the month.

On February evenings, the sky contains more bright stars than in any other month. Orion and his retinue of Taurus (the Bull), Gemini (the Twins) and Canis Major (the Great Dog) dominate the southern sky.

The Orion Nebula

Look towards the constellation Orion, a prominent winter constellation, and you'll be treated to the remarkable Orion Nebula. Visible to the naked eye as a fuzzy patch below the three stars that make up Orion's belt, a telescope reveals a stellar nursery teeming with young stars and swirling gas clouds. This object is a favourite among both novice and seasoned stargazers.

If you draw an imaginary line through the three Belt stars down to the lower left you will encounter Sirius, often called the Dog Star as it is the main luminaire in Canis Major. It is also the brightest star in the night sky. It's low down in the sky from our latitudes but is well placed on February evenings.

Catch the mighty Jupiter and brilliant Venus

As well as the bright February stars, the evening sky is

dominated by brilliant Jupiter. The planet is far brighter than Sirius and shines with a stable light (Sirius tends to flicker due to its low altitude). The gas giant sets around midnight.

You'll find the Moon nearby on 14 and 15 February.

For early risers, there is still a chance to spot Venus low in the south-east before

dawn, rising around 6:00am. The Moon is close by on 7 February. Venus is even brighter than Jupiter.

So, bundle up, head outdoors, and let the wonders of the cosmos unfold above.

Happy stargazing! Clears skies!



Bunbury Stargazer

The Memorial Cross

The theft of the Memorial Plaques from the gates of St Boniface in September 2017 prompted an outcry in the village and an outpouring of financial support for their replacement. In the event, the church's insurance covered the cost of the loss. However, the loss of the plaques led to a wish for a new memorial to be kept in St Boniface church, one less vulnerable to theft, and that such a memorial could be funded by using some of money raised by the generous donations from the village. Inspired by the cross made of 105mm shell cases which once stood in Camp Bastion Afghanistan, and now at the National Arboretum, it was decided that a similar cross would be fitting. There is a great deal of significance in utilising something used in conflict to fashion a symbol of peace, reconciliation, remembrance, and sacrifice; doing so is a poignant reflection of the words of the prophet Isaiah, who, yearning for peace thousands of years ago, wrote about... "beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks". It was also suggested that this new memorial would be not just to those who gave their lives in the two World Wars, but would embrace all those who have suffered in the service of their country, both in the World Wars and in the countless conflicts since. Once the idea had taken hold, suitable shell cases were acquired and the cross you see pictured was made by colleagues of 42 Commando Royal Marines. The cross bears no names, but the simple inscription:

In memory of all those who have made sacrifices in the service of their country.

A longer version of this article was printed in the Link in October 2021. (Editor)



Bunbury Medical Practice

news: January

New Year .. New Resolutions!

Many of us start the New Year with health-related resolutions, with some of us keeping those resolutions better than others! One simple resolution which takes minimal effort, is to take up any offers of NHS screening, be this for bowel, breast, cervical or diabetes checks; screening is free and may save your life as early detection gives patients the best chance of a full recovery. Sadly, we receive many notifications from the various screening organisations that our patients have ignored invites. If there is one resolution that is easy to keep ... let this be it!

Make more time for the important things – order prescriptions on the NHS App

Patients in Cheshire and Merseyside can save time by ordering regular medication using the NHS App. The NHS App is the quickest and easiest way to order a repeat prescription – and it puts you in better control of your own health. You can use the App to order your medication at a time that is convenient for you. The NHS App also allows you to access a range of other NHS services — you can use it to view your GP health record, find your NHS number, register your donor status, check your vaccinations, and more. By ordering repeat prescriptions yourself through the NHS App, you will also help the NHS to reduce unnecessary medicine waste and save money, as you can just order what you need, when you need it. The NHS App can be downloaded straight to your mobile phone or another device via the Apple App Store or Google Play, or if you would rather use a PC, you can also set up an NHS account and log in via the website: www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/account/

When you are ordering medication online, you will still need to plan ahead — just as you do with paper-based prescriptions. It is best to order your repeat prescription seven days in advance; do not wait until you're just about to run out, as it can take time for your request to be approved by your GP practice and dispensed by the pharmacy team.

Training Days 2024

Wednesday, 14 February. The surgery will close at 1:00pm and not re-open until the following morning.

A full up to date list of training days appears on the practice website.

Digital Transformation

Patients who use our website may have noticed that it has a new look and we hope that the site is now easier to navigate. The site has more features, including online forms for patients to complete and submit digitally, for example, for new patient registrations, consultation requests and general contact with the surgery.

Our new telephone system went live in the middle of January; one new feature is that it offers patients the functionality to request a call back which means that it will keep your place in the call queue while you carry on with your day.

Flu Vaccinations

It is not too late to have your winter flu vaccination done here at the surgery. Please contact reception if you would like to make an appointment.

West and Central Cheshire Talking Therapies

We know that the New Year can be difficult for people who suffer with mental health problems. Patients can now refer themselves for NHS Talking Therapies by logging on to www.talkingtherapies.cwp.nhs.uk

The website is a one-stop shop for people to refer themselves to for support with mental health issues including, anxiety and depression.

Cheshire and Wirral Partnership (CWP) Chief Executive, Tim Welch said: "We are excited to be launching a new website for our Talking Therapies service which we hope will make it easier for local people to get early mental health support. Reaching out for help can be a difficult first step, so we hope to make it as simple as possible and are bringing new technologies on board like 'chat bots' for people who would prefer to contact us this way. Just like with physical health concerns, early intervention is key".

Talking therapies are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety, depression and low mood, and can support people with long term conditions.

Book review

“The last devil to die” by Richard Osman (Viking, 432pp)

This is the fourth in the hugely successful Thursday Murder Club series from Richard Osman. Each of the books centres around four friends living in a genteel retirement village on the South coast. They form a club to discuss old cold cases and meet each Thursday before finding themselves drawn into real crimes and building a relationship with the local police. The books are undeniably formulaic but have a wonderful charm that draws the reader into the lives of these octogenarian sleuths.

With each successive book, Osman has skilfully developed the characters of his main protagonists, which enhances the reader’s involvement and willingness to suspend belief. Rather like the

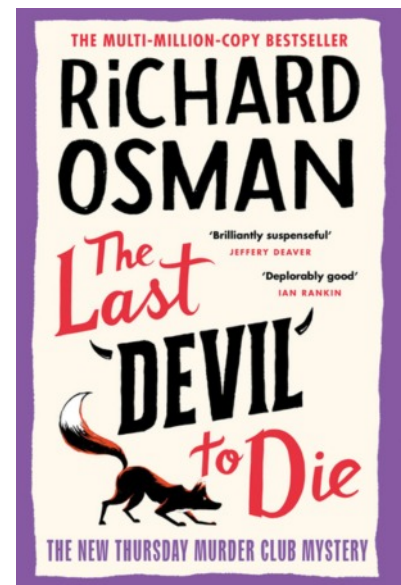
notorious village of Midsummer, the murder rate in and around Coopers Chase retirement village must make it the murder capital of the country, but none of that matters as you relax into yet another of Richard Osman’s ripping yarns.

In my view, this is the best of the series so far. Osman’s depiction of the human tragedy of creeping dementia is beautifully written as one of the many subtexts of the novel and he has that rare ability to write sensitively about serious issues whilst retaining the overarching comic narrative of the novel (have your tissues ready).

This book will be a real treat for the Thursday Murder Club regular readers, but should also delight

those who are new to the books. It’s a wonderfully entertaining light read. Enjoy it.

Paige Turner



Gardening in February

Gardening at this time of year has its joys, especially when my friendly robin follows me looking for all the good eating he can find while I work.

This time of year is tidying up and pruning, you can see the structure of the tree without its leaves. Look for any rubbing and crossover branches, reduce its size if you wish and open up the middle for light and air. Fruit trees will benefit from a spray of winter wash (available at all good garden centres) to kill any overwintering bugs. Remember last year’s severe cold spell, when many of us lost tender plants and tubers. If you haven’t done so, now is the time to either lift them and put them in a frost free place, or protect them from the frost by putting soil over the crown and then a pot of straw over that if you intend to leave them in. It is an expensive business if you have to replace them the following year.

I grow a number of hellebores for spring and winter colour. Now is the time to cut back this year’s leaves to reveal the new growth for spring and give them a feed. There are a number of plants that give winter colour. Rhododendron Dauricum produces white purple flowers, Edgworthia Chrysantha, with its highly scented yellow flowers and camellia Yoimachu, white to pink flowers throughout the winter. This one is best planted against a wall for protection and not forgetting hamamelis, an old favourite with its fragrant yellow flowers.

Fallen leaves, a gardener’s gift — don’t bin them; put them somewhere out of sight in sacks or bags, this creates leaf mould great for mixing with compost and top dressing for your borders next year.

Keep warm and busy out there. Every month is an important gardening month.

Keith Blackwood

The young people of your community need you: help Bunbury Guiding survive

The young people of Bunbury need your help. We desperately need volunteers over the age of 18 to join the leadership teams for Girlguiding in Bunbury.

We currently run thriving Rainbow, Brownie, Guide/Ranger units each with over 20 members. Jo Lester has been involved as a leader for 29 years, with support from the whole Lester family over that time, and has kept the Brownie unit running as well as forming the Rainbow in

recent years. Jo and her daughter Tash have decided to move on to other things and will be retiring in the summer leaving Georgia Edwards and myself (Jackie Bruce) to do what we can to keep the units running. I have been involved as a unit helper then leader for over 20 years and Georgia was a Brownie, Guide, young leader in Bunbury and is now a qualified leader. We both have other commitments and without new leaders to join the team the situation is untenable and we will lose Guiding in Bunbury. This will be tragic at a time when young people have suffered so much due to the pandemic and missed out on so many opportunities. As I am sure you are aware, the incidence of anxiety and other mental health issues in young people has increased as a result of the pandemic. Girlguiding provides a space where girls can be themselves and through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure, can find their voice, discover the best in themselves and make a positive difference to their community. There is no competition, no exams, no judgement, minimal stress, just a safe space to have fun, learn, gain confidence and be happy. Being a leader is fun.

The girls can be a tonic after a stressful day at work (I was a GP and Jo is a nurse). Sharing your skills and experiences is so rewarding as is watching the girls grow in confidence. Jo has been the main leader for the younger sections and taken the Brownies on numerous Pack Holidays as well as organising the weekly meetings. She describes fondly the girls' reactions on achieving challenges such as peeling and chopping carrots, washing up, completing a craft, hike or scavenger hunt and staying away from home for



the first time.

I am the main leader for Guides and Rangers. As well as helping to organise a varied weekly programme the girls have, over the years, been on annual unit camps and PGL. Several have organised, budgeted and run their own patrol camp thereby gaining their permits. Some girls have been involved in the Cheshire Hike (a countywide event run by Cheshire Scouts)

international trips to Switzerland and Norway (run by Cheshire Forest Guides) and attended the week long international Chamboree on two occasions. One of the most rewarding things for me as a leader at camps is hearing the laughter and joy of the girls enjoying a 'screen free' time outdoors whatever the weather, which has been challenging at times! Were you once a Brownie or Guide? Do you like being with young people, have your children fled the nest and left you with time on your hands, and do you have experiences and skills you would love to share? Do you want to make new friends and most importantly make a difference to young people in Bunbury? Guiding allows leaders and helpers to do all these things.

We need volunteers to take on leadership roles for all the units but also regular unit helpers. We would also like to hear from anyone with skills they can share willing to run activities within unit meetings.

My description of what we do may sound daunting but the bigger the team, the easier it is for all involved. Georgia and I would support and mentor anyone willing to help. Girlguiding UK also provides training and is very supportive of all volunteers. If you would like to know more about Guiding, please visit the website www.girlguiding.org.uk or contact Jackie Bruce 07892951452 If you would like to help, please register your interest through the website above and select 'getting started as a volunteer'. We will be alerted and respond, or contact Jackie on the above number. Volunteering is rewarding. Currently Scouting in Bunbury has gone, we must not let Guiding go too.

Have you ever wondered...

The story of the reconstruction of St Boniface after WW II part 2.

When daylight came on the morning of the 28 November 1940, the scale of the damage to St Boniface Church caused by the German bomb that fell close by the night before became apparent. Virtually all windows were completely shattered, the chancel and nave roofs had partially collapsed and the whole fabric had been severely shaken. Closer examination revealed that the north east of the north aisle was dangerously insecure and the roofs needed immediate attention. Temporary repairs were urgently carried out to the roof and the gaping windows were covered in such a way that practically all light was excluded from the inside of the church.

The community all came together, and following a huge internal clean up of debris and numerous minor repairs, some services were able to restart after only six months, despite the very difficult conditions. However it was not until ten years later that the full extent of the war damage could begin to be properly addressed.

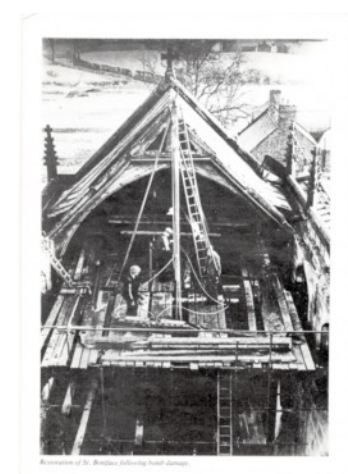
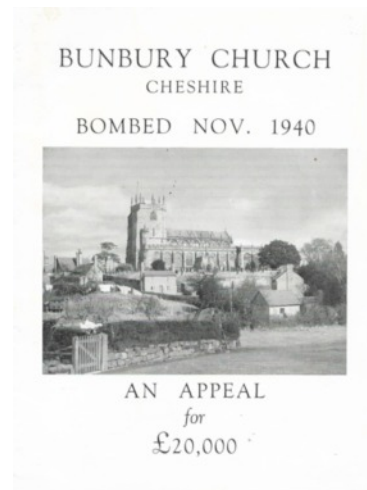
Meanwhile, the extreme bad weather that engulfed the country in 1947, and which caused the nearby River Gowy to overflow and flood severely damaging nearby Bunbury Mill, also caused further damage to the church interior when the frozen cast iron pipes burst in the heating system and snow filled the organ pipes.

Rev. Maurice Ridgway launched an ambitious appeal in 1950 to raise the necessary £20,000 for proper

restoration and William Browne and Son of Chester, and Henry Harding and son of Nantwich were appointed as main contractors.

The most obvious damage, for example the shattered windows, including the stone tracery, was not the most serious and closer inspection revealed that although the principals of the nave roof had been temporarily shored up, as part of original first aid shortly after the bombing ten years earlier, there was even more serious damage. For example one of the main camber beams above the effigy of Hugh Calveley in the chancel had been split almost in two, with a crack at one place more than seven inches wide, that might give way at any time. It was therefore essential to run up steel scaffolding immediately to prevent its collapse. Although both roofs were in immediate need of attention, work was started on the chancel roof first which called for the removal, repair, cleaning and re-erection of every timber, and the complete re-construction of the outer roof.

Then, as if things could not get any worse, at the end of 1951, when this work was only half done, the nave roof began to give way. Although still mid-winter, work on the chancel roof had to cease immediately and all efforts concentrated on the nave. The beams of the nave roof all had to be lowered to the ground and by February the nave was roofless. The impossibility of getting timber of the scantling required for such a



roof, combined with the necessity for the walls to be tied together to prevent any further thrust outwards, called for the erection of a steel frame roof with oak casing and re-inforced steel joists. Around was built the new oak roof, of considerably lower pitch than the previous one, that you see today. By August 1952 the new roof was in place.

The next time you are in St Boniface church just take a special moment to look upwards, to take in the beauty and splendour of the St Boniface Church roof.

The Alsama Project — a charity educating refugee children

Elaine Crotty writes about and educational project she and Tom support in Beirut, in Lebanon.

The school is in the Shatila refugee camp and was started by Meike Ziervogel and Kadria Hussein. It is an inspirational project and we are very passionate about it. We have been fortunate to have had two weekends away with some supporters of the project. It is a very varied and interesting group of people and we have the benefit of hearing what is going on at first hand. It has such an interesting story that I decided that I would write about it and share it with the readers.

Our involvement came about through Meike's husband Richard whom Tom had known as a business colleague for a long time. He is very persuasive and gradually we were drawn in. Richard coordinates fundraising and is at present living and working in Saudi Arabia whilst Meike lives in the camp. They have given much for the children living in the camp. He is a fanatical cricketer and because of his passion for cricket it was introduced into the curriculum. It is also a non-contact sport which means boys and girls can play together.

The Shatila Refugee camp was set up in 1948 as a tent village for 3,000 Palestinian refugees. For over seventy years the site has witnessed war, an infamous massacre, and waves of refugees. It is incredibly overcrowded like a vast slum hosting 40,000 people in one square kilometre — most of them having fled the war in Syria. Nothing can prepare one for the reality of the camps. Shatila presents a challenge for those who call it home. Visitors comment on the impossibly narrow streets, the cramped housing and the dangerous electricity wires that dangle overhead. Locals complain about the armed factions that run the camp, the drug trade, and the social problems of child labour, for boys, and early marriage, for girls. But Shatila can also show another side: it's a place of community. Some people might ask, why set up a school in Lebanon?

Lebanon has the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world — almost one in every five people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. Lebanon is four-years' deep into what the World Bank has called an economic and financial crisis that is among the worst the world has ever seen. 90% of Syrian refugee families live in extreme poverty, and many live in old, overcrowded Palestinian refugee camps like Shatila.

Why educate teenagers?

More than 50% of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon aged three to eighteen are out of school, most of them are at secondary school age. 41% of young displaced Syrian women are married before eighteen. Given that



many marriages are unregistered, these figures may, in fact, be much higher. 35% of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon aged five to eighteen are forced into child-labour.

Meike Ziervogel

In 2017 Meike was in Shatila camp creating a book giving voices to nine women, aged from 18 to 42, during a three-day writing workshop. They created a novella called Shatila Stories shaped from nine pieces of fiction. Meike at the time ran a successful publishing company in London.

The following year, when Meike and Richard's youngest son finished school, they decided to take a gap year from their careers. Meike spoke Arabic and they decided to volunteer at a camp outside Beirut intending to stay for a year. When they arrived in 2018 Meike helped refugee women create a business and Richard set up a cricket hub.

Meike met Kadra, who was a refugee in the camp, and together decided to open empowerment centres for girls to support them in making life-decisions that made full use of their rights. They explained to them that child marriage is against the law and that it brings many problems, such as the dangers of domestic violence and having children at far too young an age. The girls themselves soon started asking to be taught to read, write and budget — and that was the start of the schools.

The first school was in Shatila Camp. There are now three small schools of 200 pupils in each of the two camps: Shatila and Bourj el Barajneh. The teenagers are taught for 44 weeks a year with five days at school and two devoted to cricket. Meike has stayed on and is now CEO of the project, with Kadria and the team continuing to drive it forward. Most children arrive illiterate in Arabic, unable to speak English or perform any maths. In three months, the schools eliminate illiteracy and in six years provide twelve years of education. Maïke, Kadria, and the team have devised a curriculum for refugees that could

in Shatila and Bourj el Barajneh refugee camps in Beirut

be put in place anywhere in the world. The languages taught reflect the nationalities in the camps.

There are now 13 cricket hubs with more than 550 dedicated players. The cricket hubs are part-sponsored by the MCC, but the project always needs more funding. The students receive five hours tuition each in Arabic, English and maths every week, in addition to yoga, IT, awareness/empowerment classes, poetry and English reading support. The classes are grouped by ability, not age, and are taught using the innovative curriculum. With a rigorous assessment calendar, student progress is tracked and 100% of the students show considerable academic improvement across all subjects. At present there is a waiting list of more than 1,500 illiterate teenagers. Whilst 65% of the students are female, boys and girls are welcomed into the schools. The most talented students are sponsored through partner secondary schools as they work towards university, and employment is given to mothers through social enterprises. The projects are run for, and in large part, by refugees. The leaders train the older students to become the future teachers and leaders of Alsama. Eight of the students are now yoga teachers, 32 of the best cricketers are doubling as coaches and 18 students work as welcomers, librarians or in the communications team. This also means that they earn some money to take back to their families. This is in an environment where entire families live in one room without proper electricity and where street crime and child marriage are part of the everyday.

One of the saddest parts of all this is that although the teenagers are being educated it doesn't necessarily mean that they will get out of the camps as they do not have passports. Two years ago, we met Maram with two of her friends via Zoom. In October I spoke to her for a second time — nothing could have prepared me for her achievements. I knew that the teenagers were doing well but...Three years ago, Maram was illiterate. At the age of seven her city in Syria was besieged by Isis and she and her family fled to Shatila in Lebanon. She now reads and writes in her own language, and speaks fluent English. She is also a very good cricketer, and was offered a scholarship by a school in the UK, but she is unable to take the place up.

Alsama means sky in Arabic. It refers to the new horizons that the schools are trying to create for refugees. All the time the school is trying to make itself sustainable and with more sponsors they can do that: the power is unreliable, but some of the buildings now have solar panels; the classrooms are improving but some now have

whiteboards. School 4 is opening in February, in a much more lawless camp which will create its own difficulties.

I have lots more to write about, including about some of the children who are there, and the cricket which has made such a difference to their physical and mental health. Meike is a truly inspirational woman. When the problems started in the Middle East, Meike came back to the UK as British nationals were asked to leave. She is now back in Beirut as it is now as stable as it gets! She was so excited to be back with everyone. This is her message:

"My passion and driving force in all my years of work – journalism, director of a publishing house, novelist, CEO of Alsama — has always been giving voices to women without voices. I believe strongly that if we want to help change the world — even if just a bit — we must help women to empower themselves. Furthermore, I am also a passionate believer in collaboration. The world is dividing into an ever-growing number of refugees (without rights etc.) and an ever-smaller number of the lucky ones like ourselves who have passport/bank account/jobs/rights etc. The refugee crisis is no longer a crisis. Crisis implies that the current situation is temporary and eventually will go back to what it used to be. That's not going to happen. To find solutions we have to work together — non refugee communities with refugee communities."

The website for Alsama is alsamaproject.com. If you feel you can help it is a very worthwhile charity"



The Alsama cricket coaches

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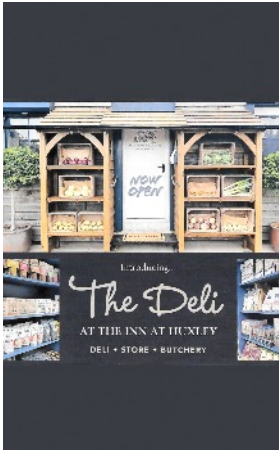
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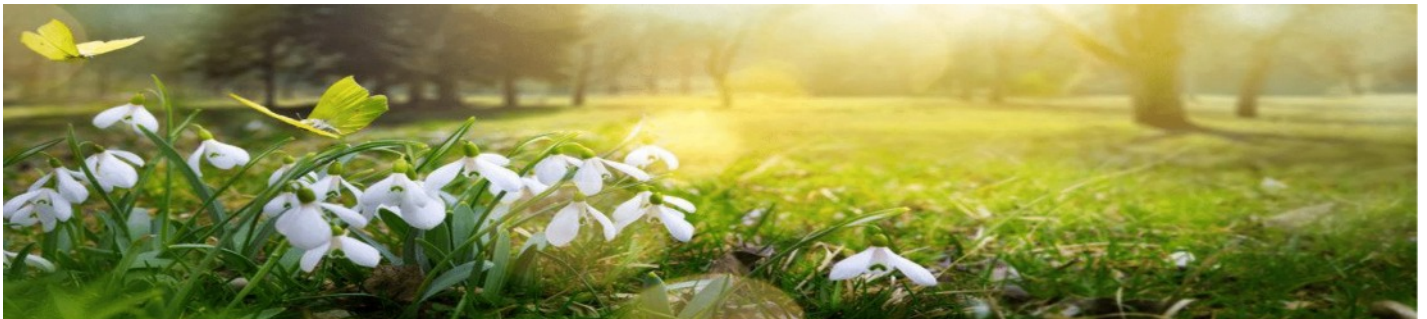
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