July 2014

The Newsletter

In this issue: • Reflections on a new life • Wordle

- Talking Newspaper WI Updates Small Thoughts
- Arts events in the area Neighbourhood Police
- All your church news Vacation by Rita Dove



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

• 3 rd July	One Man and His Cow - Rural Arts - Bremhill
• 3 rd July	Ladies Lunch - Bowood
• 5 th July	Calne Choral Summer Concert
• 7 th July	Latest date for return of Parish Questionnaire
• 10 th - 20 th July	Art exhibition - Calne
• 13 th July	Art in the Garden
• 26 th July	Painting Day – Foxham
• 3 rd August	Charity Breakfast - Bremhill
• 6 th September	Bremhill Village Show
• 28 th November	A Victorian Christmas

The editors wish to apologise for the incorrect information given in last month's edition of the Newsletter. The information given below is now correct.

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All contributions and suggestions to the Editors, please.

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EDITORIAL

A short time ago I had driven into a car park and found myself in the difficult position of having to park my car in a rather confined space. We've all been there, haven't we? No other space, late of course, so no option but to drive in. My passenger, sensible man, got out first and then, carefully avoiding the next car's wing-mirror, I edged in and opened the door. I swung my feet out and then eased myself out of the car - but oh! What embarrassment! There I was, feet on the ground, head above the door and my midriff firmly refusing to retract sufficiently to allow me to slide from behind the door! I was stuck! I had to get back in, back out and let my colleague drive into the space whereupon he opened the door, stood up and slid out - his eyes saying 'easy'. What humiliation!!

So, the hard decision was taken - the offending bulge must go - although easier said than done! But that underlines the fact that decisions have to be taken and some are not easy. The last edition of the Newsletter reminded me of this with the information about the neighbourhood plan dealing with environment and housing in our parish. We live in a beautiful area and we all have an interest in preserving our 'green and pleasant land'. However, undeniably, we desperately need more housing, particularly affordable housing which will not price people, especially the young, out of the market and this has to be built somewhere. So, sometimes, realistic decisions have to be taken to resolve difficult situations. We will all have our opinions and ideas on this matter and the last Newsletter edition announced the parish questionnaire on the issue. We have all been given the chance to express our thoughts and to help our Parish Council complete the Neighbourhood plan and we should not miss this opportunity to play our part in giving our Council the feedback they require.

I have also taken another, much easier, decision. I am going to try to enjoy the coming summer months as much as possible and I hope you all do, too. If you will be on holiday, have a good rest and enjoy it! In addition, I hope you also enjoy this edition of the Newsletter.

Ewen Bird Co Editor

SPECIAL NOTICES

ART IN THE GARDEN

A fun afternoon for all the family - 13th July

Peter and Jennie Shaw, the Friends of St Martins and St Martins Church would like to invite you and your family to Hazeland Mill on Sunday 13th July. An art exhibition, including sculptures and paintings by well-known artists, will be on view for everyone. There will be scrumptious teas and cakes, fun stalls and plants. The event will be open from 2pm until 6pm.

Come along and enjoy this beautiful garden. All proceeds to St Martins Church. All contributions, including donations for the bottle stall, will be gratefully received.

All enquiries please phone Philippa (815337) or Rosslyn (817292).



CHARITY BREAKFAST - SUNDAY 3RD AUGUST

Richard and Caroline Dutton will be hosting a charity breakfast in aid of Meningitis Research Foundation, at The Long Barn, Bremhill on Sunday 3 August, between 9.30am and 11.00am.

We will provide bacon and sausage baps, tea, coffee and/or orange juice and would ask that in return, you make a donation to the charity. For catering purposes, please could you let us know if you are able to join us by Thursday 31 July, preferably by email to richardwdutton@gmail.com or tel 07734887065

We look forward to seeing you.

Richard and Caroline

STEP BY STEP OLLIE COFFEE MORNING FINAL TOTAL

Thank you to everyone who donated and made items, made cakes, helped and came along on the lovely sunny day to support the event. We had a very enjoyable day and, including donations, raised the grand sum of £550.00.

The raffle prizes were won by Mr.T.Driscoll and Mrs.E.Norman. Also I would like to say a big thank you to my friend Jackie Harris, without whose help this would not have happened. Thanks again.

Dianne Burrows

RIDE AND STRIDE

Once again the Ride and Stride weekend will be held in September (date to follow). This weekend is when churches throughout the Diocese are open and welcome those who visit them in their attempt to visit as many churches as possible using horsepower, pedal power or foot power. The people taking part are sponsored, and money raised goes half to help preserve churches through the Historic Churches Trust and half to our own church. Our church will be open on the day, with drink and light refreshments available.

Last year David Glass took up the challenge and visited over 30 churches on his bicycle; now we hope someone else will take up the challenge.

That this is a worthwhile event is well recognised. Bear Grylls, no less, has added his voice to encouraging people to participate. Nearer the time, I will have sponsor forms available and will put a new message in The Magazine when they are ready, so "watch this space"

Elizabeth Hannah Field House, Foxham.

RURAL ARTS - NOVEMBER EVENT

Please put this date in your diary:

Friday 28th November, 2014.

A Victorian Christmas - an evening of music, song, stories and drama from the time of Dickens and Hardy. A Christmas tale of the time of King Arthur.

RURAL ARTS TOURING

Hello Everybody! I am writing to remind you of the visit Rural Arts Touring when The Theatre Orchard will be performing "One Man and His Dog".

Trevor loves Judy. Judy loves Trevor. They're best mates. Trouble is, Trevor's family don't approve. They think that Trevor should leave his prize cow alone and get on with looking after his farm and then Trevor gets some bad news ...

Written and performed in rhyme and song by the acclaimed Living Spit and with a multitude of agricultural cliches and farmyard frolics, "One Man and His Cow" is a brand new musical comedy.

The performance takes place on Thursday 3rd July at 7.30 pm in Bremhill Village Hall. If you have not already requested tickets, you can email me (rosiestevens@hotmail.com) to reserve your place, or you can ring me on 01249 813642 or Marilyn on 01249 661369.

Please reply as soon as possible so you don't miss out on what promises to be another successful performance. We look forward to hearing from you.

Marilyn Adcock & Rosie Stevens



CALNE CHORAL SUMMER CONCERT

Saturday 5th July at St Mary's School, Calne.

Come along and support your local parishioners who sing in Calne Choral for their summer concert. 'Songs and Settings for a Summer Evening' will feature a programme of English romances and madrigals, French secular songs, sacred songs and some surprises! This should be an enjoyable evening of first-class part-singing. Do come and enjoy both the singing and a glass of wine in the interval! New members are always very welcome, so if you like the singing, come and join us!

Tickets are £10 (students and children £2) available on the door.





Do you want to help yourself while helping others?

Then volunteering could be for you. We talk to lots of people who are volunteering and so many of them tell us they get far more out of it than they put in. The benefits they talk about include health benefits, improving employability, making new friends and feeling part of a team. So why not find out if there is an opportunity out there for you? Whether you've got a few hours a month or a day a week, there's a volunteering opportunity out there to suit you.

We have details of various gardening, environmental, befriending, mentoring, administration, IT and many other opportunities.

Still not sure? Here is what some of our volunteers have said:

"As I'm on my feet for most of the day, volunteering has had physical benefits too. My backache has improved"

"I'm sure the confidence and skills I gained from my volunteer role played a huge part in me getting the job"

"Volunteering is a great way to interact with other people and gives me a sense of belonging"

So come out and help your community and yourself. If you'd like to start volunteering get in touch and we can help find the best role for you.

Visit our website: www.volunteercentrewiltshire.org.uk or call our Volunteering Adviser on 0845 521 6224.



BREMHILL PARISH ARTISTS REPRESENTED IN WILTSHIRE ARTS EVENT.

Charles Rodwell, John Harris, Rosalind Robinson and David Reeves are among the ten local artists that are exhibiting in the Heritage Centre, Carnegie Building, (Old Library) Calne from Saturday, July 12th until Sunday, July 20th open from 11am until 5pm everyday. The free exhibition is part of the "Marlborough Open Studios" event which, centred on Marlborough, takes in an area from Calne to Wroughton, Hungerford to Pewsey circling back through Devizes.

Thirty- eight studios and exhibitions are represented on this art trail and gives the public a chance to meet the artists in their own surroundings or see an exhibition of their work. There is a comprehensive website which gives details of the event and samples of the artists work which is well worth a visit. www.marlboroughopenstudios.co.uk

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NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM

PCSO Nicole Yates and I have been visiting many of the villages on the Rural Patch this month, meeting up with many of you, which has been a pleasure. I thought you would like to know what we have been up to on our travels. This is also a great opportunity to let you know what has been happening with crimes and anything to look out for.

Only two crimes, in Stockley and Quemerford, have been reported this month, involving the theft of welding equipment and machinery. Other incidents included following up a sighting of suspicious transit vans, careless driving and the seizing of cannabis. You may have seen in the local paper reports on an incident at Blacklands where a laser light has been pointed at drivers as they pass. We would welcome any information regarding this, both due to the extreme danger it poses and the possible serious damage to eyes. Please call us if you see anything at all you are not happy with.

Other incidents involving hare coursing at Yatesbury, failure to report a collision and drink driving have been dealt with.

Other News

Nicole and I continue to work within the Rural Community. School visits are a top priority for us, to engage with the children as much as possible. Derry Hill School visit this month saw the children having fun wearing Police hats and Hi Viz vests for a lesson.

Community Speedwatch is vibrant in some villages. Volunteers at Hilmarton are extremely active with the Speed Gun. Despite the odd rather discourteous gesture from some passing drivers (which will be dealt with by Police) they caught 6 excessive speeders within one hour and a Police Speed check at Stockley Lane this week got 7 warnings to motorists. Most offenders were, sadly, local. I will continue to try to keep the speeds down in our Rural Villages, and would be happy to hear from you if you would like to volunteer help for community speed watch.

If you wish to discuss any issues with me please feel free to email at (sonya.stockhill@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk) or call me via 101.

Police Constable Sonya Stockhill Community Beat Manager - Rural Calne NPT



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WORDLE

Wordle is a website that can take any block of writing and produce a 'map' as shown below. The size of the word is an indication of how often it is used. Some think that is is a quick way to get a 'flavour' of complex documents.

Can you tell what this book is? (Answer on page 28)



We'd love to showcase your window view or any other interesting photos, sketches or articles you might have, please contact the editor



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FREE WEEKLY MALMESBURY TALKING NEWSPAPER

It's Thursday, time for the papers. That is reading articles from the local papers onto cassette tapes to send out to those who are visually impaired.

We are a group of about thirty volunteer readers and recorders who join our rota to produce three different editions of local papers. On Thursday morning at 9.0 a.m. we do the Chippenham edition including Corsham, Calne and surrounding villages south of the M4, reading from the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald. In the afternoon we record the Malmesbury edition.

The tapes last for an hour, so we try to select articles which we think might be of most interest and include as much community news as possible. In order to add interest we do our best to describe any pictures and also lighten the reading with occasional asides. The recording is done in a small "studio" in The Cause on the London Rd. in Chippenham, each edition taking about two hours to record, copy, put into plastic wallets and dispatch.

The service is completely free to all our listeners, being delivered by Free Post and then returned in the same way after having been listened to. About 100 tapes are sent out to both private addresses and to community homes. We can supply a cassette player (on free loan) if needed.

We do get very good feedback from our listeners who say that the weekly drop from the postman can be a highlight which helps enrich their lives. Through the medium of our tapes we enter our listeners' homes and lives each week of the year and they often speak of us as their personal friends.



We are a charity (Registered Charity 27190) which does not receive any regular financial support from national or local organisations, but we rely entirely on donations and fund raising.

We advertise our cause through posters and leaflets in local libraries and public venues. We are always keen to hear from anyone who might like to take our tapes. If you should know of someone who might benefit from the Talking Newspaper please let us know.

Gwyn -01249 659305 Frances -01249 657129

A REFLECTION ON A NEW LIFE

Four miles to Hampton Court Palace or four miles to Wimbledon Tennis. Twelve minutes on the fast train to Waterloo, then quickly onto the Underground for access to London's museums, art galleries and theatres. Holidays? – easy – thirty minutes to Gatwick or thirty minutes t'other way to Heathrow. What was there not to like? After all, Tesco was only two minutes in the car!

Nearly twenty years together in the same area and it was all so familiar. Time for a challenge before we both progressed onwards into our dotage. A move? – yes. Another house, but where? We searched the internet, but only ever viewed one house. A project – tick. Garden – tick. Safe for the dog – tick. Village location – tick (but we didn't know anything about Bremhill!). Again we checked the published facts about the village and hoped we'd make friends.

The problem with living in a London suburb means that almost every aspect of life squeezes one's personal space, whether it's queueing for a train, cramming on the Underground, waiting at traffic lights or even shopping; it's difficult to lift your head and breathe.

And so, with an enormous leap of faith we signed the papers and packed up our goods and chattels. We didn't know that within the first 24 hours of moving, our neighbours on both sides would welcome us with bottles of wine. Or that they had already cut our grass for us. Or that we would immediately be loaned a radiator to help warm a freezing house (remember last Spring?).

Suddenly we had fresh air to breath and the pleasure of sunrise over the hills. Power cuts resulted in a pan of boiling water being passed over the fence (we really must equip ourselves with a camping stove!).

We have lived here for a year and our pleasure has not waned.

The church bells ring, the animals call and the cockerels do their thing. The dawn chorus is amazing and yet we can enjoy every moment of this quiet life. We didn't know the noise a cow makes as she rips the grass on the other side of our hedge. We stop work just to listen, or to admire the beauty of a pheasant. We also didn't know about the Church and the Village Hall, Skittles Night, the Harvest auction, the Plant Stall and Coffee Mornings. Open Gardens, Rural Arts and the Produce Show are delightful.

We are still climbing a mountain as we develop the house and make a garden. We have conquered oil supplies and the septic tank hasn't been a problem – yet! No street lights? There's nothing wrong with a torch. To our amazement, we didn't drown in the winter but we continue to wonder about the possibility of being snowed in. Friends? We have made many. The kind of good friends who exchange a smile and a quick word. People who help each other out. These are the people who provide the heartbeat of Bremhill. Yes, we definitely can breath here.

Jan and Terry



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CHRISTIAN MALFORD & FOXHAM WI

We dressed as bountiful, beautiful fairies at the Wacky Races in May and money was raised for the local school and the Wiltshire Air Ambulance. Our magic wands did their work and left all who saw us open mouthed! We deservedly won the best dressed award but were last in the race as we needed the help of the 'local' for refreshments on the journey!

Thank you to Rosalind Robinson who came to our June meeting and enlightened us about 'Trompe L'oeil' paintings. Our WI artists could 'give it a go'. On July 12th the WI ladies are paddling in the Dragon Boat Race. We will be in disguise, but well worth looking out for! All our proceeds will go to the Naomi House Children's Hospice which provides care for our Wiltshire children who have life limiting conditions. Limited space, but phone Helen to participate (721411).

Are you willing to have a go at a fun, dynamic and stimulating evening? Kaya and Cava with Alex Miles will be with us for our July 17th meeting starting at 7.30pm. We will be using drums and percussion instruments to help us learn about rhythm and self expression. Do not miss this! Following on, Ruth will be leading us on the next walk on July 21st starting at 10am.

Contact Jenny: 01249 740950



The Guides have recently had a taster climbing session in Chippenham. We are fortunate to have the only Guiding climbing club in the country right on our doorstep. This gives the Guides the opportunity to experience the excitement and challenge of climbing in a girl only space. We have also recently had a weekend away at the Guiding centre in East Tytherton. This included a very successful day trip to Legoland! This term we have already been enjoying the outdoors with fire lighting and cooking. We have a weekend camp very soon, followed by a week's camping in July at Shipston on Stour.

We were delighted to welcome a new leader last term, Ekaterina, who has settled in well. Her enthusiasm is great to see and the Guides are thrilled too.

Gill Shaw

Tytherton W.I.

Our new programme for the coming W.I. year began in May with a discussion and vote on the national W.I. Resolution to encourage "Increasing Organ Donation". This was followed by a very interesting and entertaining talk by Zoe Foreman resplendent in her official 'Olympic outfit', on "Being a Gamesmaker at the 2012 London Olympics', a talk that was very much enjoyed.

At the time of writing our canal trip in June is yet to take place. 40 members and guests will have an evening trip on the Kenavon Venture from Devizes wharf. This follows a fascinating illustrated talk on the History of the Kennet & Avon Canal, given to the group and guests at the April meeting.

We are 90 years old! In July we are celebrating the 90th Anniversary of Tytherton W.I. with an evening Garden Party at Trejenda, Foxham, our thanks to Jen and Dave Wilton for hosting this. It is hoped as many past and present members will come and join the celebration. If you would like to know more about us or come for a 'taster evening', we should love to see you. We meet in Tytherton Village Hall, 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of the month, excepting August. For more information, please ring our President Shelah (659237) or Secretary Rose (740550).

Brenda Whitbread pp Tytherton W.I. Committee



Once again Foxham will be host to amateur artists who come to enjoy a day working under the watchful eye of artist John Harris (www.johnlharris.co.uk) who will provide help if required. This year we will be based for the day at Hillside View, home of Mary and Paul Kellond.

The date is July 26th and will cost £28 to include refreshments. The day is open to beginners and to more accomplished artists, including young people. Those attending can use any medium they wish. Profits from the day go to St. John the Baptist church, Foxham.

If you are interested please apply for more details from: Mary Kellond, tel. 01249 740633 or Elizabeth Hannah, tel. 01249 740619



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BREMHILL PARISH COUNCIL

A synopsis of the meeting held on the 2nd June 2014.

The one tonne salt bag scheme that Wiltshire Council has offered the Parish is to be taken up. The bag will be stored in Ratford Hill Farm. This will be delivered in time for the winter months.

Mr Tucker attended the Flood Group meeting and found it very valuable with the sharing of ideas e.g. sandbags etc to be in place to prepare against flooding. With the Flood Prevention and Property Resilience Plan being created to enable the Parish to cope more effectively with the unprecedented levels of rainfall that appear to be occurring more often than before.

By the time this newsletter will be published all the questionnaires for the Neighbourhood Plan will have been delivered to every household in the Parish, with replies to be sent back to the Clerk by July 7th.

Mr Rigby was thanked for getting the doors renewed on the notice board in East Tytherton.

The date of the next meeting will be July 7th at the Moravian Room at 7.30 pm. There wll be NO meeting in August.

SMALL ADS

- Baby Sitting. Olivia King (16) has worked with local children at school.
 Available during holidays & weekends. 07890 002 043 or 01249 740 200
- I am available for house and animal sitting, including looking after horses. Previous experience and reliable references. I am retired and in my mid fifties. Female, fit and a non-smoker. Contact Paula Godwin on: 01249-815145 or 07753-353493.

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FOXHAM INN NEWS

As I am writing this, it's stunning sunny weather outside. Let's hope it's still the same by the time you read this!!! (Long hot summer please!!)

Lots of lovely summer dishes going on the menu at the moment: Courgette Flowers stuffed with Goats Cheese, Salcombe Bay Crab, Cornish Lobsters, lots of Local fruit and Vegetables coming in and later on in the month we will have Somerset Cherries. Hopefully our home-grown tomatoes from our polytunnel will be making an appearance soon.

Exciting news: our Sous-Chef Ben Reid has been accepted for Masterchef The Professionals, so look out for him in October/November time on your telly. We will be trying out some of his intended dishes on the menu, so feel free to come and test him out before he gets to London and has to do it for the Masterchef Judges.

We are holding a 'Taste of the West Country' Dinner on July 24th, celebrating the fantastic produce from Land and Sea around the West Country - advanced bookings only.

Look forward to seeing you all soon

Neil and Sarah Cooper

DIANA RODWELL MCSP Chartered Physiotherapist Registered with Health Professions Council

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SMALL THOUGHTS OF A LARGE CLERGYMAN

Did Charles Dickens visit Bremhill? Probably not, but nevertheless his interest in rural matters, particularly the plight of the Wiltshire agricultural labourer is well documented, culminating in a hymn/poem that he penned in 1846, "The Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers"

This followed on from a series of meetings (demonstrations?) held in villages around Wiltshire, including Bremhill, protesting about the conditions that agricultural workers were forced to endure at the time. Many of these meetings were organised by a local lay preacher, George Reade of Goatacre who had founded the Goatacre Reform Society, ostensibly to fight for the repeal of the Corn Laws, but also to publicize the genuine hardships that workers on the land suffered, low pay, poor housing and insecurity.

The meeting that attracted the attention of Dickens was reported in the London paper, the Daily News. About five hundred people, labourers with their wives and children, gathered around the cross on a cold winter's night in the centre of Bremhill. The meeting was addressed by the wife of one of the labourers, Lucy Simpkins. Apparently she was a powerful speaker, "Don't you think that we have a great need to cry to our God to put it in the hearts of our gracious Queen and her members of Parliament to grant us free bread?" was part of her impassioned plea.

The whole of her speech delivered on that cold night in Bremhill in 1846 was reported in that London paper, moving the great writer, always alert to the plight of the disadvantaged, to pen his "Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourer" which, a later writer observes, "It breathes in every line the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, the love of God, the redemption of his Son, and that love of God and Man on which hang all the law of the prophets". From that meeting in Bremhill and the response of Dickens to the heartfelt plea of Lucy Simpkins, we can trace the beginnings of the changes that eventually brought about the improvements in the conditions of the Wiltshire Agricultural labourer that were so desperately needed. In their different ways both Lucy Simpkins and Charles Dickens were responding to those words of Christ himself - "Truly, I say to you, as you did for the least of my brethren, you also did for me"

God Bless You

Jim Scott

LOCAL CHURCH INFORMATION

ST NICHOLAS, TYTHERTON LUCAS

6th July Morning Service 10am (SG)

13th July Eucharist 8.30am (JS) 20th July Mattins 10am (DC) 27th July Eucharist 8.30am (DC)

3rd August Morning Service 10am (MG)



MORAVIAN CHURCH, EAST TYTHERTON

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Canon Desmond Millett Father Michael d'Arcy Walsh www.stmaryschippenham.co.uk www.saintedmundsparish.org.uk



CHURCH Officers	FOXHAM	BREMHILL
Church Wardens	Elizabeth Hannah 740619	William Wyldbore-Smith 814969
	Mary Kellond 740633	Nancy Kyte 815073
Treasurer	Robert Pegler 740253	David Stevens 815337
Secretary	Vacant Post	Vacant Post

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH. Foxham

6th July 9.30am M. Kellond

3rd after Trinity Holy Communion Romans 7: 15-25a

13th July 9.30am R. Pegler

4th after Trinity Family Service Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

20th July 9.30am D. Scott

5th after Trinity Holy Communion Romans 8: 12-25

27th July 6pm D. Wilton

6th after Trinity Evensong Genesis 29: 15-28

3rd August 9.30am A. Glass

7th after Trinity Holy Communion Romans 9: 1-5



For any information (Weddings, Funerals, Christenings and Special services)

Contact: Rev. Ann Massey 01249 817926 ea.massey@btinternet.com

Rev. Jim Scott 01249 813112 jim@bremhill.com



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calls at Naish House Farm, Spirthill, on every other Monday afternoon at 2pm- 2.30pm - 7th and 21st July

ST MARTIN'S CHURCH, BREMHILL

	Service	Sidesmen	Readers
6th July Trinity 3	8am Holy Communion 6pm Evensong	M Kyte K Blackmore & L Jones	M Kyte Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-end . J Hughes Matthew 11: 16-19, 25- end
13th July Trinity 4	11am Holy Communion	D Kyte & A Woods	F Pearson Romans 8: 1-11
20th July Trinity 5	6pm Evensong	S Tumber & A Heath	A Woods Genesis 28: 10-19a N.Jordan Matthew 13: 24-30 & 36-43
27th July Trinity 6	9.30am Family Service	Children	A Young Person Matthew13: 31-33 & 44-52
3rd August Trinity 7	8am Holy Communion 6 pm Evensong	N Jordan A Jones & K Webb	T Castle Genesis 32: 22-31 J Jordan Matthew 14: 13-21

CHURCH CLEANING ROTA

In Church you will see a Church Cleaning Rota. If you can find an hour of two to help clean the Church or polish the Brass, please put your name down as a volunteer. It will be much appreciated. Please bring your own cleaning materials, but there is a fine vacuum cleaner at the back of the Church.



If you have any items of local Church or Village News for the AUGUST 2014 edition of this Newsletter, please give them to either Derek Kyte (815073) or to me Jane Jordan (812083)

Vacation by Rita Dove

I love the hour before takeoff. that stretch of no time, no home but the gray vinyl seats linked like unfolding paper dolls. Soon we shall be summoned to the gate, soon enough there'll be the clumsy procedure of row numbers and perforated stubs—but for now I can look at these ragtag nuclear families with their cooing and bickering or the heeled bachelorette trying to ignore a baby's wail and the baby's exhausted mother waiting to be called up early while the athlete, one monstrous hand asleep on his duffel bag, listens, perched like a seal trained for the plunge. Even the lone executive who has wandered this far into summer with his lasered itinerary, briefcase knocking his knees—even he has worked for the pleasure of bearing no more than a scrap of himself into this hall. He'll dine out, she'll sleep late, they'll let the sun burn them happy all morning —a little hope, a little whimsy before the loudspeaker blurts and we leap up to become Flight 828, now boarding at Gate 17.

Rita Dove was born in Akron, Ohio in 1952. As well as collections of poetry, she has published short stories, a novel and a verse drama. She served as Poet Laureate of the United States from 1993 to 1995 and President Bill Clinton bestowed upon her the 1996 National Humanities Medal.

This poem reminds me of all those hours spent people watching at airports, waiting for flights, often delayed, to and from holiday destinations. Enjoy your holidays, however you travel!

Isobel

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