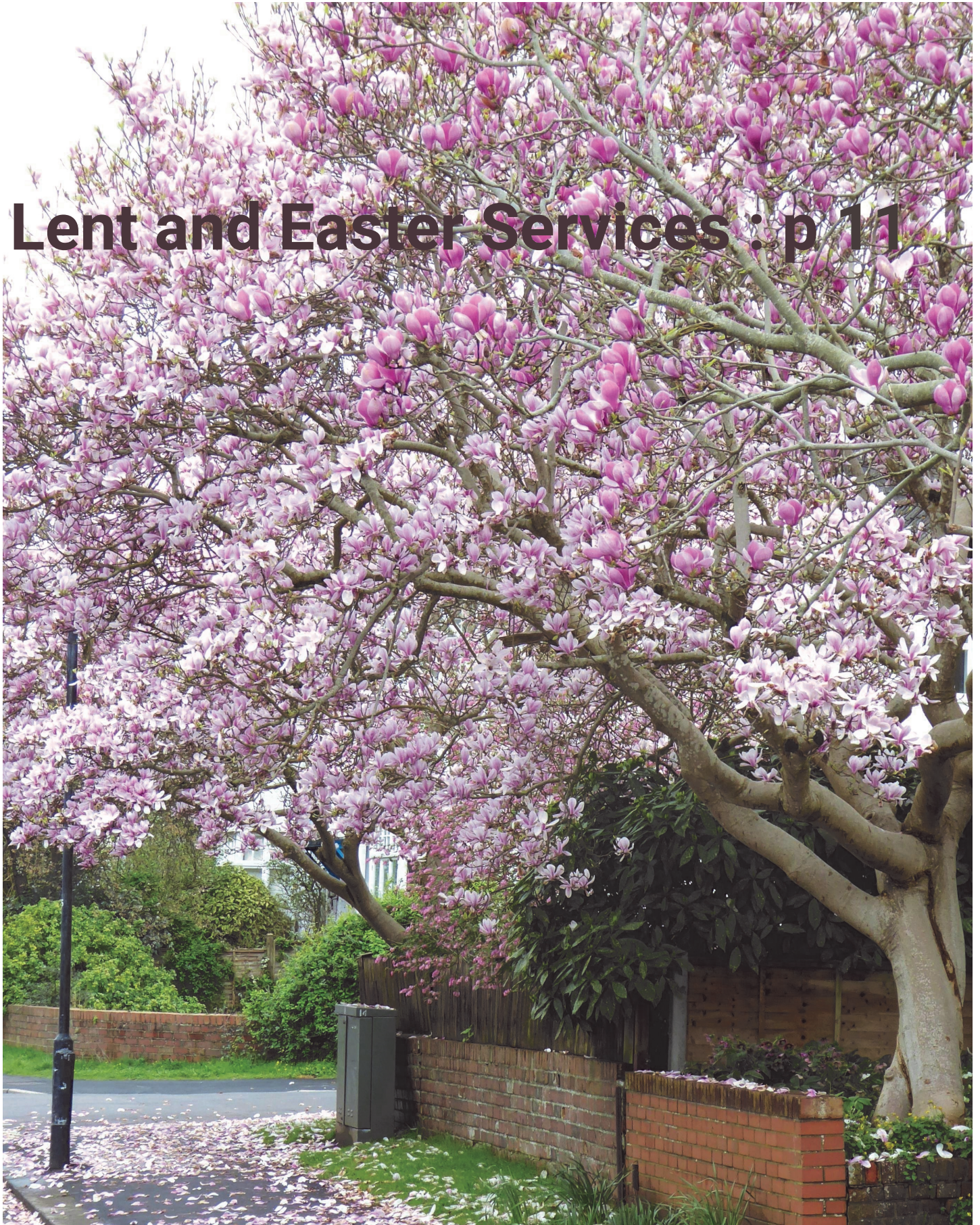


Lent and Easter Services : p 11



St Mary Magdalene, Stoke Bishop

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Associate Vicar

The Reverend Simon Potter (assocvicar@stmarysb.org.uk)

Curates for the Avonside Mission Area

The Revd Sonia Home (Sonia.asma@stmarysb.org.uk)

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Currently vacant

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The Messenger

St Mary's Messenger is published quarterly and distributed to 3,000 homes in the parish. Contact us by email: messenger@stmarysb.org.uk or by telephone:

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9th Guides Lara Kirby 07961 013 097

9th Brownies Wendy Hughes 962 4580

Sundays at St Mary's

9 am Holy Communion
with hymns and prayers

10.30 am Morning Worship
Communion alternate weeks
Band-led worship for everyone.

*SHINEon Sundays groups for children aged 0-14 yrs
take place during the service on alternate weeks*

Explore@4

An informal service open to all and planned for families with pre/primary school children. It takes place on alternate Sundays at 4pm during term time.

Audio recordings of the Sunday sermons can be accessed at any time via the church website.

For full details of services visit the church website and do check before coming as there are occasional variations to this usual pattern.

Weekdays at St Mary's

Contact the church office for more information

Bright Sparks

Baby and Toddler Group

Mondays during term time 2-3.30 pm

Fuel

Fridays during term time 6-7.30 pm

for young people in school years 6-9

Bulb

Alternate Sundays 5.30-7 pm

for young people in school years 7 and up

Connect on Tuesdays

Conversation, coffee, craft in church

10-11.15 am with Communion service to end

Thursday Lunch Club

A hot lunch in the church hall

Please book in advance

St Mary's Singers

Choir at 9am Sunday services

Rehearsals alternate Tuesday evenings - see our website What's On calendar

Bellringing

Contact the church office

for more information

Small Groups

Bible study and informal support

Daytime and evening groups

Alpha

An opportunity to explore the Christian faith in a small group or 1 to 1



St Mary Magdalene Church
(@StMarySB)

Sabbatical Stories

By Simon Potter



Rev Simon Potter, Associate Vicar of St Mary's Church, recently returned from a three-month sabbatical with many stories to tell of his time away. The Messenger invited him to share some of those stories with us here.

I wonder if you've got a favourite story? I wonder if you've got a favourite Bible story? One of mine is about old King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon - the super-powerful leader of the world's leading super-power of the time. He was a man who was rather taken with his own image and achievements who wanted to project his personality by building a towering statue made of his beloved gold.

Having built it, he summoned people to come and bow down to it in a swirling pantomime-like pageant of imperial pomp and power politics – a world which revolved around him. But just as everyone noisily bowed down, three people quietly stood up and stood out. They were members of the Old Testament people of God and – respectful but resolute – they talked face-to-face with the King and refused to worship anyone or anything except God, even when threatened with execution by being thrown into the very fiery furnace that had been used to melt the gold for the statue.

The King's face contorted with rage. The order was given. Into the furnace, like trash, the three were thrown. 'But wait!', said the King. 'Didn't we throw three people into the furnace? Why, then, do I see four people moving about; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods?' God had intervened to rescue those who had honoured him. As a result, rather than casting aside the three rebels and their God as rubbish, the King was drawn to them. He called them out of the furnace, unsinged and unharmed. He was drawn to reappraise his own beliefs and behaviours in light of what he had seen.

I wonder if we sometimes see something of ourselves in the King who puts himself at the centre of his life and who calls others to dance to his tune? I wonder if we see something of our own deep desires in the three 'rebels' – a desire to stand-out against, rather than be drawn into, the swirl of self-centredness which often characterises our world and to belong faithfully to a power higher than

ourselves, to belong to the God who can rescue those who honour him.

This was the story that I spent much of my three-month sabbatical researching, discussing and writing about. Things kicked off with visits to the British Museum in London and Ashmolean Museum in Oxford to learn from their Babylonian exhibits from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. As well as setting time aside for reading in various libraries, I then gave the story of the King to 20 or so professional storytellers to adults: film producers, writers, poets, actors, composers, visual artists, professors of story-telling, choreographers and dancers. As a preacher, I regularly retell the stories of the Bible to adults and I was intrigued to hear from others how they might retell the same story via the medium of their particular art-form.

I wanted to understand about their processes and techniques and to ask, 'what might I, as a preacher, learn from you and your art form that I could apply to my own retelling of the same story from the pulpit?' The insights were many and varied. Too many to summarise in the short article or booklet that I had planned, they ended up forming the basis for a book that I hope will encourage preachers to be even more confident and enthusiastic users of the rich raw material of the Bible – its feast of stories.

Alongside the researching, reading, and writing there was time to stay at and learn from the life and work of a French monastery which welcomes around 50,000, mainly young people, from across the globe each year. I was also grateful to be able to base part of my work among a Christian community in the Alps (see picture above) and to spend several weeks travelling in France between those bases.

As a former French teacher, it was fantastic to see new places, update my vocabulary, and hear the latest stories from a people and culture that feel like a second home – a great reminder that stories are never just things of the past but are equally being made in the present and will be retold in the future. Having enjoyed hearing so many stories from others, I ask myself, 'I wonder what stories my life is telling here and now, and what stories I would like to live on after me?'

Stoke Lodge Goes to The High Court



The defence of our Village Green reached the High Court in January - a five-day hearing in which three witnesses for Cotham School and five local residents gave evidence about different aspects of the Stoke Lodge saga.

At the time of writing, an important part of the case is still to come: closing submissions by the three barristers, who will focus on the legal questions involved. The Judge has said it will be at least a couple of months before he hands down his decision.

Away from the courtroom, signs of spring are emerging once again on the Village Green. It is just wonderful to see the

playing fields filled with hundreds of young footballers at the weekends, and to see the trees budding with new life again. We want to thank everyone who has supported us over the years in the long battle to preserve this precious open space for use by all of us, as it has been for generations and should be for generations to come.

Photo: Bruce Quilter



Demolition of the Scout Hut in Stoke Bishop is about to commence.

BUT we still need your support...

Please visit
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A New Tree For The Churchyard

As mentioned in a previous issue of The Messenger a small sapling of a holm oak had been planted to replace the redwood which fronted the road and which had to be cut down. After some discussion about the suitability of a holm oak in that constricted situation by the churchyard wall within a conservation area, it was decided that the best course of action was to replace the holm oak and choose a tree which would be ecologically more suitable.

Eileen Stonebridge kindly offered to donate a tree in memory of her husband, Brian. After further discussion it was decided to choose a crab apple. *Malus Rudolph* was selected as it has good colour, with red leaves and rose-pink flowers in the spring. The summer foliage is green, turning to yellow in the autumn when there are edible reddish-yellow fruits, which the birds love.

The tree was delivered at the end of October and planted near the boundary wall near the public footpath and close to the vicarage wall. We hope it will give pleasure to passers-by and food and shelter for the birds.

Our thanks to the office staff and fellow gardeners who gave advice over the planting.

Sue Hook

Award-Winning Stoke Bishop C of E Primary School

by Heather Whittard-Jones

For the last two years, children at Stoke Bishop Primary School have been learning how to 'live well with dementia'.

Working alongside Sally Townsend from the Alzheimer's Society, children have taken part in Dementia Friends sessions to learn more about dementia and how to help someone living with dementia. Year 5 and 6 children have been involved in a 'lived experience'; we have been lucky enough to welcome into school John and Sue, both living with dementia. John and Sue's approach of openness, love and hope enabled them to relate easily to the children and build long-lasting connections. The freedom to ask whatever questions they want has deepened the children's understanding of what it is like to live with dementia and corrected misconceptions about the disease. It has been a joy to watch the children take the lead, coming up with ideas to involve our guests and gifts to give them, inviting them to our end of year performance and our Volunteers Tea Party. John and Sue are now VIP's in our school!



The presentation of the Barbara Award to Stoke Bishop Primary School by Radio Bristol's Joe Sims.

Involvement with the Alzheimer's Society has led the children to engage in a range of activities to help bridge generation gaps and spread awareness of dementia, building relationships and learning from each other in the process. They visit several local care homes taking part in activities like making bird feeders and decorating biscuits, attend a monthly 'Singing for the Brain' session at St Monica's care home and have visited a number of other local groups to sing or 'just sit and have a chat'. These activities have been transformational for our children, building their confidence and sense of advocacy for themselves and our school, and helping them to understand that no matter what our age, we all have things in common.

In September, the school gained the Barbara Award for its work in dementia awareness. This award, set up by Tony Hall, the founder of the Dementia Action Alliance (BDAA), honours his wife who lived with dementia for over 20 years. The award ceremony was hosted by BBC Radio Bristol's Joe Sims, after which we were invited to speak on the radio.

As well as tangible change and development in the understanding of dementia amongst both children and staff at school, it is the emotional bonds that have had a profound impact. The book that John has written about our school, the painting of a dinosaur that Sue made for a child, the poems that have been written, now on display, show how something that began with a chance meeting now has an energy of its own.

Together We Discover Tomorrow.....

*Today was a day I will never forget
At Stoke Bishop School some new friends I have met
The smiling faces, the laughter and song
All sprinkled with questions, not one of them wrong*

*We talked of dementia and all that it means
We chatted for ages, or so it did seem
You asked me about all my days and routines
My favourite food and my best travelling dreams*

*I played a short tune that I learnt since the day
That the angel said dementia was coming my way
Now I'm never afraid or never so scared
Because you are the friends that listened and shared*

*You were polite and so kind and all were remarkable
You showed me that believing in me is still possible
Although in my head there are parts that aren't
whole*

*The kindness you showed healed my heart and my
soul*

*So thank you children for your kindness to me
You gave me the most fabulous new memory
And not just today but for all days that follow
You helped me discover a brand new tomorrow*

John 'Pops' Hyde June 2024

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Mr B, client's son

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BRISTOL 1904 ARTS
 Paintings Exhibition (2025)

Sixty-One

Sixty-one is one of St Mary's Mission Partners. We are grateful to them for this article explaining their work and its impact on the lives of ex-prisoners.

Bristol-based charity **Sixty-One** supports people with a criminal conviction to lead meaningful crime-free lives. Sixty-One does this by inspiring, enabling and empowering the local community to provide the relational and practical support people need in, and on leaving, prison through mentoring, hubs, prisoner gift projects and partnerships.

All of Sixty-One's programmes help people to reach their goals, re-discover hope, re-connect with community and become all that they were meant to be.

"With a re-offending/recall rate of just 2.6%, Sixty-One has the expertise and community connections to help people sustain a life away from crime." – Governor at HMP Bristol



A member of the sixty-one team and volunteers at a Celebration Event

MentorMe is Sixty-One's biggest project, a 'through the gate' mentoring programme for men and women in Bristol who have a criminal conviction, a desire for change and goals that they want to achieve.

Mentees are carefully matched with a MentorMe trained volunteer from a local Christian church. They continue to meet regularly in the community to set and work towards the mentee's goals, by providing personal support, accountability and guidance.

Mentor training courses are run by the MentorMe team three times a year, with an emphasis on educating and equipping the church in Bristol to respond to the needs of those in their community with a criminal conviction.

"Meeting weekly [with my mentor] reassures me that I have value and worth." – A mentee

Sixty-One's partner Church Hubs provide community-based meeting places for people with a criminal conviction. Hubs are welcoming spaces for attendees to meet, learn, grow and share food or a hot drink, places where people can find acceptance and belonging.

Sixty-One partners with five spaces in Bristol as hosts to this work, providing extensive training and set-up guidance, referrals, risk-management advice, signposting and ongoing support to ensure teams are equipped to support the men and women who attend.

"Thank you for seeing me, thank you for your help and more, thank you for your time, and thank you for being my friend. But most of all, thank you for not giving up on me." – An individual supported by Sixty-One

Christmas and Easter Gift Projects, a bag of thoughtful gifts for every serving prisoner at our four local prisons. Our prisoner gift projects convey a message of hope and value to each recipient at times when self-harm and suicide rates are high. Every year, with funding and logistical support from local churches and the community, Sixty-One packs and distributes over 1,800 gift bags.

"Thank you so very much for the wonderful gifts and beautiful card that I received. This will be my first Christmas [in prison] and it is wonderful to know that people are thinking of me and my fellow inmates." – Letter from a serving prisoner

Sixty-One's Partner Projects include a **Constructive Masculinity Course**, **Goal Setting Workshop** and **Bee-Keeping course** run at HMP Bristol, and an **MBA Empowerment Course** offered free of charge to people with a criminal conviction in the community, taking the key principles taught on an MBA Course and compiling them into a 6-week programme.

Whether it's pairing a mentor and a mentee, partnering with churches through awareness raising, hubs, gift projects and missional support, or linking arms with individuals and organisations to rehabilitate people in and outside of prison it's partnership that underpins all that we do.

For more information about any of Sixty-One's projects or training courses, contact details are as follows:

0117 403 7905
www.sixty-one.org
info@sixty-one.org

St Mary's Bells

In the past, church bells were used to broadcast key messages. This included reminding people to go to church, declaring weddings, and announcing deaths. This tradition is continued to this day at many churches across England, including St Mary's in Stoke Bishop.

In May 2023 a band of six ringers climbed the spire at St Mary's to ring a special performance called a quarter peal to proclaim the coronation of King Charles III, something which should normally take about 45 minutes to complete.

It started well, but after ten minutes there was a loud crash from the bell chamber above us and the number four bell stopped. A quick inspection found that a gudgeon connecting the quarter-ton bell to the frame had broken causing the bell to fall from the frame: It came to rest just above the bell chamber floor. The bell was made safe the following day but remained unringable pending specialist repairs.



After 18 months of hard work to find a suitable bell hanger, raise the funds needed, and gain the necessary approvals from the relevant bodies, the number four bell was finally rehung on a new headstock and new bearings just before Christmas.

With all six bells now hanging again, the local band of ringers have resumed their twice - monthly practices between 7:30pm and 9pm on the second and fourth Thursday of the month.

They will also continue the tradition of special ringing to announce and celebrate both local and national events, including a very belated proclamation of the coronation of King Charles III!

**By Simon Tomlinson
Ringing Master**



time of the funeral, and ongoing for those who want it. We also regularly run a course called the Bereavement Journey which helps people understand and process their grief.

"When we lost our son unexpectedly in 2022, Rev Jema Ball was able to take his funeral. We were too distressed to read at the service so Jema literally did everything for us, and it was a lovely service that we shall never forget, not just because of how important it was to us, but because it was so beautifully executed.

"Later, Jema suggested we try a course: The Bereavement Journey. To be honest we were slightly sceptical as our faith was somewhat depleted, but we decided to go. We were welcomed into a small friendly group and it was wonderful to be able to share our feelings and listen to others. We found the course a great support and would highly recommend it."

Julie and Steve, Residents of Stoke Bishop.

To find out more about funerals at St Mary's visit stmarysb.org.uk

All of the major world religions have rituals associated with honouring and remembering people who have died. Since the birth of Christianity funerals have taken place, though their form and style have changed over the centuries.

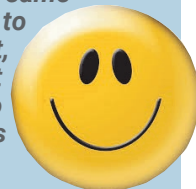
Conducting funerals and caring for people who have been bereaved continues to be one of the core ministries that the Church of England offers, and the ministers who take funerals at St Mary's consider it to be a huge privilege.

Around 25 funerals per year are held at St Mary's or led by one of the ministers but held at a crematorium or burial ground. Bereaved families receive personalised support and care around the



St Mary's Church Rooms Project Update

After two frustrating years trying to sell a property owned by the church, the sale completed in January, and at the same time we submitted revised plans to Bristol Planning Department, following adjustments that needed to be made in order to ensure that the project costs were within budget.



We hope the plans will be soon given the green light by both the Council and by Bristol Diocese (who also have to approve works done to churches and their associated buildings) and then we will be ready to seek revised tenders and formally appoint the contractor. It is possible that the works may be able to commence in the summer of this year.

If you're the praying sort, please keep it up!

Donations towards the cost of the project are warmly welcomed. Ideally, please donate via BACS and use the reference **CHURCHROOMS**. Otherwise cheques may be made payable to St Mary Magdalene PCC and sent to the Church Office.

St Mary Magdalene Church (Business a/c)
Acc No: 92604889 Sort Code: 60-23-23

Even if, like me, you've never seen an iceberg in real life, you will be aware that the vast majority of its mass sits below the water line. They vary greatly in size and shape, a small one would be just 15m long, but in 1956 an iceberg was spotted in the South Pacific which was larger than Belgium!

I've been reflecting on icebergs recently because at St Mary's we have designated 2025 as a *Year of Going Deeper with God*, using the iceberg as our focal image. We often talk about things going on 'below the surface' of our lives. Most of our thoughts, emotions and desires exist out of view, tucked away in our minds and hearts.

The same is also true when it comes to faith. There will be outward signs that a person is a Christian – they will probably go to church regularly and talk about their faith openly – but these outward things are usually founded on an inner relationship with God. The most inspiring Christians that I know have a rich interior life, which enables God's wisdom, love and strength to bubble up from within, and become evident outwardly to all they encounter.

When asked about prayer, Jesus said: *When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.* Matt 6:6. In recent years the discipline of solitude has become more socially acceptable, but for Christians, time alone is not about mind-emptying, but rather it's a refocussing of our gaze on God, and being still for long enough to become aware of His loving gaze towards us.

Across the centuries, wise people of faith have discovered that the best way, perhaps the only way, to truly flourish is to seek a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. Our souls thrive when they are rooted in the love of God, and when all we are and all we do flows from this place.

If you sense a longing for a deeper, richer interior life, I think this is a sign that God is at work, nudging you gently towards His love. Whoever you are, whatever your life looks like, you will be made welcome at St Mary's, on Sundays or during the week, and we would love to walk with you as you come to encounter God in new ways.

Jema



Revd Jema Ball
Vicar of St Mary's

From the CHURCH REGISTERS

November 2024 - January 2025

Baptisms

3 November 2024

Grace Eleanor Coupland

22 December 2024

Florencio Sebastian Gomez-Cuetara

Funerals

12 December 2024

Hilary Phillips

19 December 2024

Ruth Campion

24 January 2025

Hylton Dawson

Make an Easter Mobile

With Sarah Harris

We decided to make a mobile with things to remind us of Easter.

We used mobile wires (cheaply available on the internet), wooden coffee stirrers and our own pictures carefully cut out.

We used glue stick to stick the front and back of the pictures together and a dab of UHU to fix the threads in place.

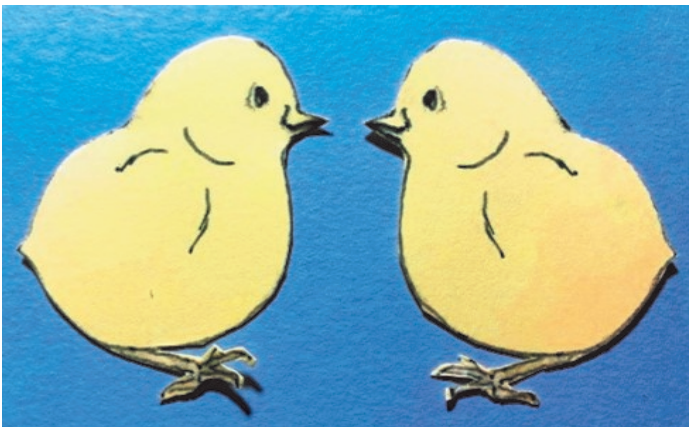
There will be some packs at the back of the church with wires and shapes to cut out for those who would like them.

The Cross, to remind us of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection: we made this from coffee stirrers, cut with scissors and glued with UHU. We tied a thread around the join for extra strength.

Easter eggs, baby animals and spring flowers, as reminders of rebirth. All of these need to be made with a front and back – mirror images of each other so they look the same as they turn hanging from the mobile.

Make the Chick

Practise drawing a chick, (or trace ours) then draw it on yellow card and cut it out. Turn the chick over and draw round it to get the mirror image. Cut it out.



Now paste the backs with a glue stick. Before sticking them together cut a long piece of thread and position it on the head (you need to experiment a bit to find the balancing point so your chick hangs straight.) Use a bit of UHU to fix the thread in place.

Stick little yellow feathers on both sides for a tail. (You can also find these at the back of the church.)

Make the Rabbit

Practise drawing the rabbit. Then draw it on grey card and cut it out. Turn it over just as with the chick to make a mirror image.



Prepare to stick the rabbits together, positioning the thread carefully and adding a bit of cotton wool for the tail before sticking the two sides together.

Make the Easter Eggs

Practise to get a good egg shape and make pairs of eggs. Ours are about 5cm long.

Cover one side of each egg with coloured foil, or colour it in. Sandwich the eggs in pairs with a thread glued into position inside.

Make the Flowers

These can be tricky to cut out, so if you draw your own, use a simple shape and again make mirror images. Colour them in, cut them out and sandwich together as before.

Now it's time to assemble the mobile.

Use a short and a long rod and lay everything out on a table so you can judge the lengths of the threads.

Hang the cross from the middle of the lower wire first and then flowers on either side.

Then hang the rabbit, chick and eggs from the upper wire.

Use a long thread from the middle of each wire and work on the balance by sliding the pictures along a tiny bit this way and that. When you are happy, a dab of UHU will help keep the threads in place on the wires.

Finally, hang the lower wire from the upper one.

Have fun!



Lent and Easter Services

Palm Sunday: 13 April

9 am: Palm Sunday Holy Communion
10.30 am: Morning Worship for Everyone. *A special All-Age Palm Sunday themed service.*
7pm: Contemporary Evening Prayer. *A short reflective service with modern songs and traditional prayers.*

Holy Week: 14, 15, 16 April

7 pm: Reflective services based around the events of Jesus' final week, including times of music and silence.

Maundy Thursday: 17 April

7 pm: A service of Holy Communion reflecting on the events of the night before Jesus died.

Good Friday: 18 April

10.30 am: An accessible, creative presentation of the events of Good Friday, including songs and hymns.
2pm: 'An hour at the cross' – *a time of reflection on the sacrifice of Jesus, including hymns and prayer.*

Easter Eve: 19 April

7 pm: Easter Eve Worship. *Contemporary worship and prayer around the theme of Easter.*

Year 6 Easter Sunday: 20 April

6 am: A dawn service including a simple celebration of Communion, starting outside the church around a small fire!

9 am and 10:30 am: Easter Day Communion Services. *An opportunity to worship God and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.*

Ash Wednesday: 5 March

7 pm: Ash Wednesday Communion Service, with ashing.
7 pm for refreshments, 7.30 pm service begins.

Confirmation Sunday: 16 March

10 am: Morning Prayer. *A said service which includes a sermon, but no hymns.*
4 pm: Service of Confirmation led by Rt Revd Neil Warwick, Bishop of Swindon

Mothering Sunday: 30 March

9 am: Holy Communion. *At both morning services posies of flowers will be given to all the women who attend.*
10.30am: Morning Worship with SHINEonSundays
7 pm: Contemporary Evening Prayer. *A short reflective service with modern songs and traditional prayers.*

Easter Gardens: 6 April

4 pm: All welcome at Explore@4 as we create Easter Gardens and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Lent Course 2025

Live from Rest: Going deeper into the life-giving refreshment of God.



Join the ASMA (Avonside Mission Area) family to worship, reflect and spend time in God's presence. Topics will include Sabbath, Solitude, Simplicity and Christian meditation.

7pm refreshments for 7.30pm start, ending by 9pm.

5th March - Ash Wednesday service, St Mary's Stoke Bishop.
 12th March – St Edyth's, Sea Mills
 19th March – St Peter's, Lawrence Weston
 26th March – St Mary's Shirehampton
 2nd April – St Andrew's, Avonmouth
 9th April – St Mary's, Stoke Bishop.

Jesus said: Come to me...and I will give you rest...Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29

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Simon of Cyrene helps to carry Christ's cross



Christ stumbles under the weight of the cross



Breaking bread in memory of Christ's passion

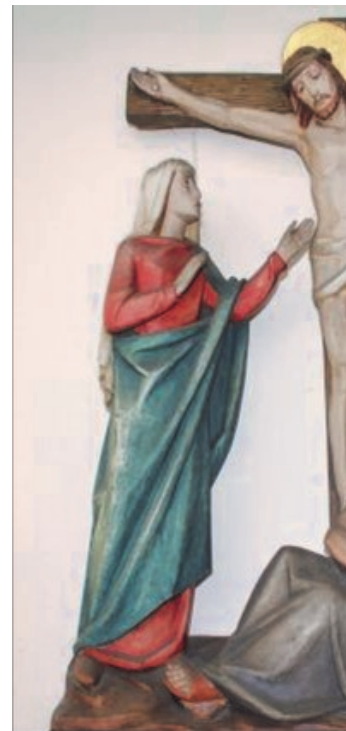
Stations of the Cross—

By Pete

If like me you enjoy looking around old or unusual churches in this country or abroad, you may have come across on your wanderings a series of related paintings or sculptures or figures around the walls, sometimes numbered in sequence, which together tell a story. The story forms the climax of the Gospels, sometimes called Christ's Passion. Usually they are found in the nave or the largest part of a church and they have an interesting history. This sequence of figures is more common in Catholic churches and is known as The Stations of the Cross.

The origin of these images goes back to the early Christian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem who naturally wanted to retrace on the ground the actual path taken by Christ to His death by crucifixion. The route is still known today in the city of Jerusalem as the Via Dolorosa or "Route of Sorrows". Pilgrims would trace the path going from the house of Pontius Pilate to Calvary, pausing for reflection and prayer at various points and linking these points with events in the biblical narrative. Later the Franciscan order of monks, who became the protectors of holy places in Jerusalem, put up images of the events for pilgrims to see and stop at the right places on their journey. Thus, the Stations of the Cross came into being.

Not everyone can or wants to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, so over time pilgrims brought back to their home country the tradition of walking the route and praying at stops along the way but doing so inside their church. This evolved into a series of usually 14 images in numbered order along a path, following which people walk, individually or in procession, stopping at each station to say prayers and engage in reflection. Typical stations were small plaques with reliefs or paintings in the nave of a church. Community celebrations were at times accompanied by songs and prayers.



The Crucifixion with a woman for Christ's

Contrasting Depictions

Four Weeks

Illustrations of the Stations of the Cross in wood, stone, paint and other materials began to appear in churches in the 1600s, more frequently in parts of Europe than in this country, although they can be found in a few pre-Reformation English churches. Perhaps early examples here were lost during or after the Civil War when so much church decoration was damaged or destroyed by the Puritans.

Interestingly I could find no definitive list of the Stations. Most churches seem to have 14, but some have 15 and they show different events. To see a good local example of the Stations of the Cross, have a look at the series decorating the walls in the soaring interior of the modern Clifton Cathedral in Pembroke Road, by William Mitchell (1925-2020). Three are pictured on the opposite page.

To make these images, 14 large low-relief panels were cast and moulded in a cement and fibreglass mix and put in place after the completion of the building. Mitchell had just one and a half hours to complete each panel before the mixture set. Seeing them now, they appear an integral part of the cast concrete wall; certainly a dramatic and compelling series of images, although some I could not confidently link with specific events during Christ's journey to his execution. Go and take a look yourself!



A soldier casting lots for Christ's garment

In complete contrast to the austere panels in Clifton Cathedral, on this page are three of the colourful icons painted in 1993 by Sister Barbara Anne of the Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage, which draw upon the riches of the Eastern Orthodox spiritual tradition. You can find them in the church of St John the Evangelist, Jedburgh, a Scottish Episcopal church just north of the border.

Different again, The church of the Holy Nativity in Knowle has a complete set of sculptures, see left. You can see them all on their website...but sadly, there is no indication of who the sculptor was.



The Last Supper



Christ prays in the Garden of Gethsemane



The resurrection

ASMA Pop-Up Events

For people who are not used to going to church, it could be off-putting, or even intimidating, to simply turn up to a service on a Sunday. Many churches offer different activities through the week and at weekends to help make church more accessible, and to give people opportunities to explore faith in safe spaces.

One of the churches in the Avonside Mission Area (ASMA) offers a series of 'pop-up' events through the year, which have been well-attended by people from the wider community. These events have helped adults and children encounter Christianity in novel, personal and transformative ways, breaking down the barriers that a church may inadvertently create.

'Pop-up' is a phrase used in a variety of contexts to describe something that people aren't given much notice about, and which might not take very much organising. St Mary's Shirehampton uses social media to advertise their pop-ups and surprising numbers of people have come along to enjoy the free food and activities. These events are building on the community spirit which already exists within the village, and helping members of the church to connect with people that they might not otherwise have met.

As one example, the church family hosted 'In The Woods' last year, a stall that handed out free bacon butties, and welcomed conversation with anybody and everybody. This year, they are planning a 'Global Feast', a bring-and-share picnic, where people from different cultures will be encouraged to bring food which is special for them. Such events can be a small step in a person's faith journey, and perhaps someone who attends will one day say "everything started when I bumped into a small pop-up event..."

Most of the events involve food because it's a great way of drawing people in, and it helps people to connect and chat through the shared activity of eating together. This is very biblical; Jesus ate meals with so many people that some of his opponents accused Him of being 'a glutton and a drunkard!' (Matthew 11:19)

So, if you encounter a pop-up event within the ASMA mission area this year, join it with curiosity and interest, and enjoy the opportunity to discover something about the most important man in history: Jesus Christ.

Tristan Hagger

If The Mountain Seems Too Big...

If the mountain seems too big today, then climb a hill instead.
If the morning brings you sadness, it's O.K. to stay in bed.

If the day ahead seems heavy and your plans seem like a curse,
There's no shame in re-arranging – don't make yourself feel worse.

If a shower stings like needles, and a bath feels like you'll drown,
You haven't washed your hair for days – don't throw away your crown!

A day is not a lifetime. A rest is not defeat.
Don't think of it as failure, Just a quiet, kind retreat.

It's OK to take a moment from an anxious, fractured mind.
The world will not stop turning while you get re-aligned.

The mountain will still be there when you want to try again –
you can climb it in your own time. Just love yourself til then.

*For the Bible says God loves you and understands your pain,
And Jesus is beside you to help you live again.
His Spirit is your comfort, his voice will be your guide,
And soon you will discover he never left your side.*

*Written by Laura Ding-Edwards, of @beckyhemsleypoetry
With an extra verse by Anni Davey at the end.*

@St Mary's



Saturday 5 April, 7.30 pm
Bristol Chamber Orchestra
Programme to include

Vivaldi Recorder Concerto with
 Soloist James Brookmyre
 Bach, Air on a G String
 Corelli, Mozart, Borodin and Suk

Tickets are on the BCO website at £12
<https://bristolchamberorchestra.org.uk>
 (£15 on the night)

*

Saturday 10 May, 7.30 pm
Tessitura Opera
Madame Butterfly

Performed in English

Cio-Cio-San, a young Japanese geisha, marries an American naval officer who abandons her but later returns with his American wife to claim the son he fathered with Cio-Cio-San...with disastrous consequences.

Tickets from the website:
www.tessitura.co.uk

Bristol Cabot Choir

Will perform

Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle

At Bristol Cathedral

On Saturday 22 March

Visit our website: www.bristolcabotchoir.org



If you would like to contribute to the production costs of *The Messenger*, or to the work of St Mary's, please use this QR code.

We are grateful for all donations.

Community Diary
Spring 2025

Friends of Old Sneed Park Nature Reserve

Saturdays 15 March, 12 April, 10 May, 10 am - noon:
Working parties.

Thanks to all who support these sessions. Please bring gloves and tools. Hot drinks and biscuits provided. To comply with current regulations, please register in advance by email.

www.oldsneedparknaturereserve.org

To register for a working party, join the Friends, or contact the committee, email fospnr@gmail.com

Stoke Bishop and Sneyd Park
Local History Group

Fri 21 March: Brunel in a changing world - how his inventions affected society and the economy, by Iain McGregor.

Friday 16 May: Maid of the Haystack - an 18th C young Somerset woman, by Martin Powell.

All talks in Village Hall at 7.30 pm.
 Visitors welcome £3. Membership £6 pa.

For enquiries, please email
sblocalhistory@gmail.com,
 or phone 0117 9686010

University Botanic Garden

From March 10 am to 4.30 pm.

'Friends', children, students, staff, alumni free. Adults £9. Wed is DAISY day (donate as it suits you).

See website for up-to-date information
www.bristol.ac.uk/botanic-garden

Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project

Sat 1 Mar: Goat Discovery Walk, 10 - 11.45 am £10

Sat 5 April: Scramble in Botanical Jewels -
 Discovery Walk, 10 am - noon £10

For full details of events and courses, and booking arrangements visit

<https://avongorge.org.uk/whatson>
 phone 0117 428 5600 or

email avongorgewildlife@bzsociety.org.uk

Stoke Bishop and Sea Mills Ward Forum

Public meeting with Local Councillors tba.
 Everyone welcome.

To receive notice if meeting, join the mailing list: email
stokebishopforum@aol.com

Stoke Bishop Townswomen's Guild

1st Thursday of each month 2.15 pm
 Hulbert Room, St Mary's Church Rooms

Friendly tea, chat and social outings.

For details, contact Sheila 914 7159
 or Angela 968 6473

Cubbaccino's

There will be no Cubbaccinos until further notice due to building work.



Worshipping together

Jema Ball writes...

It's Sunday, it's 4pm and we're ready to begin. Around 20 adults and 20 children have gathered in St Mary's church. Initially we sit in cosy rows facing the front; one of the service leaders welcomes everyone and reminds us what we are here to do.

"At Explore@4 we HEAR, PRAY, EXPLORE, SHARE and REFLECT". This model of intergenerational discipleship has served us well since Explore@4 began in 2020.



Together we HEAR about something from the Bible – a story or an aspect of the Christian faith – and often this is presented in a way that encourages active participation.



We worship together through singing, movement, flag waving and instruments, and then we PRAY that God will be with us as we move into the next part of our service.



Gathering now around tables at the back of the church, we begin to EXPLORE. During this time, members of the team offer round drinks and biscuits. There are Bibles on the tables, aimed at a variety of reading abilities, and questions are provided to prompt our conversations.

Simple resources are available to encourage creativity, based around the theme for the service, but the emphasis during the EXPLORE time is on intergenerational conversation – a chance for adults and children to learn and grow together, to share ideas about what it looks like in practice to follow Jesus. The service leaders help keep the discussion flowing and are happy to respond to specific questions that people may have.



We then have a short time where we SHARE what we have been discussing, so that we can all hear what has been happening on the different tables. Sometimes people share the creative things that they have been working on – with adults proudly doing this as much as the children!



Carrying the Ark of the Covenant across the River Jordan



This brings us to the final part of the service, when we return to the front of the church and sit in a circle on the platform to REFLECT.



Often this happens through some form of creative prayer activity, and usually we have another time of worship. Sometimes we share Communion together. Even the littlest participants have learnt that this is a moment of 'holy hush' and there have been some really special times of prayer and connection.



Time to reflect



Explore time

gifts, which is another aspect of how we seek to raise up the younger generations and help them feel valued within the church family.

Around Christmas and Easter we have special Explore@4 services where the church is full and people get a little taste of what to expect on a regular basis. Anyone is welcome at Explore@4 - you don't have to have children with you in order to come. All you need is an open mind and a willingness to engage intergenerationally. Why not give it a try?

For a list of forthcoming service dates, visit stmarysb.org.uk

Telling the story of Peter escaping from prison

It's Sunday, it's 5pm, and everyone is going home. We've packed a lot into an hour; the different phases of the service help those with shorter attention spans, but don't be fooled into thinking this is a children's service.

We've tackled some challenging bits of the Bible over the years, including the book of Revelation, an overview of the whole of God's Big Story, and some of the Parables of Jesus which are trickier to understand.

Explore@4 has also become a place where teenagers within the church can serve and use their





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Holidays and Tourism—The Other Side of the Coin

By Eileen Stonebridge

We all love going on holiday whether it is exploring new places or revisiting well-loved haunts. The demand for holidays has grown over the last few decades. Statistics from ABTA show that there has been a 68% rise in numbers of UK citizens taking holidays since 1990. In 2024 84% of the population took a holiday with a trend for shorter, more frequent trips. On average, families with children under five took 6.49 holidays per year and the 25-34 age group followed with an average of 6.43. But do we always count the environmental costs?

Tourism brings many benefits to a place, especially where there is little other economic activity, however, last summer we heard an outcry from residents of Mallorca with a photograph of the words "Tourist: your luxury trip: my daily misery" painted on a rock. There are costs to tourism which are not met by either the tourists or those who serve them. These costs have been identified in a report for Friends of the Lake District published in December 2024. "Who Pays for the Lake District?"

Many of the costs are environmental, for example CO2 emissions are one huge impact. In the Lake District, visitors' cars emitted over one and a half times more than that generated by the residents. Demand for water also rises with tourists. In the Isles of Scilly and in Venice numbers are strictly limited due to water availability. Even in the Lake District with its high rainfall, there are problems in meeting the needs of tourists in addition to the commitment to supply local needs and those of more distant places such as Manchester. Simply by adding numbers to the resident population, waste disposal also brings problems, not only for council collections but in the amount of litter dumped.

Advertising



Algal bloom in a lake

The problems associated with sewage have been well publicised when sewage is released into water courses at times when the system cannot cope with the extra load. Research has shown that there could be as many as 320,000 extra people around Windermere in a single day. Sewage adds phosphates which cause algae to expand their population rapidly, thus using up oxygen, which deprives the fish and other water-dwellers, causing them to die.

The sheer number of visitors has a physical impact on the landscape. Footpath erosion is well documented. Narrow paths once used only by shepherds have become great walking highways. Almost 250,000 people climbed Scafell Pike in 2022. Once the surface becomes broken the rainwater follows this route and deep gullies form which are costly to repair. Too much traffic on narrow lanes causes congestion and difficulty in passing with the consequence that verges are broken and walls knocked down.

These are just a few of the physical problems caused by large numbers of visitors. There are many social problems too: communities no longer viable because there are not enough residents, shortage of affordable housing for local people and many other impacts on infrastructure.

Many countries have some form of visitor tax which is ring-fenced to support the local authorities in tourist areas helping to pay for the extra costs incurred by tourism. In the UK only Edinburgh has such a tax, though Wales is planning to introduce one in 2027. Surveys in tourist areas in England suggest residents would welcome such a tax and certainly there is a need for more thought to be given to how tourism can be made more sustainable. A starting point might be for everyone to consider their carbon footprint before embarking on a holiday.

Helping Hand

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W-o-T Primary Care Ctr 962 3406

NHS Direct - 111

For Dentists, Opticians and other medical services: www.nhs.uk

Chemists

Buxton & Grant 973 5025
(Blackboy Hill)

Jhoots Pharmacy 962 3415
(Westbury-on-Trym)

Westbury Pharmacy 962 8986
(Stoke Lane)

North View Pharmacy 973 3140

Well Pharmacy 968 1272
(Sea Mills Surgery, 2 Riverleaze)

Hospitals

BRI 923 0000

St Michael's 921 5414

Children's Hospital 927 6998

Southmead 950 5050

Spire 980 4000

Chesterfield/Nuffield 911 6919

AGE AND CARER SERVICES

Age UK 922 5353

Care Direct 922 2700
adult social care

We Care 0300 323 0700
help for over 60s and young disabled
www.wecr.org.uk

Carers Support Centre 965 2200
free advice and training
www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk

Dementia Wellbeing Service 9045151
www.bristoldementiawellbeing.org.uk

Action for the Blind 934 1719
Advice on support

Holidays for Carers: 0800 999 3365
www.carersholidays.org.uk

Growing Support 07419 825261
<http://growingupport.co.uk/get-involved>

Bristol After Stroke 964 7657
Support for those recovering from Stroke
www.bristolafterstroke.org.uk

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Church Office 962 9990

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Head Teacher: Mrs L Wright

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Henleaze 903 8541

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At Home Library Service

for people who have difficulty visiting their local library. 07714 898 558

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Orpheus Henleaze 0300 124 0275
<http://bristol.scottcinemas.co.uk>

Vue Cribbs Causeway 0345 308 4620
w.myvue.com

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11/11A to Southmead Hospital via stops in Coombe Dingle/Canford and Westbury village.

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<http://www.travelwest.info/parkandride>

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darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk

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London SW1A 0AA

Bristol City Council
www.bristol-city.gov.uk

Switchboard 922 2000
(inc. refuse, streets, litter etc.)
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John Goulandris 922 2227
Henry Michallat 922 2227

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Report your loss at
www.reportmyloss.com

Power Cut Call Line
Phone 105 to check for or report a local area problem.

Save money on phone calls:
For alternatives to 0844 etc
go to www.saynoto0870.com

Helping Hand

is compiled by Paul Lewis-Smith.
If you have changes, additions or updates to suggest please contact him on 968 4221 or e-mail: plewissmith@blueyonder.co.uk

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Bristol Airport 0871 334 4444
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Cover picture:
Magnolia tree in Kewstoke Road
Photo by Keith Sheather

