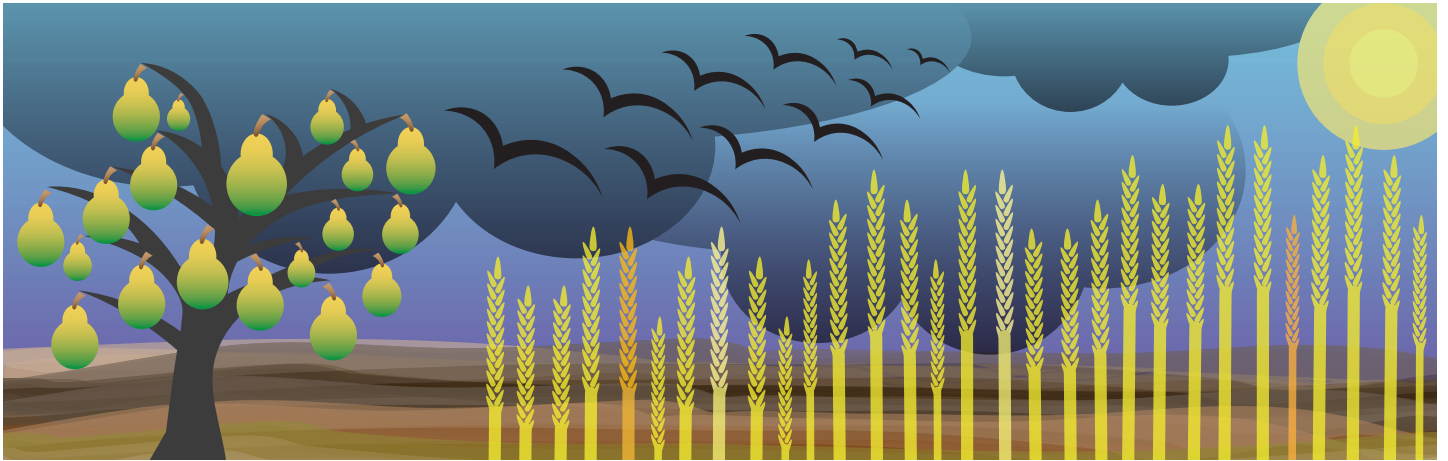




Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Shepton Montague Wyke Champflower Bratton Seymour



September 2026

For those of us who have ever attended school, which I am guessing is all of us, September marked the start of a new academic year. It was a time of freshness: a new class, perhaps some

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new items of uniform or games kit, maybe a new pencil case or school bag. As well as actual newness, there was a figurative sharpening of pencils too, as we started the new school year (hopefully!) with renewed vigour and the best of intentions and aspirations.

For the Church, our new year – the beginning of the annual cycle – is Advent Sunday. That is our time of sharpened pencils, if you like. But we rarely think of Advent in this way. We usually celebrate Advent as a time of preparation for the feast of Christ's nativity, and of course it is that as well. But I think it is important for us, individually but even more so collectively as Church, somehow and somewhere to create and inhabit a time of freshness and renewal comparable to the start of a new school year. If we do not, we risk becoming both tired and stale as the cycle repeats, year after year.

Personally, I try to open up the possibility of a time of freshness by making a retreat – taking some time out and away, spending more time in prayer, doing much less talking and minimal thinking. I find this very helpful. It is not necessary to go away to go on retreat, but it is necessary to make some space, to lay aside our normal routines, to take time to listen (which is what prayer is) and to see what changes in us as a result.

Wonderful though it would be, it would be difficult to co-ordinate a time of retreat like this at a collective level across our benefice. But we could all do it individually.



If you have something to contribute to a future edition of this newsletter, please send it to the Rector at the benefice office address.

Easy-to-follow details of how to receive this newsletter by email can be found on the St Mary's website (www.stmarysbruton.org), or email benefice@stmarysbruton.org. If you are aware of someone who might like to receive it but does not use email, please consider printing a copy yourself and delivering it to them.

News from our Parishes

Wyke Champflower

We had a baptism at Holy Trinity, Wyke Champflower, on 23 August. We do not have many baptisms there, so this was a very special occasion. We are also due to have a baptism at St Peter's, Redlynch, on 5 September – again a chapel that does not see many baptisms, so another very special moment.

Holy Trinity has recently received a quinquennial report following an earlier inspection by the architect. The church is generally in good order, though inevitably there are some minor works required.

Brewham

The repair work has begun on the roof of St John Baptist, following the lead theft in July and hopefully this will be completed before the rain returns. The roof repair at St Mary's, following the earlier lead theft there, is awaiting the grant of a licence to do some investigative work before a decision can be taken about how best to repair that roof.

On the afternoon of Saturday 18 July residents of Brewham enjoyed a Cream Tea and glass of Pimms in the Village Hall. The event raised £320 which was split between the Church and Village Hall.



Bratton Seymour

Bratton Seymour PCC is sizing up the project for repair of the nave and chancel ceiling, with associated fundraising. This is going to be a major piece of work.

Pastoral Visitor Training

We are awaiting dates for a training course, which will hopefully be during September, for anyone interested in training to become a pastoral visitor. If you might be interested, please contact June Sykes soon (via the benefice office if you don't know her contact details).



Benefice Council

The Benefice Council will meet on 2 September and one of the topics for discussion will be how we address the challenge of paying Benefice Share in full as the amount required of us continues to increase significantly. This raises some very difficult questions for us as a benefice, because the amount of giving from members of our congregation is so far below what is needed to cover our costs.

Our data relating to giving is imperfect and not all our giving is monetary: some people give in other ways. Recognising this and doing the best we can with the data we have, the contribution required from members of our congregations just in order to pay Benefice Share (which you will remember covers the cost of the Rector, a contribution to central Diocesan costs and a contribution to a support fund for parishes in areas of social deprivation) currently comes out at around £760 per person per year (or £63 per month).

A few members of our congregations give far more than this, but most give far less – many only making a donation if and when they attend church, which is often less than weekly. In addition, most members of our congregations do not regularly increase the amount of their regular giving, even as their income increases. So, as inflation continues, the value of their giving decreases over time. And of course this cost, the £760 per year, is only what is

needed to pay Benefice Share. In addition to that, we have all the costs of insuring, heating and maintaining our buildings, which are also substantial. At present, we are largely unable to devote funds to other aspects of Christian ministry and mission because all our money is used up trying to meet these basic costs.

In past years, we and many other rural churches have been subsidised by the larger and more generous churches in the Diocese, who have contributed far more than we ever have. But that subsidy has now ended and we are expected to 'pay our way'.

The Benefice Council will have to start to confront the questions that will arise if we continue not to pay our way.

Bellringers of Bruton News



Eclipse Watch

We had a very nice bunch of 12 guests who enjoyed themselves and chatting to each other. It felt very much like a social occasion. It was great to be able to get a few more people engaged with what we're doing!

Small Town, Big Tower – Heritage Open Days 19 September

Explore the West Tower of St. Mary's, Bruton – a living landmark for over 600 years. Marvel at the ancient bells, the 160-year-old clock, and the spectacular view from the top. 10am–5pm.

www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/tower-tour-st-marys-bruton.html

St Mary's Bears



A few years ago, Valerie Norton and Judy Gallannaugh started a lovely thing at St Mary's. This is the offering of small knitted teddy bears to visitors, as a reminder of their visit to the church. They were both industrious and generous in their provision of little bears, which have always been in hot demand. As many readers of this newsletter will know, Valerie died in early 2025 and since that time, Judy has kept the project going, with some help from another recruit. We are

expecting Judy to hang up her needles when she and Roger move home this autumn.

So we would like to take a moment to acknowledge this pleasure-giving act of charity that both Valerie and Judy have inspired and faithfully continued and to thank them for it. The little bears have brought joy to many people.

We would very much like to try to continue the project after Judy has moved away, and Mary Aston has kindly agreed to be the contact point for anyone who can knit and is willing to make some bears from time to time.

St Martin in the Fields Autumn Lectures

St Martin in the Fields are once again offering a series of lectures throughout the autumn. These are available online (as well as in person in London) at a cost of £10 per lecture. This year there is an impressive range of speakers covering a wide range of subjects. Full details at www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/lectures/



St Martin in the Fields 300 YEARS

In partnership with
CHURCH TIMES

Autumn Lecture Series 2026

Here I Stand

At the Heart, On the Edge

ANGNES CALLAMARD Tuesday 1 September	SAM WELLS Monday 19 October
SAYEEDA WARSI Monday 7 September	WILLIAM ASLET Monday 26 November
ROWAN WILLIAMS Monday 14 September	THANT MYINT-U Monday 2 November
AKIKO HART Monday 21 September	MICHAEL MORPURGO Monday 9 November
FINTAN O'TOOLE Monday 28 October	JANINE DI GIOVANNI Monday 16 November
JANINA RAMIREZ Monday 5 October	MICHAEL HESELTINE Monday 23 November
DAVID CRYSTAL Monday 12 October	

All lectures 7.00pm - 8.30pm
www.smitf.org/lectures • 020 7766 1100

Redlynch Chapel

St Peter's, Redlynch, are holding a Harvest Service at 6pm on Sunday 27 September. You are invited to join us to celebrate Harvest. We are hoping also to raise funds to keep St Peter's open, so after the service there will be an auction of an original watercolour of the chapel by Stewart Walton, alongside other seasonal lots. Nibbles and beverages will be provided, or bring your own bottle!

We have been told that the Somerset Geology group have been inspecting all of the Churches in Somerset and recording the stone that was used in their construction. We're trying to find out the result of their inspection so far because it relates to the seven churches in the benefice, and we're wondering if the stone for Redlynch Chapel was quarried locally.

Kimberley Snapshot

Meeting with people who think the same

The photo overleaf shows St Mary's Cathedral, Broome, also called Our Lady of Peace although I just knew it as St Mary's. It's had an extension since the original building was built, which is great as it shows the church is growing! When I first went to the Kimberley in 1976 the only towns which had church buildings

were older towns that had been established in the 19th century, and most, if not all, were very small Catholic Churches. If there was no church building, the local churchgoers either met in homes or, if there was a community hall of some sort, they met there.



There were very few priests or vicars to service that huge area, and in the early days (if you were lucky) you saw a priest maybe twice a year! As the communities grew, those who were Christians initially met together in each other's homes, and within their own denomination, but in the seventies a rebellion of sorts took place: the different denominations started to support each other. When any of them had a visiting Reverend they would *all* meet in the local church building or community hall. When there was no Reverend they would meet together to

discuss the Gospel Readings of that particular Sunday, There was no person nominated to lead, just a gathering of people eager for the Word of God.

I must say the fellowship was amazing at Christmas for instance: we all met at midnight on Christmas Eve and heard Luke's account, and then met again the next morning to hear Matthew's account and to sing Carols. I loved it!

When we left the Kimberley I must admit that I had a very hard time. I missed that joy-filled fellowship of the Word, and I found it very hard to settle into the rules and regulations of a 'normal' church.

It's different now – all the towns have grown in size and there are individual churches, but I do hope, and indeed pray, that the joy of spreading the Word has not gone.

Prayer Ministry: September

Harvest Prayers

Romans 28;38-39 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Prayers for guidance when facing challenges

O Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we humbly pray thee so to guide and govern us by thy Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget thee, but remember that we are ever walking in thy sight, for thine own name's sake.

Dear Lord I know each day has its challenges, but this one may well have more than its share. Give me the courage to do what is right when I will have to absorb some personal cost. Remind me that I don't have to control other people in order to serve you faithfully and with joy. Be with me in all the challenges today brings and deepen my faith in you. Amen.

Just a note for everyone: these prayers were compiled and written by Julia Clothier not long before Julia went to glory in the Lord. We treasure them, and the memory of Julia.



There is a prayer meeting every **Wednesday** morning in **St Mary's Church, Bruton**, at **8.30am** when some of us meet to pray for our community. Anyone is welcome to join us. If you have any specific requests for prayer, please give them to the Rector and he will pass them on to us.



Caring for God's Acre

Bats have been found in churchyards for a very long time, often roosting in trees or buildings. A bat roost may be nearly as old as the building, with around 60% of pre-16th century churches containing bat roosts. There are seventeen species of bat native to the UK: eight of these use churches or chapels for roosting, including some of the less common species such as the Natterer's bat and the Serotine bat. Some of the remaining nine species roost in large trees.



Bats do not roost in the belfry – too much noise! They usually use different roosts through the seasons. Bats need nursery roosts for the young, winter roosts to hibernate, and also temporary roosts to digest their food and to sleep in during the daytime.



Brown long-eared bat, Wetherden Church. Photo: © Chris Damant

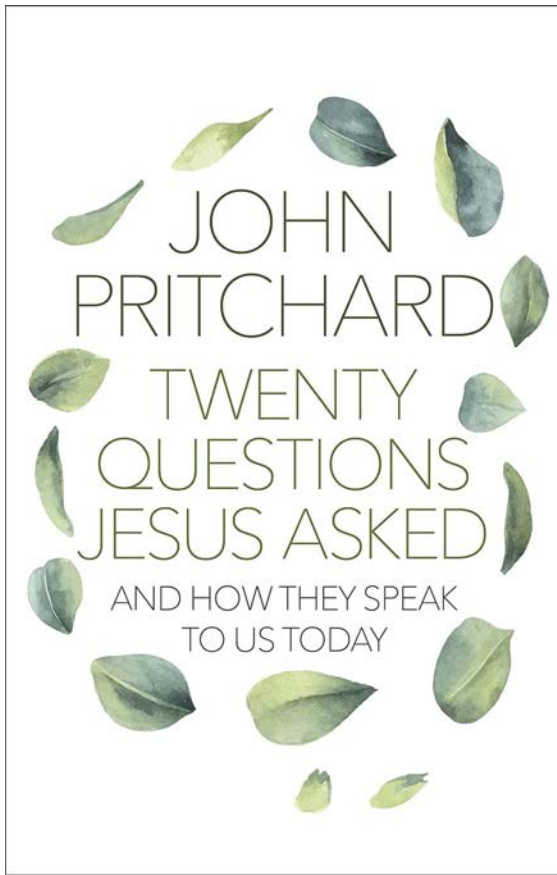
They like to roost in clean, draught free, quiet crevices where the temperature is constant. Within churches or chapels bats are found in the eaves, porch, under roof tiles, in old timber joints, behind ceilings, hangings and commemorative plaques. They also roost within chest tombs, in holes or cracks within a wall, behind ivy or in lychgates. When roosting in trees they use holes, crevices, flaking bark and gaps behind ivy. Veteran trees are full of possible roosting places.

Churchyards tend to have a mixture of large trees, grassland, flowers, areas of long or tussocky grass, compost heaps, log piles and stonework. They are generally relatively free of chemicals, tend to have some areas which are not too tidy and may have been there a long time. All of this leads to a good population of insects which is food for the hungry bats.

Why not have a quiet sit in the churchyard at the end of the day, look to see if any swifts are swirling around the churchyard and then wait to see if any bats appear. Bats can fly long distances to forage for food so even if you don't have roosting bats in your churchyard they may well come visiting.

The Bats in Churches project ran from 2019 to the end of October 2023 and their website, batsinchurches.org.uk, still holds a plethora of information and resources. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the partnership comprised Natural England, Church of England (Cathedral and Church Buildings Division), Historic England, Bat Conservation Trust and Churches Conservation Trust.

Benefice Discussion Group



A new series of meetings of the benefice discussion group will begin this month. We will be reading together *Twenty Questions Jesus Asked* by John Pritchard (SPCK, 2022). It will be necessary to bring a copy of the book to the meetings, but no prior reading is required.

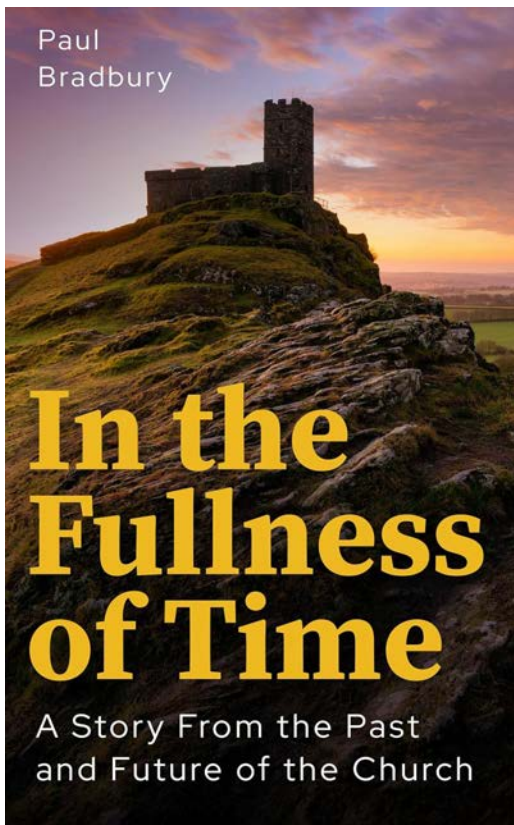
Katie Mills has kindly offered to host the meetings at her home at Marksdanes. We will meet on Mondays, with both an afternoon

meeting at 3pm and an evening meeting at 6pm, so come at whichever time suits you best. It would help to have an idea of numbers, so please confirm your attendance (if you can) to the benefice office. The first meetings will be on Monday 14 September and we will continue weekly throughout September and October.

benefice@stmarysbruton.org

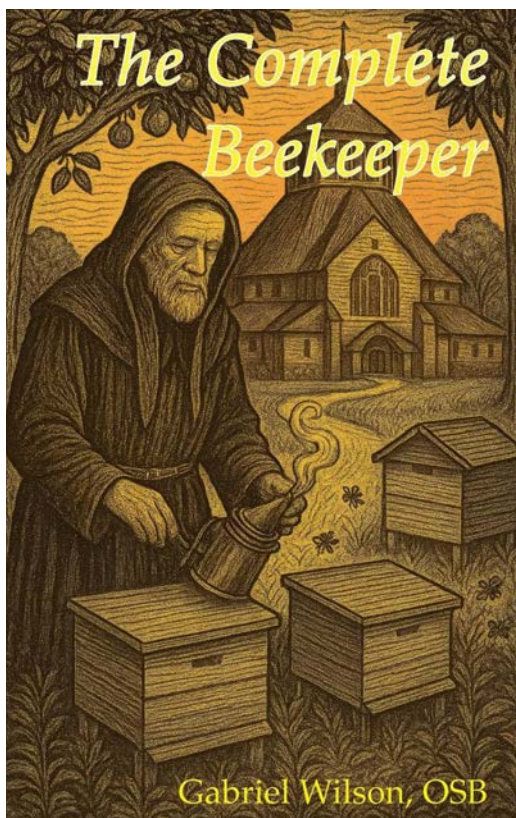


Book Reviews



***In the Fullness of Time* by Paul Bradbury (Canterbury Press, 2024)**

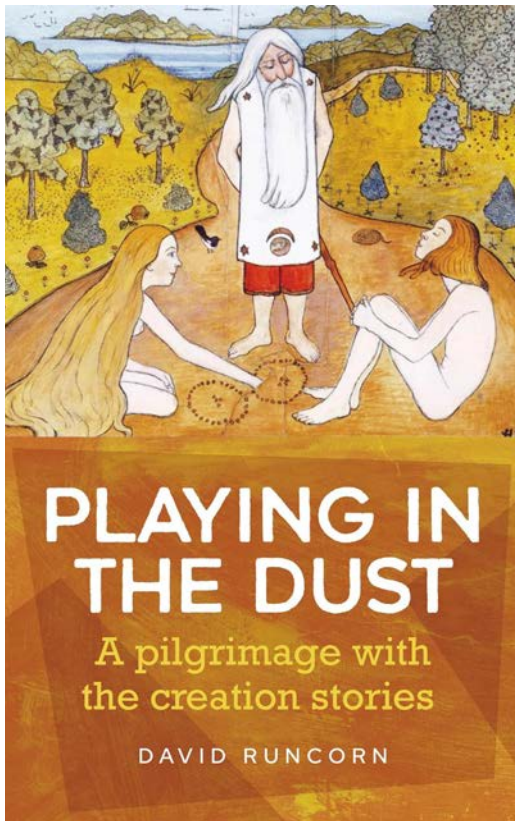
This is a book for anyone who has an interest in the future of the rural Church. Through case studies of English rural churches, the author presents the tension that many of us feel between the value and strength of our inherited tradition and the changing needs and ways of life of modern society. This is thought-provoking stuff for all of us in this benefice, especially those who are anxiously searching for a renewed vision for our shared ministry.



***The Complete Beekeeper* by Gabriel Wilson OSB (Gracewing, 2026)**

This is a delightful read. It is a slow and meditative reflection on life, using the life of honey bees as a route into contemplation of the patterns, rhythms and values of creation and humanity's place within it. This is a book to be savoured and a source for much prayer.

Book Reviews



***Playing in the Dust* by David Runcorn (Canterbury Press, 2024)**

What is the meaning of the creation narratives in Genesis for modern Christians? Assuming that we no longer understand these texts to be a literal account of how the material world came to be as it is, what is left for us here?

The author takes us on an engaging and conversational adventure through

these familiar stories, exploring some key aspects of human identity and offering fresh insights and connections with the old, old story.



EVENTS AT ST MARY'S



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Community Harvest Barn Dance!

Sat 19 Sept, Bruton Club

Hog roast, quiz and raffle at 6pm, and then
dancing into the evening!

Tickets £15 from Bruton Club, Bruton
Convenience Store, or scan the QR below:



www.stmarysbruton.org



Community Harvest Barn Dance!

We are hosting a community harvest barn dance on Saturday 19 September, from 6pm, in the Bruton Club!

We've put on many fetes and suppers over the years, but a couple of years ago we held a proper barn dance and it turned out to be a wonderfully fun evening, with food, merriment, and dancing to the sounds of folk band Teasing the Cat. The following year we had a harvest quiz instead – also an evening of great fun! This year, we're having a **combine harvester** (sorry): a quiz, a raffle, a supper, AND dancing (not all at the same time of course), and we once again welcome Teasing the Cat to call and play.

The Benefice of Bruton (which is the parishes of Bruton, Pitcombe, Redlynch, Brewham, Shepton Montague, Wyke Champflower, and Bratton Seymour) invites you to a community 'combine harvester' barn dance – not a fundraiser, but a *funraiser*, where we can meet together alongside representatives of the parish churches; of the rural communities which they support and which support them; of all the people (young, old, dancers, non-dancers, and anyone of any profession); to simply have a lovely evening away from everything else!

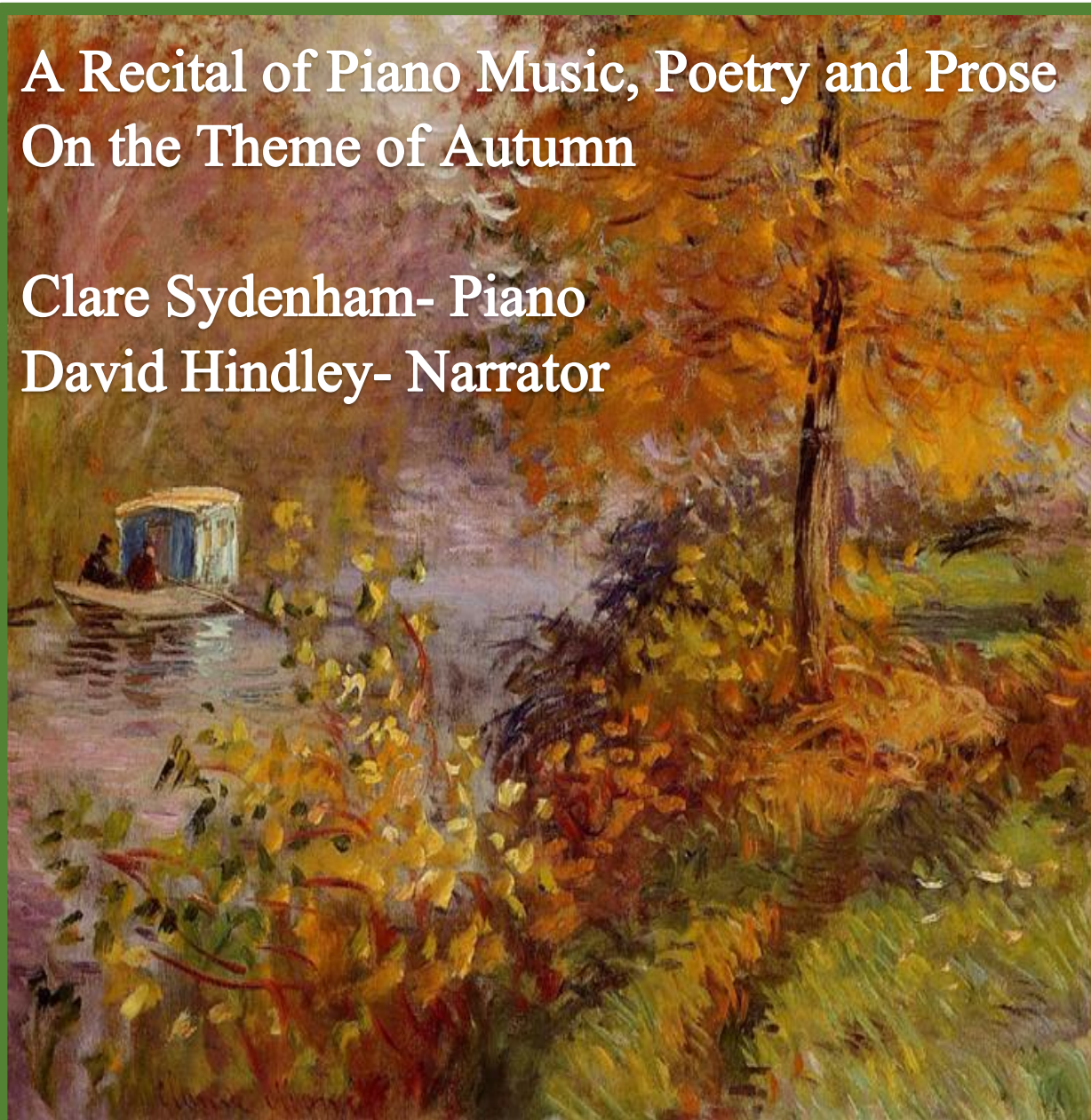
Tickets can be found in the following places:

- www.stmarysbruton.org/events
- Bruton Convenience Store (limited paper tickets for those who find online / QR codes a bit daunting)
- www.zeffy.com/en-GB/ticketing/community-harvest-barn-dance

‘Now Moves the Leaf-Starred Year’

A Recital of Piano Music, Poetry and Prose
On the Theme of Autumn

Clare Sydenham- Piano
David Hindley- Narrator



Sunday September 20th 2026 3pm

St. Mary's Church, Bruton BA10 0EB

Advance Tickets £12 online, on door £15/under 18 free

<https://www.ticketsource.com/clare-sydenham/t-ejlonor> or clare.sydpiano@gmail.com



A photograph of Steve Knightley playing a guitar in a church. The church has a high, vaulted ceiling with intricate wooden carvings and a large organ in the background. The lighting is warm and focused on the performer.

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Benefice Services September

Season Ordinary Time (Green)	Sunday 6 September Trinity 18 (Proper 22)	Sunday 13 September Trinity 19 (Proper 23)
St John the Baptist, Brewham	9.30am Eucharist (CW)	
St Mary's, Bruton	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am Patronal Festival Eucharist	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am Eucharist (CW1)
St Leonard's, Pitcombe	11am Holy Communion (BCP)	9.30am Matins (BCP)
St Peter's, Redlynch		
St Peter's, Shepton Montague		6pm Evening Prayer
Holy Trinity, Wyke		
St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour		

Benefice Services September

Season Ordinary Time (Green)	Sunday 20 September St Luke (Proper 24)	Sunday 27 September Last after Trinity (Proper 25)
St John the Baptist, Brewham	9.30am Morning Prayer	
St Mary's, Bruton	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am Harvest Festival	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 9am Breakfast Service 11am Eucharist (CW1)
St Leonard's, Pitcombe	11am Holy Communion (BCP)	6pm Evensong (BCP)
St Peter's, Redlynch		6pm Harvest Festival
St Peter's, Shepton Montague		9.30am Eucharist (CW1)
Holy Trinity, Wyke		
St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour	9.30am Holy Communion	

Diary Dates

September

- 2 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm
- 3 . Roman Catholic Mass, St Mary's, 10am
- 6 . St Mary's Patronal Festival, 11am
- 7 . Brewham PCC, Haven Farm, 7pm
- 9 . Bruton PCC, Plox Office, 5.30pm
- 10 . **EVENT:** Shepton Film Night, St Peter's, 7pm
- 14 . Discussion Group, 3 or 6pm, email benefice@stmarysbruton.org
- 16 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm
- 19 . **EVENT:** St Mary's Coffee Morning, 10am, Community Hall
- 19 . **EVENT:** St Mary's Harvest Barn Dance, 6pm
- 19 . Heritage Open Day St Mary's Tower Tours, 10am–5pm
- 20 . St Mary's Harvest Festival Service (11am) and lunch
- 20 . **EVENT:** Piano & Poetry Recital, St Mary's, 3pm
- 21 . Discussion Group, 3 or 6pm, email benefice@stmarysbruton.org
- 22 . Shepton PCC, Village Hall, 6pm
- 25 . **EVENT:** Steve Knightley, St Mary's, 7.30pm
- 26 . St Mary's Annual Litter Pick, 10am, Plox Car Park
- 27 . St Peter's, Redlynch, Harvest Festival Service, 6pm
- 28 . Discussion Group, 3 or 6pm, email benefice@stmarysbruton.org
- 30 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm

Contact

Rev'd Jonathan Evans, Rector

2 Plox Green, Bruton, BA10 0EY

Tel: 01749 812775

email: rector@stmarysbruton.org

Benefice Office

Tel: 01749 813080

email: benefice@stmarysbruton.org





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