



Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Shepton Montague Wyke Champflower Bratton Seymour



October 2026

I was idly reading a book review recently, only half concentrating on the text while thinking about other things, but was snapped out of my reverie by a single sentence: 'clergy might be

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valuable because they are useless'. The adjective 'useless' is not often used in a positive sense; it tends to be used to denigrate rather than commend. Yet here uselessness was being identified as an indicator of value, which piqued my interest, especially as it applied directly to my chosen way of life.

The statement that clergy are useless reminded me of another one-liner that someone close to me once used of my daily labours as a parish priest: 'it's not really work though, is it?' Ouch! It certainly doesn't feel like play, or holiday, I thought silently and sulkily in response. But that person made a good point: the usual metrics for work don't really apply to parish ministry; there are no KPIs, no sensible measures of productivity – indeed there is no 'product' at all; earnings and hours are irrelevant; there is no progression or promotion. So I guess they were right: it is not really 'work'.

But is it also useless? I think it probably is, in the same way that friendship or, as Oscar Wilde famously wrote, art is also essentially useless. Which is to say that it does not function instrumentally to produce a specified outcome. We don't love our friends because they are useful and we don't appreciate the beauty of art because it achieves any particular result.

So if there might be value notwithstanding the uselessness, where is this value, in what does consist? I have ordered the book that was the subject of the review and hope that it might give some hints at an answer. But I wonder whether part of the answer might have something to do with encounter. Our lives are enriched not by usefulness or productivity but by moments of encounter – when we

feel touched (or heard, or seen) by someone or something beyond ourselves. At its most rich and intense, this encounter is with a reality that is transcendent, divine. Perhaps the purpose of all Christian ministry (not just the part played by clergy) is to point towards, even to facilitate and share in, such moments of encounter. There would certainly be value in that.



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.

All Souls

We will hold a service on the feast of All Souls (2 November) – a time for remembering those who have died. This is a quiet and reflective service with the reading of names of those who have died recently and the opportunity to place a lighted candle to remember them as the names are read.



News from our Parishes

St Nicholas

Bratton Seymour village are holding an open meeting on Friday 23 October, 6pm, St Nicholas' Church. The meeting is entitled 'Church or No Church'.

St Nicholas' church funds are running out and there are major repairs needed as suggested by the Quinquennial Survey. We are having a meeting to allow everyone to air their feelings and ideas.

Any suggestions regarding how to increase our finances, future running of the church, and offers of help or support with caring for the churchyard and church would be greatly appreciated.

We want to try and prevent our church falling by the wayside and eventually becoming derelict.

Community Harvest Barn Dance

This was a great evening with something for everyone. Many thanks to Nick Chambers for writing a fun, well-balanced quiz – our team certainly had a laugh trying to remember the year that Brookside was first aired (we got it wrong)! Thanks to Emma and Karen for organising the kitchen, helping extensively with the food, and then tidying up afterwards – anyone who has done that knows that the washing up alone is no mean feat, so thank you again. Teasing the Cat provided us with wonderful folk music and their caller had us whirling, side-stepping and promenading as we

danced away into the later evening, and the Bruton Club kept a hospitable bar as we kept up a steady stream of customers! All in all it was a lovely event, and we hope to do it again. *Sarah*



Brewham Quiz Night!

Brewham Village Hall, Wednesday 4 November, 7pm (doors at 6.30).

Tickets are £10 (cash only) to include a light supper (bring your own drinks). Teams of up to six people welcome!

To reserve your team's place please contact Caroline Rathbone on 07539 676807, carolinerathbone@btinternet.com.

All proceeds will be going to St John's, Brewham.



Pastoral Visitor Training

We now have a training course organised to run over six weeks from 10am–12noon on Tuesday mornings from 12 January–16 February 2027 inclusive. It will take place at Evercreech Village Hall, BA4 6JP. There will be a small charge of £14 per participant to cover the cost of hiring the hall, etc.

If you are interested in taking part and have not previously expressed an interest, please contact June Sykes (june@sykesj.co.uk). Those who have already been in touch with me, or the Rector, should have received details of how to book a place. If you haven't, please also contact me. Likewise, if you would just like to know more details, do get in touch.

Confirmation

If anyone is interested in the possibility of confirmation, please do get in touch soon. There is a confirmation service at Wells Cathedral on 7 November and we have at least one candidate from the benefice. Perhaps you have not been confirmed and would like to be? Perhaps you don't know what confirmation is? Perhaps you would just like the chance to explore the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith, even if you are not considering confirmation. If so, please do get in touch (contact on back page).

Donations to St Mary's

If you are a regular financial donor to St Mary's, then first of all: *thank you*.

If you currently make your donations in cash as opposed to standing order (and you are an income-tax payer), then this is an appeal to you either to switch to a standing order payment or to use the envelope scheme (if you do not already do so).

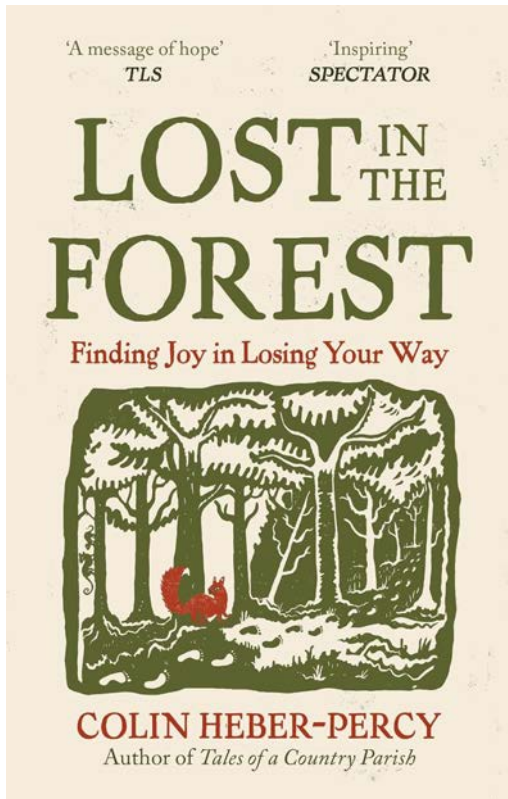
We want to be able to claim as much Gift Aid on donations as we can – remember Gift Aid increases the value of a donation by 25% at no cost to the donor.

However, there is an annual limit on the Gift Aid we can claim on cash donations where the identity of the donor is not known. At St Mary's, we risk exceeding that limit and therefore losing money.

What we need is for as many people as possible who give in cash to do so using an envelope with their name on (by using one of the yellow envelopes and filling in the details) or by using the numbered envelopes (please ask Lorna, our treasurer, for details). The amount of Gift Aid we can claim on 'named' donations is not limited.

So if you give cash and it is not traceable to you, this uses up some of our annual Gift Aid allowance for 'unnamed' gifts. We want to get as many donations as we can outside that annual allowance so that we don't lose out on Gift Aid. So please consider switching to either standing order or named/numbered envelopes. Thank you!

Book Review



Colin Heber-Percy is a parish priest in Wiltshire. He has written a beautifully meandering reflection on the themes of belonging and being lost, all based on his walks and wanderings in Savernake Forest.

He is pursued by a bear, who wants to know the answer to the question, “who are you?”

It is a good question for all of us.

Bellringers of Bruton



The September Heritage Open Days, on which visitors were allowed in to see normally hidden parts of our culture, saw St Mary's opening the West Tower to run tower tours. A steady stream of visitors climbed the spiral staircase, had a chance to chime our bells, hear the history of our clock which will be celebrating its 160th

anniversary this year, visit Bell No. 4 which is now 498 years old, and then drink in the views from the roof! Thank you to everyone who came and visited.



Friends of St Mary's

There's a place we can go to
in our search
the heart of our community
St. Mary's Church

Events of all sorts
come sing a song
check out the website below
then come along

WELCOME FOLK!

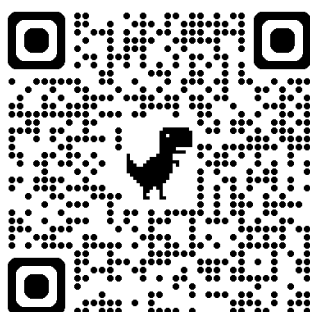
Please take a pew
we're here for everyone
and just for you

The Book, chapter and verse
we can read

To find answers
in our time of need

The joy of birth and marriage
or the solace of death
a place we rely on
to reflect and confess.

David Freestone



The next FoSM event...

A talk by Elspeth Beard

We will be hosting a talk by Elspeth Beard who, as well as being an architect, rode around the world on her BMW R60/6 motorcycle when she was 23.

Come and hear her story At
The Chapel, Thursday 22
October, 6.30 for 7pm.



Elspeth Beard

Motorcyclist and award-winning architect

In 1982, aged twenty-three, she left London alone on a 40,000-mile journey around the world on her 1974 BMW R60/6 without sponsorship, support, email, phones or satnavs

Come and hear her story ...

At The Chapel

6.30pm for 7.00pm

Thursday 22nd October

Tickets £10

by QR Code or on the door



All proceeds for Friends of St. Mary's

Kimberley Snapshot

Awgella! Awgella!

The photo is of the campsite on Lombadina. I had many an interesting moment when I went down into the community to find someone either for welfare check or just to say hello.

Once whilst I was there I heard a voice scream ‘Duck Missus!’—which I did—and a quick *swish swish swish* sound passed right by my head. For some reason, known only to the young boys themselves, they were having a boomerang throwing contest, and these things can be *lethal*. Phew!

This does however bring up a very funny incident that had happened on Mowanjum Community. We had been having problems with



children getting into the workshop at night and causing havoc. So, after a discussion with the Elders, it was decided to use one of their own traditional stories to stop them.

They had a story about a '*being*' who appeared only when a child was being naughty – this was a bad spirit who would punish them, called *Awgella* or *Debil-debil*. Since the workshop had a pit over which there was an endless chain used for lifting engines out of vehicles, it was decided that my husband John would attach some fishing line to the chain and that he would sit in the pit until the children came into the workshop after dark, and the two Elders (Bunjuck and Jangoot), who were the law keepers, would be nearby.

Duly the kids came into the workshop where John was waiting. When he felt they were near him and pulled the fishing line which moved the chain and frightened the ***** out of them, screaming 'Awgella! Awgella!' We never had a problem in the workshop again, and Bunjuck and Jangoot dutifully followed up with the kids' parents.



Prayer Ministry: September

Psalm 18 verse 6 says:

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

This month's prayer is a prayer in times of sickness that you may like to use to pray for someone you know, or for yourself.

Lord, teach me the art of patience whilst I am well and give me the use of it when I am sick. In that day either lighten my burden or strengthen my back. Make me, who so often in my health have discovered my weakness presuming on my own strength, to be strong in my sickness when I solely rely on thy assistance. Amen



There is a prayer meeting every Wednesday morning in St Mary's Church, Bruton, 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.

Prayer moves the arm that moves the world.

Charles Spurgeon

benefice@stmarysbruton.org



Caring for God's Acre

Tu-wit-tu-woo!

The Tawny Owl is probably our most familiar owl – children grow up learning that tawny owls say 'tu-wit-tu-woo' although this is not the call of one bird. The familiar call is a duet between the female who starts with the harsh 'kee-vik', which is then followed by the male with the deeper 'woo-hoooo'.



At this time of year you may hear a lot of owl calls as the young are noisily driven from their natal territory by their parents. Each existing territory they pass through will elicit much calling, shrieking and hooting. This is a dangerous time for the young owls, and many will die, driven from hunting grounds by resident



Tawny Owl

birds before they reach their first year. Once they do find a suitable territory, which is likely to be only a few kilometres from their place of birth, they may remain in it all year round for the rest of their lives, making them one of our most sedentary birds.

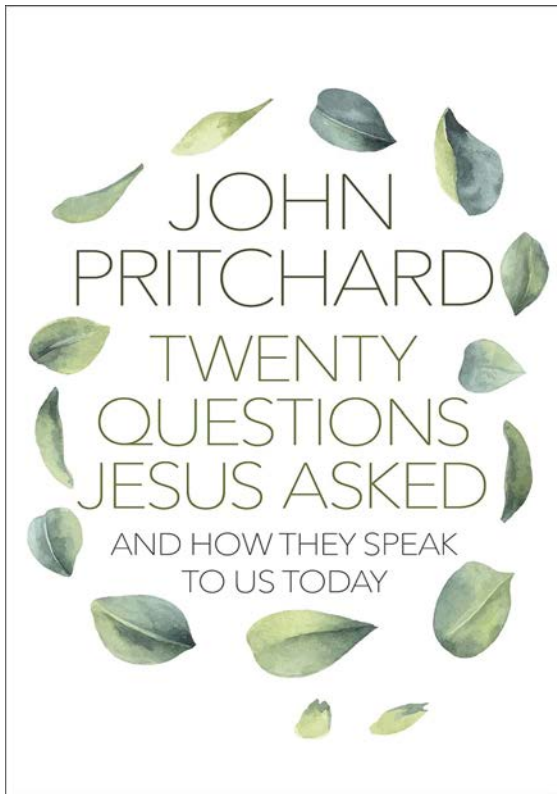
Tawny Owls are a bird of woodland, choosing to nest within chimney-like holes within large trees. As with many woodland species, churchyards can be good places for them, containing a range of habitats full of food as well as trees for nesting. We think of tawny owls as eating mice and voles, but they have quite a varied diet depending on what is available. They may eat small birds, rabbits, beetles, frogs, and worms too.

Tawny owls do well in owl nest boxes, and churchyards can be good places for these. If you're putting one up, keep it well away from paths as owls can attack people walking too near their nests. The best place for one is within a tree that has lots of ivy or branches because when the young are preparing to leave the nest they start 'branching' (which is climbing up and down the trunk using ivy and branches as footholds), sitting in neighbouring trees, and generally starting to explore. During this time the parent birds are still feeding them, and a young owl found on the ground is probably not in trouble and shouldn't be picked up in case a nearby parent attacks.

So, listen out for the Tawny Owls and think of the two birds duetting each other. Please let us know if you have owls within your churchyard, and if not, how about putting up a nest box in a large tree?



Benefice Discussion Group



The discussion group will continue during October. We are reading and discussing *Twenty Questions Jesus Asked* by John Pritchard. We meet on Mondays at 3pm or 6pm. All are welcome and it does not matter if you miss some sessions. Please get in touch if you would like to join us.

benefice@stmarysbruton.org

Coffee and Chat

There is a regular meeting for company and conversation taking place at the Chapel, Bruton, on the second Wednesday of each month (so this month it will be 14 October), 9.30am. This is for anyone and everyone from across the benefice.



EVENTS AT ST MARY'S



**Join
our
mailing
list**



SHEPTON MONTAGUE PCC

in association with

SOMERSET MOVIOLA

proudly presents



THE CHRISTOPHERS

2025/100 minutes/15

in St Peter's Church, Shepton Montague

Thursday 8th October at 7.30pm

Doors open 7.00pm for drinks & snacks

Tickets: £7.00 (£3.50 for under 15)

pay on the door with card

or at the bar with cash

All proceeds go to St Peter's Church

For more information please contact Sarah Maude 01749 812 149

Visit our website at: www.moviola.org



Charity No 1107649



Elspeth Beard

Motorcyclist and award-winning architect

In 1982, aged twenty-three, she left London alone on a 35,000-mile journey around the world on her 1974 BMW R60/6 without sponsorship, support, email, phones or satnavs

Come and hear her story ...

At The Chapel

6.30pm for 7.00pm

Thursday 22nd October

Tickets £10

by QR Code or on the door



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Paula Carnell

Paula shares how bees have transformed her life. 'Spiritual Beekeeping' published in 2025, is the story of her personal spiritual journey and the Bee Project she set up on the remote Cocos Keeling islands whilst spending a year living with the Cocos Malay community.

At The Chapel

6.30pm for 7.00pm

Tuesday 10th November

Tickets £10

by QR Code or on the door



All proceeds to Friends of St. Mary's

CABARET VOLTAIRE

Cultural events: mostly music, but sometimes poetry and other things



PENGUIN CAFE PERFORMS MUSIC FROM THE PENGUIN CAFE ORCHESTRA LIVE

Penguin Cafe, Saturday 14 November, 8pm, St Mary's Church

Marking 50 years since the release of *Music from the Penguin Cafe*! The current show 'Penguin Cafe performs Music from the Penguin Cafe Orchestra' pays homage to the original PCO music featuring performances of classic compositions that have been captivating listeners for decades. Audiences can expect to hear beloved works like *Music from a Found Harmonium* and *Perpetuum Mobile* delivered with the ensemble's signature warmth and inventiveness. This tour not only celebrates the enduring legacy of the Penguin Cafe Orchestra but also showcases the continued evolution of their sound under Arthur Jeffes direction.

TICKETS

<https://cabaretvoltairerevents.com/event/penguin-cafe-performs-music-from-the-penguin-cafe-orchestra-live-bruton/>

Benefice Services October

Season Ordinary Time (Green)	Sunday 4 October Trinity 18 (Proper 22)	Sunday 11 October Trinity 19 (Proper 23)
St John the Baptist, Brewham	9.30am Eucharist (CW)	
St Mary's, Bruton	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am Sung Eucharist	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am Eucharist (CW1)
St Leonard's, Pitcombe	11am Harvest Festival	9.30am Matins (BCP)
St Peter's, Redlynch		
St Peter's, Shepton Montague		6pm Harvest Festival
Holy Trinity, Wyke		
St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour	4.30pm Harvest Festival	

Benefice Services October

Season Ord Time (Green) St Luke (Red)	Sunday 18 October St Luke (Proper 24)	Sunday 25 October Last after Trinity (Proper 25)
St John the Baptist, Brewham	11am Harvest Festival	
St Mary's, Bruton	8am Holy Communion (BCP) 11am All Age Worship	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		
St Peter's, Shepton Montague		9.30am Eucharist (CW1)
Holy Trinity, Wyke	6.30pm Harvest Festival	
St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour		

Diary Dates

October

- 1 . Roman Catholic Mass, St Mary's, 10am
- 4 . St Leonard's, Pitcombe, Harvest Festival, 11am
- 4 . St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour, Harvest Festival, 4.30pm
- 5 . Benefice Discussion Group, 3 & 6pm, Marksdanes
- 8 . **EVENT:** Shepton Film Night, St Peter's, 7pm
- 11 . St Peter's, Shepton Montague, Harvest Festival, 6pm
- 12 . Benefice Discussion Group, 3 & 6pm, Marksdanes
- 14 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm
- 18 . St John's, Brewham, Harvest Festival, 11am
- 18 . Holy Trinity, Wyke Champflower, Harvest Festival, 6.30pm
- 19 . Benefice Discussion Group, 3 & 6pm, Marksdanes
- 23 . Bratton Seymour Open Meeting, St Nicholas' Church, 6pm
- 25 . Daylight Saving Time ends (clocks go back!)
- 26 . Benefice Discussion Group, 3 & 6pm, Marksdanes
- 27 . Planned power outage, Pitcombe and Redlynch
- 28 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm

November

- 1 . St Leonard's, Pitcombe, Patronal Festival, 4pm
- 2 . All Souls, St Mary's, Bruton, 6pm
- 4 . Brewham Quiz Night, Village Hall, 7pm
- 8 . Remembrance Sunday
- 11 . St Mary's Male Voice Choir rehearsal, 6pm
- 12 . **EVENT:** Shepton Film Night, St Peter's, 7pm
- 13 . Pitcombe PCC, 2.30pm
- 14 . **EVENT:** Penguin Cafe, St Mary's, 8pm

Contact

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