

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2018

Covering Thoughts

This summer Richard and I travelled to Meiringen in the Bernese Oberland. We returned to the hotel where a church group had stayed some years ago. Richard was absent on that occasion and it was good to not only rediscover favourite places but to share them with him.

We like to return to the familiar, but we must be prepared to find it changed, and I mean not only the place but also ourselves. It may not be helpful to try to recreate the golden past as we remember it but instead allow ourselves to embark on a new pilgrimage of discovery; not judging but accepting things as they are today, and open to new excitement, new discoveries. I recently returned to Andrew McNeillie's poetry and felt that his line:

Finders weepers, losers keepers.

could be applied to so many of our day to day experiences.

*I cannot be in the mountains without remembering Peter Matthiessen's book **The Snow Leopard**, and share with you again a short extract of his pilgrimage.*

Upon the path, in the glint of mica and odd shining stones, lies the yellow and grey-blue feather of an unknown bird. And there comes a piercing intuition, by no means understood, that this feather on this silver path, the rhythm of wood and leather sounds, breath, sun and wind, and rush of river, in a landscape without past or future time – in this instant, in all instants, transience and eternity, death and life are one.

Christine

PASTORAL LETTER

Mark Williams

Dear Friends

I had not realised that the small village on the North Yorkshire Moors was so famous. We had decided to take a steam-train for a day out from Whitby. The rail-line from Whitby to Pickering had been a victim of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s, but a group of volunteers had bought it very soon after, and set about making it a viable tourist attraction. Mostly single track, the driver has to phone to get permission to proceed at certain points. The tickets were small cardboard rectangles with our destination (Goathland) over-printed in a way that looked suspiciously like it had been done using a 'John Bull Printing Outfit'.

Situated high up in the midst of beautiful moorland, Goathland's fame had been helped by being the location of the ITV series 'Heartbeat' (eighteen series!). Even more significantly, the well-preserved little station became Hogsmeade in the Harry Potter films. The foresight of those rail enthusiasts had been more than justified.

The village itself is relatively small - a few shops and places to buy memorabilia, all surrounded by the most beautiful countryside. But my lasting impression remains a sense of welcome from the people of the village. Here are two signs of such welcome. That's what they are literally: signs. The first is to discourage people from parking off-road - but is the most gentle notice I have ever seen. It says 'Please try not to park on the grass'. A few sheep couldn't resist parking there, but the notice succeeded in keeping cars away.



The second notice was on the notice board of the small parish church where some of the furniture had been carved locally by Robert Thompson, the "mouse-man". The notice made no assumptions about the reasons for visiting; it raised spirits by its sense of unconditional hospitality.



It's a bit difficult to read, so here is what it says:

Visitor - You are very welcome

Whether you come as

- a pilgrim
- a lover of church history and architecture
- a committed Christian
- an explorer on a spiritual journey
- a questioner
- a dreamer
- a mouse hunter

Whether you come with

- a burden of illness, sorrow or grief
- delight and gratitude

We hope that your visit will

- be fun and interesting
- offer you peace and healing
- open you to gratitude and joy
- bring awareness of the deeper currents of your life
- open you to the fullness of what it means to be human
- help you reflect on the mystery and wonder of life and God.

BI-BLOG

Laurence Devlin

I have not often done this in previous bi-blogs but this month I'd like to set a purely *historical background* to some very well-known passages of the New Testament, passages which involve one of the most interesting and controversial characters appearing in the Bible: **King Herod**. But which Herod?

Many people mistakenly think that the Gospels refer to one King Herod, the one who ordered the murder of John the Baptist to reward Salomé's exquisite dancing and who is responsible for what we have come to call "the massacre of the innocents". But in fact, these are 2 different Herods: **Herod the Great** is responsible for the killing of all the male babies in Bethlehem (as described in Matthew chapter 2) while **Herod Antipas**, his son, is the one who ordered John the Baptist's decapitation (Matthew chapter 14). This very common confusion is quite understandable because the Gospels refer to Herod Antipas simply as Herod or occasionally Herod the Tetrarch or even as King Herod but never by his common name Antipas. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee for most of Jesus' life while his father Herod the Great first ruled Galilee and then became king of Judea from 37 to 4 BC.

But even if these two Herods are the ones who play the most important roles in the Bible narratives, the whole Herodian dynasty is mentioned or alluded to in several other biblical books. The founder of the dynasty was **Herod Antipater of Idumaea** (part of the kingdom of Edom) and succeeded the Hasmonean dynasty established under the leadership of Simon Maccabaeus, two decades after his brother Judah the Maccabee defeated the Seleucid army during the Maccabean revolt (described in 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, the last two books of the Old Testament). After Pompey was defeated by Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. in Egypt, Herod Antipater acted shrewdly: He came to Caesar's aid when the Roman commander was having serious trouble in Alexandria, and Caesar was so thankful that he rewarded Antipater with the title of Chief Minister of Judea. Caesar also granted him Roman citizenship, and the right to collect taxes for Rome. The Jews, however, were extremely angry and bitter about Herod Antipater's pro-Roman policies, and he was mysteriously poisoned in 43 B.C.

His son - who would come to be called **Herod the Great** - was appointed King of Judea by the Roman occupiers, a position he was to maintain for 32 years, a very long time for a leader to be in power in those days. Although he ruled over the Jews, Herod the Great was not an ethnic Jew as his father was an Edomite and his mother was the daughter of an Arab sheik. However, Herod was particularly proud of the title 'King of the Jews' and he would do anything to keep it including, according to Matthew, the murder of innocent children in Bethlehem to get rid of any potential rival: the soothsayers of the time had predicted that the birth of a

new King of the Jews was imminent and threatened Herod's position. It is worth remembering that such a massacre is mentioned in only one verse in Matthew and is notably absent from the other gospels. It seems difficult to imagine that it would not be mentioned by Josephus, the first-century historian who described other events in Herod's life in great detail. It is therefore probable that the massacre is not historical but is of great theological significance: As Matthew's Gospel is consistently portraying Jesus as the New Moses, Jesus' escape to Egypt to avoid the massacre of male babies unmistakably reminds us of Moses being saved from the same fate when Pharaoh ordered to kill all male Israelite babies.

Historians agree that in many respects **Herod the Great** had a hugely successful reign even if he was, before anything else, a Client-King of Rome and a cruel tyrant. He increased the land he governed from Palestine to parts of modern Jordan, Lebanon and Syria constructing fortresses (including Masada and Herodium whose archaeological remains are still impressive today), aqueducts and amphitheatres and the spectacular port city of Caesarea, named after the emperor, all great works which earned him the title 'Herodes Magnus', Herod the Great. According to the famous Oxford biblical scholar, Geza Vermes, in a book published posthumously: *"Herod was both heroic and horrible. A genius in politics as well as a giant in architecture and planning, he was at the same time shamefully vindictive towards those he considered potential rivals or opponents, including members of his family."*¹

Of course, Herod is the one who considerably enlarged and embellished the magnificent Jerusalem temple, which, according to Geza Vermes, was "one of the marvels of the ancient world", a marvel which was however, to be totally destroyed by the Romans following the great rebellion of 70 A.D. It is important to add a note of caution to this admiration: the Jewish population had to pay a heavy price for these magnificent projects, not only in financial tribute but also in the forced labour of thousands of people, having to move enormous blocks of limestone, many of them weighing more than ten tons. Even projects that Herod commissioned to endear himself to the people, like the Temple, failed to change their hatred of him. The two major Jewish sects of the day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, both showed opposition to Herod: the Pharisees were discontented because Herod disregarded many of their demands with respect to the Temple's enlargement and the Sadducees, who were closely associated with priestly responsibilities in the Temple, opposed Herod because he replaced many of their own priests with priests from Babylonia and Alexandria, in an effort to gain the support of the Jewish Diaspora. Herod's outreach efforts however gain him little

¹ Geza Vermes, *The True Herod*, (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014)

and at the end of his reign, anger and dissatisfaction were generalised among Jews.

Many historians think that Herod's downfall began with his possessive love for his wife Mariamme. He became convinced that she was scheming against him, so he had her put on trial and executed. Despite being responsible for her death, Herod's torment was intolerable, and he saw visions of Mariamme. Perhaps in a futile attempt to replace his love for Mariamme, Herod became polygamous. The story of Herod became still more tragic when, for fear of being usurped, he executed three of his sons. But he had many children and after his death, his kingdom was divided between 3 of his surviving sons: **Herod Antipas**, **Herod Archelaus** and **Herod Philip**.

Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, married his half-brother's wife, Herodias. As John the Baptist rebuked Antipas for marrying her (the law of Moses forbade a man to marry his brother's wife *while his brother was still alive*), Herodias took a strong dislike to John the Baptist. As Matthew and Mark both recount (Matt.14:6-11 and Mk. 6:21-28) Salomé, pushed by her mother Herodias, requested the beheading of John the Baptist as a reward for her dancing and Antipas granted her wish. Herod Antipas also played a part in Jesus' trial (Luke 23: 7-15). Of the other two sons, **Herod Archelaus**, appointed Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, was replaced by a series of Roman governors including Pontius Pilate as he was judged incompetent by the Romans while **Herod Philip**, Tetrarch of Trachonitis and Auranitis, remains fairly inconspicuous in the New Testament except that he added his own name to the port of Caesarea created by his father by naming it "Caesarea Philippi".

After the deaths of Herod's sons, the Herodian dynasty continued however and is still present in the New Testament with **Herod Agrippa I**, grandson of Herod the Great, responsible for the execution of James and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12) while **Herod Agrippa II** is remembered as a protector of the apostle Paul (Acts 25 &26).

VISITOR

Ann Hardiman

A visitor to the church recently was Revd John Sturney who was minister here in the 1950s. He was looking at houses in the area as there was an idea of him moving back to the village to be nearer his daughter but he was finding the prices very high. He is now 87 and still takes services in Hungerford. Luckily the church was open as it was Table Tennis morning and we could welcome him!

CHURCH CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 2018.

Everyone is invited to stay for coffee or tea after 10 am Sunday services.

Date	2 nd Sept	9 th Sept	16 th Sept	23 rd Sept	30 th Sept
Service	Morning Service with HC	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
Worship Leader	Rev. Pauline Main	Richard Bainbridge	Rev. Colin Thompson	Laurence Devlin	Duncan Wilson
Vestry Elder	Catherine Harding	Pauline Shelley	Peter Devlin	Ellen Webster	Malcolm Benson
Welcomer	Tom Goss	Ann Hardiman	Pauline Shelley	Peter Devlin	Charles Bennett
Steward	Joan Kidd	Angela Holdaway	Bob Webster	Robert Harding	Barbara Joiner
Reader	Ann Hardiman	Catherine Harding	Robert Harding	Barbara Joiner	Zena Knight
Prayers	Robert Harding	Ann Bettess	Malcolm Benson	Ann Hardiman	Bobbie Stormont
Flowers	Ann Hardiman	Allison Towner	Angela Holdaway	Peter Devlin	Sybil Beaton

Elders' names in **Bold** are on Communion duty

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize at 3 Barns Close at 7.30 pm on
Sundays 9th and 23rd September

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS (leaders may use other readings.)

Date	2 nd Sept	9 th Sept	16 th Sept	23 rd Sept	30 th Sept
First Reading	Solomon 2:8-13	Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23	Proverbs 1:20-33	Proverbs 31:10-31	Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22
Psalm	Psalm 15	Psalm 146	Psalm 116:1-9	Psalm 54	Psalm 19: 7-14
New Testament	James 1:17-27	James 2:1-10, 14-17	James 3:1-12	James 3:13-4:3,7-8a	James 5:13-20
Gospel	Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23	Mark 7:24-37	Mark 8:27-38	Mark 9:30-37	Mark 9:38-50

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER 2018

<i>2nd Sept</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>11.30 am 2.30 to 4.30 pm</i>	<i>Foodbank Church Meeting/AGM Afternoon tea in the Hall</i>
<i>3rd Sept</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>2.00 to 4.00 pm</i>	<i>Not So Young Club</i>
<i>6th Sept</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>10.00 am to noon</i>	<i>Coffee morning, Church open</i>
<i>9th Sept</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>7.30 pm</i>	<i>Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton</i>
<i>11th Sept</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>1.00 pm</i>	<i>Lunch Club Two</i>
<i>16th Sept</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>8.00 am 7.00 to 9.00 pm</i>	<i>Morning Meditation & Breakfast Pulse Group games in Hall</i>
<i>17th Sept</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>2.00 to 4.00 pm</i>	<i>Not So Young Club</i>
<i>18th Sept</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>1.00 pm</i>	<i>Lunch Club</i>
<i>23rd Sept</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>7.00 to 9.00 pm 7.30 pm</i>	<i>Pulse Group Discussion, 17 Bell Lane Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton</i>
<i>25th Sept</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>2.15 pm</i>	<i>St Mary's Guild</i>
<i>30th Sept</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>6.00 to 9.00 pm</i>	<i>Pulse Group games in Hall</i>

WEEKLY EVENTS

(NB several activities are term-time only)

<i>Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)</i>	<i>Monday 5.30 to 7.00 pm</i>
<i>Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)</i>	<i>Monday 7.30 to 9.00 pm</i>
<i>Wheatley Singers (Term Time)</i>	<i>Tuesday 7.10 to 9.00 pm</i>
<i>Pre-School Music Group (Term time)</i>	<i>Wednesday 9.30 am and 10.30 am</i>
<i>Guides (Term time)</i>	<i>Wednesday 7.00 to 8.30 pm</i>
<i>Prayers and Breakfast</i>	<i>Thursday 8.00 am</i>
<i>Mindfulness Sitting Group</i>	<i>Thursday 8.50 to 9.40 am</i>
<i>Table Tennis</i>	<i>Friday 10.00 am to 12 noon</i>
<i>Hymn Practice</i>	<i>Sunday 9.30 to 9.45 am</i>

“HERE WE GO ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH”

Tony Barry.

All nursery rhymes have an historical or political meaning or origin, I have been told and this one is no exception it would seem. Reading a back copy of “Broadleaf” recently, I found a short article by one of The Woodland Trust’s volunteers, Judy Dowling, who has special responsibility for seeking out and recording for The Trust, old and large trees, particularly mulberries, of historical significance. From her researches she found that the children’s rhyme is said to originate from a particular tree located in the grounds of Wakefield Prison, in Yorkshire, apparently now Northern Europe’s largest high security jail. So she travelled from her home in Fife, Scotland back to her birthplace, coincidentally, Wakefield, to see if the tree was still there and indeed it was, albeit in a rather sorry state.

Judy quotes. “Mulberries are Cinderellas of the tree world. They are gnarly and beautiful, but they scramble along the ground rather than growing proud and tall, so people overlook them”

“In the 1700’s Wakefield housed women inmates whose children were locked up alongside them. They would exercise in the yard by dancing around the old mulberry tree, singing about the workaday chores of prison life – washing their clothes, scrubbing the floor and so on.”

“Because I’ve highlighted its age and significance,” she says, “the prison staff are looking after it properly now, so hopefully it will survive for many years to come”.



Other ancient mulberries that Judy has located can be seen at Canterbury Cathedral and William Shakespeare's House in Stratford upon Avon. There is another at the Old Manor Hall in Knaresborough, "thought to be one of the original trees imported by King James I and sent around Britain in a bid to kick-start a home-grown silk industry. Unfortunately, James introduced black mulberries and silkworms only eat the white variety!" Nearer to Wheatley, a number of Oxford colleges seem to have had Mulberries planted at about this time and I think that I may have seen a younger one at the front of William Morris's Oxfordshire home at Kelmscott?

Do we still have an ancient mulberry tree in Wheatley that Judy could be invited to record? If not, perhaps we should consider planting one for the future to celebrate our new **Mulberry Room** – oh that there were space to plant one adjacent to it, where it's branches could reach out along the ground enticing in the community of Wheatley! Perhaps on The Howe Trust land might be more appropriate, Malcolm, as a statement of our involvement with and ongoing commitment to the good folk of the village?

FAITH JOURNEYS

Ann Hardiman's faith journey was printed in the July/August edition of the Newsletter but unfortunately the last two paragraphs were inadvertently omitted. Apologies for that.

Ann wrote: From Charles (it seemed for the first time) I learnt that I was forgiven, loved, accepted. From Yvonne I learnt to consider the wider world, from Colin I learnt that faith can be poetic and intellectual, as well as down to earth. From Richard I am learning to live in the moment and to appreciate overheard conversations on the bus! From Tanya we learnt that ministry is something we all can do, not just the minister. From Pauline I have learnt that love and concern can be just listening and being there. From Laurence I am learning all sorts of details in the Bible I didn't know before! From Mark I am learning *stillness*, which is a quality that doesn't come naturally to me as I'm always rushing on to the next job. From Cara I am learning to appreciate the energy of youth.

From you all, I have learnt tolerance; an inquisitiveness about God and the world that doubt is a part of faith and the special sort of friendship here which becomes love, which is where I started really.

RIDE & STRIDE 2018

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Tony Barry

This year's event is on Saturday 8th September from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm. Unfortunately I am unlikely to be here to lead a walk, but I am proposing, in line with our church objective, this year, "*To Be Walking The Way*", a pilgrimage through the URC churches in our group, namely Wheatley to Marston to Summertown, incorporating any other churches conveniently on the way. As an extension, for those who want a longer day, St Columba's and Collinwood Road could also be added, using bus passes back to Wheatley, as necessary. I will work out a route and appoint a walk leader, if I cannot be there on the day.

The Trust is likely to provide us with a grant toward our repair costs within the Cogwheel Project and a half of all money raised by this walk will also come back to Wheatley URC. So it is well worth supporting by as many church members as possible, please. You could either pay, through me, a flat rate of £10 to go on the walk or I could let you have a sponsorship form to raise sponsorship money by mile or by church visited, if you preferred this method?

We shall also need a team of supporters to be on duty at Wheatley URC to welcome, refresh and record walkers from other churches arriving at our church. I suggest a minimum team of two people for each hour and during August, I will put up rota list on the church notice board for volunteers, please.

KIT RASMUSSEN

Colin Thompson

We send our warmest congratulations to Kit Rasmussen on his recent graduation from Balliol College, Oxford with a BA in PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics). Kit will be spending the next two years in further study of Economics in Paris, and we wish him a happy and successful time there. As it's not too far away, we shall hope to see him from time to time.

FOOD BANK SUNDAY

Ann Bettess and Frances Simpson

The first Sunday of every month is Food Bank Sunday but we are happy to receive donations any time. Please put them in the baskets in the entrance hall. We welcome any of the following non perishable items:-

Tinned vegetables eg. peas, beans, carrots (preferably not pulses, baked beans or tomatoes).

Tinned meat, bottled sauces, puddings eg rice pudding, tinned fruit, cereals

Also welcome are :

Milk- UHT or dried

Coffee, tea, chocolate

Fruit juice

Sugar - especially small (500g)

Biscuits

Jam, honey, peanut butter

Other non-food items are also acceptable eg toiletries

Thank you for your continued support.

PRAYERS

Please remember in your prayers the members on Charles Bennett's pastoral list: Catherine and Robert Harding, Wendy and Malcolm Benson, Pauline and Chris Shelley.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Hospitality Team: Catherine Harding, Liz Barry, Angela Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Joan Kidd, Allison Towner, Moira Watson, Ellen Webster.

Disclaimer: The editors of this Newsletter welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations but reserve the right to publish or not, and to edit.

Deadline: Wednesday 12th September 2018 is the deadline for the October Newsletter. Please always send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk and not to individuals. But paper copy may be handed to Moira or Jim Watson.

Please also inform newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk if the Church Calendar duty entries are changed.

LANDSCAPES OF WHEATLEY AND BEYOND

Michael Worthington

From Wednesday to Saturday, 19th to 22nd September, there will be an exhibition of landscape paintings in St Mary's Church in aid of the 2020 Church Building Project. Since moving to Wheatley just over a year ago, I have been excited by many views of the village, Shotover and the countryside towards the Chilterns, and have put together a collection of about sixty paintings that also include some work from further afield such as Suffolk and Yorkshire.

If you have not heard about the 2020 Project, then this is an opportunity to learn what is being proposed to make the Church a more adaptable space for a variety of activities in addition to Christian worship as well as being warmer in winter and better lit. There will be explanatory posters of the architect's designs alongside the artwork.

All the paintings are for sale. Some of the pictures will be reproduced as greetings cards and last but by no means least, there will be tea and cake. So, we hope you can drop by at the following times:

Wednesday 19 September:	1.00 - 5.00 pm
Thursday 20 September:	1.00 - 5.00 pm
Friday 21 September:	1.00 - 5.00 pm
Saturday 22 September:	10.00 am - 2.00 pm

NOTE EARLIER CLOSE ON SATURDAY THAN IN SOME PREVIOUS NOTICES.

MARRIAGE OF ELIZABETH HUGHES

David and Catherine Hughes

David and Catherine were delighted when over 100 friends and family joined them to celebrate the marriage of Elizabeth to Steven Williamson at Magdalen College Chapel on Saturday 28th July. The marriage was conducted by Mark Williams and the preacher was Colin Thompson. We were glad we were able to share some of the flowers in church the following day. Elizabeth and Steven live in Sheffield where Elizabeth is a GP and Steven a Systems Engineer.

SCIENCE CORNER – ‘Magic Rice’ that needs no cooking

Jim Watson

According to the Indian Express, for the farmers of lower Assam, the 'magic' Boka Saul rice (*Oryza sativa*) has been a breakfast staple for centuries "*Just soak the rice in (cold) water for one hour, and it swells up like a charm. Mix it with curd, jaggery and banana, and it's ready to eat*". In parts of lower Assam, especially during the hot season, farmers subsist almost entirely on this specific kind of indigenous rice. It is claimed to be highly nutritious with 10 % fibre and about 7% protein and allegedly '*cools down the body!*' Those who know about this special variety, swear by it, and those who do not - well, the geographical indication (GI) tag, which has just been bestowed upon it by the Government of India's Intellectual Property India (IPI) body, should do the job.



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