

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

May 2022



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning service starts at 10.30am

For more information about services,
please phone 01702 557678

Breathing the ecumenical air

The recently-retired General Secretary of Churches Together in England, Rev. Dr Paul Goodliff, writes...

As I write this piece for the CTe-News in May 2022, it is my final day as General Secretary. Tomorrow I shall be retired! It has been an enormous privilege to lead the English ecumenical instrument for the past four years, and I am grateful to God for the prayerful support of so many over my term as General Secretary.

At the recent Forum, Dr Lurliene Miller, Deputy Chair of the CTE Trustees, said that we had been through some stormy waters over this period (and she was not referring to my leadership style!) We have negotiated our way through the challenges of a deep disagreement about human sexuality, and remained united when I thought we might fragment; then the Covid19 pandemic struck 18 months into my tenure and almost overnight so much changed, (and with renewed determination to bring about racial justice in the midst). And just as we came out of that stormy weather, Russia invaded Ukraine, and the whole post-Cold War strategic and political order has been thrown into disarray. What a time to be General Secretary!

With a cost of living crisis already upon us, and the escalation of war in Europe threatening, I am not sure my successor Bishop Mike Royal will have any easier a passage to sail, but I am confident that he is well able to meet those challenges, and take the ecumenical life in England to its next chapter. Remember him in your prayers, as I shall.

It was not all challenge, of course. We have rejoiced in new Member Churches joining CTE, from long-standing Free Churches like the Wesleyan Reform Union, ancient churches like the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East in their English diocese and new churches like the Vineyard UK; and many Christian charities and ministries have become new Bodies in Association.

Each new church and Body strengthens our life and witness together as the ecumenical family in England, and gives us fresh courage to face whatever challenges will come, both local to our nation, and international alike.

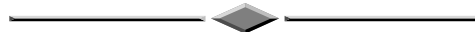
I said in my address to Forum that ecumenism has become the air the English churches breathe, and in that regard we are a signpost of hope for ecumenical witness elsewhere in the world. I dare to suggest that ecumenism is richer and deeper in England than almost anywhere else in the world. But we need to learn how to breathe that ecumenical air deeper and take the Spirit of God — the breath or ruach (in Hebrew) of God — into our collective lungs. To honour and learn from one another is a first step, and then to witness together in proclamation of the good news of Christ and compassionate concern for our neighbours, especially the most vulnerable. Alongside that we continue to seek greater unity in faith and practice. There is much ground still to plough and plant with the seeds of the kingdom.

We are undoubtedly better together: more faithful to the gospel, more repentant of the sins of disunity, more effective in our witness to Christ and we draw much greater courage and wisdom from our collective discernment than if we remain isolated.

So, as I retire, I pray for a steady deepening of our ecumenical life in England until we “grow up in every way into him who is our head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15–16)

Paul Goodliff

Rev. Dr Paul Goodliff was the CTE General Secretary from 2018 to 2022. Paul trained for Baptist ministry at Spurgeon’s College, and served for ten years as associate minister at Lewin Road Baptist Church before moving to Stevenage as minister of the Bunyan Baptist Church, and then the General Superintendent for the BUGB Central Area. Before serving as the BUGB Head of Ministry, Paul was a moderator of the Baptist Union’s Church Relations Committee. He has written books on pastoral care; the theology and psychology of shame; and most recently, ministerial formation and virtue ethics, *Shaped for Service* (2017) and *ecumenism and oversight*, Episkope (SCM 2020).



Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAY 2022

Sun 1 st May	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr John Amos
Sun 8 th Mar	10.30am	Morning Service	Major Geoff Ashdown
Sun 15 th May	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant MA MTh
Sun 22 nd May	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning
Sun 29 th May	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Joyce Berry

FLOWER ROTA

Sun 1 st May	
Sun 8 th May	
Sun 15 th May	
Sun 22 nd May	June Gargrave - birthday
Sun 29 th May	

ELDERS' MEETING

Wed 18th May Apr 3.30pm

CHURCH MEETING

No meeting in May

Blessing for Christian Aid Week

And as you go,
may you know that you are held secure in the palm
of the Shepherd's hand,
through all the days of Christian Aid Week
and your whole life through.
In the name of the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen

HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS

Interim Moderators:

Rev. Jim Tarrant/Rev. Celia Whitman

Hon. Secretary:

Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)

Acting Hon. Treasurer:

Mr Royston Brackin

Serving Elders:

Mr Royston Brackin

Mrs Heather Brown (01702 557678)

Mr Malcolm Brown (01702 557678)

Miss Jean Reeve (01702 554907)

Useful information

Address: 1 Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ

Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk

An invitation

We invite you to join us for worship and fellowship at any of our services where a warm welcome awaits. If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then be assured of our interest and concern. If you are suffering from ill health, loneliness or bereavement and feel that we could help, or if you would like to ask for a prayer or personal visit then please let one of our church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.

Revealing Prayer

Throughout the Bible, most notably in the Psalms, are people pouring prayer out of their hearts to God: “O Lord hear my prayer, when I call answer me”. The Christian’s lifeline to God is prayer. An unknown person once said: “A day hemmed in prayer is less likely to come unraveled”. Martin Luther stated: “It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last in the evening.”

I think he’d remembered Psalm 92: “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to the Most High. It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening.” (vs.1-2). Prayer delights the Lord, but the Devil wants to keep Christians from praying – so there’s too many distractions, we don’t find the time and we find ourselves saying, “I’m not confident; I don’t know how to pray!” I’m sure that’s why in every Christian bookshop there are dozens of titles on prayer, meditations and techniques for spiritual growth teaching us to pray for many things: our own families, world issues like war, famine, natural disasters, our communities, our government, the sick, lonely and bereaved, world peace, as well as praying for ourselves.

Personally, I don’t believe you need a self-help / prayer-for-dummies type of guide. We need Scripture absolutely. But prayer is simply, in reverence, having a conversation, talking out of our hearts, with God, as a person, actually as our Father in Heaven, like Paul says “telling him what you need, thanking him for all he has done”. (Philippians 4:6).

Do we pray in this way? Not usually. Do we plead in faith? Not often, because sometimes we think of God as a kind of celestial vending machine. Put in our requests, heal my illness, give me a bigger house, let my team win and so on – and out comes the answer! When we put money into such a machine and that bag of crisps or chocolate bar doesn’t drop down – what do we do? We push the button a few times, each press getting harder. Then we punch the machine. Still nothing happens. Then we try and get our money back. We reach into the coin slot, feel around, jiggle the change button repeatedly. Hit the machine again and as a last resort we go to find a member of staff and complain: “That machine took my money and didn’t give me anything in return!

Our prayer life is just like this. We pray to God, ask for what we want and expect to get an immediate answer which suits our will and not the Lord’s, and if we don’t get what we asked for we feel ignored, cheated, disappointed, angry or even disillusioned that we just give up. What’s the point of faith if we get nothing in return?

The Good Lord is perfectly entitled to say No. He knows what we need. His love denies us if the timing is wrong. In fact we may need to learn patience and to wait for whatever it is. Prayer is not about getting our will done, but God’s – “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!” The Bible does make some amazing promises about prayer. Jesus told His disciples: “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” (Matthew 21:22). Elsewhere He says, “Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” (John 16:23).

Verses like this certainly sound like a blank cheque don’t they? Anything you ask for in Jesus’ Name, you’ll receive! Anything you ask for, as long as you believe, you’ll receive! But in reality, of course prayer doesn’t work that way. Every one of us can give examples of prayers that haven’t been answered the way we hoped. Definitely the most heart-breaking experience is when we lay hold of God’s promises and ask for someone to be healed of cancer, but the cancer continues to spread, the treatment fails and eventually, the person dies. The question persists, “Why didn’t God hear our prayers?”

In fact He did hear our prayers. He’s not deaf, nor is He ignoring us. It could be we didn’t really believe in His healing power in the first place. Many people believe that if they just add the words “In Jesus’ Name” to any prayer request they make, then that’s all they need to do to guarantee God will answer them. But Jesus made it quite clear that just using His Name, as if we were putting a coin in a vending machine, is not enough. We don’t get the answers we hope to receive, because often we lack the faith. Praying in Jesus’ name means so much more than just saying the words. Are we really thinking about what we’re saying, or is it just out of habit? God is after our hearts, not our words.

The first disciples were qualified to pray in the name of Jesus because they knew Him. They had walked and talked with Him. They knew the kind of things He wanted them to have and to do. So

when they asked God for something in Jesus' Name, they believed and trusted in His authority and power: "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." (Acts 3:6). "You will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name...ask using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy." (John 16:23-24).

We need to understand that our lives must be right with God before He can answer our prayers. Our hearts must be open to the Holy Spirit, or God's blessings cannot be received for ourselves or for others. I like what Augustine says here: "Come Holy Spirit, dwelling in me, teach me to pray and to glorify thee." But if we refuse to give up our sins, and are grieving the Silent Shepherd – "the quiet guest of our soul", doing things we should not be doing, disobeying God, we cannot expect Him to answer our prayers. Also if we refuse to forgive others who have wronged us, prayers will not be answered.

Remember this too that the Lord's timetable is not the same as ours. He knows better than we do when is the best time for our prayers to be answered. He is eternal and does not measure time as we do. "That with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8). God promised a son to Abraham when he was 75 years old. But Abraham became impatient when Sarah didn't bear him a son, so he took his wife's servant as his wife. Abraham tried to solve the problem in his own way and the result was disastrous. God eventually, after 25 years,

answered his prayer at the time when He saw it was best for Abraham to become a Dad when he was 100 years old! He certainly moves in mysterious ways and Christians are stewards of the great mysteries of God.

When we go back to the example of healing when Jesus returns and restores everything to eternal beauty and joy, every sick believer will at last be healed. So when a Christian falls ill, and they ask in Jesus' Name for healing, they can be assured that the answer will be yes. Sometimes God will miraculously heal right away. Sometimes He will heal over a period of time, through medical intervention. And sometimes He will wait until the person has fallen asleep in Him, been promoted to glory and give them a new, whole, and healthy body at the resurrection.

We must leave the how and when to Him. Everyone will die sooner or later. But those who trust in Jesus will rise again, never to know sickness or pain anymore: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints". (Psalm 116:15).

The Good Lord is not a divine vending machine, He's a person. And faith in God is simply trust in a Person we know and love. Faith comes out of a loving relationship with our heavenly Father. And that's where answered prayer comes from, too.

Love in the Messiah. Blessed be the Word.

Tim Mullings

Minister, Tettenhall Wood & St. Columba's United Reformed Church, Wolverhampton.



The Perfect Church

If you should find the perfect church
Without one fault or smear,
For goodness sake, don't join that church,
You'd spoil the atmosphere.

If you should find the perfect church
Where all anxieties cease,
Then pass it by, lest joining it
You spoil the masterpiece.

If you should find the perfect church
Then don't ever dare
To tread upon such holy ground,
You'd be a misfit there.

But since no perfect church exists,
Made of perfect men,
Let's cease on looking for that church
And love the church we're in.

Of course it's not the perfect church,
That's simple to discern.
But you and I and all of us
Could cause the tide to turn.

What fools are we to flee the past
In that unfruitful search,
To find, at last, where problems loom
God proudly builds His church.

From the Editor

Welcome to the May 2022 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

The magazine includes a report and some photos from the united Good Friday service at St Michael's Church and the Easter Day Sunrise Service at Hadleigh Castle.

Vera Knapton has kindly written a 'good news' article about a recent family wedding that she attended but, sad to say, the Family News section does include news of more health problems and, sadly, one death.

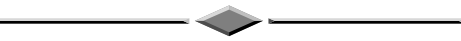
This edition is a landmark in terms of my involvement with the magazine. I took over as Editor from John Porcher in June 2002 so I have now been editing and printing the magazine for 20 years. One thing that is noticeable when I look

back at the early editions is how the layout has improved. I am very grateful to all those who have provided content over those years and to my wife who has been my proof-reader, often at short notice.

Unfortunately, less of the content is now 'home-grown'. With fewer events at the church to publicise and report on and fewer people submitting contributions, I have become very dependent on external sources for articles, particularly since the pandemic arrived. This does seem rather like cheating to me but, hopefully, it still feels like the church magazine.

Finally, thank you to all those who have made a donation in the last couple of months towards the costs of producing the magazine in 2022.

Malcolm Brown



Church Meeting

The first Church Meeting for over two years was held in the church on Thursday 28th April. As had become the usual practice before the pandemic, the meeting was held on the same day as a coffee morning and attendees were able to bring a packed lunch and eat together before the meeting.

Updates were given on some of the work carried out by the Elders over recent months, including the Safeguarding Policy and updating of the premises hire agreement. The Tuesday Fellowship, which was on the verge of closing before the pandemic, was formally closed.

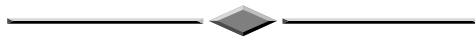
The Secretary informed the meeting about the outside organisations that have started meeting again at the church and those which have decided

to close. The latter group includes the Ever Green Singers choir, that used to practice on Monday mornings, and the flower arrangers' group, that used to meet on Wednesday afternoons.

During a discussion on possible events, the meeting decided to celebrate the church anniversary by holding a buffet lunch after the morning service on Sunday 19th June. Similarly, it was agreed to hold a harvest lunch instead of a harvest supper on Sunday 25th September.

Another Church Meeting will take place before an Annual General Meeting is held, possibly in August, to sign off the outstanding accounts.

Malcolm Brown



Life on an Island

Louie was shipwrecked and lived alone on a desert island for years until he was finally rescued. Before leaving the island, he gave the rescue party a tour. "I built myself a house. That's it there. Here's the barn, and over here is the church I worshipped in."

"What's that building over there?" one of the rescuers asked.

Louie sneered. "That's the church I used to belong to."

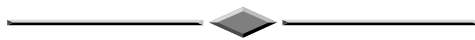
Articles for the magazine can be e-mailed to the Editor, Malcolm Brown, at mgbrownmail@yahoo.co.uk.
Opinions expressed in any published articles do not necessarily reflect the view of the Editor or the policy of the United Reformed Church, either locally or nationally.

In May

Yes, I will spend the livelong day
With Nature in this month of May;
And sit beneath the trees, and share
My bread with birds whose homes are there;
While cows lie down to eat, and sheep
Stand to their necks in grass so deep;
While birds do sing with all their might,
As though they felt the earth in flight.
This is the hour I dreamed of, when
I sat surrounded by poor men;
And thought of how the Arab sat
Alone at evening, gazing at
The stars that bubbled in clear skies;

And of young dreamers, when their eyes
Enjoyed methought a precious boon
In the adventures of the Moon
Whose light, behind the Clouds' dark bars,
Searched for her stolen flocks of stars.
When I, hemmed in by wrecks of men,
Thought of some lonely cottage then
Full of sweet books; and miles of sea,
With passing ships, in front of me;
And having, on the other hand,
A flowery, green, bird-singing land.

William Henry Davies (1871-1940)



Prayer Reflection – A Servant King and a serving people

Acknowledge that walking along dusty roads all day in open sandals is likely to make feet hot, dirty and somewhat sweaty and smelly. This would have been the condition of the disciples' feet when Jesus washed them. Imagine the relief such cleansing would have brought and also the consternation that it was Jesus doing the washing. Pray for those who perform similar, seemingly menial, tasks for others today and also for those receiving their care. May both know God's peace and we know how best to support them.

Accept the fact that our gifts of money to support those working 'on the front line', though vital, are a somewhat sanitised way of serving. Consider whether there are other, more immediate ways God is calling us, both together and individually, to serve those in need in our community. Pray for the guidance and the humility needed to see the opportunities for service all around us. Thank God for the grace to respond.

Acclaim our God who, through Jesus, has shown us that he is one who cares about the nitty-gritty of everyday life as well as the activities in church worship. Praise his holy name in all you do during the week as well as on Sunday.

Prayer - Loving Father God, who lifts us up when we are falling or failing and carries us when we are too weary to continue, may we be strengthened by the awareness of your faithful presence with us Thank you for your loving care. Thank you Lord. *Amen*

Beryl Hunt

Ann Lowes (1938 – 2022)

Although Ann worship worshipped at St Barnabas Church, she had become well-known in our fellowship through attending the coffee morning and representing St Barnabas Church at special events. In recent years, Ann developed dementia but was able to live at home until near the end of her life. She died on 1st April and her funeral, conducted by Guy Negus, was held at St Barnabas Church on 28th April.



Ann Maureen Lowes was born in Hadleigh, Essex, on 16th October 1938. She was known as Maureen by her family but most people knew her as Ann. She was the 7th of 12 children born to Jock and Annie Lowes. Jock was a builder and enjoyed racing pigeons. Ann attended Hadleigh School in Church Road and then Southend High School for Girls (SHSG). She made lifelong friends at both schools. Her friends at Hadleigh School included church members Kay Watson and Jean Reeve.

In 1957, Ann went to train as a P.E. teacher at Chelsea College of Physical Education in Eastbourne for 3 years. It was there that she became a committed Christian attending Holy Trinity Church, with renowned theologian Canon Michael Green as her mentor. Around 1960, Ann became part of a team running Inter-School Christian Fellowship house parties (summer camps) at Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset. She was involved for twenty years and eventually led the house parties, which were attended by 80 girls, aged 11-14, from schools all over the country.

Ann chose St Barnabas Church in Hadleigh as her home church and began helping in the Sunday School, teaching 9 to 10 year olds but she went on to lead the Pathfinders and CYFA groups of 11-18 year olds. She also arranged Easter cruises on the Norfolk Broads for 40 teenagers.

Ann's first teaching post was at Grays Technical High School where she taught French and Religious Education in addition to P.E. After 7 years, she moved to Raines Foundation Grammar School in Stepney, which became a comprehensive school in 1977 and moved to Bethnal Green in 1985. In addition to being Head of P.E. and a Head of Year, she also taught Religious Studies to 3rd, 4th and 5th year to examination level. After 28 years at Raines Foundation, Ann's legs began to get weaker and she had difficulty in carrying sports equipment. After medical tests at the Royal London Hospital, she was diagnosed with ME (chronic muscle fatigue) and had to retire.

By pacing herself, Ann was still able to lead an active life in retirement and she became very involved in raising money for charities. She also ran the Women's Fellowship at St Barnabas for many years. For a time, Ann represented St Barnabas at Churches Together in Hadleigh meetings and took a turn as leader in 2011/12. When Messy Church started at St Barnabas, Ann willingly volunteered to help. Although she never married and had no children of her own, Ann loved children and, over the years, was a surrogate mum or adopted aunt to many.

The COVID-19 pandemic put an end to Ann's church activities and increasing dementia started to affect her day-to-day life but she enjoyed having lunch nearly every day at Yemek's café. Ann was able to remain living at home with the help of carers. However, after being found collapsed on the kitchen floor on 7th February, she had spells in Southend Hospital and Godden Lodge care home in Thundersley and eventually passed away in Southend Hospital on 1st April 2022.



Ann with Jean Reeve in 2012



Ann with Kay Watson on her birthday in 2021

We give thanks for Ann's life of service to her Lord and Saviour, whom she loved dearly. She was a kind and generous soul who will be missed by her many friends and family.

Malcolm Brown

Family News

Please remember those associated with our fellowship in need of prayer...

URC Ministers' Gathering – John Bradbury's speech

Two hundred and fifty of the United Reformed Church Ministers and Church Related Community Workers from the denomination's 13 synods, are spending four days from 9-12 May at Yarnfield Park Training and Conference Centre in Stone, near Stafford, being refreshed and encouraged at the 2022 Ministers' Gathering.

Rev. Dr John Bradbury, the United Reformed Church (URC) General Secretary, spoke to the URC's Ministers' Gathering on the afternoon of the first day, in a talk entitled: 'The URC at 50: Maturing nicely or mid-life crisis?'



Our world, he said, was turned upside down by the Covid pandemic – embracing new technology, restrictions on funerals, different ways of staying connected. New worshipping communities and ways of reaching people emerged, international links were strengthened.

“But we are tired,” he said. “My goodness, we're really tired. And we still don't know what this pandemic has done to us.” Experiences have varied enormously, he said. Some are excited, some ground down, some traumatised.

Although our situation does not compare to what our brothers sisters elsewhere in the world face, said Dr Bradbury, this is the most challenging time for the western Church since the Reformation. The rapid changes we were going through were brought into focus and intensified by the pandemic. Some churches didn't survive. Many of us are running a hospice ministry, he said, which is tough and draining. A third of any congregation may not yet have returned; how worried should we be about that? We are surrounded by a culture of disinterest in organised religion; and yet young people pray more than in previous generations.

Funerals for the wider community were, ten years ago a mainstay of evangelism, said Dr Bradbury, but they have disappeared from churches. Union is no longer the ecumenical game in town. And yet the URC is still having an impact, through JPIT, through ecumenical instruments, in the public square and in the world Church.

These are the matters that the Church Life Review Group has been formed to look at. Meeting a couple of weeks ago, the group is agreed, “One last programme or mission strategy will not sort us out.” Instead, said Dr Bradbury, we need to tend the vineyard. One area of change that that must

involve, he said, is deployment. Ministers are spread evermore thinly – soon in the URC there will be at average of seven congregations per minister. ‘Too many of us wonder if we can make it to retirement at the rate we're going. Too many of us wonder if our calling to ministry is being fulfilled in what we're doing.’

“We have no immediate magic solutions,” said Dr Bradbury, but the group did see ways forward. There is work we can do that will free congregations and ministers from some of the burden of compliance. We believe in this stuff, he said – safeguarding, health and safety, charity regulations – but we often feel we will be overwhelmed, and it takes a vast amount of time away from other things.

Another helpful prospect, he said, is that the think tank Theos is doing qualitative research for the URC – conversations about what works and what does not, not simply questionnaires. They are talking to a representative set of local churches asking them what flourishing would look like for them and how can it be fostered.

Another point to be considered, he said, is that, ironically, church closures have released financial resources, increasing synod funds from £150m to £200m. That is in addition to what local churches are sitting on, ‘for a rainy day’. It is raining, said Dr Bradbury.

As ministers, he said, we see good deaths and less good deaths. A congregation has a good death when members feel their ministry is completed and has led to new life elsewhere. This is like the way Christ set his face to death, didn't avoid it, but prepared for it, and went through death to resurrection. Most of the URC's money is the result of deaths of congregations. ‘Do we build ever bigger barns,’ he asked, ‘or believe that money released can fund flourishing work elsewhere?’

Each year, 60% of our budget is spent by General Assembly and 40% by synods. That means that 14 separate bodies are spending, and it is very hard to get a global picture of what we're spending and what wealth we have. Where our money is, said Dr Bradbury, our heart is. When we find out where it is, we may need to do some soul-searching to decide whether that is where we want it to be.

The Church Life Review Group is bringing to this year's General Assembly (for discussion, rather than immediate voting) proposals for a radical overhaul of the central committee structure. It also proposes that the URC become more proactive in attending to churches where life as it is has become unsustainable.

"There are some very real possibilities for flourishing," said Dr Bradbury. "There are things

we need to face; and facing them is a profound act of hope."

He concluded with a warm tribute to the work of the URC's ministers, saying: "There is no greater gift to God's church than ministry. There is no higher calling than to be a minister of the gospel. The church owes you all a huge debt of gratitude."

From the URC website

Christian Aid Week – 15-21 May



With the church closed because of the pandemic during Christian Aid Week in 2020 and 2021, there were no collections but this year I've ordered a few posters and some envelopes so we can attempt to raise some much-needed funds. Envelopes will be distributed on Sunday 15th May – the start of Christian Aid Week – and may be returned in the next week or two. At the coffee morning on Thursday 19th May, I plan to run a bric-a-brac stall for Christian Aid and will add the proceeds to the profits held over from sales in 2019.

Janet's story

What makes you smile? For Janet Zirugo, 70, it's seeing her grandchildren's faces light up as she hugs them tight. Janet has a big heart. Many of the children in her family are orphans, and she is their sole provider. In her village in Zimbabwe, Janet has seen how drought pushed her family into desperate hunger.



Janet reflects on a particularly painful time: 'One year, there was so little food. Rains had not fallen. We ate things which we wouldn't eat in normal times. I made porridge and gave it to the children, then removed a portion and put it down for the dogs. The children picked up the dogs' share because they weren't full. When I saw this, I knew the situation had become unbearable... My heart was so painful thinking that my family would die. By God's grace we did not die. We soldiered on.'

With faith, hope and love, Janet brought her family through this time. Thanks to kind people like you, she was given drought-resistant seeds that can grow in this harsh climate. Her farm is now bursting with life. She proudly shows us the food she has grown – bowls full of groundnuts, wild fruit, golden corn; a rainbow of colour. Now, she is strong and resilient. With all her strength, she works on her farm so her family never again go hungry. She has built a storeroom to keep her harvest safe and secure, to help her bounce back in future droughts. She knows when changes are coming and can adapt before crisis hits. 'My life is changing,' she says. 'This project is lifting us up. We are thankful.'

Through our local partners, our BRACK programme empowers the most vulnerable communities in Mutoko and Mudzi districts of Zimbabwe to prepare for, and adapt to, the harsh and changing climate. Janet, and other women like her, knows when changes are coming, and can adapt before crisis hits.

Christian Aid's work includes helping people to:

- claim their rights and access services such as healthcare and education;
- ensure they are not discriminated against for any reason;
- become more resilient to shocks and disasters such as drought, climate change and hurricanes;
- make the most of opportunities, such as being able to sell their produce for a fair price.

More information can be found at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/what-we-do>.

Malcolm Brown

A Day Like No Other

Malcolm appealed in the April edition of the magazine for items of family good news. I hope this fits the bill...

On 23rd April, I attended the wedding of my sister Ruth's grandson, Edward, to Rona, in Wiltshire. The wedding took place on the Rushmore Estate within the area known as Cranbourne Chase, once a royal hunting ground of King John in the early years of the 13th Century. It is said to be one of the best examples of a typical English landscape anywhere in the country; the higher ground affords wonderful views as far as the Isle of Wight.

The estate comprises 7,000 acres in total, including one of the largest swathes of broad-leaved woodland in southern England, and is a wildlife site of national importance.



Rushmore Estate trees

The estate includes the Larmer Tree Pleasure Gardens and is usually open to the public, however, a notice at the entrance announced, "Closed to the Public Today". We drove as far as the lodge, where a lady directed us to the car park. We then sat at tables and chairs outside the lodge, accompanied by numerous, noisy peacocks that strutted about – too near for comfort as far as I was concerned. They screeched and flew up on the roof of the lodge and into the trees. Non-stop squawking on the ground, they displayed their magnificent, vibrant, blue tail feathers.

Other guests joined us and we were treated to a wonderful fashion show. One young lady had hair dyed to match her outfit – half bright pink, half bright green! Another looked as she was still in her pyjamas. Another wore a bright yellow 'onesy'. One young lady wore a long evening gown devoid of a back and precious little to the front. The day was dry but chilly.

The bride is Scottish so many guests were from various parts of Scotland. All of the male guests, with a few exceptions, wore kilts. Those from north of the border knew which tartan they were

wearing whilst the English, wearing kilts supplied by Moss Bros, had no idea! Even two tiny toddlers wore cute little kilts.

Eventually, we were instructed to walk to a gazebo situated across a vast tract of grass. This proved to be a very difficult, painful experience. A kilted gentleman from the Isle of Lewis offered to help me stagger to the rows of chairs in front of an ancient stone edifice.

Two ladies arrived, one introduced herself to be the celebrant; her companion was the Registrar, without whom the wedding would not be legal, it seems. Also, in attendance, were the ever-squawking peacocks screeching from the trees.

From far across the parkland came the swirl of bagpipes to herald the bridal procession and so the wedding ceremony commenced.

"Will you take this woman to be your..." Squawk, squaaaawk, squaaaaawk, answered the peacocks in the trees.

"Will you take this man to be your..." Squawk, squaaaawk, squaaaaawk.

The nuptials completed, we were instructed to make our way to the reception, which was held in a modern purpose-built pavilion on the other side of yet another vast tract of parkland. My knight in shining kilted armour again offered to help me struggle the distance. Having negotiated the grass, we came to the entrance of the pavilion. At the top of this slope stood a chef, wearing an impressively tall toque blanc, busily grilling steak, chicken, sausages and goodness know what else on his barbecue grill.

The ninety eight guests took their seats. Place settings consisted of coasters, each of which was inscribed with the guest's name. (I shall keep mine in preparation for the day that I fail to remember who I am!)

The banquet commenced. We were invited to collect our main course from the chef. My niece Claire accompanied me up the gravel slope. "Yes, Madam," said the chef. "What would you like?" "May I have a steak, please?" I replied. "How many?" he enquired!

The food was delicious. Large wooden bowls of piping hot chips and every conceivable kind of salad were on the tables ready to help oneself to. An array of desserts was served. A couple of

brief, amusing speeches and the customary toasts to bride and groom and to the bridesmaids concluded that part of the celebrations.

We then transferred to another pavilion, which, fortunately, was adjacent to the reception venue so no more trudging across grass or gravel. For guests who were able to stay the course, there was entertainment and disco-dancing until midnight.

Back at our hotel, Ruth and I agreed how lovely it had been to have all her family together again

and what a wonderful day it had been. “What did you make of all the ‘way out’ fashions?” I asked.

Ruth replied, “All of those youngsters in their up-to-date outfits probably looked at us and wondered ‘who are those two frumpy old souls in the Sunday best.’” No doubt she was right.

This ended a great day of family fellowship, fun and laughter. It was certainly a day unlike any other.

Vera Knapton

The Larmer Tree Gardens (from Wikipedia)

The Larmer Tree Gardens mentioned by Vera are set high on the Cranborne Chase, near Tollard Royal in Wiltshire. The 11-acre (4.5 ha) Grade II* listed gardens were created by landowner Augustus Pitt Rivers as pleasure grounds for “public enlightenment and entertainment”. They were the first private gardens opened for public enjoyment in the United Kingdom, and were free to enter.

In 1880, Augustus Lane Fox inherited the Rushmore Estate, centred on Rushmore House. A condition of the will was that he should change his name to Pitt Rivers. He started making the Larmer Tree Pleasure Grounds almost immediately, and they were opened to the public in 1885.

The gardens are named after the Larmer Tree, a landmark tree on the ancient county boundary. The tree was possibly an ancient Wych elm under which King John (1167–1216) and his entourage were reputed to have met when they were out hunting. The original tree was still living as late as 1894, around which time it was replaced by an oak, which was planted in the centre of the decayed rim.



Roman Temple



Peacocks on the roof of the tearoom



The Singing Theatre

Pitt Rivers built several structures around the main lawn which were intended to educate and enlighten visitors to the garden. There was also a racecourse, an eighteen link golf course, a bowling green and lawn tennis courts. There were eight picnic areas, each enclosed by cherry laurel hedges and with thatched buildings in case of inclement weather. Pitt Rivers provided “crockery, knives and forks for picnickers, gratis”, as well as “chairs, tables and dumb waiters” and accommodation for 20 horses.

Music and entertainment was provided at the Singing Theatre, where plays were performed by workers from the estate, and poetry recitals given. A band was provided on Sunday afternoons during summer.

By 1899, the gardens were attracting over 44,000 people a year, some of them making a day trip from the growing seaside resort of Bournemouth. A map of 1900 names the area as Larmer Park. After Pitt Rivers' death in that year the gardens closed, opening only occasionally after that time.

Restoration of the gardens started in 1991 under the direction of Michael Pitt-Rivers. In the 90-odd years that the gardens had been closed, the cherry laurel had taken over almost all the gardens apart from the main lawn, and many of the buildings had decayed. The gardens were re-opened to the public in 1995. In 1999, a new Larmer Tree was planted to mark the new millennium.

Seven myths and truths about healthy skin

Skin is our largest organ and something we may take for granted when it's healthy. As an academic dermatologist, I frequently hear misleading "facts" that seem to be stubbornly enduring. Here are some of the most commonly shared myths that can be cleared up immediately, and some truths you can rely on.

Skin constantly renews itself

TRUE - The skin provides a dynamic barrier between your body's internal environment and the outside world. Cells called keratinocytes in the epidermis (the outer layer of skin) are constantly dividing to produce a supply of cells that move up through this layer and are shed from its surface. Skin is a rich source of stem cells with the capacity to divide and renew themselves.

Drink two litres of water a day for healthy skin

FALSE - The amount of water you drink does not directly affect your skin. Water is supplied to the skin by blood flowing through the dermis, the inner layer of skin; water is lost from the epidermis, especially in a dry environment.

Water is needed to maintain skin hydration and when you become seriously dehydrated your skin appears dull and is less elastic. In a healthy person the internal organs – kidneys, heart and blood vessels – control the amount of water reaching the skin. There is no fixed volume of water that you need to drink, it simply depends on the amounts you are using and losing.

Stress can make skin unhealthy

TRUE - There are many health issues in modern life that we blame on stress, but several skin conditions have been shown in scientific studies (see below), to be worsened by life events, possibly via stress hormones including cortisol (a steroid hormone made in the adrenal glands). Notable examples are alopecia areata, an auto-immune condition where the body's immunity begins to attack the hair follicles, causing hair to fall out; psoriasis, another auto-immune condition that causes skin thickening, scaling and inflammation; and eczema, itchy red skin inflammation often occurring alongside asthma, hay fever and other allergies. Unfortunately a flare up of these skin conditions is exactly what you don't need when you are feeling stressed or under pressure.

Eating chocolate causes acne

FALSE - Acne vulgaris, the common "teenage" acne which can actually persist into your 30s and 40s, occurs as a result of the interaction between hormonal effects on grease glands in the skin, plus the skin's immune response to blocked pores and microbes living on the skin.

Eating a high fat diet is unhealthy for many reasons, but it doesn't cause acne. In fact some tablets prescribed for severe acne such as oral isotretinoin are better absorbed when pills are swallowed with a fatty meal – and that could include chocolate.

Washing powder causes eczema

FALSE - Eczema is a condition where the skin is dry, itchy and red. It is caused by a combination of genetic factors (how your skin is made) and environmental effects, leading to inflammation. Soap, detergents and washing powders can irritate the skin and contribute to dryness because they remove oil from the skin (just as washing-up liquid removes grease from your dishes). Biological washing powders contain enzymes – proteins that break down fats and other proteins to remove stains – and these can irritate sensitive skin, so they may worsen eczema. It is important that any washing powder is thoroughly rinsed out of clothing before it is worn, to avoid skin irritation.

White marks on nails = calcium deficiency

FALSE - Nails are manufactured in the nail matrix, an area under the skin at the top edge of your nail. If the matrix is traumatised, bumped or bitten, an irregularity in the developing nail occurs and air can become trapped.



This appears as a white mark as the nail grows out. Calcium is important for healthy nails (as well as bones and teeth) but these white marks are not a sign of deficiency.

Sunshine is good for you

TRUE & FALSE - Many people have experienced the feel-good factor of a sunny day, but there are good and bad effects of sunlight. Light from the sun includes a mixture of different wavelengths of light: some are visible to the human eye, some are shorter than the colours we can see – these are called ultraviolet (UV) – and

some are longer, the infrared. Different wavelengths have different effects on skin.

UVB is used by skin to manufacture vitamin D which is essential for bone health. Without sun exposure this vitamin must be obtained from the diet. Dermatologists use specific wavelengths of UVA and UVB in carefully controlled doses to reduce skin inflammation, a valuable treatment for some skin conditions.

But when the skin is exposed to too much UV it can damage the skin cells' DNA, leading to uncontrolled growth – the basis of cancer. As a simple rule, unless you have a disease or treatment that suppresses your immune system, sunshine is good for you in moderation, but always avoid getting sunburned.

The basic principles of keeping skin healthy are mainly common sense. You should wash your skin regularly to remove dirt, but not so much that you remove the essential moisture and water-proofing substances. Use a moisturiser if your skin feels tight or dry – a greasy ointment works best unless you have acne-prone skin, in which case you should use a non-greasy water-based cream. Avoid stress if possible, eat a healthy diet and drink water when you feel thirsty. And finally, protect your skin from too much sun with a hat and clothing or sunscreen.

Sara Brown

Professor of Molecular & Genetic Dermatology, Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow, University of Dundee.

Originally published on www.theconversation.com.

Good Friday & Easter Sunday united services

Good Friday – Unusually, this year's Churches Together in Hadleigh Good Friday service was held at St Michael's Church in Daws Heath. The weather was glorious and it would have been nice to have had a Walk of Witness from Hadleigh to Daws Heath but that might have led to a few casualties along the way! Hopefully, next year, we'll be able to incorporate a Walk of Witness in the arrangements.

It was good to be able to worship together again at Easter after missing two years because of the Coronavirus pandemic. The service was organised by Rev. Sue Croucher, the curate at St Michael's and Sue welcomed everyone before opening the service. The service was based around a series of bible readings with associated meditations, which were read by members of different churches. These were interspersed with well-known Easter hymns. The service was closed by Rev. Andy Hudson, Priest in Charge of the Parish of Thundersley, of which St Michael's is part. Our thanks are owed to Sue, Andy, the organist, and all those who served refreshments.

As will be seen from the photo below, the church was virtually full. After the service, the congregation was kindly served with tea/coffee and hot cross buns by friends from the host church. Some people sat in the Community Room but others were able to sit outside and enjoy the sunshine.

Easter Sunday – The traditional Easter Sunday Sunrise Service at Hadleigh Castle was held at 5.45am in time for the sunrise shortly before 6.00am. It was another beautiful day with hardly a breath of wind. I am not usually an early morning person but it was worth getting up just to hear the amazing sound of the birdsong whilst walking to the castle. The short service was led by Major Marian Fripp of the Salvation Army Hadleigh Temple and several members of the Temple Band were present to provide musical accompaniment. Thank you to Major Marian for leading us in worship and to the musicians for playing.



Good Friday service at St Michael's



Good Friday refreshments



Easter Sunday Sunrise Service

Malcolm Brown

URC News

URC minister to host political series

Rev. Jenny Mills, United Reformed Church Secretary for Education and Learning, is to take over as host of 'Politics in the Pulpit?', a lectionary-based preaching resource, launched by the Joint Public Issues Team in 2020.

In free weekly 30-minute episodes, Jenny will explore how reclaiming the justice issues present in biblical texts helps us to be good news in the world today. The episodes, aimed at helping preachers prepare relevant and engaging sermons, will feature a wide range of voices from different church traditions and experiences, but who are all passionate about justice and preaching.

Each week, for the following Sunday, Jenny and a different guest will discuss the political dimensions present in the Scriptures and reflect on how they connect with the week's current news and our role in the Kingdom of God.

Explaining what made her take on this role and what she hopes to achieve, Jenny said: "The Bible is a political text in so many ways and being asked to host sessions where we connect our everyday faith in this troubled world with the stories, events and teachings in the Bible, seemed an opportunity too good to miss! Plus, I love a good chat! I hope to help contributors to offer their thoughts and reflections in a space that is honest and authentic."

The podcast is also available as a weekly video on YouTube too. As well as getting to see Jenny and her guests, the video offers subtitles, providing greater accessibility for deaf people or rail commuters who have forgotten their earphones! Catch up on previous episodes at <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicsinthepulpit>. Find more about Politics in the Pulpit at <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicsinthepulpit>.

URC achieves 100% Eco Synods on World Earth Day

The United Reformed Church (URC) is celebrating a significant milestone! All 11 Synods in England and the National Synod of Wales have now signed up to become an 'Eco Synod'. This is part of the wider commitment made by the Church in 2019 to act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life.

Eco Synod is part of A Rocha UK's Eco Church scheme, which sees churches and synods awarded bronze, silver, or gold status as they take action to improve their environmental footprint. The Eco Synod criteria were developed in partnership with the URC to help and encourage Synods as they supported local churches to engage in creation care through Eco Church, as well as to look at Synod-level activities and policies.

World Earth Day is celebrated around the world and this year the theme was 'Invest in Our Planet', where people were encouraged to take part in activities to care for the planet, like picking up litter and planting trees.

Almost 300 URC churches – almost 25 per cent of the total – are now registered with the Eco Church programme. Ninety-three of these have achieved bronze awards and 38 silver awards. Three churches have achieved gold awards, with St John's Marsh Green as the first URC church to do so in 2019, followed by Tavistock URC and Emmanuel Church in Bungay in 2021.

The URC West Midlands Synod in 2021 was the first to achieve a Bronze Eco Synod Award. The award encourages Synod-level change and complements the local church-level engagement with Eco Church.

School plants 50 trees for URC's jubilee

A wonderful celebration of the United Reformed Church's 50th anniversary has been held at Barrow URC School in Clitheroe. On 1 April, families, friends and members of the community were invited to help schoolchildren plant 50 trees, each marking 50 years of the denomination.

The tree planting was followed by fun tea party, and a reading of Celebrate Together – the all-age book specially commissioned for the jubilee – by Dr Sam Richards, Head of Children's and Youth Work and Lorraine Webb, Programme Officer (Children's & Youth Work). A copy of the book was given to each child to take home, and a special assembly was also held with prayers led by Rev. Adam Woodhouse, Minister of Clitheroe URC.

The planting of 50 trees, was the start of a North-Western Synod-wide initiative to plant 500 trees across the jubilee year.

Computer Corner

Handling the past; handling our inheritance

Interesting video

This is a video of the talk given at the 2022 URC Ministers' gathering by David Cornick on the history of the United Reformed Church. David is a URC Minister who has served in local churches and chaplaincies, as Director of Training for the South Western Synod, as Tutor in Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge, as Principal of Westminster College, as General Secretary of the URC and General Secretary of Churches Together in England.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UM9P4a_LVhE

Ukraine: The Latest

Interesting podcast

A daily podcast on the latest developments in the war in Ukraine, as analysed by Telegraph reporters. Each podcast is around 45 minutes to an hour in length. The podcast has a very high 4.8 out of 5 rating.

URL: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/ukraine-the-latest/id1612424182>

Avidemux

Useful free software

Avidemux is a free video editor designed for simple cutting, filtering and encoding tasks. I use it for trimming bits off the start and end of videos. It supports many file types, including AVI, DVD compatible MPEG files and MP4, using a variety of codecs (encoders-decoders). Unlike many of the recommendations in this column, Avidemux is available for MAC OS X and Linux in addition to Microsoft Windows.

URL: <http://avidemux.sourceforge.net>

Word Search – Anniversaries

Inspired by the forthcoming Queen's Platinum Jubilee...

Z	N	Z	W	X	I	E	A	B	N	B	Y	Z	A	R	K	V	Z	N	R
T	E	I	W	G	C	I	W	Y	U	R	L	J	X	N	P	F	L	F	L
J	O	A	Q	Q	S	V	C	D	L	J	R	W	L	E	I	Q	G	E	K
Q	I	M	R	K	V	Z	Y	A	D	W	A	N	W	R	E	H	Y	R	Y
T	X	K	V	L	N	A	C	V	L	L	E	B	X	J	E	J	C	Z	L
G	B	Z	S	I	Y	E	D	K	X	K	P	V	I	E	N	V	I	I	B
R	E	L	A	S	G	Q	N	Y	B	U	R	R	B	V	Z	A	L	K	K
M	U	N	I	T	A	L	P	S	N	F	O	D	R	T	U	P	H	I	N
D	W	Q	T	E	C	I	T	C	W	N	Y	I	L	F	L	Z	B	R	S
V	V	N	M	W	F	E	R	G	Q	A	C	A	A	F	N	B	B	E	F
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J	R	O	N	L	N	C	B	O	N	I	F	O	O	P	X	G	Z	A	B
E	N	A	N	B	M	G	E	L	C	O	N	N	C	V	X	E	A	P	T
Y	R	R	X	X	W	C	Z	D	E	G	H	D	D	N	M	N	W	C	C
G	Q	I	E	L	Y	N	A	P	W	R	D	M	A	E	F	A	R	S	D
F	P	D	H	P	E	V	B	X	E	Z	N	O	R	B	V	Y	P	Q	S
U	T	U	R	P	P	N	E	N	I	L	Q	A	Z	C	S	Z	T	N	E
W	K	X	O	M	P	O	W	G	T	L	L	V	U	T	N	I	T	D	R
H	Z	H	G	Z	K	A	C	B	L	D	D	I	A	E	X	O	M	T	M
Z	A	G	C	Q	M	Q	S	C	A	V	R	L	O	U	J	S	U	R	K

BRONZE
CHINA
COPPER
CORAL
CRYSTAL
DIAMOND
EMERALD
GOLD
IRON
LACE
LINEN
PAPER
PEARL
PLATINUM
RUBY
SAPPHIRE
SILK
SILVER
STEEL
TIN

Words may appear in any direction including diagonally, back to front and upside down.

WHAT'S ON

A round-up of future events in the area

Sat 14 May 2022	- Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall. Every 2 nd Sat.
ditto	- Beat & Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music with coffee, tea and snacks. Free admission.
ditto	- Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Every 2nd Sat.
Tue 17 May 2022	- Happy Feet Walking Group - 90-minute circular walk around the Hadleigh Farm estate. Meet at The Hub café, Chapel Lane, Hadleigh. Starts at 1.00pm. Held every Tue. All welcome. No need to book.
Wed 18 May 2022	- Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath, from 10.30am to 11.45am. Held every Wed.
Thu 19 May 2022	- Poetry Reading Group at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm - the poems of Simon Armitage. Every 3 rd Thu of the month. All welcome.
Fri 20 May 2022	- Benfleet Art & Craft Club at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 1.00pm to 3.30pm every Friday. Established 1945. New members welcome.
ditto	- Craft & Knitting Club at Hadleigh Library, 12.30pm to 2.30pm every Friday. Meet others who are passionate about craft and enjoy a chat.
ditto	- The Westwood Singers (WI Choir) Concert - 'Music in May' with guests the Old Chimers at Hadleigh Methodist Church, Chapel Lane. Starts at 2.30pm. Suggested donation £6.00, includes refreshments.
Fri 27 May 2022	- Fish & Chip Lunch at St Michael's Church at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath. Cost £4. To book, phone Sue Croucher on 07902 463829.
Sat 28 May 2022	- Queen's Platinum Jubilee event at St James the Less Church from 10.00am. Plant stall, refreshments and raffle.
ditto	- Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-In at Hadleigh Library. Bring along old photos and documents for scanning, chat about your memories of the area. Books for sale. From 10.30am to 12 noon.
ditto	- Love Your Library Jubilee Day at Hadleigh Library. Jubilee-themed activities for children and adults.
Thu 2 Jun 2022	- Music in the Park at Priory Park Bandstand (free): 1.00pm to 2.30pm ~ Southend Band; 3.00pm to 4.30pm ~ Salvation Army Band 5.00pm to 6.00pm ~ Might Brass Jam.
Sun 5 Jun 2022	- Queen's Platinum Jubilee Picnic in the Park at John Burrows Recreation Ground from 11.00am to 4.00pm.
Sat 11 Jun 2022	- Hadleigh Gardening Association Summer Show at Hadleigh Methodist Church Hall. Viewing from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Refreshments and raffle.
Sun 12 Jun 2022	- Rayleigh Trinity Fair in Rayleigh Town Centre from 11.00am to 4.00pm (main stage). Windmill open from 10.30am to 4.30pm.
Sat 18 Jun 2022	- Hadleigh Heritage presentation 'A Padgett Postcard Local Tour' by Malcolm Brown at St James the Less Church at 11.00am. Doors open at 10.30am for refreshments. Admission £3.00.

More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighsex.info>