

# FOREST EDGE NEWS

The newsletter of the Forest Edge Benefice

Ramsden - Leafield with Wychwood - Finstock with Fawler - Wilcote

www.forestedgebenefice.co.uk

Michaelmas 2021

Edition: 275

## VOLUNTEERS OPEN ROMAN VILLA SITE



*English Heritage staff and volunteers at the Roman Villa site in East End*

Lovers of history were in for a treat over the weekend of the 11th/12th of September at the North Leigh Roman Villa; volunteers opened the shelter containing the splendid mosaic, answered questions about the historical context of the villa and allowed handling of Roman finds; the mosaic itself was also cleaned by English Heritage conservators. Although the site is managed by English Heritage, a very active group of local volunteers regularly undertake tasks such as site maintenance, public relations, research and guided tours of the villa.

The North Leigh Roman Villa volunteer group (NLRV) usually meets on the last Wednesday evening of the month. Anyone interested in joining the group may contact [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com) for further information.

### Forest Edge Benefice Church Services

#### Sunday 10th October

10.30am, Holy Communion, CW,  
Ramsden  
(Harvest Festival)

#### Tuesday 12th October

10.00am Harvest Festival with  
Finstock School  
Finstock Church

#### Sunday 17th October

10.30am, Holy Communion, CW,  
Finstock  
(Harvest Festival)

10.30am, Morning Light, non-Eucharistic  
Family Service, Leafield

#### Sunday 14th October

10.30am, Holy Communion, CW,  
Ramsden  
Benefice Service

#### Sunday 31st October

10.30am, Holy Communion, BCP, Wilcote  
All Saints' Day – with the reading of the  
names of departed loved-ones

#### Sunday 7th November

10.30am, Holy Communion, CW, Leafield

#### Sunday 14th November

Remembrance Sunday – Services TBC

#### Sunday 21st November

10.30am, Holy Communion, CW,  
Finstock

10.30am, Morning Light, non-Eucharistic  
Family Service, Leafield

#### Sunday 28th November

Advent Sunday – Services TBC

#### Every Friday

6.30pm Evening Prayer  
St. Peter's, Wilcote

At this time of year, the Aster (*Aster nova-belgii*) blooms, and it has become known as the Michaelmas Daisy. The Michaelmas Daisy comes in many colours, from white to pink to purple. An old verse goes:

The Michaelmas Daisies, among dede weeds,  
Bloom for St Michael's valorous deeds.  
And seems the last of flowers that stood,  
Till the feast of St. Simon and St. Jude.



A very warm welcome to this latest edition of the Forest Edge News!

No doubt regular readers will have noticed the new format - at the end of July we bade farewell to John Hook, who retired from his comfy but well-worn editor's chair. We salute John for his years of service - and also his wonderful crosswords which kept so many of us entertained (and scratching heads) throughout his tenure. Thank you John!

A brief introduction to your new editor - my name is Arthur MacGregor Young, I have lived in the Wilcote area all my life apart from university and some years in London, my mother's family have ties to Wilcote Grange (where we lived formerly) that go back to 1937. We now reside at Shaken Oak Farm, which actually lies just over the border in Hailey parish (sshhh!), but quite a few folks within the Benefice will know me since I attend services in all four of its parishes. My background is in music, history and writing, and I also lead a service of Evening Prayer every Friday at my "home" church of St. Peter's, Wilcote. I am discerning a vocation to more formal ministry within the Church.

As a (comparatively) younger member of the local Church community, both in age and my time worshipping with you, I am very joyful to be given the opportunity of editing this newsletter. Let me explain a little more about some of the changes you will see as the months go by.

Firstly, the FEN will be tied more closely with the liturgical (Church) calendar - simply put, there will be slightly fewer issues per year but they will each be tied into a particular season, all of which have significance for both the changing seasons around us and the Christian story - Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Trinity; each will see an issue, with perhaps a couple more like this one to "fill in the corners". My aim is to therefore have each issue linked thematically to these seasons as we experience them, as communities together and as individual Christians discerning God in our lives - reflecting on the world around us and our own stories.

This leads to my second point, which is that this is very much *your* newsletter - it is designed to inform, entertain and, if not actually educate, to at least pique your curiosity and interest. I would hope that everyone who reads this understands that they can contribute not just news items, but also reflections, photos, poems or anything else they wish to share. As editor I am particularly interested in publishing content concerning the natural world and environmentalism, local history, charity work and faith.

Lastly, we will be returning to a print run ASAP - in fact this very issue may see a limited pressing. Besides leaving copies in the churches of the Benefice, FEN will also be available in each of the pubs in the villages and any community spaces. If you'd like to assist in delivering, please contact me at [forestedgenews@gmail.com](mailto:forestedgenews@gmail.com).

Enjoy this issue, and I hope to see you soon - either around the villages and countryside that we call home, or in worship together.

### An Autumn Blessing

Blessed are you, autumn,  
season of unavoidable endings.  
You show us how letting go  
can be a glorious, joyful practice  
with your spectacular colours.  
You model how to hold  
paradoxes with grace -  
the balance living and dying,  
relinquishing and receiving,  
gathering and sharing.  
You know that death is not  
an ending, but a passage,  
a transformation into new life.  
May we learn these lessons well:  
to celebrate with abandon  
to practice reverence  
to surrender completely  
to embrace tenderly  
to love without regret.

- Wendy Janzen



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## Michaelmas



At Michaelmas we remember God's messengers and the ways in which God looks over, protects, and guides us. The day itself was important in the medieval calendar. Churches dedicated to St Michael would have been celebrating their patronal feast day, but in England and elsewhere this was also one of the quarter days - the four days marking the equal divisions of the year. As such, it was a day for settling debts and hiring servants. Michaelmas tended to mark the end of the harvest season, so it was a time for celebrating the harvest with feasts and for looking towards the approach of winter's darkness. Michaelmas also saw one of the strongest of the annual food traditions, with goose being the customary food to be eaten on this day - a custom that may be medieval or slightly post-medieval in origin. We are blessed with a church dedicated to St Michael within the Benefice of course, the magnificent St Michael and All Angels in Leafield designed by George Gilbert Scott and built in the 1860s. Please take a moment to pray for the vestry team of St Michael's or hold them in your thoughts around this time of their patron saint.



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## A Seasonal Reflection...



All around us in the Forest Edge are the signs of harvest season - straw bales stacked high, fields of stubble or freshly ploughed soil. Newly arrived too are the first tokens of autumn - leaves draining of green chlorophyll and changing colour to copper and bronze, mist and fog in the early morning, the days shortening and the sun's path across the sky lowering.

The East window of the chancel of St Peter's, Wilcote depicts a parable of Jesus most apt for this time of year - the parable of the sower, told here in stained glass. Perhaps the most memorable of Biblical allegories, the sower casts seed which falls, almost haphazardly, on four different soils - on rocky, on shallow, on soil which is also choked with thorns and weeds, and lastly on the good fertile soil.

The season we are now in allows us to contemplate harvest, to reflect on what is bountiful in our lives and hearts, and what is not. This is also the first comparatively "normal" autumn since the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus perhaps feels even more significant for us. How have we fared during a particularly stressful and perhaps painful or depressing time for families, communities and our faith?

It is often said that this story of Jesus might equally be called the "parable of the soils" - and by honestly analysing ourselves through this story we find that our faith is in fact a dynamic medium, through which we cultivate a loving relationship with God. Like good compost, it needs tending and replenishing to nourish the seed. It is transformative and evolving. It is a wondrous process in our lives.

While faith is indeed a gift from God, it is also our responsibility to tend to it, to be fertile. There are many ways in which we do this, and going to church is but one of them. Being more compassionate, listening more, practicing humility and gratefulness. Taking just five minutes from our day to be genuinely quiet. Praying for others, or just holding them in our thoughts and wishing them comfort, release from care, and for their good health.

There is another dimension to this parable of course - the sower casts seed everywhere and anywhere, apparently heedless of where it will fall, on good soil or bad. Since this is a parable, we may want to entertain the possibility that the sower throws seed like this in order to suggest that "anywhere" is, in the final analysis, the arena of God's care and redemptive activity. This sower throws seed not only on good soil, but also amid the rocky, barren, broken places, to suggest to us that God's vision for the world is itself often apprehended in the realm of the inhospitable and fractured.

Ultimately perhaps, this parable is not so much about good soil as it is about a *good sower*. This sower is not so cautious and strategic as to throw the seed in only those places where the chances for growth are assured. Drawing such a conclusion should give us all pause to think - is there any place or circumstance in which God's seed cannot sprout and take root?

*A. P. MacGREGOR YOUNG*

### **IN OUR FOUR PARISHES**

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## LOCAL NEWS BULLETIN

- Ramsden Parish Council voted at a recent EGM against a proposed solar farm situated on land adjacent to the village. Concerns were raised about location, visual impact, potential destruction of archaeology and disruption to surface water runoff. WODC have yet to decide on the application - please visit their website planning portal and search for REF: 21/02473/FUL for further information and updates on this proposal.
- Following the sad death of Clive Cowen in July Ramsden PC have a vacancy - if you feel called to fulfill this role, please contact Clerk Jon Gammage at pcclerk@ramsdenvillage.co.uk
- On Monday the 11th of October at 6:30pm, a group of Leaffield residents seeking to overturn Burford town council's controversial HGV ban will demonstrate outside the Corn Exchange in Witney. The current ban forces HGV drivers to divert through the smaller villages creating both hazards and disruption for drivers and farmers.

N.b. Please contact the editor if you have a news item for this section - forestedgenews@gmail.com

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## WYCHWOOD FOREST TRUST NEWS AND EVENTS

The charity, formerly known as The Wychwood Project, held a most successful Forest Fair at Foxburrow Wood on Sunday the 22nd of August. Not only did organisers and attendees uphold a great Forest tradition, but over £9,000 was raised for the charity.

As autumn sets in, the Trust are offering a number of courses and activities that may be of interest, including:

- **Hedgelaying Course (beginners welcome)**

Saturday 16 October, £45  
10am-4pm  
Foxburrow Wood, Witney

Learn the rural craft of hedgelaying with an experienced local hedgelayer at Foxburrow Wood, Witney. No experience necessary, all tools and equipment will be provided. Tuition will include: tool use, preparing the hedge, laying, staking and binding.

Places are limited to 6 people

- **Wychwood Walling Course for Beginners**

Wednesday 3 November, £45  
10am-4pm  
Foxburrow Wood, Witney

On this beginners' course you will learn about: stripping down a wall, grading and sorting stone, base stones, building stones, throughs and toppers. Using local stone and local methods you will learn the tools and techniques necessary to build a dry stone wall in the Cotswold style.

Places are limited to 6 people.

- **Winter Tree Identification**

Sunday 27 November, £10 (children free)  
1-3pm  
Singe Wood

Brush up on your winter tree identification with an expert in this two-hour beginner's course at Singe Wood. No experience needed. You'll learn to identify common local trees by their bark, buds, shape and other features in this interactive session.

No dogs please. Children are welcome to accompany their responsible adult.



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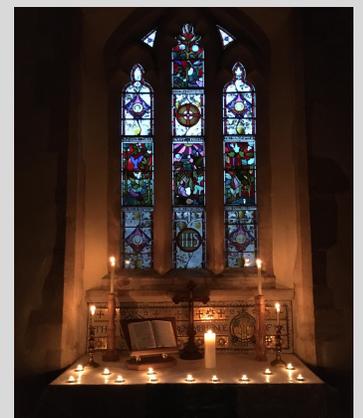


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EVENING PRAYER AT ST PETER'S,  
WILCOTE

Every Friday at 6:30pm

A time for contemplation and reflection at the end of the working week.

## FROM THE REGISTER

### WEDDINGS

Stacey Louise Williams and  
Mark Gardner  
26th June 2021  
St Michael's, Leaffield

Sophie Elizabeth Neal and  
Charles Patrick Davies  
15th July 2021  
St Michael's, Leaffield

Victoria Ann Morris and  
Liam Robert Fernley  
31st July 2021  
Holy Trinity, Finstock

### BAPTISMS

Rocco Charles Fowler-Harris  
4th July 2021  
St Michael's, Leaffield

Jaxon John Lonsdale  
22nd August 2021  
Holy Trinity, Finstock

Arthur Peter MacGregor Young  
29th September 2021  
St. Peter's, Wilcote

Thomas William Crockford  
19th September 2021  
Holy Trinity, Finstock

Rory Mason Terry Bishop  
3rd October 2021  
St Michael's, Leaffield

### FUNERALS

Clive Cowen  
31st July 2021  
St James', Ramsden

Terrance Denis Howse  
8th September 2021  
Holy Trinity, Finstock

## Local Lens



Straw bales in the mist below Shaken Oak Farm - A. P. MacGregor Young



Sunrise above Ramsden - Aimee Drake

*Please send the editor your photos of the local area to feature here in the next edition!*

