

In Touch



*with St James the Less Church, Penicuik
& St Mungo's Church, West Linton*

**A quarterly magazine for all of us
Issue 20 - May 2025**

Ascension, Pentecost, Ordinary Time



Reflections from the Rectory

Reflecting: A Necessary Spiritual Exercise

In my *Last Word* in the previous edition of *In Touch* I quoted Socrates who said, “*The unexamined life is not worth living.*” Several people commented on this and the spiritual journey that can lead to personal growth and a deepening relationship with God through Jesus. There was a common understanding that, with God’s help, we can venture into a process of reflection that gives us life, opens up new ways of being and thinking, and leads to spiritual and personal growth. It is also a useful tool to aid us in following the way of Christ, and not finding ourselves way off track and wondering how we got there (or here).

One such model starts with a quiet time of reflection on a recent personal experience or something that directly concerns you. You are invited to sit with it and see where God and the Holy Spirit was present or absent in that experience. You may be able to have a sense of the Holy Spirit’s guidance or an absence of presence. You may be able to think of a piece of scripture that can help you see more clearly; giving you insight or understanding. It is easy to become overly self-critical. This would run counter to the teachings of Jesus. You are invited to note what you did, to explore it, perhaps in a playful manner, to say to yourself, “*Well, that was interesting, why did I react like that?*” You will learn much more about yourself if you are not too judgemental.

The second stage is to think about what you would do differently in the future, either to positively affect the existing situation, or, if that time has passed by, how you would wish to handle it in the future, noting the emotions and feelings that sit alongside such a resolve. This is a stage of discernment: a time for gentle and prayerful meditation, to explore the insights you have gained, and intentionally choosing a different way in the future.

The third stage is to step out and experience life once more, and explore the experiences and concerns that you now have. This sets you up for a further cycle of reflection, prayer, discernment and so on.

This whole process maintains a clear focus on being, on your wholeness (recognising the light and dark sides of our character), and leads to action based on your personal reflections, which are based on your personal reflections.

There is an Ignatian approach to self-examination and personal spiritual growth called the Daily Examen. It is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God; more an attitude than a method. It is a time you set aside to discern God's presence and direction. The key questions of self-examination are: '*Where did I experience God's presence today?*', and '*Where did I struggle, or feel an absence of God?*' There are quite a few YouTube videos that guide you through the Daily Examen in as little as five minutes (although I think fifteen to twenty minutes is far more effective). If you only have five minutes a day, preferably in the evening, one of the short videos is a good starter.

The Epiphany Group run excellent courses in the Ignatian tradition. Look at <https://www.epiphanygroup.org.uk/> for more information.

The Cursillo movement offers people of faith a chance to have a long weekend of faith renewal, a sort of booster to help refresh and refocus your faith. There will be a long weekend this October. If you are interested in attending, please let me know.

The Cursillo movement offers a model of prayer, study and action, which people who have been on a Cursillo weekend are encouraged to adopt afterwards. The sections are:

Prayer: When have you been aware of God's presence? What have you felt you need to pray about? How have your prayers been answered?

Study: Is there anything you have seen or heard recently that has caused you to pause and reflect? What have you learned from other people? How are you becoming more open to God's will for you?

Action: In what ways have you tried to live a more Christ-like life? What plans have you felt led to make recently? Have you had any unexpected encounters or opportunities to share God's love?

These are some ideas to help people of faith continue to journey with Christ and follow his way. I hope you find these useful. If there is sufficient interest we could start a group to support people using the Daily Examen or the Cursillo approaches. Let me know if that interests you.

Nick Bowry

News from the Congregations

Happy Birthday to Nick!

A small birthday cake with (thankfully) only two candles on it! Lovely to have Alison Bowry (my sister) with me today in church and to celebrate the rest of my birthday too.



Loss and Celebration of Life

While celebrating birthdays and new life (next page), we are mourning the deaths of two much loved and very active members of our St James Congregation who have died in recent weeks: Mona Bennett and Lynda Smith. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Their eulogies can be found on pages 8 and 22, respectively. We pray for comfort for their families and all those who loved them and give thanks for their lives.

News from the Congregations cont'd



Welcome Nathan!

Baby Nathan, born to Martin and Emma Phillips on 9 March 2025; a fourth grandchild for Richard and Georgina

Georgina Phillips



And Welcome Zach!

Let me introduce Zach(ary) Zikakis, my new grandson. A son to Rachel (McGavin) and Richard.

Born on 1 March 2025. A new cousin for Maisie, Finlay and Lockie.

Dy Harvey

Penicuik Witch Trials

On Saturday 26 April 2025, there was a ceremony to unveil a memorial to those who were accused of witchcraft in the Penicuik area and were put to death. There is an information board and the small, but beautiful, memorial to the eleven women who were tried for Witchcraft, just inside the gates to St Mungo's (now known as Trinity Community) churchyard (see photos on the next page), which can be accessed at any time. These form part of the Penicuik Heritage Trail.

The Annals of Penicuik, a volume first published by the author John J Wilson in 1891, includes, in Chapter IX, stories of witchcraft and how the accused were dealt with. In my opinion, the following quote is still as relevant today as it was when it was written:

It is difficult for us, in the days in which we now live, to realise the fact that at one time, not only in our own parish, but throughout Scotland, belief in witchcraft was universal. It is still more difficult to believe that numbers of wretched creatures of both sexes were accused of this imaginary crime and put to death, in many cases with cruel tortures.

I was born and brought up in Penicuik, but there was no mention of this part of the town's history during my schooling. I'm keen to learn more and suggest that a visit to this part of the Penicuik Heritage Trail would be of interest to you too.

Marion Mather



The beautiful memorial plaque in Penicuik Trinity Community Church Yard, naming and honouring the eleven Penicuik women who were wrongly accused of witchcraft.



*Christian Thomesoun Isabel Dryburgh Margaret Smaill
Janet Bishop Jenet Pennycuik Margaret Cuthbertson
Anne Pursell Christian Simson
Christian Purdie Agnes Elphinston Mareon Twidie*

Fabricated by Penicuik
Old Iron Works Engraving

Mona Bennett

26 May 1933 - 3 March 2025



Mona's 91st birthday with grandsons Andrew and Robbie

Mona Bennett's sons Roger and Richard, and all the family, would like to thank everyone from St James the Less that both helped with and attended her funeral service on 24 March 2025. The church and her faith were a large part of her life, and seeing many friends there and at the Craigie helped make a difficult day as good as it could be under the circumstances. More than one person commented that she would have enjoyed the get together of family and friends, which is very true.

This is the the eulogy, spoken by Nick Bowry on the day.

Mona was born Mona Robinson on the 26 of May 1933, the second of three sisters to Billy and Jenny Robinson, in Netherton, part of the small coastal town of Maryport in Cumbria. There are photos of her as a small child with her sister Joyce, who was three years older, and like children of that age the younger one wants to do everything the older one gets to do. So much so, that when Joyce and their best pal and next door neighbour Mary started school just around the corner, Mona used to go and hang on the school railings, until eventually she was allowed to start school still aged three!

Younger sister Olga came along just before the family moved to the bigger town of Workington, to a large house right next to the bus station at the main crossroads in the town centre. They were joined by Mona's grandparents living in that house; her grandfather had been a train driver, and Mona used to come home from school and tell him everything she'd learned that day.



Mona aged 14 months and big sister Joyce 14-7-1934

In her words it was an idyllic upbringing, though she would recount that the first time she was ever out in the dark was going to get her gas mask issued as World War II broke out.

When she was ten years old, in the middle of the war, her first brother Brian was born, and Keith followed soon after to complete the family.

At eleven years old, Mona passed exams to gain entry to the Grammar school and was awarded a scholarship to enable that to happen. In her own words, she enjoyed school very much, especially Maths, English and Games. She started playing tennis in the evenings in the summer

months in post war double summer time when it was light until after 10pm, and she would take her brothers with her.

She was always interested in reading and poetry, and indeed could still recite poetry (in her later life) that she learned at school, including the Wordsworth poem *Daffodils*, a lifelong favourite of Mona's (*this was read out during the service*). It reminded her both of the carefree youthful times and her beloved Lake District.

She left school at sixteen years old, there were no thoughts of university in those days, and went to work at the Coal Board offices at Bankfield in Workington for the princely sum of eleven shillings a week. That's fifty-five pence **a week** for those that are under fifty years old! She was sent to night school to do secretarial studies and learned to touch type and write shorthand, something that she went on to use throughout her life.

It was there in 1950 that she met Ronald Bennett, who was apparently “a bit of a dish” according to Mona and her office colleagues! Ron asked her out to a dance - or to be more accurate, he had to ask her father Billy who initially refused, but Mona sweet-talked her mother into persuading her father to let her go. There was a strict “be home by 10” rule though, and Mona told of regularly running home after the dances to make it back on time! They both loved music, the swing and dance bands of that time, crooners Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett, and that preference for music rather than TV provided the soundtrack for years to come.



Mona and Ron 1957 on their wedding day

Love flourished and after saving for seven years, they got married and bought a house in September 1957. A little while later, Roger was born in 1961, and Mona stopped work to look after house and home as was the way then. She did start to play badminton, though, at the church hall in Workington, and her brother Brian tells of coming to babysit to let her get away to the club.

The coal industry in West Cumbria began to decline, and Ron was offered a Hobson’s choice move to Wigan to keep his job. This was a turbulent time for them, Mona was expecting Richard who was born just a few weeks before the move. The same thing happened after only six months in Wigan, and Ron was offered a job in Edinburgh which he took, but every week commuted the 250 miles, pre M6 or A74, staying in Edinburgh during the week and in Wigan at weekends. However after six months of doing that, the house in Penicuik was ready and the family moved up in November 1967.

They settled well and integrated into the church community of St James the Less, with Roger also singing in the choir here while Mona joined forces with Tilly Suttle (among others) in catering for church functions like harvest suppers and other occasions. First at the old hall in Croft Street, from a tiny kitchen, then at the new church hall here at the church where they even did the reception for Ralph and Jean Hindle's son's wedding. There's a classic picture of Mona and Tilly peering through the serving hatch! Mona also did the church cleaning here for thirty years, and took great pride in it with various



Tilly Suttle and Mona Bennett at the Church hall hatch

partners in the work including Patricia Clapperton and Margaret MacLennan, but sadly almost all of them are no longer with us.

Mona still enjoyed playing badminton, and with friends helped run the Carnethy badminton club on Monday or Tuesday evenings at both Cuiken school and the High school, organising the hire and being secretary. She continued playing competitively until retiring gracefully age sixty!

Throughout the 1970s, Mona kept her typing skills up to speed by typing theses for students of the Edinburgh University Arabic department. It was handy extra money and gave her a bit of stimulation. Once Ron retired, Mona applied for and got a job working in Edinburgh University Department of Politics. She enjoyed the work and the people, dealing with both the teaching staff and the students. Two of the notable students were Emma Simpson, the BBC correspondent, and our current First Minister, John Swinney. She continued to work there until Ron became ill in 1993 and she gave it up to look after him.



Siblings: Mona, Brian, Olga, Keith and Joyce

After Ron died in 1994, it could have left a big hole in her life, but typically, she looked on the positive, and began to travel, both with her sister Olga, and with Richard's Mother-in-Law Jessie. Some of the memorable holidays included going with Olga to the

Italian lakes, the north east USA seeing New York and Niagara Falls, and then another trip to the West Coast of San Francisco and Arizona. That trip included staying out in the desert overnight as part of an old style wagon train. But perhaps the thing that put them in an exclusive club for the wrong reason was being on an early morning pleasure flight to go over the Grand Canyon; they were almost there when the pilot announced they had been instructed to turn back. It was the 11 September 2001 and the tragic events of 9/11 had begun to unfold.

Happy trips with Jessie included several trips around the UK and to Lake Garda. On a memorable cruise from Edinburgh up round the Scandinavian Fjords, Mona and Jessie were astonished when they were the only ones that stayed up on deck on the Summer Solstice to see the midnight sun. The two Grandmas made a good team together, and were forever known as '*The Gangster Grannies*' after one memorable and hilarious Christmas game of charades.

She was not a fan of pop music or sport apart from her beloved tennis, but after Ron died she continued go to Knockhill to watch Roger racing motorcycles. She always watched from the hairpin as it was the slowest part of the track and she would not see the bikes at high speed.

Richard and Helen had their first son Andrew in 1999 and Robbie was born two years later in 2001. Becoming a grandmother gave Mona real focus and new energy, she was a fantastic help to Richard and Helen when the boys were young, picking them up from school and looking after them; she loved spending time with them and was always on hand to babysit. The boys used to love going to Penicuik for a sleepover where they knew they'd be spoilt! She took a keen interest in everything they were doing both in school and in sport. She would watch them play football as they grew up and was proud to see them both win cup finals with their respective teams.

When asked for their input, here were the things Andrew and Robbie remember about their Grandma

- A very large 'old persons' green clip-on sun visor in her Corsa car
- Learning and singing the Fernando Torres football song with her
- Her famous homemade shortbread and lemon curd
- Going on holiday with Grandma
- Her eightieth birthday in the Lake District where we had a rare Robinson family get together
- Being taken to the park when they first got their roller blades

In later years Mona began to lose her eyesight through Macular Degeneration, and had to give up driving at eighty-two years old, (ten years ago). This was a big blow, but still she was thankful that she was mentally sharp and learned to use new technology to help her enjoy life, including a talking watch, cooking scales and book player. She would also dictate emails to Roger through her ipad until 2022.

On the 4 February 2022 though, around midnight, she thought she'd just bring in some newly bought plants from the back of the house to shelter from the frost overnight. But she fell off the back steps onto her back on the patio, badly breaking her elbow. Unable to get up, she called for help but couldn't raise anyone.

By 4am she had said her prayers and was reconciled with it being the end, when neighbours Janis and Neil McCulloch saw that her outside light was on, then that the back door was open. They came to investigate and saved her life by finding her in the garden.

After a six month stay in hospital, and with a new elbow and some great care from our oft-maligned NHS, Mona got home again with carers coming in. She was happy to be living at home again and wanted to remain there until the end. Despite an increasing number of falls and the loss of her eyesight, she remained positive and determined to retain her independence. She would rarely grumble and always maintained "*I'm lucky to be so healthy*".

We must mention the care and compassion shown by her carers from Midlothian Homecare and McSense in the last two and a half years, who did everything for her with a cheery attitude, a laugh and sharing a joke with Mona. Huge thanks are also due to Dr Lutte and the team of district nurses from Penicuik Medical Practice who did their best to make her comfortable in the last six months.



Beautiful Flower arrangement for Mona Bennett's funeral

The will and determination she always had saw her through. Even when very weak and in her final days she was aware of people around her and conversations. When overhearing Andrew and Robbie talking about a young Hibs player who left to sign for a rival club, she whispered "*traitor*" much to the surprise and delight of the boys.

We hope you all have positive memories of Mona that you will keep when you think of her. As she used to say "*I feel grateful when I wake up in the morning!*" and take a few moments now to reflect and celebrate a life well lived.

Roger Bennett

St James the Less Fundraising May 2025



We held a very successful Daffodil Tea on 5 April 2025 which raised the incredible total of £945.46! Many thanks to all those who helped to make it a success, and thank you to those who came along to support it.

Our next fundraiser is a Strawberry Tea on Saturday 14 June 2025, 2pm-4pm in Trinity Community Church hall. As it was so successful last year, we'll stay with the same format: a strawberry cream tea then entertainment by Margo Falconer. Please put the date in you diary and bring your friends along.

Funds raised at Fellowship Lunches

2 March 2025 for Mary's Meals: £335

6 April 2-25 for Bishop's Lent Appeal: £295

We are always on the lookout for novel ways to raise funds so, if you have any ideas, please do let us know. If you'd like to run an event and need our assistance, we can do that too.

Talents Challenge

We are running the Talents Challenge again this year, and I do hope you'll consider what you might be able to do. If you're not sure how to put your ideas into actions, please ask and we'll be happy to support you. It doesn't have to be a major project which raises hundreds. Smaller amounts add up and we know that every penny counts!

Marion Mather

Daffodil Tea fundraiser photos



The wonderful home bakes and produce table



Gillian Little and Isabel Stenhouse



Kathleen Cox serving refreshments



Gill Murray, Katy Horton-Fawkes and Nick Bowry



Cicely McCulloch on the plants stall

The Cigarette

I came across a cigarette stub on the pavement the other day and it took me back to the days when smoking was common and even encouraged. Some people may remember the advertisements which appeared on many stations proclaiming '*Craven A is good for the throat*'. (Craven A was a well known tobacco brand).

When my husband, Philip, was sixteen his father gave him a pipe and taught him how to smoke it. Then in 1942 when he was eighteen he joined the army and in 1944 shortly after D Day he was among those who crossed the channel to fight the Germans in France. Rations were given out daily and always included a packet of cigarettes, known to help calm the nerves. That was when he became a cigarette as well as a pipe smoker.

After the war he carried on smoking both cigarettes and pipe. Forty cigarettes and two ounces of tobacco was the usual weekly purchase, though when life was particularly fraught that might not be quite enough.

When we lived in Edinburgh and he was Provost of the Cathedral, he often held meetings in his study. I would put out three or four ash trays beforehand and fight my way through a cloud of smoke to empty them when everyone had dispersed.

Philip was a relatively modest smoker compared to some. My sister, for example, was getting through up to forty a day at one time. I tried hard to become a smoker but failed to learn how to inhale without spluttering, but I would waft a lighted cigarette in the air at parties, hoping it made me look suitably sophisticated. So many dashing film stars would be photographed with a lit cigarette dangling from their fingers.

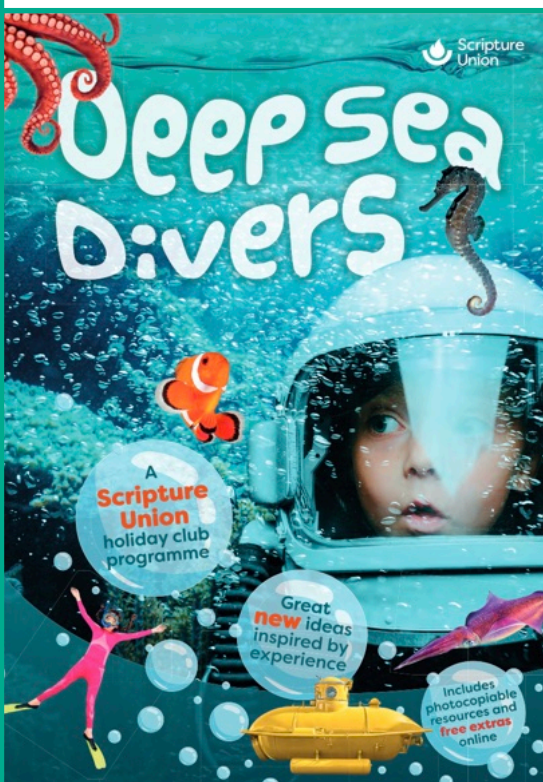
But to revert to Philip's story: in 1989 he had a massive heart attack, followed eventually, after much chivvying on my part, by a by-pass operation. He was then told that he **MUST** give up smoking. The only way to do this was to throw all his precious pipes (some ten of them, each with a different story) into the bin.

This was such a sad sight, and for years after that he would say "*I'd give anything for a good smoke*" and I would sympathise, knowing how calming a good smoke could be.

He lived for over twenty years after giving up smoking, so it was definitely a wise move, but I still feel a tinge of nostalgia when on rare occasions I see someone smoking and I still wonder where I put all those ashtrays.

Sue Crosfield

Scripture Union Summer Holiday Club (no smoking!!)



We have selected *Deep Sea Divers* as the theme for this year's holiday club using materials prepared by Scripture Union England/Wales.

It will be from 29 July to 1 August 2025 in Trinity Community Church Hall.

Our first meeting is on Wednesday 26 Feb 7pm in Trinity Community Church Hall.

Everybody who is interested in being part of the *Dive Team* or the *Support (prayer) Team* is invited to come along and receive more information. If you would like to give financially, then please see me (Marion Mather).

Marion Mather

Reflection of the last Season - Lent (but always relevant!)

Luke 4:1-13 - Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Reflection

It can be oddly difficult to find something different in texts as familiar as Luke's narration of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. Jesus would be very familiar with the history of migration, folk fleeing their homes, wandering in the desert. He would not remember the time he fled with his parents in fear of persecution - he was only wee at the time.

We are told that, led by the Spirit, Jesus is there being constantly tested, eating nothing; weakened in body and soul after forty days of this. The devil comes to tempt him with food - our basic need; with power (which seems to be food and drink to so many prominent leaders these days); and the promise of immortality. Each offer in turn is refuted by Jesus with words of scripture. I had not previously noticed the significance of the final words - when the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time. Jesus the MAN was to encounter much physical and mental suffering during his Passion and death, the MAN must have surely been sorely tempted to seek another path. Perhaps Jesus might have wished for the quiet life of a carpenter!

I began to wonder in what form the devil appeared. Safe to say not the traditional forked tail etc. of old religious illustrations. Was it in the guise of a fellow traveller, was it a mirage? Might it have been an external visualisation of Jesus' internal struggle - debilitated in body and spirit after fasting for so long? Temptation assumes many forms - the words of corrupt leaders, of false prophets, or from our screens. We are reminded to *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

We stand at the start of our journey through Lent, Christ's Passion and death, towards the glory of Resurrection. Some sources say the word Lent derives from Middle English *lente* - springtime; some, Lent from Old English *lencten* - a period of penitence and fasting; some, after an old English word meaning *lengthen* - because of the time of year when the days start to get longer as we approach Summer. Take your pick!

What is a journey? - originally that accomplished in a day, it now refers to travel taken over an indeterminate period. It can be a pilgrimage, a journey undertaken for a religious motive; such as the *Camino de Santiago*, or *Way of St. James*, which Nick regularly walks; the *Hajj pilgrimage* to Mecca is special to Muslims; the *Kumbh Mela* is a Hindu pilgrimage to bathe in the Ganges River in northern India.

We are not called to live our Christian life in a real desert, but encouraged to imagine these forty days as a time of testing and spiritual discernment. We are constantly being tested throughout our life's journey. The incessant barrage of dreadful news about war, famine, climate change, destruction of habitat, violence, the insidious evil effects of social media is enough to test anyone's faith. Many live with disease, incurable illness, poverty, mental illness - what hope have we?

It can be hard to make the right choices when overwhelmed by the pressures of daily life. But we have been given the power to do just that. Lent is a time to engage actively with our faith, scrutinising areas in our lives where we might be prone to temptation, and actively opting to nurture our spiritual growth through prayer, scripture study, and acts of service. We might try to change the pattern of our normal lives, which might include altering our diet somewhat to support a healthy lifestyle, considering how we treat others, being more aware of how our actions impact on our world. There is much supportive material to encourage us, as well as the Lent series which started on Monday 10 March. However, a good Lent is not just to be judged by a congregation doing a number of extra spiritual activities. It is a great opportunity for us to be reminded annually of the need to enter our own sort of desert. It is also a period to challenge our attitudes and behaviour towards our sisters and brothers in the community.

Luke emphasises Jesus' consistent reliance on scripture, using the phrase '*It is written to refute each temptation*', confirming the importance of grounding our faith in God's word - a theme common to all three texts.

A final thought: mention of the hymn *One more step along the world I go* might illicit a few groans from those who have worked in schools. But consider the simplicity of the final couplet:

'And it's from the old I travel to the new; keep me travelling along with you.'

Georgina Phillips

Extracted from Georgina's reflection for the first Sunday of Lent (9th March 2025; selected by Sue Owen)

Eulogy for Margaret Lynda Smith

26 March 1936 - 4 April 2025

(Lynda's son Matthew read this to the congregation at the celebration of her life on 16th April 2025)



Thank you all for coming, and it's wonderful to see so many people here to celebrate my mother Lynda's life. Some of you are family, but many of you know her from her time in Penicuik where she lived since 2011, when she moved here to be closer to Jenny and me and to care for my dad as his Alzheimer's progressed. In her time in Penicuik she made lots of new friends and led a wonderfully active retirement, singing in the choir here at St James, and travelling the Lothians to sing Taizé chants. She became involved in the Penicuik Community

Development Trust, volunteering at the Lost Garden, the Storehouse, the Pen-y-Coe Press, the Town Hall cinema, and perhaps most importantly, supplying cheese scones for the Town Hall open house on Saturday mornings. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in Penicuik for making mum so welcome and for all the new friendships she made here - I know in the last few weeks of her life she was astonished at the love and support she felt from so many of you: she genuinely couldn't believe she had made such a strong impression. It's typical of her, really - she was always fascinated by people and quick to find connections with them, but never really thought that she was interesting in herself, so she was taken aback by how many people expressed their love and friendship for her over the last few weeks.

Mum was born on the 26 March 1936 to Sylvia and Richard, and grew up in a lovely house called Mary Knowle near Blakedown in Worcestershire. She was the youngest of three sisters, Sue and Janet (Jay), and although Jay sadly passed away in 2020 and Sue isn't able to be with us today as the journey from Wells would be too far for her, we're very grateful that Sue's daughter Lucy is with us here today. We do have pictures of the three sisters from different times in their lives, which you will be able to see if you come along to the Craigie later on.

For a while, Sue and Jay were homeschooled by my grandmother (it was the start of the war) and so the sisters spent a lot of time together at home for the first few years of mum's life. Mum remembered her sisters putting on performances in the living room, and Sue recalls that when they were quite young, she and Jay made a badge for mum and pinned it to her, which read V.U.G, standing for '*very useful girl*'. Mum then went to a local primary school, followed by a year at a prep school in Dorset, and then to Cranborne Chase school, also in Dorset where she was a boarder. She remembered the school fondly and it was where she began to take an interest in classics - Latin and Greek - under the teaching of Anthony Brackenbury. She entered and won a prize for a Greek oration competition at the nearby Bryanston School, in which she recited Thucydides.

She applied for both Oxford and Cambridge, and always remembered being very daunted by her interview at Oxford with the formidable novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch, who began by asking mum which Russian novels she had been reading recently. She didn't get in to either university but decided to take a year off and go to Bristol to do a general degree focussing on Latin, Greek, Music and some English. She started at Bristol in 1953, and thoroughly enjoyed her time there, making several lifelong friends. She particularly enjoyed being in the madrigal society, which would meet once a week to sing madrigals and some sacred music, and went on tours, including to Germany where she remembered the group singing on board a boat as they cruised down the Rhine.

Once she graduated, she took an education certificate to become a teacher, and her first job was at Sidcote School, a Quaker boarding school a few miles outside Bristol. She thoroughly enjoyed her time there, and was becoming more and more involved in the folk dance and music scene. She had begun her interest while at university, and at the school she ran a folk dance club for students, and would frequently ride her Lambretta into Bristol to attend the folk dance club there.

She remembered being astonished at how the musicians in folk dance bands were able to play without any written music, and she took up the accordion in order to be able to play herself. She soon formed a band with friends from the school, calling themselves the Old Grey Cats. She also attended folk dance courses during the school holidays, and at a course in the New Forest she met my father, who was an accordionist himself and was playing the music for the course.

Mum then took a job at a grammar school in Bermondsey, in London, and moved up to London, staying in a flat in Hampstead above the tube station. She became engaged to my father in the November of her first year in London, though she remembers the fog being so thick that they weren't able to meet up for a week afterwards! They bought their first house together at 22 Horn Lane, Woodford Green and were married on 27 July 1963. The wedding was at St Chad's church in Chaddesley Corbett and the reception took place at her parent's house Mary Knowle. Lucy (mum's niece) was a bridesmaid and the Westminster Morris Men (for whom my dad was the musician) formed a guard of honour as they left the church before becoming 'lost' in the pub and being late for the reception! Their honeymoon took them to the Forest of Dean, and then to Sidmouth folk festival, where they were booked as part of a band. The local TV company filmed them and made a big deal of the fact they were on honeymoon, though sadly no footage survives.

When I was born in 1968, followed by Jenny the next year, mum stopped work for a couple of years and then went back to teaching part time. She taught at several schools in the local area, but spent the most time at Woodford County High School, where she enjoyed working until retiring.

As well as working as a teacher, she was also a very active volunteer, especially with the Manna Centre, a charity supporting homeless people in London. During this time she was also a stalwart of the choir at St Mary's church in Woodford – choral music was a key part of her life from university onwards, and I know how proud she was of her grandson Callum's achievement in getting into the National Youth Choir of Scotland.



After her retirement she and my father decided to move to Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire, a part of the world they both loved, and they lived there for several years until my dad's Alzheimer's became apparent. Then they moved up to Penicuik to be closer to us while caring for him, and she was also able to be very involved with her grandchildren Kirsten and Callum, which she loved. As I said earlier, mum made a very rich new life for herself in Penicuik, and was actively volunteering in the Pen-y-Coe press until a few weeks before her death. She was sadly diagnosed with cancer in February of this year, and my sister Jenny took her into her house to care for her in her last few weeks. During this time mum was genuinely astonished at the warmth of love she received from the community here - ever self-effacing, she couldn't believe she'd made such an impression on so many people.

We want today to feel like as much of a celebration as possible: mum had a rich and fulfilling life, full of enjoyment and friendship, and it's good to see so many of her friends here today. You are all welcome to come to Mortonhall crematorium after the service, where there will be a short service at 12.30 to say goodbye to mum; or to go straight on to the Craigie, where there will be food and drink. There are directions to both places in your Order of Service. Thank you ...

Matthew Smith

Poetry Corner

To Keep a True Lent

1. Is this a Fast, to keep
The larder lean,
And clean,
From fat of veals and sheep?

2. Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

3. Is it to fast an hour,
Or rag'd to go
Or show
A downcast look or sour?

4. No; 'tis a Fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.

5. It is to fast from strife.
From old debate,
And hate;
To circumcise thy life.

6. To show a heart grief-rent,
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;
And that's to keep thy Lent.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Shared by Georgina Phillips at the end of her reflection on the first Sunday of Lent (see page 19)

Of Truth and Flies

(A poem on fly fishing)

A still, clear November morning.
The lochan ringed with golden trees
Reflected in the mirrored pool
Give warmth and light more than
The shallow incident rays of autumn sun.

A line unfurls, arcing out over the waters
Settling gently, kissing the reflecting interface
Between cold clear water, and crisp clean air.
There presents the 'lie' – a sharp, curled, barbless abdomen
Dressed red body and ruff – dips into the water
Dark hairs clinging to the tension of the surface.

A piscine mind – always hungry, always eating
Always looking for an opportunity to feed – sees food...
And voraciously takes the lie – creasing water, twitching leader
In expectant moment arm muscles tighten
Rod tip lifted high, bowing towards an unseen opponent
Strike! – it's on – battle commences.



The line once lazily resting on the pool
Now taut describes a vector between two worlds
One of water and one of air.
Racing – tugging – pulling – snatched to and fro...
Adrenaline flows... arm wearies... smile remains
The vector shortens, and at times lengthens
As the war of will plays out.
But inexorably the line taken is more than is given out

Drawing fish and fisherman to waters edge
Soon, all too soon, man and fish are eye to eye
Surrendered to an encounter with each other
What will the final outcome be?

Warm hand reaches out and gently removes the lie
From the cold-blooded lip
Once a prisoner, now released, set free
Leviathan pauses then, flicks a tail – returns to the depths.
Until next time.

Resting on damp knees, a smile remains
Present at this blue pool, ringed with gold
Thankfulness flows for this place, this time, this moment
And the warm light of a clear, still November morning.

Andrew Gregg

*a poem that I wrote after a day's Fly Fishing one
Autumn*



Babyboomer recollections

Richard and I were discussing how folk will be remembering VE Day this month. I was born a few years after the war and spent some early years abroad, so there was little effect on me. Richard started reminiscing about his childhood, so I said "*you ought to write this down*" ... This resulted in Richard's article below. Perhaps it will strike a chord with some St James the Less folk. We would still very much like to have archival information about those whose families participated in WW2, as we know very little. Please contact Charlotte or me if you have any relevant photos etc which could be scanned and returned, thank you.

Georgina Phillips

I have no memory of World War 2. The Medway town where we lived and where my Father worked in a seaplane factory was a major and strategically important military-industrial complex. My Mother was evacuated to Kidderminster, famous for its carpet-weaving which was not a strategic industry. My parents re-united at the end of the war; I was born summer 1946. I grew up on an unfinished 1930s estate on farmland on the edge of town, where building work had stopped at the end of 1939 and did not resume until the mid-50s; by then, the original builder had ceased trading and the new houses were of much different post-war design and build.

Housebuilding had stopped a few doors up the road. The next side road had houses on one side only. Off it was another side road; the kerbs had been laid out; at the entrance there was road foundation, but it petered out in a hundred yards. At the beginning of the side road had been an allotment, but by the time I could go up there, on foot or my tricycle, it had been abandoned. Yet the rhubarb still flourished untended, with a heavy steam-collecting dome from some long-scrapped railway locomotive, used for forcing the rhubarb.

My maternal Grandparents lived two doors down from us, so, as soon as I was old enough to toddle on my own, I was in and out quite frequently. Both houses had enclosed walled back gardens, and garages with no car in them. Grandfather's garage had an old table with a manual bench grindstone, and as soon as I could turn the handle, I had endless fun making free 'sparklers' from old nails. A little later, our garage was let to a commercial traveller from along the road, for 2/6d a week. He had a small grey convertible two-seater with a dickie seat. There was little traffic on the roads; I remember even seeing a 'steamer' on the main road - a pre-WWI steam-engined lorry, still in service. Children wandered locally quite freely, and in and out of neighbours' houses.

I can scarcely remember a time when I could not read, nor learning to read. There was a large book with a swallow on the cover and glossy coated art paper pages of bird pictures, little Beatrix Potter books, and a reader on life in Pompeii! Long before I saw a live one, I knew a good deal about squirrels, and not only anthropomorphic ones. My Mother read to me from cheap readers from the newsagent, and I had a book on the discovery of prehistoric cave paintings by Three Brothers in France, who were searching for their lost dog after it fell down a hole in 1912. There was no television, but after lunch the radio had *Listen with Mother*, and later, at 5pm, *Children's Hour*.

There were fewer shop-bought toys than today, (much of Britain's shop-bought toy stock pre-WW2 came from Germany), but plenty of homemade toys. I had a pre-war German clockwork railway locomotive, but only a little track. And pre-war wooden building blocks, also German. There was a cargo ship which consisted of hull (about the size of the old *Eat Me* wooden date boxes seen at Christmas, which older readers probably remember) with a rectangular hollow space. The deck, in two parts, and various pieces of deckhouses, funnels, hold covers, and derricks, could be assembled. The ship had a large swastika on the side of the hull. Inside, hidden in the hull, was a break-back mousetrap, and a rod in the side of the hull could be pushed in to release the trap.

The loose parts of the ship then exploded as if the ship had been torpedoed! There was endless fun re-assembling the ship and repeating. Probably my Father made it from a design in a hobby magazine, as I've never before seen anything like it.

I can just remember the trolley buses, but soon they vanished and their cables were removed. As a pre-schooler, I was taken by bus across town to a tinker who worked under a railway arch, to have our leaking kettle mended. This was an era when things were repaired or re-used, and I watched my Father re-winding the heating element of a toaster with a length of Nichrome resistance wire. Having lived through the Depression and the war, folk were accustomed to saving things for re-use. From stamp-edging for re-using envelopes, to tobacco and sweet tins filled with salvaged nails and screws.

I was also taken to the Coal office when my Mother went to order coal, still on ration until 1956. When the coal was delivered, I was stationed by the lorry to count the sacks delivered, as coalmen had a habit of putting an empty sack on the ground "*on which to drop the next sackful*" (but actually, the sack was taken off the lorry directly onto his back). At the end of the delivery, the coalman would count the empty sacks with the housewife, and try to include the first empty sack as a delivery! Hence the need for an alert small boy to watch the coalman and keep count. Anthracite, for the kitchen heating stove, was not rationed.

Houses did not have central heating, and the bedroom fire was only lit in time of illness, and then rarely. My Father changed the simple grates downstairs to ones which would stay in overnight by putting the ashes on top of the coals, and closing the air vent, so in the morning it was only necessary to open the air vent and poke a few holes in the ash covering, instead of laying the fire afresh and using the gas poker to light it. Even so, a fire brick each side reduced the size of the grate for a smaller fire. My Mother put a potato on this fire brick to bake during the afternoon, and be ready for my tea when I came home from school in the winter.

Confectionary was rationed until 1953, but my sweet consumption was strictly rationed by money. The sweet shop had shelves behind the counter filled with jars of loose sweets, and choosing how to spend my few pennies was difficult.

I am (almost) a child of the National Health Service. Despite sweet rationing, National Dried Milk, American orange juice, cod liver oil capsules, and malt (which I still love, though not in whisky), I have not had good teeth. I had no fear of dentists though. I went to school with my dentist's two sons, and when very young, I always had a ride in his chair when we passed his surgery. During a bus strike, he took us to school in his car, and one morning when I had a loose tooth, he stopped the car, leaned back, and extracted the tooth! In the afternoon, with a straight face, he asked my Mother if she had heard about the emergency surgical operation performed in a nearby street? The Tooth Fairy paid 6d a tooth.

Milk was delivered to the doorstep in re-usable glass bottles. I can just remember Eric the milkman having a horse, which knew the round as well as Eric, but he soon changed to an electric milk float. On Saturday mornings he collected cash payment from customers, and had a waiting-list of small boys and girls to help him collect payment. He stayed in his milk float with the book, moving along the road as a couple of children ran back and forth collecting the payment and delivering the change - early education in cash-handling and simple arithmetic. At the end of the morning each child was paid 6d, and Eric was able to go home a good two hours earlier and less tired! Eric worked hard: in the afternoons he did painting and decorating. The baker, greengrocer, and rag-and-bone man continued to use horses until the end of their rounds, but the laundry always had a motor van, a pre-war van similar to Jones the Butcher's in *Dad's Army*.

To be continued.....

Richard Phillips

An audience with Pope Paul VI

The death of Pope Francis, just a day after our TV screens depicted the scenes as he toured the crowds of people gathered outside St. Peter's at Easter, instantly brought back memories of a family holiday in Rome in the Spring of 1971.



We were on our way to visit friends in the south of Italy and broke the journey to enjoy some sightseeing in Rome. My father had written to the Vatican, enquiring about the possibility of an audience, being careful to mention "*We are of the Congregational Church in Scotland, active members, and involved in ecumenical dialogue*

with friends in the Catholic church". Within a week, an envelope arrived, bearing the special postage stamps and postmark of the Vatican City. We could be included in an audience on 31 March 1971!

The next preparation was to decide on suitable outfits ... my father packed his best dark suit, my brother opted for school uniform. Mum had a grey 'costume' which she accessorised with a black handbag and black gloves, while I squeezed into a navy outfit and white blouse that I'd worn to a cousin's wedding a couple of years previously. I'd put on a few inches in height, so my knobby knees were on show, but it was still rather the age of the mini skirt.

The first surprise was the vast interior space inside St. Peter's and the second was the hundreds of people present for the General audience. We arrived early and were shown to our places on tiered seating under the dome.

I don't remember too much about the audience itself apart from His Holiness Pope Paul VI being carried in at shoulder height at the start. Perhaps I should have applied myself a little more during the two years of Latin at the start of my secondary education. Most of the speaking was conducted in Latin or Italian.

At one point, various groups were welcomed by name, in their own language, where upon the sisters from the convent at XXX or youth group from YYY would jump to their feet and applaud. Some waved and cheered. Quite a difference from the behaviour expected in church in protestant Scotland and I was relieved that the MacLeods from Edinburgh weren't mentioned by name.

The candles, the paintings, the marble floor and the splendid uniforms worn by the Swiss Guards all impressed me and we did feel privileged to be there.

Helen S.



*Helen and her mother Agnes
outside St Peter's in Rome, 1971.*

St Mungo's Report May 2025

There has been no vestry meeting since the last report and our next one is scheduled for Monday 19 May 2025.

We were able to offer the full range of services for Holy Week and we are particularly grateful to Peter for taking Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The spring flowers have been particularly good this year and our thanks go to the flower team for making the church so beautiful for the Easter day service.

Our thoughts now turn to the Whipman events which will be starting on 6 June.

For some time St Mungo's had our own magazine edited by my dear friend the late Collin Baxter. I am attaching Colin's Editorial from the first ever edition dated 1 March 2000.

Ian Kerry

Reflections on a Sunny Winter Morning

This village formerly and happily known as Linton Roderick, may have taken its name, as suggested by Will Grant in *The Call of the Pentlanders*, from the Christian Strathclyde King Roderick. So it has existed for at least a Millennium and a half! It has in these centuries seen many changes. It is seeing them now and not all for the good.

Walking in the Deepsyke Woods today, I fell in with a local personality who remarked that the current operations at Robinsland were like the land being raped. To many the scene is indeed depressing, and there is more to come.

The downside from the development is clear as a village increasingly becomes an overcrowded urban commuter sprawl. Is there any upside?

Well Eildon Homes are to build some homes which should be affordable to local residents. A light industrial unit may mean jobs. But what about compensating us for the loss of our quality of life in the village?

A new village hall, parking facilities? What about the total clogging up of our services which seems likely? Will the schemes be enhanced by really imaginative planting and the layout of the Village Green? Will there be any encouragement for the tourist industry?

Another well known local resident has just handed in a leaflet about The West Linton Millennium Arts Festival. The impressive program of events is evident of a vibrant local community in our village and area. We not only congratulate the arts group committee, but take heart for the future which is really the community itself. We pray that the large influx of incomers to the new houses will not dilute but integrate and strengthen this community.

A mavis is singing sweetly on the ash tree outside and this somehow reminds me, as we think of the 2000th anniversary of our Lord's incarnation, of Paul's word in Thessalonians:-

Be cheerful no matter what;

pray all the time;

Thank God no matter what happens,

This is the way God wants you who belong to Jesus Christ to live

Colin Baxter
1st March 2000

(Ed: a 'mavis' is a song thrush)

St James the Less Vestry Notes May 2025

Vestry met on 11 March and again on 29 April 2025. As usual Vestry received reports from our rector, our finance team and our fabric co-ordinator. The following were the main items for consideration:

- To undertake the Quinquennial Report conservation accredited architects Simpson and Brown have been appointed. The fee charged will be £1,800.00 plus VAT. A drone will be used to facilitate survey work.
- A Letter of Intent will be sent to RPO Joinery and Building Service for the insulation of the Rectory. The cost of the Rectory insulation is £56,535.52 plus VAT. An application for funding was submitted for 50% of the cost to the Provincial Building Grant Committee. Other sources of funding are also being investigated. The work cannot commence until the funding is in place.
- An application for grant funding to cover the costs of a feasibility study for ground-source heat pump to heat the church has been made.
- An independent consultant is to be appointed to report on heating options in lieu of the existing boiler. The fee will be around £900.00.
- Business Energy Scotland have assigned a consultant to St James. The consultant will supply a written report exploring the options for heating the church.
- The appointment on a Safeguarding co-ordinator is now underway. This is an appointment which requires the Bishop's approval. References are now being sought for the appointment.
- A further application to British Heart Foundation will be made during summer 2025 for funding to have a defibrillator attached to the outside walls of the church.
- An Internal Policy on Charges for hiring the church hall has been drafted.

- How to increase the membership of our Young Church. New materials are being resourced and considerations given to activities which are not on a Sunday.
- The Vestry Meeting in August has been changed to Tuesday 12 August 2025

Vestry are very grateful to our Fabric Co-ordinator Moira Morrison for all her input to the Rectory Insulation and Quinquennial Review Projects. Not just for keeping Vestry updated but for the numerous meetings with architects and contractors, plus the research and advice she has provided. Without Moira, Vestry would not have been able to move these projects forward. In addition, she is involved with the church heating project. Despite all this work Moira is extremely patient when responding to Vestry's many questions and the day-to-day maintenance of St James. Very many thanks Moira from a very appreciative and well-advised Vestry.

As you will gather from this report St James is committing to large expenditure in the coming year. Grant funding is being sought wherever possible, plus some of the reserves will be spent. Fund raising will be even more essential to pay for these projects, so please look for ways of raising funds. Remember the *Talents Project*, which was so successful last year? it's starting up once more (please see Marion Mather's fund-raising article in this issue). They were fun and everyone enjoyed them, so more, please, everyone!

With my love

Charlotte Kemp

Vestry Secretary

Last Word

I had an interesting conversation a few weeks ago about spirituality, and whether it was different for men and for women. The overall conclusion was that, typically men were not very good at discussing their feelings and inner thoughts, and also that the male ego could often be a barrier to exploring their spirituality.

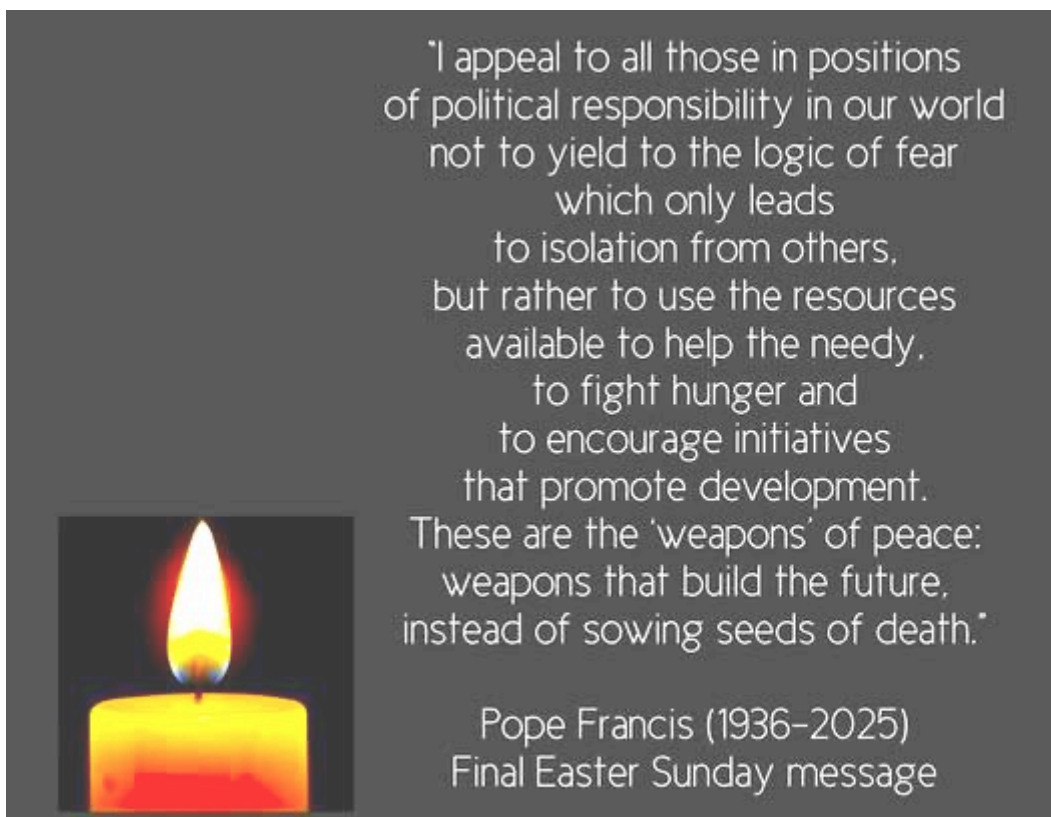
I wonder how you respond to this rather simplistic summary?

Richard Rohr's book on male spirituality has a really useful schematic of different decisions and where they lead men in their lives.

Maybe a male only discussion group to explore this subject may be something of use?

And some wise words, some of his last, from Pope Francis.

Nick Bowry



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For donations to any of the causes mentioned in this issue, please contact the treasurer for St James the Less, John McCulloch ([treasurer\[at\]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org](mailto:treasurer[at]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org))

Websites

St Mungo's: <https://stmungoswestlinton.org/>

St James the Less: <https://stjamesthelesspenicuik.org/>

Next Deadline

Please send copy to Sue Owen at the email address below by **Sunday 3 August 2025**

The next issue of *In Touch* will be distributed on **Sunday 24 August 2025**

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