

## HAPPY CHRISTMAS

The MMHS office closes from 5.30pm on 22nd December to 8.30am on 2nd January, when normal service will resume. For any urgent matters with MMHS properties during the Christmas break, phone **020 3848 6020** and choose the emergency option. Have a wonderful festive season!

# roof roots

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## 'We became like teenage backpackers'

*MMHS BOARD CHAIR REVD ALAN TAYLOR MARKS HIS 75TH YEAR IN OUR 75TH YEAR! HE AND WIFE DOROTHY KNOW HOW TO CREATE A LIFE EVENT – FROM MEETING A US PRESIDENT TO CAMPING IN THE MONGOLIAN DESERT*

It couldn't have been timed better. Chair of MMHS Board Revd Alan Taylor has just celebrated his 75th birthday during our own 75th anniversary year.

Alan and wife Dorothy – whose birthday is on the same date – marked the occasion with a quiet winter weekend. That's unusual for them.

Over the years they've created such dramatic memories as praying with past US President Jimmy Carter, climbing the O2 and backpacking across the northern hemisphere – not all at the same time.

That's as well as serving churches in East Anglia and the West Country, having two children and four grandchildren, and retiring to an MMHS property in 2013.

They met Jimmy Carter while visiting American friends in 2016. On a long drive

from Florida to Tennessee, they stopped at the ex-president's church in Plains, Georgia.

President Carter was teaching all-age Sunday school. He asked if there were any visitors in the congregation. Alan's friends pointed him out.

'Jimmy Carter said, "Where are you from?" and I said, "England",' Alan explained. 'He said, "Would you like to lead the opening prayer?" Alan was happy to oblige.

Alan and Dorothy climbed the O2 in 2020 to mark 49 years of marriage. There's no lift or escalator. Kitted out with harness and hook, they clipped onto the walkway and up they went.

'It involves a walk over the roof,' said Alan, 'and at the top there's a viewing platform with a celebration glass of champagne. We were fortunate to get this in before lockdown.'

Backpacking in 2009 was the most



HIGH NOTE: Alan and Dorothy celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary on top of the O2

impressive trek. Alan had earned his first sabbatical, so they set off on a tour from Lindisfarne, Northumbria, to Lake Junaluska, USA – the long way round.

'We became like teenage backpackers with a rucksack, carry bag and shoulder bag each for three months,' said Alan.

Catch our anniversary news at [mmhs.org.uk/75th](https://mmhs.org.uk/75th)



## A message from Mairi



As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we've been researching MMHS's story. We've been ploughing through memos, minutes and magazines that offer a detailed account of our charity's birth and subsequent growth.

We've discovered afresh the pioneering people in the 1940s who made the seemingly impossible, possible – and who not only brought MMHS into existence in 1948, but also created a solid foundation for MMHS, thereby enabling our future growth and development. It's a remarkable and humbling legacy.

In my role as MMHS's CEO, I am forever grateful to the team around me who help me deliver MMHS's mission for today's generation. Looking back on our story, there is a common thread of good people doing good things. That's a deep part of our narrative, and it truly is something to celebrate.

In closing, I hope you have a joyful festive season, and we look forward to serving you in the New Year. Happy Christmas!

Mairi

## Winter ways

HOW DO WE DIG A PATH THROUGH WINTER, DESPITE ALL THE CHALLENGES IT MAY PRESENT FOR US? HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

There's a range of artwork that shows a classic 'cosy cottage' Christmas. The hearth is glowing, the chimney is smoking and even the snow looks sweet and fluffy like a ton of marshmallow has been piped onto the garden path.

Real winter is far from that. It can be a challenging time with limited resources and fewer loved ones around us to help and to celebrate with us. So how do we make the most of this season?

### \* Eat well

Healthy eating is important and doesn't need to be expensive, say the Association of UK Dietitians ([www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)).

Make a meal plan and plan your shopping trips. Look for cheap and convenient ways to get your five-a-day. Read the label on food products to make sure you are getting the best value. Use food 'waste'

such as peel to flavour soups and stews. 'Batch cook' where possible.

### \* Keep moving

A little bit of activity now and then is a great way to help you keep warm, as well as help you maintain strength and mobility, according to Age UK ([www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)). They recommend we should try not to sit still for more than an hour at a time.

Lots of local Age UKs run exercise classes – ranging from more sedate chair-based exercise to nostalgic ballroom dancing and heart-pounding Zumba! Find out about your local Age UK, and see what they offer.

### \* Stay connected

Make sure you stay connected and have regular conversations with other people, says NHS England. Even if that is sometimes by phone, keeping in touch is important. Isolation can have a negative impact on our emotional and mental health.

## 'We became like teenage backpackers'

'Lindisfarne was a sacred starting point. We finished up at a Methodist convention centre at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina.' Land travel across Europe and Asia was by train.

In their 60s, the Taylors found they weren't always the oldest pilgrims on the road. 'The age thing was a mixed experience,' said Alan.

'I think if we'd have done it any later, it might have been too much. But we were just on the cusp of having the youthful energy and enthusiasm to give it a go, and we did.'

They went across Europe and visited the infamous concentration camp at Auschwitz. 'I remember looking in one corner – it even gets me now – this little child's shoe,' Alan recalled. 'That one thing begins to bring home the evil of what took place.'

In Russia they went to Yekaterinburg



FELLOW PILGRIMS: The Taylors travelled mostly by train – and met lots of friendly people along the way

where the Tzar and his family were executed during the Bolshevik revolution. They went on to Mongolia and slept in the desert, in tiny tents under a big sky untouched by light pollution. Alan was on toilet duty – which meant digging a hole!



Re-engage ([www.reengage.org.uk](http://www.reengage.org.uk)) offer group and one-to-one activities to help people expand their social circle in a friendly, safe environment. Community Christmas offers a weekly chat over the phone throughout December with a friendly volunteer to lift your spirits.

### \* Go wintering

We can learn from nature, according to author and podcaster Katherine May. Writing in *The Guardian*, she explained how a dormouse slows down its metabolism so it consumes almost

no energy at all.

We're not dormice, but we could modify 'the rhythms of our lives'. Katherine adapts with the pleasures of solitude, dreaming and contemplating, eating cooked food and comforting carbs. She revisits old festivals that offer community gatherings in the dark days of winter.

Katherine has learned to find a way through the season by seeking 'moments of light and heat to keep my spirits high'.



WALK THE LINE: Alan and Dorothy reached the obelisk marking the Europe-Asia border

They visited The Great Wall Of China, too. On reaching America, they saw the Grand Canyon and toured the National Civil Rights Museum, built around the former Lorraine Motel, site of the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Everywhere they went, they were met with a sense of welcome and hospitality. What did they learn from this journey of a lifetime?

'The people we met everywhere from Lindisfarne – all the way across – they were ordinary people like us,' said Dorothy. 'They just want a good life and to get on with everybody.'

Dorothy would encourage others to go on a journey of exploration, even if that's simply getting out and about where you live. 'But then we've always done silly things,' she smiled.

## CAMERAS FOCUS ON MMHS FILM MAKER

Our video producer Peter Wooding found himself in front of the lens – instead of behind it – when he took part in a tribute to his late father, celebrated journalist Dan Wooding.

In his work for us, Peter usually films MMHS residents sharing their stories. This time, cameras were focused on Peter as he interviewed keyboard player Rick Wakeman – a close friend of his father for many years until Dan's death in March 2020.

Rick shared his memories of Dan at the tribute, held as part of the Christian Resources Exhibition. They first met in 1969 when Dan wrote about Rick playing keyboards for David Bowie. Dan went on to become a Fleet Street journalist and a popular writer for Christian publications.

Rick also shared his own journey of faith, which is rooted in both Methodist and Baptist traditions. He has recorded albums on spiritual themes, including *The Gospels*, *Amazing Grace* and *Prayer*.

The videos Peter has created for us include interviews with Elvis Presley fan club chaplain Revd Derek Aldridge, clockmaker Revd Neville Pugh and Revd Charles New who celebrated his 80th birthday by walking The Wirral. Visit [www.mmhs.org.uk/mmhs-tv](http://www.mmhs.org.uk/mmhs-tv)



MOVING TRIBUTE: Rock musician Rick Wakeman (left) shares memories of journalist Dan Wooding with MMHS video producer Peter Wooding, one of Dan's two sons.



# Walk on the wild side

*WE'RE ALL TEMPTED TO STAY INDOORS FOR THE WINTER. BUT WE COULD BE MISSING OUT ON MIRACLES. DI WALLACE ENCOURAGES US TO WRAP UP AND ROCK OUT!*

Is winter something you dread? The long, dark days can certainly feel depressing at times.

However, I rather like the winter. I love to wrap up warm and take a nice walk. I was going to say when the weather permits – but I quite like walking out in the rain and snow, as long as I am adequately dressed for the job.

Perhaps you view a daily walk as rather tedious. But I can assure you that at this time of year, a simple walk is full of surprises and – dare I say it – a miracle or two. Let me explain.

## 1 Look

The geese are coming in from afar in their droves. Look up at those marvellous flight formations. If you live near farms or country lanes, look for the fieldfares – thrushes with that lovely patch of red under their wings.

Look for the many varieties of fungi that have emerged, pushing up through the leaf mould. Watch the squirrels readying for the cold.

## 2 Listen

Hear the crunch of the leaves, the calls of our winter visitors flying in. Note them, learn about them, get to know these creatures that we share the planet with.

## 3 Touch

Don't be shy. Touch things. Pick things up.

## 4 Smell

Smell the air, so different from the summer. Our senses are very important. If we don't use them, we can lose touch with the wonder that is constantly around us.



MMHS resident Di Wallace is a former therapist/counsellor, working in schools, occupational health departments and private practice. She plays the fiddle, facilitates a folk gathering and plays for occasional ceilidhs with husband Les, a retired Methodist minister. Together they cycle, motorcycle, canoe, ramble and nature watch.

## 5 Note

Take a notebook, jot down what you see. Take a photo, then look it up when you get home if you don't know what it is. I promise that you will stay out a lot longer than you intended to.

Walks reduce stress, lower blood pressure and release endorphins. It's all good news. Really, it is!

But I can't get out these days, you may say. Then bring glorious nature to your window with a bird feeder or nuts for the squirrels. You'll have entertainment and delight for hours on end – not to mention providing much-needed nourishment for the wildlife.

So, what about those miracles?

Well, just recently I walked up our lane past a field where the winter wheat was about four inches high. Some highly industrious spiders had spun single strand webs that covered the entire field.

As the sun caught it, it shimmered and looked as if it were green water sparkling in the sun. Breath-taking! And you know what? I might have been the only person to have seen that incredible spectacle.

So, grab the coats, hats and gloves. Get out in the streets, parks and countryside. The wonder and the wildlife are everywhere. Don't just endure winter, live it, marvel at it. It's good for you – and it's free. 🏠



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