

The MMHS office closes from
4pm 24 December to 9am 2 January 2025.

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HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

roof 'n' roots

The MMHS Newsletter • Winter 2024

Leonora talks faith on TV



Photo: BBC

TV TIMES: Leonora shares the Methodist way with Ben Robinson on *Villages By The Sea* – Runswick's High Chapel is in the background

AN MMHS RESIDENT HAS BEEN SHARING THE MESSAGE OF METHODISM ON THE BBC

If you're a fan of BBC TV's *Villages By The Sea*, you may have seen MMHS resident Revd Leonora Wassell in a recent episode.

Leonora brought a social and spiritual perspective to the show, which looks at communities that cling to Britain's coastline.

Programme researchers contacted Leonora after finding out about Methodist Women In Britain (MWIB), which she co-chairs. They wanted to interview her on an episode about Runswick Bay.

Archaeologist Ben Robinson – who presents *Villages By The Sea* – quizzed

Leonora about the Primitive Methodists, who set up a church at Runswick in 1854.

'John Wesley set up a social movement, rather than a church, but it got a bit more established,' Leonora told Ben. 'The Primitive Methodists wanted to get back to the original social justice, get out, meet the people. So they set up their own church.'

Local women had been instrumental in building the 'High Chapel' – so called because it was located higher up on a hill than another place of worship, known as Low Chapel. The Primitive Methodist message was – 'even those from the lower classes could find a way to heaven'.

A congregation met at High Chapel for



PLUGGED INTO PRAYER: Leonora launches her own website of prayers and reflections (www.rainbowreflexions.co.uk)

148 years until it became a domestic dwelling. Leonora said their philosophy was about social justice, better housing, education and health care.

'To hear that message when you've been put down by the establishment and say, "Yes, I believe" – people's lives changed,' she added.

Leonora's life completely changed when she started suffering from fibromyalgia – a chronic condition causing pain and tenderness throughout the body.

'At 49 I had to take early retirement,' she told us. 'I'd become so ill I couldn't

A message from Mairi



Living in the present. It truly isn't an easy thing to do. We give much headspace to contemplating the future – sometimes overthinking and worrying about it. We can have many 'what if' moments.

On a lighter note, a minister with whom I chat often, said, 'Getting older has the advantage of helping you live in the present as there isn't much left of the future!' He was talking in earthly terms, of course!

We can also spend time living in the past, perhaps unhelpfully. We can become stuck. Regrets can gain the upper hand.

I've been practising living in the present. Being very intentional about listening to people. Standing and staring, in a way that would've pleased Welsh poet William Henry Davies – whose piece *Leisure* guides us towards that. This edition of *Roof 'n' Roots* had me stepping into the lived experiences of our contributors, and lingering there.

As we head towards Christmas, I hope you are able to enjoy many special moments, either of your own making, or ones shared with you.

Wishing you joy at Christmas.

Mairi

HOW DO YOU FEEL THE BENEFIT OF THIS SEASON – INDOORS AND OUTDOORS? HERE'S A SIMPLE GARDENING PLAN

Gardening supports our health and wellbeing. We can make use of the benefits of gardens and nature all year round – even in winter.

Gardening for health charity Thrive have created a four-week journey of winter wellbeing activities (see calendar opposite) – and TV gardener David Domoney has given his support to it.

The calendar presents a mix of practical, passive, active and creative activities. Some can be done indoors, others outdoors.

Most of the activities need little to no equipment. You can take part if you have a huge garden – or no garden at all.

You could begin at the start of the month, or on any day. If you miss out activities, that's also okay. But hopefully you'll increase your time with nature and feel the benefits.

'During the shorter daylight hours of winter, it's important that we take care of our mental and physical wellbeing,'



Photo: Trevor Adams

SEASON'S TONIC: TV gardener David Domoney encourages us to do some winter gardening to stay healthy

said David Domoney, who also serves as ambassador for Thrive.

Leonora talks faith on TV

continue. I was offered an MMHS property in 2004. I was so grateful. It was rewired, re-plumbed and redecorated. It was beautiful.'

Now 69, Leonora doesn't let her auto-immune illness hold her back. She's launched her own website of prayers, become active on social media and is helping to promote MWIB on Instagram.

Her recent TV appearance has inspired her. 'It made me want to do some productions ourselves about Methodist women through history,' she said. 'It's fired me up!'

Preparing to write for the MWIB newsletter and a blog, Leonora encouraged retired ministers to get into the web and use the media to share a message of hope. 'My father taught me to dream – dream big – so I am,' she said.



★ watch the TV programme that features Leonora – www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0024s6m/villages-by-the-sea-series-5-1-runswick-bay

★ has your community – or a community near you – been featured on *Villages By The Sea*? Do you have any memories of the High Chapel in Runswick? Share your stories with us at comms@mmhs.org.uk

★ find out more about Methodist Women In Britain by visiting their website www.mwib.org.uk

Boost your winter wellbeing



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1 Go on a sensory walk	2 Clean pots and trays	3 Make compost in a bottle	4 Sort seeds	5 Wildlife web cam	6 Go cloud spotting	7 Try some nature writing
8 Tend to your houseplants	9 Leaf art 1: printing	10 Leaf art 2: rubbing	11 Bird watch / break ice on bird baths	12 Plan for spring: research	13 Plan for spring: create	14 Winter interest walk
15 Frozen plant art	16 Start an indoor herb garden	17 Check winter garden protection	18 Review photos from garden this year	19 Make an apple bird feeder	20 Clean garden tools	21 Sharpen secateurs
22 Take a wintry tree photo	23 Make herbal tea	24 Top up bird feeders	25 Deadhead winter bedding	26 Grow an avocado from its stone	27 Warm up seedbeds	28 Look for signs of spring

CUT-OUT AND KEEP: Calendar from Thrive, the gardening for health charity (www.thrive.org.uk)

'Activities such as those outlined in Thrive's winter wellbeing calendar are the tonic that lifts our mind and body by engaging with nature.'

Cut out and keep the calendar. You can

also download the calendar to print it out.

If using a phone or tablet, tap and hold the image to save it to your device. If you're on a desktop or laptop, right-click

to save. Extra information explaining each activity can be found here:

www.thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/winter-wellbeing-calendar

It's your write



HAVE A GO: Revd Warren Bardsley offers encouragement to budding authors

EVER THOUGHT ABOUT WRITING A BOOK? PERHAPS HAVE A GO THIS WINTER. WARREN BARDSLEY SHARES SOME ADVICE

I never intended to be a writer. Then one night in 2005, I couldn't sleep. I went downstairs in the early hours and wrote down chapter headings.

Days later, I bumped into fellow MMHS resident Bob Davies at a cricket match in Worcester. We'd been at college together. He told me he published as a hobby, and agreed to produce that first book. *Touched By Grace* was about losing my wife Joan. It sold 1,000 copies and has had heart-warming reviews.

The following year, the Iona Community published *Against The Tide*. This is the story of Adomnán, ninth Abbot of Iona who enabled the passing of a law

It's your write

protecting women and children in time of war.

Letters From Jerusalem is one of three on Palestine/Israel, following a stay in 2008-9 as a human rights observer with the World Council of Churches. *Passage Of Play* is about cricket which is partly autobiographical. I've written two biographies of former colleagues. *Dancing* is the only novel I've attempted – addressing the question, what would God do if he/she came to live among us today?

To my surprise, I've written 14 books over the past 18 years. I don't look for subjects. I need to be inspired by an event or situation. But I believe I have a vocation to do this.

I've been helped enormously by Bob Davies, who's published most of my books. His guidance has been indispensable. My advice to anyone thinking about becoming a writer is – find a good publisher.

The advice of friends can be most helpful. During the pandemic, I wrote a weekly letter to friends, one of whom is a professional librarian. She suggested I make a book of them – and would do all the essential preparatory work. This became *Lockdown Letters*. Copies have almost sold out.

I don't make much money out of writing. But I've never been out of pocket. Any small profit becomes 'seed corn' for the next work.

'Of the writing of many books there is no end,' said the writer of Ecclesiastes. Today's market is extremely crowded. Though fulfilling, writing books is hard going. Selling them is even more difficult.

But if you feel you have something to say, have a go – especially in these winter months as we shut ourselves in from the cold. You never know who'll read your work. One of the greatest feelings is to receive a letter telling you what a difference your writing has made to someone.

That makes it all worthwhile. 📖

Rev'd Warren Bardsley is an MMHS resident. For copies of his books, contact w.bardsley@btinternet.com

Be like a hedgehog – and hibernate



NATURE HAS A NAP AS WINTER ARRIVES. CAN WE DO THE SAME? DI WALLACE SHARES SOME TIPS

During winter, the world around us closes down. Flowers and foliage die, leaves drop and it can seem as if creation has gone to sleep.

We may feel the urge to hibernate, too. We'd love to escape the long, cold, grey days of the winter months. Many animals – from hedgehogs to bears – enter a state known as torpor, which reduces bodily functions to a minimum. Researchers at the European Space Agency are looking at this process, to help astronauts survive long journeys to distant planets.

A *British Medical Journal* story from 1900 claimed to show a form of human hibernation in Pskov, Russia, called winter sleep, or 'lotska'. A 2000 reprint of the article paints a mythic picture of Russian peasants spending half the year asleep to avoid the hardships of famine.

Modern pressures and our lack of 'torpor' rule that out! But maybe we can embrace these winter months and use them to our advantage, just like the animal kingdom.

♦ Enjoy a different beauty

Much of the activity of gardening and outdoor jobs ceases in the winter. Just as all plant life reduces to a minimum to

rest and regenerate, we can find those things to do that help us relax and reflect.

For some it might be gentle walks, a good read, meeting up with those that you never seem to have the time to get together with. Take time to stop and stare, to appreciate the world in which you live. There is a different kind of beauty in the natural world.

♦ Do just one thing

The world is conserving energy to produce next year's growth. We may be growing older, but that doesn't mean life should stop. The late Dr Michael Mosely urged us to do 'just one thing' to keep healthy and active.

There's a wealth of 'new' things to do. Learn to play an instrument, take up photography, paint. The world is your oyster. Learning something new energises you and opens doors for socialising.

♦ Prepare for a new year

The world in hibernation is preparing for the coming year. That's something we can all do. That could be booking a holiday, choosing a different lifestyle or just reorganising the garden. Who knows where plans could take you?

We can learn a great deal from nature. It's not just about passing away the dark days that we don't like very much. It's about helping ourselves grow, develop and thrive.

These things are not just for the young. Life is for everyone – whatever our age. We need to treasure it and live it to the full. I wish you a wonderful winter. 🌱

MMHS resident Di Wallace is a former therapist/counsellor. She plays the fiddle, facilitates a folk gathering and plays for occasional ceilidhs with husband Les, a retired Methodist minister. Together they cycle, motorcyle, canoe, ramble and nature watch.

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