



Rolling dice as Christ was crucified

I played dice as Christ was crucified. Imagine that as a story to tell the grandkids. And why were you playing dice while Christ crucified, Pops? For Jesus' seamless purple tunic, is what each of the four gospels tells us. The four Roman centurions had already divided the rest of Jesus' clothes, as was custom at all public executions. But this tunic was seamless, like how exquisite it feels when you peel an orange with not a break in the skin. This tunic wasn't for tearing. And the tunic was purple.

There is every chance it was Tyrian purple, the most valuable pigment back then, worth in weight three times more than gold, and made from a recipe lost to time's tides. Although we do know it was produced from the secretions of three species of sea snail. By most accounts, once collected, the mucous gland was sliced using a specialised knife. One Roman author detailed how the snail's gore would then ooze out of its wounds, "flowing out like tears", before being collected into mortars for grinding.

These days the sea snails are safe from harvesting. As an aside, so many have bred in our tropical fish tank at home, we could make enough purple dye for a tunic for each of the disciples. And I'd say we'd still have enough left over for a new hairdo for Skye. And another aside, young Rowan (daughter) spends most of breakfast time scooping out what she considers the excess of escargot into her often-not-quite-finished-with cereal bowl. So hit her up for molluscs if you fancy some purple dye for yourself. Actually, there's one last aside (three asides in one paragraph is quite enough – Ed), we still use deep purple as part of the Anglican church's liturgical colour palette during Advent and Lent. And, in a direct line from Jesus' tunic, our bishops will often wear purple shirts as a symbol of their pastoral authority.

Laying aside all these asides, the tunic was seamless and the tunic was purple. And someone's grandfather cast lots for it while Christ hung, crucified not more than a dice roll's away. But Pops, why were you playing dice, not what for? Why were you playing dice as Christ hung from a cross?

Years later, telling the grandkids, wondering why the rugrats are less than impressed, Pops falls into an uncharacteristic silence. They may as well ask a man, why take a deck of cards on the train to Scotland?

Pops is silent because his answers to these two very different questions – about the dice and about the deck - are very similar: it passes the time (it took Jesus six hours to die; it's six hours to Aberdeen); it's become a tradition; it helps me make friends; I love the thrill of the win.

I am haunted by another question in this season of resurrection: had I been a Roman soldier keeping guard at the cross, would I have played dice as Christ slowly suffocated? Would I have sensed this execution was different from all the others? Would I have made sure Jesus' seamless purple tunic made it into Mary's hands?

I wish I could answer those questions with a clear yes or no. I too often find myself identifying with the wrong human in any Biblical narrative. I think of myself as the one whom Jesus loves most or who never asks Jesus a stupid question, or who helps carry the cross. I imagine myself a rare Israelite who doesn't curse Moses in the wilderness, or who wouldn't carry on toiling when his prodigal brother returns. And yet, as a follower of the resurrected Christ, living in the resurrection time of our calendar, I am called to see with wider eyes, with greater compassion and with deeper humility.

Who am I to judge the soldiers playing dice as Christ crucified? I think back to when the school kids came to church for the Stations of the Cross in Holy Week. We all, me included, loved playing with the dice the most; down on our knees, cubes clacking on the stone floor, cheers for a six as we ignored the cross behind us.

I will finish with this beautiful generous reading of the dice-rolling soldiers by the theologian Augustine, which teaches that no moment is wasted in God's economy: "By [their] casting of lots, what else is commended but the grace of God? When the lot is cast, the award is decided not by the merits of each individual but by the secret judgment of God."

Shalom,

Matty

BENEFACTORS OF MARSTON & ELSFIELD



Welcome to St Nicholas & St Thomas.

Further details can be found on our website

stnicholasmarston.org.uk

Or call the office on 01865 580354.

Every Wednesday at 9:30am we have Holy Communion & Thursdays at 5pm Evening Prayer at St Nicholas Church.

Sunday 3rd - 5th Sunday of Easter - CHRISTIAN AID SUNDAY

10am - ALL TOGETHER Service with Holy Communion *with Worship band* at St Nicholas Church. **Soup Lunch** after the service in the hall. Donations welcome for Christian Aid. Live Streamed.

6pm - BCP Evening prayer at St Nicholas Church.

Sunday 10th - 6th Sunday of Easter

8am BCP Communion Service at St Nicholas Church.

10am Holy Communion Service at St Nicholas Church *with Energy** (Sunday School). Live Streamed.

12noon Christening for Sophy Waterfield at St Nicholas Church

6pm **Pause for Thought** at in the Church Hall. *Lord Nuffield*. David Cranston

Thursday 14th - ASCENSION DAY

6:30pm Holy Communion Service at St Nicholas Church

Sunday 17th - 7th Sunday of Easter

8am BCP Communion Service at St Nicholas Church.

10am Holy Communion Service at St Nicholas Church

10am Messy Church in the Hall.

Sunday 24th - PENTECOST SUNDAY

8am BCP Communion Service at St Nicholas Church

10am Holy Communion Service at St Nicholas Church *with Energy** (Sunday School). **Live Streamed.**

10am Holy Communion at St Thomas Church in Elsfield

Sunday 31st - TRINITY SUNDAY

8am BCP Communion Service at St Nicholas Church

10am GREEN CHURCH - Short Celtic service followed by a Wildlife Walk at St Nicks

6pm Choral Evensong with Choirs at St Nicholas Church

* Contact Helen for information about Energy - familyminister@stnicholasmarston.org.uk

A Church For Everyone



What to quote in May?

May

by Harvey Carson Grumbine (yes, really)
Sweet month of May, the loveliest of the year!
When all the world, arrayed in garb of green,
Smiles like a comely girl; when far and near,
On hill-top and in valley, there is seen
In all its grandeur the handiwork of God:
The leafy trees, the bursting buds, the sod
Up-sprouting with blue violets atween
The blades of springing grass; in modest mien
Anemones hold up their heads and nod
To stirring winds, and mark the place where trod
Erstwhile the foot of April wet and gray.
O hail, and hail again, sweet month of May!

Nature notes: What to see and hear in May?

May is the gateway to summer and a month of abundance. Swifts arrive after their long migration. You might see them screaming through the skies at dusk. Scented hawthorn blossom (often called May) in shades of white to pale pink abounds in the



hedgerows. Look out for large buzzing brown beetles flying clumsily on warm evenings. These are common cockchafers, also known as May bugs. New guidance issued by the RSPB recommends pausing filling bird feeders with seeds and nuts from 1 May to 31 October to reduce disease, but you can still provide fresh water, a staple for birds and mammals during warm spells.

What to cook in May

Asparagus



It's asparagus season. Rectory Farm has an enormous field of it just above Barton and you can go and pick your own. Whether you have purchased or picked your asparagus, keep it fresh by treating it like a bunch of flowers. Cut about

half an inch/2cms from the end of each stalk and stand it in a tall container in the fridge or somewhere cool. When you are ready to use it, make sure you rinse it well. Bend each stem until it breaks at its natural breaking point. Fry it in butter until tender, give it a squeeze of lemon and serve with eggs cooked as you like. Frying retains the flavour better than boiling.

Marston WI

Marston Women's Institute meets every second Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm in St Nicholas' Church Hall, Elsfield Road, Old Marston OX3 0PR. Every month we have a different speaker or activity followed by refreshments. We also meet once per month for lunch at a local pub. Other activities include Knit and Natter and outings to local places of interest. New members are always welcome and your first visit is free; there will be a small charge for the next two if you attend as a visitor.

See our website: marstonwi.org



Coffee Pot

Our next Coffee Pot will be on Mon 18 May from 10.30am to 12 noon in the Church Hall. We welcome all who have been bereaved and others who would like to meet more people. For more details please contact Eileen Palayiwa on 01865 725423.

Lunch Club

Lunch Club will be on Friday 28 May. On the menu will be chicken and mushroom stroganoff with rice and vegetables, with sticky toffee pudding and custard to follow. Ring Debbie (01865 580354) to book your place.

Donations to St Nicholas church

If you enjoy reading this magazine...if any information it gives proves useful to you...please consider making



a financial donation. If you have an attachment to St Nicholas - the ancient centre of our parish - help towards its upkeep would be very much appreciated. We can claim Gift Aid of 25% on any donation up to £30

when you use this QR code.

Rooms available for hire

St Nicholas Primary school in Raymund Road has a suite of office rooms, including toilet and kitchen facilities, available for long term let. For full information go to

<https://stnicholasprimaryschool.org.uk/facility-and-room-hire/> and contact Anne Johnson via 01865 242838 or sbm@stnicholasprimaryschool.org.uk for details.



**Thursday 14th
May 6:30pm**

ASCENSION DAY

Risen Above

**Celebration service.
With Holy Communion, Choir & Hymns.**

All are welcome



GREEN CHURCH

Programme for 2026

stnicholasmarston.org.uk

**Sunday 12th April 6am – Spring Bird Walk
followed by breakfast**

**Sunday 31st May 10am – Short Celtic Service
followed by a Wildlife Walk**

**Sunday 12th July 6pm – Pause for Thought
Gardening for Wildlife, by Wild Oxfordshire**

**Sunday 30th August 10am – Short Celtic Service
followed by Weeding the Churchyard**

**Saturday 18th October 3pm – Spring Bulb Planting
followed by tea and cake in the Church Hall**

Outdoor activities are weather permitting. Short Celtic gatherings will be held in the memorial garden with chairs provided.



Messy Church at St Nicholas, Marston
2026

Sunday 17th May
Sunday 21st June
Sunday 19th July

10 – 11.30am, Church Hall, Elsfield Road
Crafts, Bible Stories, Singing,
Prayer, Breakfast

All ages welcome
(children need to bring an adult with them)

FREE!



**Marston
Community
Gardening**

We're Growing... And We Need You!

Seeking a Treasurer to join our friendly local team

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

Honest, community-minded Treasurer


Just 2-3 hours per month


Skills You'll Need:

- ✓ Number & spreadsheet skills (book-keeping)
- ✓ An eye for detail
- ✓ Modest accounts management

WHAT WE OFFER

Your Rewards:

 Access to your own growing plot

 Delicious homemade cakes

 Fresh seasonal fruit & veg

Who We Are

We grow food, plant trees and care for local green spaces – sharing skills, tools, time and resources so more people can feel healthier, happier and connected to nature and our community.

Ready to help us grow?

hello@marstoncommunitygardening.org.uk

 @marstoncommunitygardening

 @marstoncommunitygardening

Beginner Kayak and Canoe Courses



Club based in Oxford
Beginners canoe and kayak courses
Beginners and experienced paddlers welcome
www.isiscanoocluboxford.co.uk



BEER FESTIVAL

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
ELSFIELD

SATURDAY 2ND MAY

2:00PM - 5:00PM

ELSFIELD CHURCH
///SIMPLY.CURIOSITY.PLANT

JOIN US AT ELSFIELD CHURCH TO ENJOY A SELECTION OF LOCAL BEERS AND CIDERS.

£12 TO TRY 6 BEERS/CIDERS (ONE THIRD PINTS) NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER, SOFT DRINKS AND SNACKS WILL BE AVAILABLE

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

IF YOU CHOOSE TO WALK TO ELSFIELD CHURCH, ROUTES WILL BE MARKED FROM THE END OF MILL LANE, OLD MARSTON ///BRANCH.HURLS.TEND AND BARTON PARK ///ODDS.WAKES.POLICE

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL
REVSAMDURLEY@GMAIL.COM



PAUSE...



FOR THOUGHT

Programme for 2026

Sunday's **Pause for Thought**
at St Nicholas Church

Sunday May 10th at 6pm (in the hall)

*Lord Nuffield
and his legacy to the motoring
and medical world*
Dr David Cranston

Sunday July 12th at 6pm (in the hall)

Supporting wildlife in the garden
Dr Caitlin McLaughlin,
from Wild Oxfordshire

Starting at 6pm with refreshments, 40 mins presentation,
and then time for Q&A. All Welcome!



MARSTON ART DAY

Saturday 16 May 2026 10:00 – 13:00

Mortimer Hall
Oxford Road
Old Marston, OX3 0PH

Come along to Marston Art Day and discover the creativity in our local community.

FREE ENTRY • EVERYONE WELCOME

You'll find: original artwork
• prints • handmade cards •
• crafts • family-friendly art activities

More information: marstonmarket.com/art-day

Are you a local artist?
We're looking for artists to:
• display their work
• sell art, prints, cards or crafts
• run short creative activities or demonstrations

Scan to learn more about the event and how to take part

Supported by Old Marston Parish Council

Poster by Mira Khanna
@PepperAndDixie

Bellringers' report

In March, we played host to the Oxford City Branch AGM, with ringers from eight different branches in attendance, with most who were there for the meeting remaining for an hour's ringing afterwards. A raffle was held raising a small but very useful amount for our funds. Thanks to Andrea and Jane for being masters of the refreshments with delicious cakes.

A surprise announcement came from two of our regular visitors from Witney tower who tied the not a few weeks ago and our congratulations to Dan and Ruth. Quarter peals were rung at various towers to celebrate.

Another anniversary was our Spring outing in April which coincided with 40 years since Tower Captain Hugh organised his first ever outing. It was thought we might take in the same towers but this time visited Hitcham, Burnham, and Bray. Fun fact: over the past 40 years we have explored more than 20 counties across the country.

If you fancy learning the ropes and making music in various hidden gems throughout our beautiful land, then do get in touch.

Roy Peach

A view from Elsfield Road Closure

Recently the road through Elsfield was closed and for a while we were reminded of how things were years ago when, if we heard a vehicle, we looked out into the lane to watch it go by. It was a pleasant reminder of former tranquillity.

We can't turn back the clock. The idea that "Things were so much better back then" is tempting, but dangerous. People have to get to work and Elsfield is a convenient cut through. So, it is what it is.

Whilst we can't do much about the volume of traffic, maybe the speed of motorists could be managed. Yes, it is 20mph. Yes, I am the irritating individual who suggests slowing down to motorists by means of calming hand gestures. What's to be done?

I recall reading something in the Marston Times about a tactic for making drivers aware of their speed which had proved successful. What was it? How did it work?

MORTIMER HALL
Oxford Road, Old Marston
FOR HIRE!

A modern village hall in the centre of Marston, available to hire at weekends. Reasonable rates, and ideal for children's parties, meetings, and community events.

We offer a large hall with a sprung floor (with tables and chairs available for up to 80), a generous reception area, and kitchen facilities (with equipment available on request). It is a fully accessible building, with a small amount of visitor parking and a bus stop immediately outside the hall. We are close to a recreational ground and the Red Lion pub.

For more details about availability, cost, facilities, and contact details, please visit the Mortimer Hall website www.mortimerhall.co.uk where you will also find lots of photographs of the hall.

Mortimer Hall Management Committee are an Oxford Living Wage employer.

Old Marston Parish Council Report - April

The parish council had no objections to planning applications for 24 Ashlong Road, 1A Mill Lane and 7 Southcroft. The city council has advised us that applications from 1 Mill Lane and 80 Arlington Drive have been approved while one from 22 Raymund Road has been refused.

After many months, the leak from a ground cover in Oxford Road has finally been fixed. Thank you to parish councillor Charlotte Vinnicombe for her persistence in getting this resolved.

Some residents would like the bus stop outside the church hall in Elsfield Road to be moved further along as, when a bus stops here, it blocks the junction with Church Lane.

The parish council are doing work in the Orchard Triangle to improve the grounds. If you have any ideas on this space, then please do contact the clerk.

There are concerns about cars parking along Elsfield Road near the exit to Marsh Lane. The clerk has asked County Highways for advice.

As there were only ten candidates for the parish council election, this means that there will not be an election and we have vacancies. If you are interested in becoming a parish councillor, then please contact the clerk for more information.

Regarding dog attacks, TVP has advised that a warrant was executed on Friday. A dog has been taken and is currently in police possession. There is an active police investigation underway. Thank you to all involved in resolving this.

The annual community meeting will be on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 7pm in Mortimer Hall. All welcome. Refreshments available afterwards.

The clerk, Tim Cann, can be contacted by phone (07341 758889) Mon to Wed from 9am until 1pm. Otherwise a message can be left or emailed via: clerk@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk For information, agendas, minutes of meetings etc go to <https://www.oldmarston-pc.gov.uk> X, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram or BlueSky.

Thursday evening slot available at Mortimer Hall

A slot at Mortimer Hall has become available for someone interested in running a class on Thursday evenings. Our other regular classes are:

Tuesday - Kick boxing (6.30pm)

Wednesday - Yoga (6.30pm)

Friday - Kick boxing (6.30pm)

If you're looking to run a class, please contact Chris at bookings@mortimerhall.co.uk or telephone 01865 727995 to discuss. mortimerhall.co.uk

Parish Organisations

Allotments Associations

Court Place Farm, Boults Lane. Chair: Jane Wilson
Sunday mornings 9-10.30am.....shed.cpf-allotments@gmail.com
Mill Lane Chairman: Angie Brown07852 132874
Treasurer Dana Vlad07919 493580
Secretary Alex Hodgkinson-Last.....a_last@hotmail.com

Baby and Toddler Club Weds 9.30-11.30 term time in Parish Hall
Helen Norman.....07852 213974

Bellringers:

Practice Friday 7.15pm Learners welcome
Hugh Deam, Tower Captain 01865 247574
Roy Peach, Secretary.....07788 746157

Choirs and Musicians at St Nicholas

Junior Choir, SATB Choir, Music Group
Practices at various times.
Lewis Morin.....musicdirector@stnicholasmarston.org.uk

Coffee Pot

Coffee morning, monthly, Monday
Eileen Palayiwa, 27 Ouseley Close 01865 725423

Rainbow, Brownie, Guide and Ranger Units

Evenings throughout the week. Adult volunteers as well as girls welcomed!
District Commissioner, Lesley Dentry, 07765 418067

Leisure:

OXS RAD Sports and Leisure Centre,
Court Place Farm, Marsh Lane. 01865 741336

Library (next to Mortimer Hall) opening hours

Tuesday 2-5pm; 5.30-7pm
Thursday 2-5pm; 5.30-7pm
Friday 10-12noon; 2-5pm
Saturday 9.30-12.30pm01865 815176

Hedena Health Medical Centre. 01865 597023

Marston Community Gardening

Alistair Morris 01865 724081
Kate Robinson 01865 766620

Marston Saints Football Club

Andy Winchester (Treasurer) www.msfc.org.uk
Mortimer Hall (Village Hall)

Chris Crane, 2 Raymund Road 01865 727995

Oxford City Council (Marston Representatives)

Mary Clarkson, 8 Dunstan Road, Oxford OX3 9BY 01865 751493
Kate Robinson07483 011488

Oxfordshire County Council (Marston Representative)

Mark Lygo 07765 665 726

Oxford Preservation Trust

10 Turn Again Lane, Oxford OX1 1QL.....01865 242918

Parentline

Confidential helpline for parents 01865 726600

Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Tim Cann, 8 Nicholas Avenue.....07341 758889
(Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm)
Chairman: Duncan Hatfield07706998224

Pre-school at Mortimer Hall

open 9 sessions a week 07818 236348

Royal British Legion Club Hall:

Steward 01865 243991

Schools

Friends of St Nicholas School 01865 242838

Scouts — 43rd Oxford (St. Nicholas) Scout Group, Boults Lane

Group Scout Leader, Tim Greaves..... tim.greaves@keble.oxon.org

Beaver Scout Leader, Sue Springett 01865 251515

Cub Scout Leader, Matthew Kennedy.....matthew.kennedy500@gmail.com

Scouts Leader, Linda Phillips 07804 925705

St. Nicholas Church Hall and Committee Room

Debbie Bailey, Parish Office 01865 580354

Women's Institute

Meetings at 7.30 second Tue of each month - new members welcome!

President, Sue Hawes marstonwi.org

Trade Directory

Architectural services for Planning Permissions/ Building Regulations

Digby Architectural: 4 Broughton Close07979 756918

Building/Builders Services

Colin Simpson: High Class painting, decorating and coving etc:

10 Dent's Close OX3 ONP 01865 742842

Trevor Dines: No job too small - plumbing, complete bathrooms

from fitting a door to building an extension. Free estimates.

8, Raymund Road01865 452851, 07889 263140

Daniel Kelly: Painting and decorating services: 07917 607949

Cleaning Carpets & Upholstery

Grimebusters: Quality carpet, rug & upholstery cleaning at competitive rates. Free estimates..... 01865 726983

Complementary Medicine

Oxford Therapies: pain relief, stress, management & more

www.oxford-therapies.com.....07913 503257

Oxford Reflexology: relaxation, stress-relief and rebalance

www.oxfordreflexology.co.uk.....07726 312719

Decorating

Kerr-Brown painting/decorating hkbdecorating@gmail.com 07944 605502

Dog grooming service in Old Marston village.....07877 183281

Electricians

Brian Turner: Registered NICEIC domestic installer..... 01865 728729

All work guaranteed 33, Salford Road 07538 382683

..... brian.r.turner@ntlworld.com

Craig Holloway Electrical Ltd: 07868 706392

.....enquiries@craigholloway.co.uk

Footcare

Pedilicious Foot Care: treatment following initial medical consultation, including foot soak, toe nails trimmed, corns and calluses removed, half leg and foot massage. Contact Patricia Anson (with years of experience)

..... 07881 366350

Funeral Directors

C S Boswell Independent funeral services.....01865 553737

Homewood Funerals (Family-owned and managed)

14 Cherwell Drive, Marston OX3 4LY01865 570000

Garden & small machinery service/repair.....taylordannyuk@yahoo.co.uk

Danny Taylor, 5 Ouseley Close, Marston OX3 0JS.....07796 573319

Hair and Beauty

Fiona's Hair Salon:

Salford Road, Old Marston OX3 0RX 01865 241632

Monumental Mason

Reeves Memorials: New memorials, removal for burials, added inscriptions & renovations.

147A Magdalen Rd, Oxford. OX4 1RL 01865 251231

Plumbing, Heating & Gas

Lemarsh Building Services – plumbing and heating

22 Marsh Lane.....07710 390980

S. J. Moore: Installation and servicing for all gas appliances.

Gas Safe Reg. 146337.

76, Arlington Drive.....01865 724037, 07970 470176

Tree Surgery, Fruit Tree Pruning

R. Timms: 80 Oxford Road..... 01865 244608

Window Cleaning - MRF Window Cleaning Services

Mick Fry: 37, Green Hill Oxford OX4 7UD. Fully insured member of the Federation of Master Window Cleaners.. 01865 777889, 07887 515168

