



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

May 2025

4 May	Shared service with Anglicans (at San Antonio).....	9:30am
11 May	Informal worship service.....	9:30am
18 May	Silvia Purdie.....	9:30am
25 May	Informal worship.....	9:30am
1 June	Shared service with Anglicans (at St Ronan's).....	9:30am

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Power Hour – Sundays 9:30am

Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 8:00am

Mainly Music – Thursdays 9:15-11:15am

For pastoral care needs, please contact one of the Local Shared Ministry Team

Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Simon Shaw 562 8772,

Colin Dalziel 562 7238, Sandy Lang 562 8753

A Good Friday reflection - worth repeating...

Luke 23:34 *Father, forgive them...!*

He could have said other words, but he didn't. We heard him right. It was those particular words which came from Jesus' lips... *Father, forgive them...!*

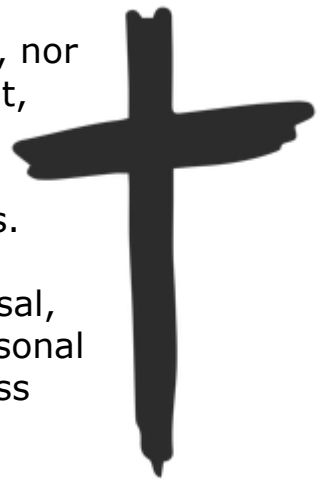
And they are recorded only by Luke. All four gospels have very detailed accounts of the trial of Jesus and his crucifixion. They all mention he was crucified between two thieves, but only Luke records these critically important words... *Father, forgive them...!*



Oh, He could have said so many other words! - but he didn't.
He didn't call for his friends to avenge his death...
He didn't call down fire and brimstone...
He didn't demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Instead, he prayed with words shot through with understanding and compassion...
for the criminals who hung on either side of him...
for the crowd shouting abuse from below...
and maybe, we hope, with understanding and compassion for us too...
Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing...

From the cross we hear no words of condemnation, nor anger, nor self-pity, but only words that echo what Jesus lived and taught, about whom we should love, and whom we should forgive, and the blessed place of mercy in the divine scheme of things.



From the suffering viewpoint of God, the human cycle of reprisal, revenge and retribution, born from nationalistic, ethnic or personal pride, will simply never... ever... save the world. But forgiveness and mercy can.

The Gospel of Jesus proclaims there is no other way.
We cannot work or earn our way into God's love.
It's just there for us, offered freely.
There is no other religion that announces their good news in quite this way.

The notion of God's mercy, and forgiveness, and grace, though held in common by the three Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam - is hard for any of us to accept, and even harder to put into practice. To try to follow Jesus in this way remains completely counter-intuitive and counter-cultural.

You see, Jesus revealed on the Cross, that forgiveness always costs the forgiver, maybe to the extreme of pain, and ridicule, and death. God in Christ was prepared to suffer and to die rather than retaliate against a humanity, free to reject their creator's love...

God bears the full cost of forgiveness on the Cross.

It's clear from the Gospel we proclaim

that Jesus reveals God's mind;

that Jesus reveals God's will;

that Jesus reveals God's eternal purpose;

and he calls us to follow him,

and to live his life, in our day-to-day world.

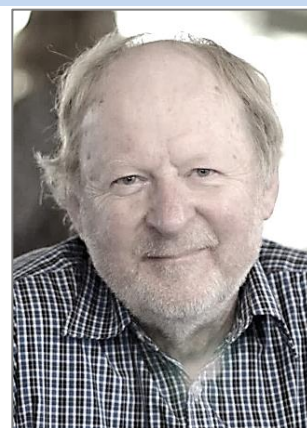
Father forgive them, he said, for they don't know what they're doing

Reg Weeks

Clerk's corner...

Easter: A very busy time which saw us working together with the people of St Alban's and San Antonio at this special time in the church calendar – four unique events over the period. Always a pleasure to share this festival – the Christian church is more an 'Easter church' than it is a 'Christmas church' – but sometimes one might wonder...!

Record: Les has resigned from his role as Editor of the *Record*, the April issue was his last. *We've all appreciated your work, Les, it's seen the Record go from strength to strength over the nearly five years you've been on the job... Thank you from us all...!*



And while we are thanking, we should also thank those who contribute such good content – be their writings regular or occasional. There would be no *Record* at all without your thoughtful content – it would have died long ago.

Record circulation remains at about 85 copies each month, with the readership significantly larger (i.e., most copies will be read by more than one person, so maybe 150 readers...?).

And most *Record* issues are 16 pages in length (we nearly had a 20-pager last month), and they usually include some very significant articles.

In the short term, I've taken over from Les as editor. Anne will take over from me in a couple of months.

Church Chat: We had a Church Chat on 27 April. We talked about:

1. Refreshments - Easing the pressure on those on the refreshments roster. By all means bake muffins/scones - but remember it's a snack not a meal and if you're feeling pressured, a packet of ginger biscuits will do just fine.

When we are catering for a shared service at St Ronan's (six times a year), the congregation rises from about 15 to about 50, so significantly more food is required. On these occasions, the rostered person is more a 'coordinator' than a 'provider', so should invite others to help. But there's still no need to over-cater. It's not a competition to see who can produce the biggest spread of the best baking. As hosts, our aim to make our guests comfortable and welcome...!

2. Roster - We agreed it would help if our quarterly duty rosters were promulgated a month early. This gives people more notice than a just-in-time roster at the start of the period covered. So, the next roster (for the July/Aug/Sept quarter) might appear about 1 June.

3. Future - We started a conversation on what the future may look like for St Ronan's, especially apropos our buildings. This turned out to be a bit of an unexpected rehearsal for our upcoming church meeting (see just below).

4. Record - And we talked about the *Record* (see just above).

NOTICE - Church Meeting: We will have a formal Church Meeting on Sunday 18 May. As with the *Church Chat* we will hold this formal meeting after the service, over tea/coffee in the Fellowship room, at about 10:45am.

AGENDA – As a congregation, we need to be looking into the future – say the next 10 years and beyond. You'll be glad to hear we have no financial crises looming but some of us are getting a bit short on energy. We're getting older...!

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Sandy Lang

Rood Screen – The Picture of Dorian Gray¹

We have just celebrated ANZAC Day – the day on which we remember those who've given their lives in the service of our country. For me, one of the most poignant moments in the service is when the words from Laurence Binyon's poem *For the Fallen* are read out...

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn...*

I find myself quietly remembering, not only the war heroes but also my friends and family who've passed on. Their faces are frozen in my memory, as they were when I last saw them - ten, twenty, fifty years ago...



¹ *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – Novel - Oscar Wilde 1890.



Photograph of Oscar Wilde close to his appearance (short hair) when Francis Richards painted his portrait

In December 1887, Canadian artist Frances Richards painted a portrait of Oscar Wilde. When the sitting was over, and Wilde looked at the portrait, he commented, *What a tragic thing it is. This portrait will never grow older, and I shall. If it was only the other way...!* The moment he said this, it occurred to him he'd found the plot for a new story...!

In Wilde's story, Dorian Gray is described as a man of exceptional beauty. Dorian believed that the only two things worth pursuing in life were beauty and sensual fulfilment, but he also realised that both these would fade over time. So, on impulse, he chose to sell his soul to the Devil.

Dorian had a portrait of himself that had been painted by his friend Basil Hallward. He asked that rather than himself, it would be the portrait that would age and fade. His wish was granted. So, while Dorian pursued a libertine life of varied amoral experiences, he stayed

young and beautiful. And all the while, his portrait aged and recorded visually every one of Dorian's sins.

It strikes me the story of Dorian Gray has parallels with our Christian faith.

Our pre-Christian life might have had its fun parts, but the direction it was headed was inevitable. However, with Jesus in our lives, we have not only been promised an eternal spiritual life but also a warmth in our hearts that only those who have experienced it can know.

When we give our heart to Jesus, it is *HE* who takes away the burden and consequences of our sin and it is *WE* who are redeemed. And it is *WE* who no longer grow old but have eternal life.

Maybe you are going to Google how Dorian Gray ends? But that is *NOT* how our Christian faith ends! In fact, there are a few other differences in the two stories.



PENGUIN CLASSICS

OSCAR WILDE
The Picture of Dorian Gray

- We do NOT give our hearts to Jesus with the sole motivation of being able to continue to sin but with impunity; and
- Giving our hearts to Jesus is NOT the same as selling our souls to the Devil.

But isn't it a wonderful thing to know that when we give our hearts to Jesus, we will *Dwell in the house of the Lord forever* - Psalm 23:6. God bless...!

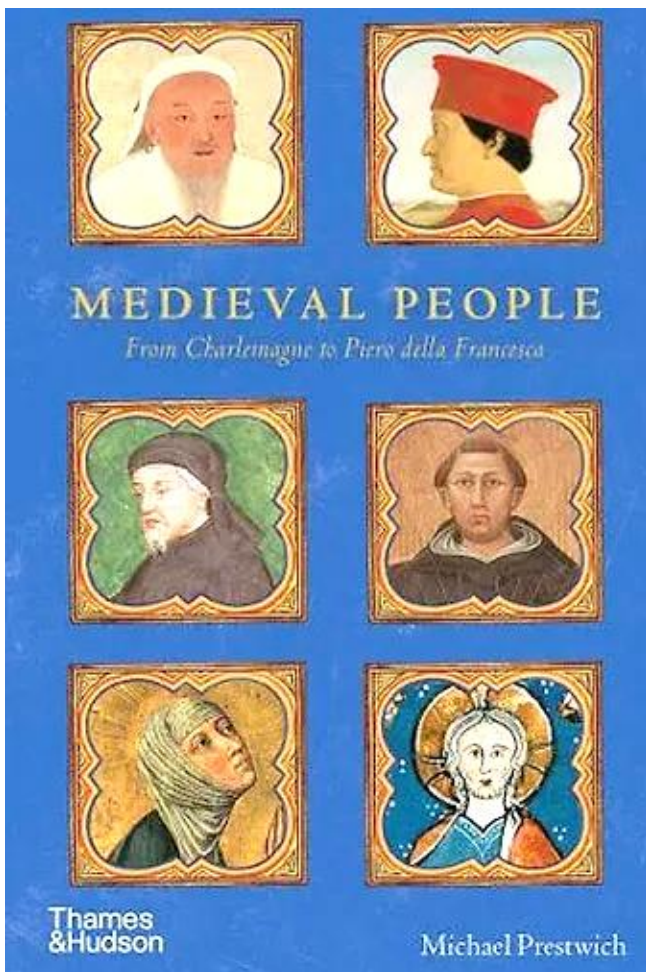
John Harris

Easter readings...

I spent the recent grey days of Easter reading two books...

The first book I read was **Medieval People – Vivid Lives in a Distant Landscape** by Michael Prestwich.

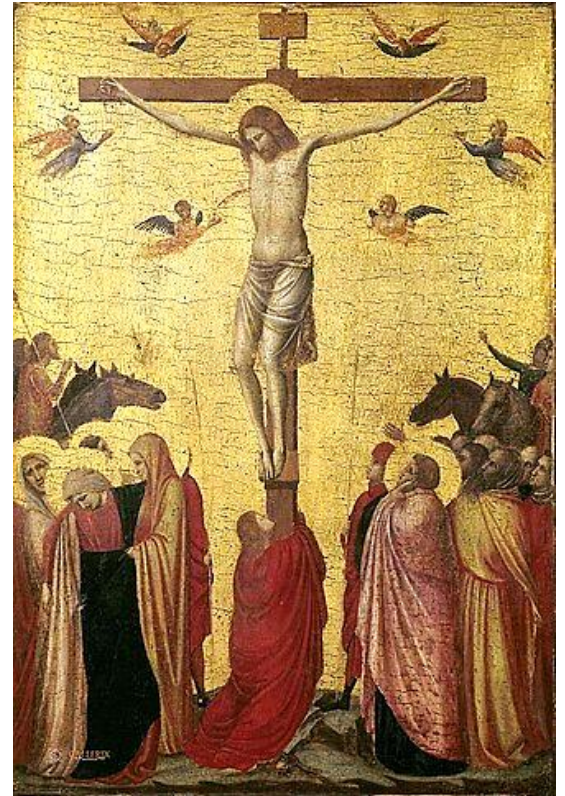
This book gives potted versions of the lives of 69 prominent personages from 800 AD through to 1500 AD. It included Charlemagne, Dante, Chaucer, Genghis Khan, Joan of Arc, El Cid and Johannes Gutenberg.



Few of these 69 people lived beyond the age 60, and most had to deal with plagues and wars - either local or crusades.

With very few exceptions they were of the landed or ecclesiastical aristocracy. The peasants were an unmentioned rabble except when rallied to join in the crusades.

There is little to envy about these lives and years, which seem overall to be characterised by social chaos and suffering,



Giotto circa 1315

But to be admired are those who rose above it, and whose efforts set the stages for the advances of subsequent centuries...!

The second book I read was ***The Hard Road Out*** – *One woman's escape from North Korea* by Jihyun Park and Seh-Lynn Chai.

Jihyun Park lived her first 30 years in North Korea. Seh-Lynn Chai grew up in the family of a South Korean diplomat in Africa and Europe. Her first languages therefore are Korean and French, although now she lives in the UK. Jihyun has told her story in Korean to Seh-Lynn who has translated and documented it in English.

THE HARD ROAD OUT

ONE
WOMAN'S
ESCAPE
FROM NORTH
KOREA



JIHYUN PARK
AND SEH-LYNN CHAI

**'Gripping, suspenseful
and cathartic'**
David Lammy MP

The childhoods of these two women could scarcely have been more different. That of Jihyun in Chongjin a city of 50,000 people on the NE coast of Korea, but more reminiscent of a medieval village of abject poverty, where children begged and died on the street, where food was scarce, and communities and neighbours lived in constant fear of one another, and the state; where everyone paid abeyance and homage to the Kim gods whose photos were in every dwelling and daily religiously polished and whose 3 m statues gleamed as the populace set flowers at their base every Kim festival-day. The Party was the national religion; to criticise the Party was a blasphemy worthy of ostracism and hard labour.

On Good Friday I read the following passage:

I had just come home from school when the local enforcer told us to go back right away: a traitor had just been arrested and was about to be punished... The execution was to take place on the bridge, where the greatest number of people could gather and the visibility was best... I could see they had erected a post on a stretch of sand below the bridge. Suddenly, an army jeep drove up. Policemen pulled a hooded man from the jeep. Clearly weak, he could barely

walk – maybe they'd tortured him before bringing him here. When they saw the traitor, everyone got excited and started shouting. They tied the man to the post. Three soldiers lined up in front of him; "What did he do?" (someone asked). "I think he killed a cow!" "A cow? Who would dare do such a thing? Let him die! Serves him right!"... Each of the three soldiers shot him in the head, the chest and the knees... After untying him from the post they rolled him up in some sacking. They put the body in a car, which took off immediately and disappeared from sight.

The little schoolgirl grew up and became a teacher. With her sister and brother-in-law they decided to flee. They climbed mountains and crossed frozen rivers to reach China, where she was traded as a slave.

Eventually after years of imprisonment in China she found her way to Mongolia then to a UN refugee office and, ultimately, to the UK and to Manchester.

Her accounts of state-sponsored brainwashing, persecution, torture and cruelty are mind-numbing. Implicitly and explicitly, she blames the State, the Party and the Kims.

She became involved in the community of Moorside in Manchester and felt that she could serve Britain in local government – but "why the Conservative Party?" "Don't talk to me of Socialism! Justice, freedom and the family, these are the values I believe in!"

Jerusalem 33 AD, Europe 400-800 AD, North Korea 2,000 AD: Three different ages.

Humanity has learned to fly to the moon, and has also perfected the skills of torture, cruelty and injustice.

Geoff Mann

CHILDREN'S POWER HOUR – Passover & Easter...

In the lead-up to Easter, our Power Hour children were posed with the question: "What, if any, is the connection between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter?" Their thoughts were a little hazy. To connect the Passover with Easter we dramatised Jesus' last week in Jerusalem.

The Passover week celebrations had begun and we dramatised Jesus' welcoming entrance to Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Palm Sunday) with palm leaves waving. We highlighted how Jesus had asked two of his friends to follow a man with a water jar to a home where they could prepare the Passover meal (Seder).

Each year the Jews ate a special Passover meal during Passover week. From Moses time, it was a reminder of how God had guided the enslaved Jews out of

Egypt and back to the Promised Land. The Passover celebrations were a way to show gratitude for God's delivery.

Like Jesus' friends, we then too laid out the Passover Seder plate and ate it in the prescribed order. Rather than eating the Seder food for its yummy flavours, it was eaten while reflecting on the essential tastes of sweet, sour, salty, bitter and the associated symbolic meanings connected with God's delivery from Egypt back to the Promised Land.



Seder food plate

The Seder plate had a roasted lamb shank bone, charoset, a green vegetable, horseradish, an egg, parsley and salted water and matza (unleavened bread). A cup of wine was a reminder of Elijah the prophet and was drunk throughout (we used grape juice). Then to review, we matched up the food items with their symbolisms.

Can you imagine the food tastes and understand their symbolic significance?

- Lamb Shank Bone – Lamb of God, Blood painted on door posts and above.
- Charoset (ground apple, nuts, raisins) – Bricks and mortar for Egyptian buildings.
- Green vegetable (lettuce) – Life was sweet at first in Egypt but Bitter/Hard at the end.
- Horseradish – Bitterness of slavery.
- Matza Bread – Unleavened bread made hastily at the Escape from Egypt
- Egg – Hope and new life.
- Salted Water – Tears of slaves.
- Parsley – Spring, New Life.



Around the Seder plate and crafted Easter baskets

Following the Seder meal, we went on to experience what Jesus did and said next. Telling his special friends this meal was his last with them. We acted out this scene by sharing broken pita bread with thanks to God and that it represented His body. Going on, Jesus warned them that something horrible was going to happen but something good was going to happen from it. God would make it possible for people to be forgiven for the wrong they had done. So, we raised the cup of Elijah (wine/grape juice), thanked God and drank it with remembrance that this is Jesus' blood and who died for us.

To reinforce Jesus' key message, we unscrambled words on a pictorial activity sheet to read, "This bread is my body" and "This wine is my blood". Passover and Easter are indeed intertwined.

Last, we made Easter baskets to cradle a daffodil bulb for later planting, to see the beautiful new yellow flower which will emerge next spring. All in symbolism of Easter, burial and Jesus arising to new life. This was a fitting way to end our Power Hour Term 1 just before Palm Sunday.

Term 2: 4 May to 22 June (Matariki-20 June)

Susan Connell

Why does the date of Easter change each year...?

Easter is always the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the Spring equinox (21 March).

Easter marks Jesus' death and resurrection. The Bible indicates it happened around the time of the Jewish Passover. Both Easter and the Passover dates have always been calculated using the lunar calendar and are historically linked. Early on, however, the various Christian traditions disagreed about the exact date and this caused conflict. So, when was our current Easter date calculation established, and how, and why?



King Oswy (Oswiu) of Northumbria (612–670 AD) was a significant king. He had grown up within the Celtic/Irish Christian tradition. When he married his second wife, Queen Eanfled, he found himself in a difficult position. She had been raised within the Roman Christian tradition which celebrated Easter a week later than his Celtic/Irish tradition. In 664 AD King Oswy played a major role in standardising the Easter date throughout Britain.

According to the Roman tradition the Easter date, was established by Emperor Constantine in 325 AD at the Council of Nicaea. Easter was to be on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox. But other Christian traditions calculated Easter differently - based on the Gospels records.

King Oswy believed the country would be more cohesive if the religious arguments stopped and everyone celebrated Easter at the same time. So, he decided to sort out the date of Easter, once and for all. He called the Synod of Whitby together in Whitby Abbey.



According to the Jewish calendar, Passover can never be before the 14 Nisan and this is always just after the Spring equinox (21 March). Clearly, the date of Passover had to be incorporated into the calculation.

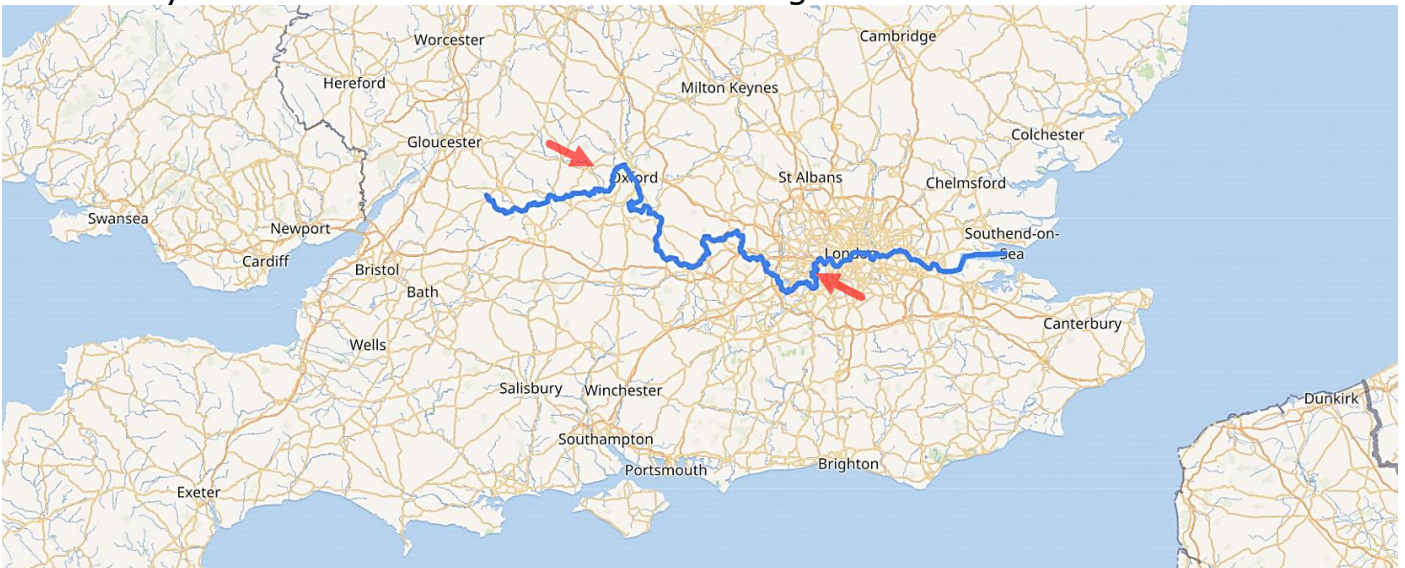
The Council of Whitby decided that King Oswy's northern realm would follow the Roman Christian tradition. This brought unity to all Christian groups in Britain, and to this day, Easter remains the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the Spring equinox (21 March)².

Susan Connell

Two rivers I know...

It's not only Māori who personify rivers. As with a log-fire, there's something alive about a river. The World over, rivers are seen as bringers of life, and have long been associated with sprites, spirits, deities and other supernatural beings. Only last month, Anne wrote about 'Maa Ganga' (Mother Ganges).

Old Father Thames: The famous River Thames has its source (a bubbling spring in a grassy paddock) in Gloucestershire and flows into the North Sea near Tilbury. Its length is about 346 km. On the way, it winds its way through some very ancient and famous cities including Oxford and London.



About 65 years ago, at the end of the summer term, my schoolfriend Peter and I kayaked from our Oxfordshire boarding school (see red arrow - left) to London (see red arrow - right). No lifejackets. No waterproof tent. No drybag. No special clothing. No cell phone. Very little money. We'd neither of us camped or kayaked before. But we were 16 years old and bulletproof...!

² See: www.rogersteer.com; Google [easter date bbc](#); Google [easter date wiki](#)

Our journey started just across the road from our school's front gate where the River Windrush (little more than a stream) winds through about 15 km woodland and farmland before joining the River Thames at Newbridge (the bridge was 'new' in the 13th century). No boats of any size can get under it...



The Thames has 45 locks, giving it a navigable length of a bit over 300 km. Newbridge is about 60 km downstream of the Thames' source and 25 km downstream of Lechlade, its first lock and highest navigable point.

A week and 43 locks later, we entered London - a commercial port in those days. At this point the much larger boats (ships) made it too dangerous to kayak any further. So, we stopped at Kingston-on-Thames, about 80 km upstream of where the Thames enters the North Sea. We'd made it...!

We'd paddled about 30 km per day, and about 200 km in total. There were no campsites in those days. So, nights, we'd camp on the riverbank (at dusk to avoid discovery). After erecting our ex-army, two-person, leaky, canvas tent, we'd light a little open fire (no Primus stove, no gas stove) to heat a can of baked beans and a can of corned beef. In the morning at first light (for the same reason we'd camped at dusk) we'd break camp and get away. Breakfasts and lunches were bread and jam.



One morning, we were woken by a herd of heifers trying to eat our tent. Another morning, we found we'd camped on a narrow grass strip between the river and a busy main road - it had been fully dark when we'd camped the night before...!



Kingston-on-Thames

That schoolboy adventure left us with life-long memories of the Thames (my memories now shared briefly with you) and created for us both a very happy relationship with that famous personage 'Old Father Thames'.

Whanganui River: For a long time, I've wanted to get to know the Whanganui River³ in similar fashion. I've crossed it many times on SH3 at Whanganui (a big river there), and also on SH4 at *Manunui*, close to Taumarunui (a little river there). I've also driven beside it 76 km from Whanganui to Pipiriki, going through the little riverside settlements of Koriniti, Matahiwi and Jerusalem (of JK Baxter fame). There's no adjacent road upstream of Pipiriki.

Also, I did once take a two-hour trip on the lower reaches (to about 12 km upriver from Whanganui) on the coal-fired paddle steamer *Waimarie*.⁴ Pleasurable, undemanding and an excellent way to get an introduction to the fascinating histories of both the steamer and the river. To be recommended...!

Up close and personal: But if you really want to get to know a river there's only one way. You see it from the water - in a kayak or canoe. And for the Whanganui River you join a guided group⁵.



³ Google [Whanganui River wiki](#)

⁴ Length 100 feet, built in London in 1889, coal fired, two single-cylinder steam engines (double-acting, 9" bore, 24" stroke). Google [PS Waimarie wiki](#)

⁵ Google [canoe safaris](#)



Anne and I did the 5-day trip, the company describes this as “bumpy and fun” - our group of 17 would describe it as tough-going and very demanding both physically and mentally. Either of the shorter 4-day or 3-day trips would have been more sensible for us two oldies - but then we’d have seen less of the river. We’re glad we did full the 5-day trip. We survived...!

The trip: We canoed the bit of river that runs through the *Whanganui National Park*. This long section is inaccessible by road. Our adventure started at Ohinepane, about 17 km downstream of Taumarunui (see red arrow - left). We travelled about 120 km over 5 days of paddling (4 nights of camping). We

camped **night1** at Whakahoro, **night2** at Ohauora, **night3** at Mangapurua, **night4** at Ramanui, and at the end of day 5 we left our canoes at Pipiriki (see red arrow - right).



Canoes: Our waka were lightish, two-person, fibreglass, 'Canadian' canoes. Anne paddled up front, I paddled and steered from the back.

Our stuff: We each had a blue waterproof barrel for our sleeping mat and clothes, and a smaller barrel of communal equipment. We shared an orange 'dry-bag' for the things we might want during the day. All were securely strapped into the canoe. So, in a capsize, there were just two paddles and two people for someone to fish out of the water.



Paddling: We averaged 25 km /day. I didn't find the paddling too arduous, Anne did...!

Rapids: Over the 5 days, we had to negotiate about 30 rapids of varying malevolence. We had two capsizes on day 1. No more. We'd learned...! Most crews had at least one capsize. Some crews had three capsizes.

Camping: Nights, we camped by the river at Dept of Conservation campsites (very basic, long-drop loos, no showers). A couple of nights we made and broke camp in the rain.

Clothing: You keep your dry clothes dry and your wet clothes wet.

So, evenings, you change into warm/dry things after you've pitched your tent. 😊

And, mornings (still dark) you climb out of your warm sleeping bag and don yesterday's cold, dripping-wet things. 😞

Food: Our two young and extremely competent guides (Sam and Gregor) provided us large quantities of good, hot food, morning and evening. And salad+bun lunches at midday. And a hot drink and cake/bickie in between.



We're both now very good friends with the Whanganui River...!

Sandy Lang (and Anne)



Our God calls us to worship and grow together and to show the love of Christ through serving our community.

Directory

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Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome.
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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.
They do not necessarily represent those of St Ronan's Church.

**And the closing date for our next *Record* for June 2025
is Sunday 25 May 2025**