



Our aim is to offer a variety of articles, essays, and materials that help us develop our Spiritual, Human, Intellectual, and Pastoral life (SHIP).

Our Monthly Newsletter is designed specifically for the St Alban's Community and its friends, featuring curated content that speaks to our daily life under the Catholic faith. We therefore encourage you to publish your thoughts with us, based on facts and reliable sources of information. Our **SHIP** content allows you to print all materials related to the liturgy, retreats, sacraments, etc. (**S**piritual), Catholic social teaching, politics, culture, etc. (**H**uman), science, theology, philosophy, etc. (**I**ntellectual), and everything linked to parish life (**P**astoral). Just remember that our aim is not simply to inform, but to **FORM** consciences in the light of Catholic teaching... and all these in **LOVE** and **RESPECT**.



By Karyn Johnston

May, traditionally the Church's month dedicated to Our Lady and the Rosary, this year feels especially timely. Many of us will recall May crownings, home May altars, parish rosaries, and the familiar rhythm of prayer drawing families and communities together. Pope Leo has spoken often of Mary as a mother who "suffers with her children" and who gently leads them towards her Son, the true Prince of Peace.

As conflict and uncertainty continue to weigh heavily on the world, the Church is once again turning hearts and minds towards prayer, peace and the gentle but powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In April, Pope Leo XIV issued one of his strongest appeals yet, calling on Catholics everywhere to become "bearers of peace" through prayer, conversion of heart and trust in God's mercy.

Leading a global Rosary Vigil for Peace at St Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father reminded the faithful that prayer is not an escape from responsibility, but "the most free, universal and transformative response to

death." Lighting candles before an image of Mary, Queen of Peace, he urged believers to rise "from the rubble of despair" and to believe that peace is still possible, even in dark times.

This emphasis on Mary, Queen of Peace has been echoed closer to home by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, who have frequently encouraged parishes to pray for peace and reconciliation across the world. Recent statements from Archbishop of Westminster, Richard Moth, have reaffirmed support for Pope Leo XIV's call, urging us to unite prayer with practical solidarity for those suffering through war and injustice.

In our parish, homes and schools, rediscovering the Rosary this May offers a simple, achievable and powerful response. By entrusting our fragile world and the decisions of its leaders to Our Lady, Queen of Peace, we join the universal Church in believing that prayer can still move hearts, heal wounds and open pathways to a just and prolonged peace.



First Saturday Devotion 2 May and 6 June 2026

Join our Holy Rosary at 10:30 am, Consecration Prayer and Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Confessions at 11am with Holy Mass at 12 noon

St Alban's Coffee Club

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 12th May at 10.30 am at The Hope Centre Cafe in Park Green. You are warmly invited to pop in for a coffee and a chat with fellow parishioners. Just turn up on the day - friends and family also welcome! Jane 07855628075



St Alban's Parish ROSARY FOR PEACE

Every Wednesday at 5:30pm in Church

Pope Leo's intention for May 2026



That everyone might have food

Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.



The social committee are organising

a trip to Buxton on Tuesday 30th June

A guided tour of the fascinating hidden histories of the town. Discover how the town and the wonderful Crescent building came to exist, followed by a delicious afternoon tea at The Palace hotel.

Sign up form at back of church

Info: moifriell@hotmail.co.uk

500 Club

Yes, it's time to join our club or renew your membership.

To Win It – You Need to Be in It

Some of our lucky winners:



Charles and Krysia



Karyn

For just £2 per month or £24 per year. Payable by standing order, tap to donate or cheque.

Application forms are in the church porch. Completed forms can be placed in the 500 Club box in the porch.

Quarterly draws – March / June / Sept / Dec

Cash prizes of £250, £100 & 2 x £50

Holy week

Below is a reflection which a parishioner shared with Fr Tomasz after the celebrations of the Holy Week.

Dear Father Tomasz,

This Holy Week has been a very special time for all of us, a journey that nourished our faith [...]. At the centre of this journey, the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus [...].

I would like to reflect on some moments that particularly touched me: the sinful woman washing and kissing Jesus' feet; Jesus Himself washing the feet of His disciples; your homily, in which you spoke so tenderly of your mother; and the moment when you yourself knelt to wash and kiss the feet of members of our community.

There was something deeply moving that connected all of these. In that woman, we see a love that is unafraid [...], even when it comes from a place of brokenness. In Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, we witness the ultimate expression of humble love and selfless service, [...] without expecting anything in return. In the memory of your mother, we see a love that is gentle, instinctive, and pure - expressed in the smallest, most intimate gestures. And in your actions at the altar, we witnessed that same love made present among us.

As a mother, I was touched in a very personal way by the tender care of your mother. I found myself thinking: how many times have I kissed my own children's feet, without even realising the depth of that gesture? It is a love that does not judge, that simply gives, that simply loves.

In my opinion, there is something profoundly symbolic about the feet. [...] We stumble, we fall, and yet, with the strength of Jesus, we find the courage to rise and continue. It is along these very paths, despite the struggles, that we grow in faith, in resilience, and in love.

It was quite moving the way you [...] expressed your gratitude after Holy Week: your acknowledgment of the efforts of all who [...] made possible the success of the most important event of our Christian faith [...].

Inspired by Jesus, your example reminds us that faith is much more than words; it is shown through actions, love, and service. Through your gratitude and humility, you encourage us to grow, to forgive, and to embrace one another with open hearts.

Lord, may we have abundant inner silence so that our minds and hearts may be touched by Your Love. And may we be certain that, however difficult the situations we face, walking in the sandals You give each of us, we may always journey towards You - who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

With heartfelt gratitude and blessings,

Dina Felipe

RCIA

by Denise Volpato



Eight baptisms and eight Confirmations were the culmination of our six-month RCIA programme. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)

What attracts our 'Enquirers'?

Some come along after an event in their lives; others are drawn by the example of someone they respect; others still after exploring different religions for a 'best fit', or after attending our services for many years.

Whatever the impetus, after many years journeying with catechumens (non-baptised) and candidates (baptised, but not confirmed), I am convinced it is the Holy Spirit who leads individuals to begin or continue their journey towards full communion with the Catholic Church.

The people nervously walking through the Parish Centre door on the first evening, grow in confidence, knowledge and friendship as the course unfolds. It is heartwarming to see them, over the years, taking up various roles in our parish community.

This year, half our team of catechists are retiring due to age and illness. We are praying that the Holy Spirit will lead others to come forward to share their faith and time, to prepare others for reception into the Church.

Understanding of the Sacraments, the Church's yearly cycle, our devotions and Feast Days matters as much as formal qualifications.

If you feel prompted to assist in this ministry, please contact Fr Tomasz, who is heavily involved in the programme and a back-up for thorny theological questions.

Somer Chappel writes:

The RCIA has been the most welcoming community. The whole experience has been amazing from start to finish. The group is very friendly, helpful and welcoming. Fr Tomasz is extremely funny and makes the process less stressful. My sponsor / Godparent has been nothing short of outstanding.

To the members who give their spare time to enlighten all of the newbies we are forever grateful! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

After the Baptisms and Confirmations

Lynda writes:

When I first entered the church hall at St Albans, I was unsure of what to expect, as I did not know anyone. However, I was warmly welcomed by the RCIA team, whose kindness and hospitality immediately put me at ease.

Over the following weeks, I came to know others on the course, each of us at different stages of our faith journey. The sessions, thoughtfully prepared and led by the RCIA team, were both engaging and informative. Father Tomasz in particular has a remarkable gift for storytelling, presenting the teachings of the faith in a way that is both accessible and deeply meaningful.

The entire experience has been one of genuine enlightenment, for which I am sincerely grateful. It has been a privilege to share this journey with new friends and with the dedicated RCIA team.

The Easter Saturday service was especially significant and remains a deeply memorable occasion. It was moving to support one another through the baptisms, receptions into the Church, and confirmations, marking an important milestone in our shared journey of faith.

Several of us intend to return to the course in October, not only to support new participants, but also to continue deepening our own understanding and commitment to the faith.

Candy's story

My Journey to Becoming a Parish Secretary – and Choosing Baptism

For seven years, I ran my own cleaning business. After working for various cleaning companies and building up a strong reputation, I decided to go self-employed so I could work around my four children. Even after having my 5th child, I was back to work when he was just eight weeks old, starting with one day a week and gradually returning to five days by the time he turned one.



After years of balancing long days cleaning houses with the demands of family life, I began to feel exhausted and ready for a change (and perhaps ready to retire my mop!).

During this time, I regularly cleaned the presbytery for Fr Peter and Fr Paschal, and I had

built a lovely friendship with the parish secretary at the time, Jeannette. One day, over a coffee, she mentioned she was planning to retire. Half-jokingly, I said, "I'll take your job, I'm fed up with cleaning!" Well Jeannette thought it was a wonderful idea and encouraged me to apply.

Although I had some administrative experience, there was one complication: I wasn't Catholic and hadn't been baptised. Jeannette contacted the Diocese, and they agreed it would be possible, provided Fr Peter was happy. It may have taken a little convincing, but thankfully he agreed, and I like to remind him now that it was one of his best decisions!

However, I was completely unprepared for how challenging the role would be. There was so much to learn, and I often doubted whether I was capable. During this time, I also faced personal struggles, losing my grandad suddenly, taking on a caring role for my nana, and experiencing panic attacks which led to time off work. It was an incredibly difficult period, and I often questioned myself.

Then came another big change, Fr Peter was leaving. I was devastated and anxious about starting again with a new priest, especially as I still felt I had so much to learn.

But when Fr Tomasz arrived, everything began to fall into place. He was incredibly supportive, guiding me patiently, answering my



endless questions, even during the busiest times of the year, like Lent and Easter. I was also blessed with the kindness of parishioners who supported me, encouraged me, and helped me whenever I needed it.

It was during this time that something shifted in me. I began to realise that I could do this job, that I had been carried through the hardest moments. I truly felt that the Lord was guiding me, strengthening me, and helping me to grow.

And so, I made a decision that felt completely right in my heart: I wanted to be baptised. I wanted to deepen my faith, to learn more, and to be fully welcomed into the Church.

One of the most special moments of all was being baptised alongside my three boys at the Easter Vigil. It was such a beautiful and emotional night, one I will treasure forever, and it made the journey even more meaningful to share it with them.

This journey has not been easy, but it has been full of grace, and a few surprises along the way! I am so grateful for where it has led me, and for the faith I have found.

The Turin Shroud and Paschal Events

By Fr Maurice Hogan. Originally printed in Far East Magazine, March /April 2026. Reprinted here with permission

The Shroud of Turin has been venerated for nearly two millennia as the burial cloth of Jesus. The linen cloth measures 4.4 by 1.1 metres (14.5 by 3.5 feet). It has been displayed in Turin Cathedral (Italy) since 1578. Recent scientific, medical and technological tests point to its authenticity. The mysterious image on this non-photosensitive linen was produced by a process not fully understood or producible by modern technology, lending credence to the argument that this is the burial cloth of not only the historical Jesus but of the risen Christ.

A photographic negative of the cloth shows a three-dimensional image of a crucified man so accurate in anatomic detail that scientific tests today can diagnose his multiple injuries. Its 372 bloodstains point to a crucifixion resembling that of Jesus by Roman authorities in 33 AD. The Shroud reveals details that correspond to the wounds described in the Gospels and hints at bodily transparency suggestive of the resurrection.

The authenticity of the Shroud was challenged by carbon dating in 1988 which dated its origins in the Middle Ages, suggesting it had been produced by a medieval forger. However, the sample tested by carbon dating was compromised by repairs to the cloth after a fire in 1532. Newer tests date the Shroud around the middle of the first century AD. Pollen grains embedded in the Shroud indicate it spent much of its time in Palestine. What is intriguing is that the image was not produced by any paint, dye, or chemical; it has no brush strokes. Scholars have identified coin imprints on the eyes of the man in the Shroud as very likely images of coins specially minted by Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem around 30 AD. Placing coins on the eyes of the deceased was a common practice at the time. When all the findings are combined, they present strong evidence that the Shroud originated in first century Palestine around the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

Real bloodstains on the Shroud (blood type: AB) congealed on the cloth before the image was formed and likely



1. The image on the linen is barely visible to the naked eye. It wasn't until Secondo Pia took a photograph in 1898 and examined the negative that it became apparent that the cloth had enveloped a man whose wounds aligned with those of Jesus as recounted in the Gospels.

came from the tormented man in the Shroud. Insofar as the blood is real, and the image created after the bloodstains were embedded on the Shroud, it seems that the cloth enveloped a real man who was crucified in a manner similar to the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Shroud of Turin and the Passion of Christ

The man in the Shroud was scourged by two soldiers using a Roman whip consisting of three thongs with lead pellets at the end of each thong. The scourging left multiple lash marks that covered the man's back, thighs and

calves, reaching around to his sides and part of his chest, causing him to bleed profusely. Three of the Gospels specifically mention that Jesus was scourged (Mt.27:26) which was a common Roman practice for criminals. Pilate wished to have Jesus scourged so that the Jewish crowds would be satisfied that Jesus had been punished for alleged blasphemy. He hadn't committed a capital offense according to Roman law. Despite Pilate's protestations of Jesus' innocence, the crowds still demanded his crucifixion and Pilate gave in to their request (Jn. 19:1-16; Lk.23:13-25).

The man in the Shroud was also severely wounded by a crown of long thorns that penetrated the scalp. It was woven like a cap so that the crown would penetrate the top of the man's head as well as the forehead, temples, and back of the head. The thorns would have produced excruciating pain and considerable bleeding. The crown of thorns is unique to Jesus' crucifixion because of a charge levelled by the chief priests that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews (Mt.27:27- 31 and par.).

A dislocated shoulder has been identified which indicates that the man in the Shroud had a large blunt object on his right shoulder. When he fell forward it hit him so hard that it caused a dislocated shoulder and paralysis on the upper right side. Scrapes on the man's knees confirm the fall as well. With his upper body paralysed, it would have rendered him incapable of carrying a cross. These injuries would have exacerbated the pain of the man when later he hung on the cross, making his breathing difficult and thereby shortening his life. The injuries may be explained by circumstances surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. Although the Gospels do not mention a fall, the Gospel of John states that Jesus carried his own cross (Jn. 19:17) but that along the way, the other Gospels relate, the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Jesus enabling him to reach Golgotha (Mt.27:32).

The man in the Shroud was fixed

to a cross with nails that went through the palms but exited through the wrist to sustain the weight of a human body and agrees with the nail wounds on the hands of the risen Christ as the Gospels report (Lk.24:39; Jn.20:20,25,27). The nails would have caused unbearable distress. It is difficult to determine whether the feet were nailed side by side to the upright beam or if one foot was placed on top of the other using a single nail.

The man in the Shroud was pierced on the right side by a spear resembling a Roman lance. The wound exuded both blood and a watery substance detectable on the Shroud and points to a unique feature of Jesus' crucifixion. The Gospel of John reports this feature and insists that it was seen by reliable eyewitnesses (19:34-35), indicating thereby both the likely authenticity of the Shroud as well as the accuracy of John's account of the crucifixion.

The Shroud of Turin and the Resurrection

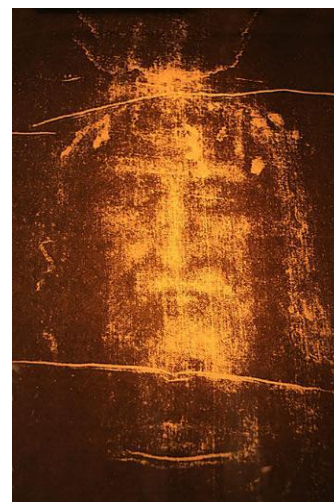
The precise three-dimensional photographic negative image on the Shroud of Turin appearing on a non-photographically sensitive linen cloth cannot be replicated by traditional physical, chemical, or biological processes. It is likely that the image was produced by a momentary intense form of low radiation accompanied by the transparency of the radiating body of the deceased person and admits of no natural or scientific causation. Furthermore, since the cloth did not make contact with every part of the body, only radiation can act at a distance while other image agents do not. It is the only physical explanation capable of explaining all the features. This unique image produced discolouration on the uppermost surface of the Shroud, engendered by an unidentified process colouring it straw yellow.

Scientists are inclined to favour a particle radiation hypothesis as the source of the radiation and the cause of the transparency of the body. Instantaneous atomic disintegration of

the physical body would produce particle radiation on both the ventral (frontal) and dorsal surfaces of the Shroud with equal intensity, and the body would become transparent. Heavily charged particles would have formed a three-dimensional highly precise image on the cloth. This would explain both the image and the transparency of the body. The particle radiation hypothesis has no known natural cause, yet it best explains all the unusual features of the image, the cloth, and the blood. We are dealing with the beginning of a miraculous event because it marks the point at which the body moved from a physical state to a trans-physical glorious state, leaving behind a flash of bright light and producing a perfect three-dimensional photographic negative.

There are other aspects of the image on the Shroud and the condition of the cloth that require clarification. The body disappeared from the Shroud without distorting any of the 372 blood stains that had already been transferred to the Shroud, none were broken or smeared. This suggests the possibility of a supernatural cause because there is no natural explanation for the unique image, the integrity of the blood stains, or the excellent condition of the cloth. It seems that other particles of the nuclear disintegration penetrated the linen cloth which would have strengthened it, making it resistant to chemical reactions. This would account for the lack of "ageing" that might be expected in material 2000 years old that had been subjected to repeated ill-treatment.

Biblical scholars today are generally in agreement that Jesus' disciples experienced him as risen from the dead and spiritually transformed in a glorified body. We may ask why the early Christians would have risked such a doctrinal rift from Judaism when they continued to respect other doctrines and did not wish to break from the synagogue? The reason had to be more than an empty tomb and was more likely an experience of a spiritually transformed and glorified Jesus, an appearance that was continuous with his former embodiment but transfigured in



2. *Is this the face of Jesus? The faint image of a crucified man on a linen cloth, which only became visible through a photographic negative, reveals a bearded man with shoulder-length hair and shows signs of crucifixion wounds as well as thorn marks, flogging, and a potential jaw injury. The debate over its authenticity as a miraculous imprint or a medieval artifact continues.*

spirit, power, and glory (Mt.28:9-20; Lk.24:36-43; Jn.20:19-21; Acts 9:3; 22:6).

How does the image on the Shroud suggest the resurrection of Jesus? A powerful, split-second source of low particle radiation could have caused the image formation and bodily transparency, something akin to becoming spiritual. St Paul coined the term "spiritual body" to describe this phenomenon (1 Cor.15:44). Radiation giving off light with bodily transparency is suggestive of "becoming spiritual" and corresponds to the testimony of the Gospels, Pauline letters, and Acts of the Apostles. One could say that the radiation and bodily transparency which caused the image on the Shroud were the gateway to a risen body transformed in spirit, power, and glory. A precise three-dimensional photographic negative image with encoding of the interior of the body is completely beyond natural causation. And how was the body removed from the Shroud without disturbing or smearing the bloodstains?

The Catholic Church takes no official position on the Turin Shroud, and has avoided claiming that it is anything more than an "icon" of Christian devotion.



By Anna Hughes

On Friday 17th April, a group of 25 of us gathered in the Macclesfield town centre to Walk the Wall – an event organised since 2020 by Amos Trust to coincide with the Palestine Marathon. Thousands of people around the world run or walk in solidarity with Palestine over the same weekend the actual Palestine Marathon should be taking place. Many of those who joined us that Friday were St Alban’s parishioners. We completed two circuits of the town centre, speaking to people we passed, and raising awareness of the situation in Palestine and the West Bank.



Marriage MOT – 21st March 2026

By Louise Hatchman

The MOT Day for Marriage was a real treat.

Sixteen couples attended a full yet relaxed programme. We began with Mass, and it was lovely to see couples of all ages present. Children were cared for by seven students and had a wonderful time. The weather was glorious, and we were given time to explore the grounds and truly connect with our spouses.

Paul and I were among the veterans, yet there was still so much to learn. The introduction was given by Caroline Candia, outlining how to make the most of the day. The first talk, by her husband Ciro Candia, was titled “Building a Marriage That Grows Stronger with Time.” This was



followed by a quiz on friendship – how well do you know your spouse?

The dining room was set up with tables for two, where we enjoyed delicious food and wine. The second talk focused on self-knowledge, understanding, and teamwork in family life.

We concluded with Adoration, the renewal of our marriage vows, and Benediction. Fr Michael was available throughout the day for confession.

Just as we have MOT for our vehicles and regular fitness and health checks, I can strongly recommend a Marriage MOT Day—it is truly a day to remember.

Interview with Father Tomasz – Part 1

By Magda Zarzycka, editing by Sallyann O'Dell

MZ When I first became editor of the monthly newsletter, I tried to find out what our parishioners wanted to read about. And one of the many suggestions was that they wanted to read about you – who you are and your background. This moment of your silver anniversary is the perfect time for this. So please tell us: where did you grow up and how has your childhood shaped you?

Fr Tomasz: I was born in 1976 in Szczecin and grew up in a town called Police, well-known for its huge chemical plant. This area was a new addition to Poland after WWII, given as reparation for the loss of territories in the East. Szczecin was completely ruined at the end of the war: everything had been destroyed and people living there had been uprooted from other areas. There was no true sense of community and a lot of distrust which was then furthered by the communist regime. It has probably all changed now – there's a new generation and we are in the EU; everything has been rebuilt. You and I probably belong to the last generation that remembers communism – the younger generation (even my younger sister) has no memories of those days – queuing for hours for everything, empty shelves in food shops, essential products being routinely unavailable.

MZ: Yes, I remember our local butchers – until the nineties I didn't know why there were hooks on the walls because I had never seen any meat on them.



Chris Niedenthal, "The Butcher Shop, Warsaw," Making the History of 1989, Item #23

everything ran out. If we were lucky, we could get a little extra to swap with someone. This past experience of poverty has helped my understanding of poverty today.

I was still very lucky because my Canadian grandma sent us food parcels occasionally when she moved back to Canada. A bag of Haribo every now and again was such a treat!

My dad was a Jehovah's Witness and, although my mum was a devout Catholic, they were not married in the church, and my father would never set foot in a Catholic church. This was a source of great suffering for my mum because she couldn't take Holy Communion and I found it so difficult watching her only able to come forward for a blessing, not Communion.

MZ: How did you become a priest?

Fr Tomasz: I was always a very able student and, when I gained great school results, I could choose to attend any of the top universities

When you grow up in poverty, you dream of having a good job and financial security. And

what were the really good jobs in communist Poland? Soldier, policeman, firefighter, nurse – government protected jobs offering financial stability.

The mid-nineties brought the fall of communism and the arrival of computers, so I decided to enlist in the army as an IT specialist, studying at a technical university and then working with radars etc. But I

realised I would have to sign up for at least five years after graduating, which I did not want.

I was drawn to the church, not least as it was the only place where we could talk freely rather than really watch what we were saying for fear of being arrested.

My local parish served around 28,000 people. We had 9 priests celebrating 9 Masses every Sunday on two floors, as well as separate masses for young people - in all 11 Masses every Sunday. I remember so fondly those youth masses.

And then a great new priest arrived in the parish - Robert Snieg. He would drag us places (thirty of us!) – prayer events, meetings, days of recollection. He had such inspiring ideas, and we loved dropping in on him to see what he was up to, or he would take us cycling, or camping.

All the priests would visit the sick on the first Friday of every month, offering confession and Holy Communion. As an altar server, I sometimes joined Fr Robert on these visits and saw how much patience and affection he had for those people; how he built up relationships with them and brought them donations from Caritas and Polish Red Cross. The parishioners were always waiting for him, tea at the ready!



Police Old Town Photo by Mateusz War, CC BY-SA 3.0



I remember he took us for a day of recollection for teenagers, which was organised in a seminary. It was a new building, very beautiful, and it was completely open for us to explore. I was swept off my feet! The feeling of community and shared space really resonated with me. So at 19, with my open entry to any university, there was this small voice inside me asking me whether I should try. I wasn't sure, so I made a deal with Jesus: I will go to the seminary for one year and see how it goes. But you only have one year to show me.

My parents were absolutely furious with me - their son had graduated as number one in the whole school, and he now wanted to throw away the financial stability that an army job offered and go to a seminary.

Anyway, my father said that if his first-born son went to the seminary, he would leave us. And he did leave us. He wasn't there when I went to the seminary. But it was both of my parents I had to stand up to. I said to them, "You have already arranged your life, please let me arrange mine myself." And so off I went.

I did not settle during that first year. I was always in some trouble- asking a lot of questions was perceived as cheekiness or subordination. There was a tradition at the end of the first year for seminarians to go on a retreat to Częstochowa, So I went. And then I stayed. To this day I don't know why. But I stayed and I keep doing what I promised Him I would do.

I was always fascinated by truth. Even if bitter and unpleasant, we have to face it and not hide it, because that always brings trouble. Hiding away from the truth always bears bitter fruit. But if we face it, it might be tough for a while, but there will be a joy in our heart that we did the right thing.

None of us are perfect so if we make a mistake, we can say "I was wrong. I'm sorry, forgive me." And that's it. I think this is a beautiful virtue, which is often lacking these days. People find it very difficult to say "I'm sorry, I've made a mess, please help me. I can't do it on my own, I need your help". People prefer to run away, hide and suffer for years instead of accepting help.

MZ: Would you agree it also works the other way round too, that people struggle to tell someone that they are upset and why? In British culture, politeness plays such an important part.

Fr Tomasz: Yes, that is also part of this problem. I won't tell the person that I am upset because they might be hurt, but then I might tell someone else behind their back. And the problem doesn't go away. Politeness is not an absolute value that we

need to protect above all. Christ didn't come to tell us to be polite. He told us to love, and in love sometimes you have to be tough. Truth sometimes hurts but Christ also tells us that truth sets us free. Politeness does not set us free. Putting politeness above truth is like putting a layer of paint over a wall that is covered in damp. It will be nice for a while, but the damp will grow back pretty quickly.

MZ: Also, relationships that are based on truth like this, are deeper and more fulfilling

Fr Tomasz: Yes, and of course there are different sorts of relationships, from acquaintances who know us only a bit, or those who know us a little more through working together. Then, for me, there are closer friends I went to school or the

seminary with. And then there are my closest friends and my family: close friends who know everything about me and the special category of family, with which I share a common past, a common present and common problems.

Back to the seminary, there 33 of us initially with 14 finally ordained, so almost half of us got through until the end. On 26th May 2001 we lay on the church floor and the bishop ordained us to priesthood. 26th May in Poland is also Mother's Day.

I celebrated my first Mass the following day - Day of the Holy Trinity. It was a very important day for the parish because one

of their own became a priest and I still love the welcome I receive back there as part of the community.

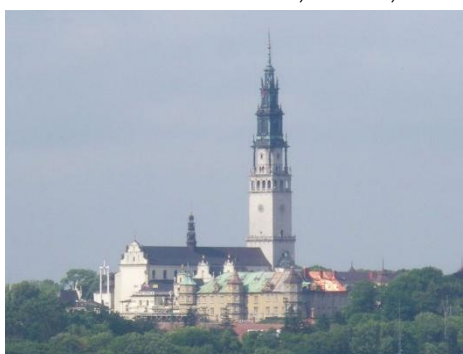
I was a priest in the diocese for 3 years and then taught RE and was the Deputy Head of a Catholic high school for two years; I loved all aspects of this role.

MZ: What was so special there?

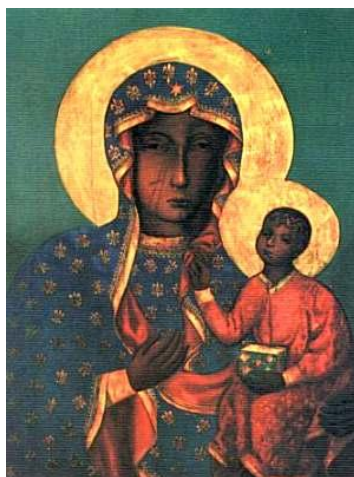
Fr Tomasz: It was the relationships I built with the teachers and the students. I have always loved being among young people, sharing our faith and our interests. I am still in touch with many students who now lead fulfilling, successful lives. Such fond

memories.

The students were empowered to ask challenging questions: "How come that the bishop is so dishonest? How can a certain priest behave in a certain way?" And my answers were equally difficult: "It is a problem, we have to pray for these people." Honesty and truth have to be valued because where there is truth, there is also a chance for evangelisation. Where there is no truth, there can only be indoctrination: many governments and societies indoctrinate their people but that's not living in



The Monastery in Częstochowa



Black Madonna of Częstochowa

freedom. God created us to live in freedom; we can choose freely and as God says, we can choose between life and death, between a blessing and a curse. Whatever you choose, God will give you because He loves you and respects your free choice. This has always been my position: evangelisation has to be based on freedom.

After those two years, I studied philosophy and after being awarded my MA, was offered a PhD place.

MZ: So, philosophy got under your skin after all?

Fr Tomasz: Yes, it did. As part of my PhD, I was expected to study a topic not related to theology or philosophy. I wanted to study a foreign language and initially chose Russian, which I was already very familiar with. Instead, my supervisor challenged me to learn a completely new-to-me language: English!

The best way to learn a foreign language is total immersion, so a year's sabbatical to the UK was granted in 2012 and I arrived in Stockport at the parish of Our Lady and the Apostles. God certainly had his fingers in this because Stockport College was just a few blocks away and I was able to study English there with 3-hour lessons 3 times a week, as well as keeping up constant practice with the Irish priest Fr Pat Monroe.

After that year, I went back to my university with great command of the English language (better than I speak it now!)

In 2016 I defended my dissertation on Descartes, David Hume, and Thomas Aquinas and the concept of human soul in philosophy. Afterwards I took up a teaching post at the University of Szczecin, teaching both lay people and clerics. My interest was mainly in philosophical anthropology, which is the philosophy of man – Who is man? What makes man so special in all of creation?

After six years, as I was considering making this a permanent contract, I received a message that Fr Pat Munroe – the priest who had hosted me in Stockport – had suffered a stroke. His parish in Timperley had been without a priest for six months.

MZ: Six months?

Fr Tomasz: Yes. A priest would visit on Sundays to celebrate Mass but from Monday to Saturday there were only extraordinary ministers to distribute Communion. There is such a shortage of priests in the UK.

I reflected that there were other philosophers in my home diocese and university who could take on my role, but I was needed in Stockport. I could be useful and, even though I love philosophy, my first vocation has always been the priesthood – being a priest.

MZ: What does that mean to you?

Fr Tomasz: A big sacrifice – just like being a father, a mother, a husband, or a wife. You have to give things up, accept certain limitations, and sometimes endure a bit of loneliness.



I asked my Bishop if I could go to the UK. I felt needed, and at the same time I was beginning to feel overwhelmed by the bureaucracy of university life. The original idea underpinning the whole concept of the university, back in the Middle Ages, was the pursuit of truth. Today's universities seemed more in the pursuit of finding money and funding.

I remember trying to publish articles – good, solid academic pieces. And the reviewers would say, "Interesting article, but maybe you could add something about antisemitism? Or slavery? Or racism? Or maybe an LGBTQ+ angle?" And I would say, "But that has nothing to do with the topic." And they'd reply, "Yes, but if you include it, we might get funding." That made me really frustrated.

So in 2019 I came to England on a three-year contract; although I remained a priest of the Diocese of Szczecin, I worked in Timperley, at the parish of St Hugh and St John the Baptist.

After three years, I was delighted when Bishop Mark asked me whether I might like to stay permanently in Shrewsbury and we began the canonical process toward incardination. Two years ago, on the 1st of September, I became a priest of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

So now I'm here. This is my diocese. Not Poland. Poland is part of my past – nothing binds me there anymore. This is my bishop, these are my brother priests, this is my life.

MZ: And why? What brought you to the point where you didn't want to return? What made you decide to stay?

Fr Tomasz: I reflect on my first Mass back in Poland. As is the tradition, I prepared small prayer cards. On the front there's usually a holy image, and on the back a motto, a kind of guiding sentence for life. I thought a lot about what my motto should be and, since I always imagined that I would become a missionary somewhere far away, I kept returning to the story of Abraham. In the book of Genesis, God says to him, "Leave your homeland and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you." And God promises to bless him, to make him a great nation – in the sense of faith, of course.

I chose that sentence for my prayer card: *Leave your homeland and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you.* Abraham trusted, he went, and today he is the father of our faith. I never fully imagined it meant leaving Poland entirely and going to the United Kingdom. But here I am.

MZ: Yes... With God you always have to read the fine print – and even then there's no certainty.

Fr Tomasz: Exactly. And I've tried to remain faithful to that call.

Part 2 of this interview will be published next month.

Please join Fr Tomasz at St Alban's Church

At **11:15 am on Sunday 17th May 2026**

When he celebrates Holy Mass marking the **Silver Jubilee**
of his Ordination to the Priesthood.



You are then invited to join him in the Parish Centre for
a Shared Table.

Please bring contributions to the Shared Table &

bring your own alcoholic drink if you wish.

News from the Parish Council

Sallyann O'Dell

Our April meeting was a busy one, as always, with lots to discuss. Sadly, one of our members is having to step down because of increased work and family commitments. This leaves just a few of us, representing the whole parish and making decisions on your behalf. I am sure we don't always get it right, so perhaps you could think about helping and joining us? Email us on parishcouncil@stalbanmacc.org.uk to find out more.

Here are some of the matters we discussed:

Fr Tomasz shared details of his meeting at Diocesan level regarding the upgrade and renewal of the heating system. There is still a long way to go until anything can be agreed upon, particularly as our church building is so old and precious.

We discussed ways to store parish council documents and sensitive information, so that they are accessible in an emergency or if we have a change of councillors. It was emphasised how important it is to have a succession policy, rather than try to keep everything in our heads.

The Easter Triduum was reviewed: what went well and where small changes could be made. Storm Dave certainly made his presence known during the Easter Vigil on the Saturday night but our congregation was unflappable!

Feedback was received about the monthly newsletter and its mission statement; the proposed editorial guidance notes were discussed.

The date was confirmed for the parish meeting (27th May) and a suitable subject was agreed upon, as well as roles, councillor availability and resources needed. It is always good to have a mix of practical (meeting with the finance committee) and spiritual (Pentecost) at these meetings and we expressed our hopes that many people will be able to attend.

It was agreed to have a special Mass and picnic for the feast day of our St Alban, with finer details to be sorted later. His feast day is 22 June, so we will celebrate on **Sunday 21 June**.

The different pillars presented any updates from their groups and anything of particular note. The Communications Pillar is extremely busy creating a whole new website to replace our obsolete current one. This will be launched soon and will enable us to update and add content much more easily and quickly to reflect all the different aspects of our parish life. A huge undertaking and we offered our gratitude to Nicol for taking this on so competently.

As always, do get in touch with the parish council if you have any questions or need anything clarified. Our email address is parishcouncil@stalbanmacc.org.uk or you can chat with a member when you see them - our photos are in the porch for reference.

The First Pentecost

by Laura Moore

Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Church. It is the day we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the promised helper, to dwell in Jesus' followers. We think of the disciples sitting in the Upper Room; we remember the wind and the tongues of fire resting on their heads; we repeat Peter's speech, declaring the wonders of God.

However, the importance of Pentecost goes further back than the New Testament. When the Israelites were making their way through the desert, after Moses had led them out of Egypt, they received God's word at Mount Sinai, and God came to dwell in the Tabernacle. The Festival of Shavuot, or Pentecost, is celebrated fifty days after Passover, and began as a Harvest Festival. It also commemorates the giving of the Torah, which, legend has it, occurred fifty days after the first Passover. So, fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead, Jews in Jerusalem were celebrating God's gift of the Commandments on stone tablets. On that same day God gave His Holy Spirit and wrote His Law on people's hearts.

As Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, He came to fulfil the law, not to abolish it. Pentecost shows us how that fulfilment is to take place - God's presence is to dwell in His people, keeping His law safe in their hearts.

'This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.'

Jeremiah 31:33

The disciples were good Jews. They kept the festivals and attended the Temple. So they would have been watching for something to happen, especially on Shavuot.

"Something exciting was going to happen. Jesus had said as much at Tabernacles, the first pilgrim festival of the year, when the Temple was packed with visitors. (John 7) Something about rivers of living water. Then he died at Passover, the second pilgrim festival. Who knew what he might do on the third? And if he rose on the barley harvest, he almost certainly had something in store for Shavuoth."

A Little Kosher Seasoning - Michele Guinness

Isn't that amazing? The Old Testament events were always pointing forward to Jesus and the events that would surround Him. God knew what He was doing. Through providing them with a history, He enabled the disciples to understand and expect. And it ensured that the relevance of the Pentecost events would not be lost on the Jewish pilgrims at the Temple to celebrate Shavuot that day.

Traditionally, the Church has taught that the disciples - not just the Apostles, but about 120 men and women - were

gathered in the Upper Room together. Logically, this seems unlikely. Michele Guinness, amongst others, suggests otherwise. The Hebrew word for house is the same as the word for Temple, and it makes sense that the disciples would have been there. What follows is Guinness's account of what she thinks happened:

"Once the geography of the event is right, it changes the whole perspective of things.

There they all were, in a fever of expectation, surrounded by the noisy hub-bub of thousands of out-of-town visitors and cousins. At nine o'clock silence falls for the traditional early morning readings. First from Deuteronomy, an account of the giving of the Torah... Then from the first chapters of the book of the prophet Ezekiel. "High above on the throne was the figure like that of a man. I saw from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire." Suddenly, to the congregation's utter amazement, tongues of fire appear, and hover over the heads of Jesus' followers. The priest, hoping he's hallucinating, tells the reader to continue as if nothing has happened. "Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound..." At which point a sudden loud whooshing sound fills the building. Prayer shawls flap with its force, head coverings are lifted and debris scattered. And then the disciples begin to shout things in foreign languages, and roll around on the floor as if drunk... Peter takes control of the situation. He knows exactly what is happening. He has had seven weeks to work it out. God, in one blow, is fulfilling all the promises he has ever made to his people."

A Little Kosher Seasoning - Michele Guinness

Wow! It would have been absolutely awesome to experience that. God fulfilled His promises in a show of power, majesty and glory. Shouldn't we be making more of our Pentecost celebrations?



In our house we have a cheesecake party every year on Pentecost Sunday. Dairy products are eaten traditionally during Jewish Shavuot celebrations. This has two possible reasons behind it: The promised land of milk and honey that the

Israelites were on their way to, or that when Moses told the people the laws, including the dietary ones, they were too eager to eat that they didn't have time to kill and prepare meat properly, so opted for dairy products instead. Either way, you can't go wrong with a cheesecake!

Family Games Afternoon

On a Saturday afternoon in February, families had great fun participating in games and activities in the parish centre. 50 children and 45 adults from the parish and beyond, played games of Bingo and "Build a Beetle" and then competed enthusiastically in a hat making competition. The younger children had their own farmyard bingo game. The afternoon included refreshments, lots of stickers and prizes for everyone - all very happily received! Many thanks to the Social Committee members for organising this successful event - it



will definitely be repeated! If you have any suggestions for more family events or activities, please let the Social committee know.



2030 Group

The 2030 group for young adults in this parish, and those with an interest in the Catholic church, is continuing to thrive and gain members. The WhatsApp group is now a WhatsApp Community with a Prayer request group, a Bible Study/Theology Group, an invitation to events/groups of interest as well as the core 2030 activities group. There is also a Ladies' 2030 group which has held social evenings. Over the last year members of the 2030 group have met for social time in the evenings and afternoons, been on walks, led one of the Stations of the Cross services, had a Christmas party and craft sessions. Currently the group is starting up a monthly Bible



Study session and is open to anyone interested in joining. New 2030 members are always welcome - bring your ideas and suggestions! For more information contact Jane on jmfc@hotmai.co.uk



and suggestions! For more information contact Jane on jmfc@hotmai.co.uk

ST ALBAN'S LADIES GROUP WINTER PROGRAMME

We meet informally in the Parish Centre on 1st / 3rd Wednesday 2.00-4.00 p.m. for discussion and talks of mutual interest.

Tea & Biscuits (inc. chocolate ones) are provided.

Interests are both spiritual and social and include Days of Recollection and social outings.



MAY

6th Open meeting

Catch up with old friends and meet new ones

20th Speaker: Richard Slater

Tales from the Travel Industry

Informative, entertaining stories from a lifetime in travel.

JUNE

3rd A.G.M. - All Welcome

- Come along and 'see what happens'
- What your subscription can provide
- Does it meet members' needs?

For further information contact Anne 7305267325

Article reproduced and adapted with kind permission of Pip Mosscrop, Co-ordinator of Hope Street Angels Macclesfield and Pam Simpson, Street Angel.

Helping make a night out in Macclesfield safer! Experience of being a Street Angel in

Hope in North-East Cheshire (Hope) brings together nearly forty Churches of many denominations. Led by twenty-five Church Leaders, they encourage shared initiatives and gatherings for worship and prayer. Established in 2009, Hope incorporates Churches Together in Macclesfield and Bollington and involves volunteers in a number of initiatives that any one Church would find difficult to sustain. Hope especially encourages like-minded people to come together share their passions making things happen for the benefit of our communities.

Hope Street Angels Macclesfield is one of those initiatives and has been working with the management of the Town Centre, the CCTV Operations, Cheshire Police and the Hospital since it was established in June 2012! Street Angels are on duty on Saturday evenings from 10.30pm to almost 3.00am, providing a calming presence in the Town Centre. They help those leaving the bars, clubs, pubs and restaurants who become vulnerable, helping them to get home safely.

Based at the United Reformed Church (URC) on Park Green, they listen, care and offer practical help! Four of them are on duty in pairs, a male and female Street Angel together, keeping in touch with the CCTV Operations using two-way radios and chatting to those out on the town. Flip-flops for those who can no longer bear to wear their shoes are particularly appreciated. They also provide water, thermal blankets and wipes, pick up and dispose of bottles and drinking glasses, and encourage those needing help to come to the URC where they provide a warm welcome and hot drinks and biscuits. They are now well recognised with their purple mid-viz waistcoats and Street Angels' rucksacks! Those they meet are remarkably appreciative and regularly go out of their way to thank them.

There are currently sixteen Street Angels but they always look for new volunteers. If you would like to find out what life out on the town on a Saturday night is like, come for a 'Taster' evening with no obligation to stay the whole shift or join up. Please email streetangelsmacclesfield@gmail.com or call Pip Mosscrop, the co-ordinator, on 07715 495701.

As a recent Chief Inspector of Cheshire Police, reported, 'I just want to THANK YOU, Street Angels of Macclesfield. I have been involved in policing in and around Macclesfield for the past 15 years or so and I have seen first-hand the impact your work has on the town centre at night. You give your time through all weathers and at times of night that some people don't know exist to make our town a safer place.'

Macclesfield - Pam Simpson

I joined Street Angels in 2016 as a way to give back to my community. When I tell others I'm a Street Angel it can sometimes feel like I've just told them I'm a space explorer or a zookeeper. Responses are often a mix of fascination, polite distaste, and curiosity. "Oh wow, that must be really hard work - I could never do that!" I always feel a little guilty about this because I'm about the least 'qualified' to be a Street Angel. I'm a middle-aged American woman who prefers an evening knitting and watching BBC dramas. I've never been a bouncer or spent my youth clubbing or at raves. In fact, Street Angels isn't about anything exciting like breaking up drunken brawls or lovers' spats!

It is, however, about being a calming presence in Macclesfield-at-night. For me this means showing God's love in a place where His Light is not always found, but is nearly always most welcome.

It is also an opportunity to receive God's love as much as it is to offer it. When I started with Street Angels, I assumed that it would be a one-way relationship - I was sharing God's love with others, I was serving the 'poor and lost' of the community. But I was very much mistaken! Macclesfield-at-night holds its own beauty and joy. Its cast of characters are complex but kind and caring - especially the young people.

"You Street Angels do great work - thank you!"

"Please, my friend is in a bad way - can you come help us? We'll make sure she gets home."

"Can I sit here with you for a while? I don't feel well. Thank you."

As a Street Angel I've had the pleasure of getting to know others, many who are brothers and sisters in Christ, who volunteer to provide shelter for the members of community in need. We drink tea together and share stories and learn from one another. We work with others on watch: CCTV operators, the police, bouncers and pub owners, church leaders and other community workers who are committed to keeping Macclesfield-at-night a safe place for all.

It's a long night and by 3:00am I'm tired! But I am also encouraged and my spirit is encouraged by the time I have spent with the people I had the pleasure to connect with.

Street Angels is looking for new volunteers! Why not come for a 'taster' evening and see for yourself?



March & April - two months, three rambles

By Jerome Johnston

In March, I joined the 20/30 walkers at Clarke Lane for a delightful walk led by Jane Cole. We followed the road toward Kerridge and turned right at the War Memorial, up Higher Lane, passing Endon Hall on our right.

Ahead of us, at the top of the lane, a water main was being replaced, and a barrier was across the footpath. No work was taking place and the path was clear of obstacles so we took the view that it is sometimes better to apologise than seek permission we skirted the barriers and continued on our way.

The path here turns sharp left and winds closely behind some impressive stone houses and then onto the road in front of a terrace of cottages with views across the Cheshire Plain.

Just before the last cottage, there is a step off the road and an otherwise hidden path can be found. This runs behind the last cottage and then opens out to a wooded area where there are free range hens and sloping fields with sheep. Beyond this, the path of stone slabs crosses a field, ending in a tall laddered stile onto Redway Lane.

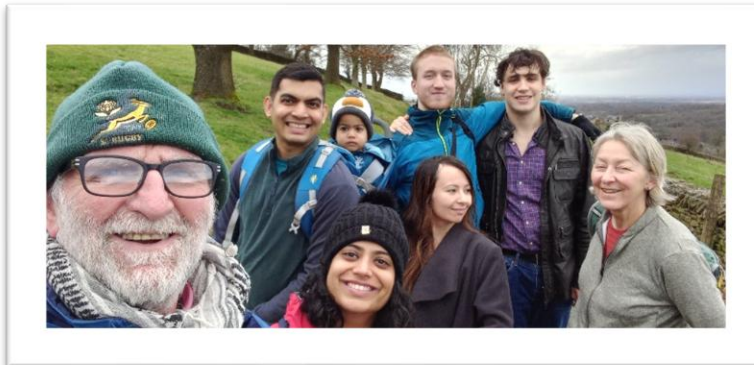
After a hundred yards or so, we took a left turn up a paved track to cross the shoulder of Kerridge below White Nancy. The track bears away from Bollington and descends steeply, with views of Savio House to Waulkmill and its waterfall.

Behind the waterfall, the path climbed gently through woodland to reach a field path, which turned us back along a contour towards Bollington and from here we retraced our steps into Kerridge, made a stop at the Bulls Head for refreshment and then back to Clarke Lane.

March's Parish Ramble was a lengthened adaptation of the 20/30 route and it was good to be joined by Łukasz as their *representative*. We set off from the same place but took the canal, heading toward Macclesfield, till we reached the bridge near the Astra Zeneca campus. Turning to face Kerridge Ridge, we passed the Model Aircraft field, then took a path to the right, across two muddy fields towards Swanscoe.

At the junction of several footpaths near a disused farm building, we turned back to face the ridge and climbed gently to reach a

muddy driveway through woodland. This led to the site of the water main replacement works and we followed the 20/30 route from here to its return point at White Nancy.



In the woodland above the waterfall, we stopped for a snack... and the rain began, but not too heavily; that came later! Below White Nancy, we descended a stone slabbed path to Chancery Lane in Bollington and then followed a series of urban paths and passages to the canal. The rain by now was heavy.

It had been my intention to lead this walk off the canal at Tinkers Clough and back through fields to see some newborn lambs, but as we had four dogs with us, we stuck to the canal till we reached Clarke Lane and the warmth of The Lord Clyde where we steamed dry and revived our spirits.

April blessed us with one of the finest days for walking. The Poachers kindly allowed us to use their carpark which made the start easy in an otherwise notoriously difficult area, and five of us set off with Łukasz joining us again as the 20/30 representative.

A couple of fields first and then across Harrop Brook before a steady climb towards Berristall Hall. Here we turned right along a metalled track in the direction of Gausie Brow, where the gorse bushes were in full bloom. Along the way we met several groups coming towards us, each asking if we were there to see the bluebells. And see them we did - in profusion - as we entered Harrop Wood.

After the woodland, we were again on open hillside and stopped in the sunshine for lunch, before making our way along a gently sloping path, passing Further Harrop Farm and continuing to where the track forks before Harrop House Farm. Taking the path to the right we descended to Black Brook from which there was another steady climb up to reach the roadway to Harrop Fold Farm. Along the climb we were able to see the repair work being carried out on the Whaley Bridge (B5470) road. Black Brook seems such an insignificant stream and it's hard to imagine how it caused such catastrophic damage!

From the farm, we entered the southern edge of Harrop Wood and followed Black Brook below us, before turning south and climbing to Hedge Row and following that track back The Poachers, where "we few, we happy few" felt it only polite to sit a while and enjoy a refreshing drink before departing.



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