

**April 2021**



One of the pleasures we had was getting out and about in the village over the last year. Seeing other residents and sharing news (always at the right distance) was good. Another joy was the walk around the village, up the hill to Major Cross and back via the (now very muddy) footpath. You do notice the subtle changes, especially with spring on the way. The primroses seem even better than last year; the celandines also which have probably benefited from the very wet weather and the churchyard is looking glorious with a good show of snowdrops and some white violets this year to mix with the primroses.

Another sad death to report; many will have known Derek Norrish who was part of the village until a few years ago. He attended the old village school and was captain of bells for many years. In fact last year he would have been ringing here for 70 years - some achievement.

Thank you Clive, Robin and the Parish Council for the work you are progressing.

Covid has delayed the telephone box which hopefully will be starting again very soon. The small green with the well is being cleared and it is hoped that the well and surrounding area will be restored and make a more attractive entry into the village. We understand thought is being given to other areas in the village and it is hoped this will encourage others to consider any improvements around their residences. We are sure the Council would welcome any ideas or help with the projects.

Don't forget the library has a good selection of books and is in the Village Hall entrance. Polly and Thom would welcome any donations for CHAT in the box outside Gable Cottage.

Unless there are major changes in the rules a printed copy of the Bugle will be available for next month. We have been informed that the Silverleigh should be in print this month.

**Your editors  
Steve and Michael**

# Phyllis May Nichols

Phyllis was born in Bickleigh in 1927 in Church Green cottages, where her parents had moved in 1911. She was the youngest of three sisters, Joyce the eldest, had been born in Cardiff, with Gladys and Phyllis both born in Bickleigh. Their parents, Alice and Frank Bond, lived in the cottage, now the home of the Mark and Kerry Peters. Frank Bond worked on the railways. When a young girl Phyllis recalled playing in the Rectory and having tit bits of food brought to the tree house by Bessie, the Rectory cook. The then headteacher, Mrs Reader, lived next door to them and allowed the use of an upstairs bedroom. Dinner could be taken to the bakery and cooked for 2d. the Vowlers at Church Green sold milk from the door and a glass of scald milk was enjoyed before going to Sunday school. The post office was at Wells Place with an outside telephone you could pay to use.

At age seventeen Phyllis joined the Women's Land Army serving on various farms in the Tiverton Area. She joined an organisation which at its height employed 80,000 women. Today the British Army is about the same size which indicates the prodigious effort made by the national effort to feed the people of the UK in desperate times. Leaving the Women's Land Army, Phyllis went back to being a cook, an employment at which she excelled.

Phyllis was twenty-one when she married Coram Nichols. Living at Penderells, next door to what was Bickleigh Bakery, Phyllis recalls the taste and aroma of lovely dough cakes and bread cooling outside on the wall. In 1986 the the family moved into Bell Meadow. By then their daughter Sheila had been born. There were to be six grandchildren who recall with great fondness their visits to Bickleigh to see their gran as well as their aunties Gladys and Joyce and were always on their best behaviour during their visits. Granny Phyllis would

always make sure that they ate well from roast dinners with home-grown runner beans to home-made welsh cakes which were always a hit with everyone.

Phyllis had many pen friends, and was very creative, writing poetry which appeared from time to time in the Bickleigh Bugle and painting. I recall Phyllis telling me of a memory she had sitting between her mother's knees at the age of three in the higher pews of St Mary's church. She was a faithful member of this church all her life and knew the Book of Common Prayer Sunday services from memory. Although the last few years were tough she never lost her sense of humour and was a person of integrity, grit and kindness. Our thoughts and prayers are with her daughter Sheila and the grandchildren.

*Rev Thom Thompson*

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# Clive chat

I'd like to start this month by thanking those of you that have kindly sponsored me in my efforts to raise funds for The Brain Tumour Charity. I've so far raised over £800 and by the time you read this I hope to have more or less completed my walking challenge. I'd also particularly like to thank Richard Sommerwill for taking me on some great walks in recent weeks. We've been on a 7-mile loop to Butterleigh and back, a trek up the hill to Cadeleigh and back via Cadeleigh Court and my favourite, beyond the castle and up to Lee Cross farm and then on to the old St Martins chapel and Pitt Farm before dropping back down towards Traymill Farm and returning to Bickleigh via the castle. The views from the top of the ridge above Pitt Farm are amazing, it's one of the few places that I have discovered where you can get a good view overlooking the River Exe from above.

Some of you will be aware of the numerous wells in and around Bickleigh including a fairly substantial well at the bottom of the hill opposite The Parish Rooms. Some of the long-standing residents will recall that this well once had a proper roof and a pump and was very much a feature of the entrance to the village. Sadly, the pump was stolen many years ago and the roof collapsed leaving what was left to become overgrown and no longer visible from the road. Thanks to the sterling efforts of some villagers in recent weeks, the overgrowth around the well has been cleared and the parish council are hoping to arrange for the roof to be repaired and the rest of the brickwork to be renovated. Once that is complete, the parish council hope to make further improvements to this part of the village in order to improve the overall appearance. This is in line with the suggestions received recently in the Bickleigh Improvement Plan.

Those who know me will be aware that I'm very much a half glass full sort of person, looking out for the positives and grateful to be living in such a great part of the world and so I just don't understand those are quick to blame others and

see conspiracy theories all around. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has been a terrible worldwide disaster, I'm going to list just a few positives to come out of lockdown.

*Connecting better* - it feels odd to talk about connecting with family and friends in a way that's perhaps deeper than before, during a time when we can't physically see anybody, but somehow it seems to be the case. Personally, I call family more often and have really enjoyed our Bickleigh Bible Study zoom meetings. I've even joined a monthly meeting of old school friends, some of whom I hadn't seen in nearly 50 years!

*Learning or rediscovering a hobby* - free from the daily commute or just being allowed to venture outdoors, we've all had more time to spend on developing interests or hobbies. I've got into astrophotography, am certainly reading twice as much as previously and as mentioned in a previous article, more appreciative of the many benefits of walking.

*Helping others* - lots of us have volunteered or helped out in a formal or informal way, be it checking on our elderly neighbours, helping the NHS deliver Covid vaccines or one of hundreds of other ways of helping those in need.

*Pollution levels have gone down* - the dramatic reduction in personal travel and in heavy industry has brought air pollution levels down to half their normal levels.

*Clean hands are back in fashion* - when I think back to the number of hands that I shook at various business functions and then helped myself to the buffet - it seems really odd the more you think about it.

I'm hoping that, long after Covid-19 is a distant memory, I haven't forgotten these lessons and whilst they won't resonate with everyone, I hope you can identify with some of them.

Clive Williams

# Marjorie White

Marjorie passed away peacefully in her sleep at home on Wednesday, 10th March, aged 101 years.

Anne White

**Submissions to the Bickleigh Bugle are very welcome!**

**Email us by the 20th of the month at  
[bickleighbugle@outlook.com](mailto:bickleighbugle@outlook.com)**

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