

# WYGGESTONS NEWSLETTER

#theheartofthelocalcommunity

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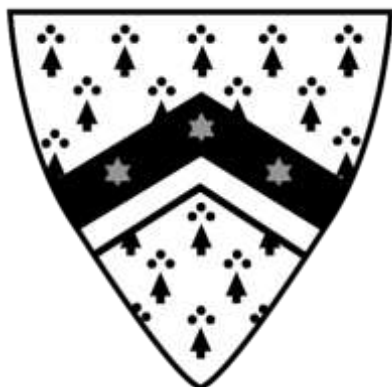
**To Russia with Knowledge** – If you don't know what a 100 year old passport looks like, go to page 10

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**National Day of Reflection** – See how the staff and residents of Wyggestons took a moment to pause on reflect on the last 12 months of lockdown

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**Morsbags** – Have a look at how one resident has been carrying out random acts of kindness



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**The Mending of Thomas Tompkins (part one)** – A fictional tale of an one individual, in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Leicester



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# Welcome

Welcome to April 2021 Edition of the Wygggeston Newsletter.

So this time last year we were just entering the first Pandemic lockdown which was to have such a profound effect on the country. What a year we have experienced!

The reaction from everyone has been really wonderful and I thank you all for your patience, support and assistance over the last 12 months as we have had to inflict such unprecedented restrictions on your daily lives, the services we provide and the way we operate.

As an Almshouse this has been particularly difficult for our Staff and Governors to contend with but I am sure you will agree with the unique necessity of these decisions to safeguard the community.

The loss of social spaces, visitors and events has been particularly hard for us all and we are looking forward to the opening up of society in the next few months, beginning with families returning into Agnes House. The roadmap towards the end of restrictions is foremost in our thoughts and as ever if you have any questions please ask the staff for clarifications on the current restrictions.

One constant has been the building works from the new development and this continues apace with completion over the summer. By June we hope to be in a position to commence some open days to show you around the new buildings and the extension of the grounds.

We were really pleased with the increasing numbers and varieties of articles and other submissions from residents – please keep them coming – and if you have any other suggestions for what you would like to see please let Melissa know.

Happy Easter!

Chris

**PLEASE NOTE THE FINANCE OFFICE  
WILL BE OPEN TO RECEIVE  
PAYMENTS ON  
TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**



For those residents who have birthdays March, we would like to wish you a very Happy Birthday!

### William House

Pam Blower	3 <sup>rd</sup> April
Margaret Seymour	11 <sup>th</sup> April
John Branney	20 <sup>th</sup> April
Pam Womersley	29 <sup>th</sup> April

### Agnes House

Bill Deevey	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Monica Clowes	12 <sup>th</sup> April
Margaret Bonser	15 <sup>th</sup> April
Gillian Smith	21 <sup>st</sup> April
Betty Slater	29 <sup>th</sup> April
Muriel Lauder	30 <sup>th</sup> April

### *In Memory*

Sadly, we have one death to record in this edition.

Mr Norman Langham of room 15, Agnes House passed away peacefully on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends





# Cherryleas Development

The new development is progressing well, what a difference a roof makes!



About 4 years ago every flat in William house received a Morsbag through their letterboxes and this started me off on a long standing 'hobby' of making more Morsbags.

### **So what are Morsbags?**

They are re-usable cloth shopping bags made by volunteers worldwide, using recycled donated fabric and given away **FREE** as an alternative to plastic carrier bags.

### **500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide each year**

Claire and Joe Morsman had the idea in January 2007 as a response to the hideous number of plastic carrier bags that are used worldwide. Many of these find their way into our waterways and oceans and severely damage the marine wildlife. They put a simple pattern online and soon hundreds were being made.



Over 200,000 have been made in 50 different countries. Leicestershire is a Morsbag hotspot, having made over 80,000.

**Morsbag Pods:** Pods are simply the name for groups who make Morsbags and there are about 1500 around the world; with several in Leicester and Leicestershire. There are also 'solo podders' who make Morsbags at home by themselves. Claire and Joe have set up a website where you can find information about how many bags have been made, how to make a Morsbag and even to download a pattern, if you want to make your own. The website build was originally funded by the Big Lottery Fund but they pay the ongoing costs.

Morsbagging is a '**random act of kindness**' where bags can be given away to strangers. Some Morsbaggers arranged to put the bags through letterboxes anonymously (which is where ours came from!)

The best kind of fabrics tend to be from curtains and bedding such as duvet covers, sheets and pillowcases as they don't stretch and are strong, washable and

easy to sew. It's a good excuse for de-cluttering your airing cupboard – tea towels can also be used.



Morsbags also help keep waste fabric out of landfill (1,000's of tonnes dumped every year) and unlike new fabric bags being sold or given in shops and supermarkets, Morsbags are sourced and made locally so no air miles and the material has already been produced so no more pesticides and water pollution - cotton farming is incredibly harmful.

Since starting to make Morsbags I have made over 1500 bags. I took a bundle to a friend who works for the NHS at the start of the pandemic, and they have been used by the nursing staff. I have also sent numerous bags to a couple of local food banks where they are used to pack food parcels for local families. Making the bags has also helped me keep busy during the pandemic.

### **A Royal Morsbag!**

In 2010 Prince Charles invited [morsbags.com](http://morsbags.com) to show guests at his sustainability garden party how to make the bags. HRH donated curtains from Clarence House, and even made a bag himself!



**If anyone has been having a clear-out and wants a 'home' for their unwanted sheets etc, please bring them to me! I will gladly make them into more Morsbags.**

*Caroline - William House*





**On the first anniversary of lockdown, see how the residents and staff at Wyggestons paused and took a moment to reflect on the collective loss, supporting those who've been bereaved, and sharing hope for a brighter future.**









# TO RUSSIA WITH KNOWLEDGE

My grandfather, Leonard Smith, was born in 1884 in Tipton, near Dudley. He seems to have had a varied occupation with the story telling that he used to dive in the canal for pennies! Following this he went down the mines coming home to a bath in front of the stove with neighbours sitting around gossiping. Too bad if you suffered with modesty, I'm sure the neighbours had all seen it before. This is how it was in those days, no bathrooms with hot running water or showers. Aren't we lucky today? The other job he had was instrumental in inserting electricity in the, then, new underground railways in London. At this time he enjoyed going to the London theatres.

How he learnt his trade as an electrician is lost in the mists of time but he ended up with the car makers, Armstrong Siddeley, in Coventry where he worked for 25 years. This I know for certain as I have a clock that was presented to him by the Directors.

During his time with Armstrong Siddeley he was invited to go to Moscow to teach the Russians how to put electrics in cars. Of course, there were no planes in those days and he went by boat and across land. The story goes that he got frostbite on his nose after looking out of a troika. All this was in 1914 and I have the passport that accompanied him, a copy of which is reproduced here. Whilst there he stayed with a Russian and we have a photo of him and also he sent to my Grandmother some picture postcards. What an adventure.

My mother also worked for Armstrong Siddeley from leaving school and when WW2 broke out they were evacuated to The Keep at Kenilworth Castle. If you ever go there you will find a room dedicated to Armstrong Siddeley. Whilst she was there my father came home on leave and they slept in the phone exchange, much to the delight of the other girls, who kept ringing them up all night.

When Coventry blitz took place she walked from Kenilworth to her parents home in Coventry to see if they were ok. Fortunately they were and my Grandmother made her a coffee, which she was looking forward to, but mistook the bottles and made it from gravy! A treat not to be repeated.

My Grandfather lived on his own in Coventry until he died aged 96, my Grandmother having died a few years earlier.

**Sue Hulatt**



## RECIPE CORNER

**As Easter is upon us, why not give these recipes a go?**

### **Asparagus & New Potato Frittata**

#### **Ingredients (serves 3)**

- 200g new potatoes, quartered
- 100g asparagus tips
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 40g cheddar, grated
- rocket or mixed leaves, to serve

#### **Method**

Heat the grill to high. Put the potatoes in a pan of cold salted water and bring to the boil. Once boiling, cook for 4-5 mins until nearly tender, then add the asparagus for a final 1 min. Drain.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in an ovenproof frying pan and add the onion. Cook for about 8 mins until softened.

Mix the eggs with half the cheese in a jug and season well. Pour over the onion in the pan, then scatter over the asparagus and potatoes. Top with the remaining cheese and put under the grill for 5 mins or until golden and cooked through. Cut into wedges and serve from the pan with salad.



### **Easter Puddings**

#### **Ingredients (serves 6)**

- 175g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 175g self-raising flour
- 140g soft light brown sugar
- zest 1 lemon
- zest 1 orange
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 25g natural glacé cherries, quartered
- 25g sultana
- 25g currant
- 25g mixed peel
- grating of nutmeg (optional)

#### **Method**

- Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Butter 6 individual puddings basins or dariole moulds and line the bottom of each with a small circle of baking parchment. Sit them in a deep roasting tin and boil the kettle.

Place the butter, flour, sugar and zests and eggs into a bowl with a pinch of salt. Whisk with an electric hand whisk until just combined. Stir in the dried fruit, then divide between the moulds. Carefully pour hot water from the kettle into the tin until it comes about one-third to halfway up the sides of the moulds. Bake for 25-30 mins until a skewer pushed in comes out clean. Serve straight away. If making ahead, leave the puds to cool, cover for up to a day, then turn out of the moulds into a microwave-proof dish and microwave, three at a time, for 1-2 mins on High until hot. Turn out the puddings, pour over some of the Nutmeg custard (see recipe, below) and add a grating of nutmeg, if you like.





# THE MENDING OF THOMAS TOMPKINS

## A Tale of Imagination set in 1860s Leicester

by

JOHN SEYMOUR

(Written in Covid-19 Lockdown, March 2021)

### Part 1: Desperation

Thomas Tompkins, unlike the majority of his colleagues, refused to use the cane. He was a first rate teacher who habitually gained and retained the respect and attention of his pupils, and so the need for such corporal punishment rarely occurred.

His lessons on English literature focused chiefly on recently published novels, and his students listened with close attention as he summarized and evaluated the many authors with whom that particular period – the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century - was soon to become associated. Of these, Mr Charles Dickens (pictured) was clearly the most popular and, due to the publication of his books in weekly instalments, the most affordable and the most read.

But now, approaching sixty years of age, Thomas was losing confidence and becoming increasingly restless and uncertain of himself. His problem began some three years earlier when in the autumn of 1864 his wife Esther showed the tell-tale signs of consumption. Her decline was rapid and just before Christmas that year she was admitted to the Leicester Infirmary near to their house in Jarrom Street. She died there in the spring of the following year.

Their marriage some forty years earlier was a true love-match and he was completely devastated by his bereavement. Their only child Ben and his wife Betsy tried to support him as best they could, but they had their own anxieties. They had two young children, Emily and Philip, to provide for, and prospects were not good at the factory where Ben worked as a cutter. The introduction of new machinery was taking over much of this work, which reduced the demand for his specialized experience and skill.

Thomas was becoming increasingly nervous and began to try to avoid meeting people. He appreciated the sympathy and support of the kindly Minister and people at the Wesleyan Chapel in Bishop Street, but his attendance there became less frequent. When he did attend he found that even the hymns which he greatly loved and the congregation sang so fervently, gave him little comfort.

The only light which seemed able to penetrate his mental darkness was the music played on the chapel's famous old organ. The organist seemed to have a preference for the works of George Frederick Handel. Thomas shared this opinion, but although these moments of relief were real and helpful - they didn't last long.

His school work was as much as he could cope with as he became more and more anxious and inward looking. His doctor diagnosed the onset of melancholia and recommended rest and time away in the country. But this was not easily a possibility as Thomas was entirely dependent on his modest salary. So



he struggled on. At least he was not, at this stage, committed to what was then called, offensively to our modern ears, the Lunatic Asylum.



But he was beginning to find it difficult to hold the attention of his class. One or two boys, particularly the twins, Nicholas and Oliver Hobbs, took advantage of this and became rather troublesome and led a few others on to unhelpful, distracting behaviour.

“Tompkins”, said the headmaster, “you really must be more strict, and be willing to use the lash on these lads, or the situation will get a lot worse.” But the gentle Thomas could not bring himself to inflict pain on anyone. The boys’ behaviour did get worse, and this in turn caused his health further to deteriorate.

One morning In May 1867 Thomas began a lecture on *Bleak House*, one of Mr Dickens’ novels published just a decade or so earlier, and one of Tom’s favourites.

“The book is wrongly named”, he began, insisting that there were many good unselfish characters in the story, and that “...Bleak House, in contrast to other locations, was a place where there was frequent sunshine, much hope, concern for others, and indeed love. It was a bright spot in rather a dark world”.

He went on to describe just a few of the fifty or so named characters in this remarkable book, which he claimed, was surely one of Dickens’ greatest achievements. He described Sir Lester Deadlock, the pompous old baronet, and Lady Deadlock, his wife with the terrible secret. There was Krook, the Rag and Bone merchant who died of spontaneous combustion. And Jo, the young crossing sweeper. “I ain’t done nufink wrong, I ain’t”, Jo kept insisting.

Thomas’ enthusiasm was in no doubt, but his voice became weaker. Led on by Nicholas and Oliver Hobbs one or two others in the class started to giggle and to imitate his weak delivery.

“Then there was the warm-hearted Inspector Bucket”, he continued bravely - although slowing down considerably while the Hobbs twins and the class generally grew increasingly restless and troublesome – “who must be one of the earliest detectives in fiction, predating Sherlock Holmes ..by about ...forty years.... and of Guppy, (he added in almost a whisper) the ever hopeful Guppy”.



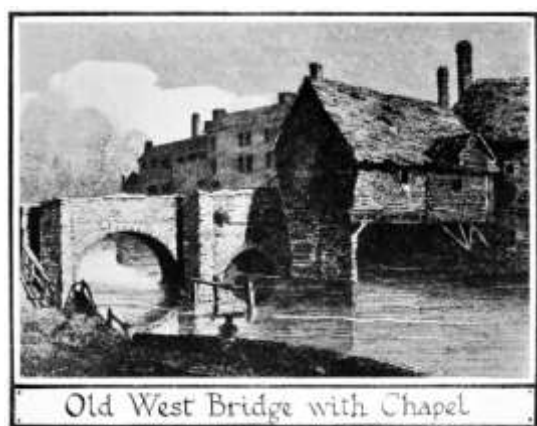
His strength was ebbing as he attempted to describe John Jarndyce, the master of the so-called Bleak House, who was kind and tolerant and generous in the extreme. He then tried to evaluate one of Dickens’ most heroic of heroines, “the one whom John Jarndyce ...loved... deeply.... who from a sense of loyalty and gratitude agreed to marry him, in spite of being in love... .. with the good young Doctor Woodcote... I refer to the gentle, saintly, - self-sacrificial, - noble ... Es....”

He began to pronounce her name, but was quite unable to do so. The attempt only served to bring back memories of his own dear Esther. The class with wide-open eyes became quite hushed and still as Thomas sat down with his head in his hands, barely concealing the tears welling up inside him. Even the Hobbs twins showed dismay and concern at this sorry sight. He was totally exhausted, truly a broken-down school master. Thus the day's lesson, and indeed, his long and distinguished career, came to a sorrowful end.

**T**he headmaster was sad to lose so excellent a teacher, and arranged a small gift as an appreciation of his many years diligent service.

**S**oon Thomas' want of income became a serious worry, adding to his depression. He had for many years been a member of the Ancient Order of Oddfellows, and so a small weekly annuity from them brought some relief. The minister at Bishop's Street Chapel had some funds available, but in total there was insufficient to pay the rent due on the Jarrom Street house, and also provide for food and other basic needs. One blessing was that a frugal life-style had incurred no debts, and therefore mercifully the risk of being committed to the Debtors' Prison was not a threat, as indeed happened to so many, we may recall, of the characters in the Dickens novels.

Ben could not tolerate the idea of his father being homeless or even, God forbid, admitted to an asylum, or worse, the Workhouse. So with Betsy's willing agreement Thomas moved in with them at their new home on the outskirts of town, just over the West Bridge in Dunns Lane. The grandchildren were very fond of their Grandpa, and thought it great fun to have him living with them.



This did have the advantage of bringing him nearer to the open country. In springtime the blossoms in the cherry orchards on the Fosse Way cheered him a little. He started reading once again and sometimes walked through the Old Town to the Belvoir Street Library. Here he was able to read the newspapers and keep up with some of the recent publishing. But he was still far from well, and still had recurring times of listlessness and melancholy.

The initial novelty of living with Ben and Betsy and the two children lessened as time passed. The children had to move into their parents' bedroom, acceptable at first, but more difficult when little Emily became ill with a fever causing everyone to lose a lot of sleep. Ben and Betsy's relationship began to suffer and tempers became distressingly frayed. Their hospitality was kind and generous, but by no means a permanent solution. At times depression degenerated further into a state of near desperation. On many nights his bad dreams persisted in reminding him of the struggles of former years.

An alternative must be found. But how? When? And where?

## End of Part One



# Meet your Governors

*Over the upcoming months we will be asking the Governors to introduce and tell us a bit about themselves.....*

## Introducing: John Royce

"Hello everyone,

I was born in the city of Leicester and lived in the Belgrave district as a child attending the local schools. My teenage years were largely spent riding motor bikes until girls began to seem more appealing. At around that time I met a nice girl called Ann who was later to become my wife. We married in March 1963 and spent ten days on honeymoon in Jersey. Not surprisingly, we eventually ended up with two children and have now just celebrated our 58<sup>th</sup> wedding Anniversary (a milestone not reached by too many people these days).



I always had a schoolboy fascination with radio and later television and electronics in general. Following training, I spent my early working life servicing Radio Telephones used in both the City and County and National Coal Board Ambulance Services. As early TV services developed, I moved on to a senior technical position with a national company who sold brown goods. After some 20 years I decided to move on to a slightly less stressful job with a more local company who ran several retail outlets until eventually retirement beckoned.



Ann and I both love all animals and have always kept dogs with Ann moving on to competing in the show ring including Crufts for a number of years.

I have always had an interest in politics, which eventually led me to stand for election to the local Borough Council. To most people's surprise, I was elected to office and eventually served 12 years including one wonderful year as the Borough Mayor with Ann giving a very good account of herself as Mayoress. In 2001 I was a candidate in the County Council elections and again surprised some people by winning a seat fairly comfortably. Sadly, four years later I was unable to repeat the achievement and lost my seat. This marked the end of my career as a councillor but our very happy memories live on!



When I was first elected as a County Councillor I was asked if I would like to be nominated as one of the county's representatives on the Board of Governors at Wyggeston's Hospital. At that time I knew very little of Wyggeston's activities but agreed to be nominated and now consider it to be one of my better decisions. Some 19 years later I'm still around and do hope I have made at least a small contribution to the success of the Hospital. I have always served on the Estate and Finance



committees and also the "Looking Ahead Group" since its inception. These are exciting times for the charity with the prospect of witnessing the opening of our new development 'Lancaster House' and the Cottages"

# QUIZ TIME

1. What was the name of rocker Bill Haley's backing band?
2. Which city is home to cricket's Trent Bridge ground?
3. Hannibal famously crossed the alps utilising which animals?
4. In the name of the capital of the USA, what does DC stand for?
5. Which duo were responsible for writing the Savoy operas?
6. What was the title of The Beatles' second movie?
7. How many degrees make up a right angle?
8. In Norse mythology, where was the home of the Gods?
9. Who played Eleven in the Netflix series "Stranger Things"?
10. In which English county would you find the seaside resorts of Filey and Scarborough?
11. The movie "Clueless" was based on which Jane Austen novel?
12. Which monarch directly followed Henry VI to the English throne?
13. In the zodiac, which animal is linked to the star sign of Capricorn?
14. Which ground was home to Sunderland AFC from 1898 to 1997?
15. In which Charles Dickens' novel would you find the character Wackford Squeers?
16. What is the capital of Malta?
17. A deficiency of iron in the diet can lead to which medical condition?
18. On a standard London underground map, what colour is the Bakerloo Line?
19. What is the scientific name for "laughing gas"?
20. What nationality was the Arctic explorer Roald Amundsen?

Answers in the next newsletter!

Answers: 1. Amii Stewart. 2. Portuguese. 3. Tinker. 4. Stuttgart. 5. [a] "I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass", reached no 7, [b] "Thru' the Glass", no 18, [c] "Water on Glass", no 11, [d] "Long Tall Glasses", no 4 and [e] "Raise Your Glass", no 13. 6. Hancock. 7. Asparagus. 8. Neptune. 9. The Other Place. 10. Edward I. 11. Samuel. 12. Russia and the USA. 13. Piano. 14. Pitcairn Islands. 15. Porgy and Bess. 16. Nostromo. 17. Poland. 18. Mo Connolly (1953). 19. Loganberry. 20. Pfenigs.





Since the first lockdown a year ago William House residents have very generously been supporting a local Foodbank. Items are placed in boxes in the Chapel and I then transport them to the home of Melanie Carter (Holy Apostles Churchwarden). Melanie volunteers at the foodbank so she then takes the items with her. Melanie writes:

*The food bank are very grateful for the continued donations your lovely residents send us. They have tripled their clients since lock down. Things we particularly need are medium bags of sugar and coffee jars. Toiletries, i.e. shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, toothpaste, toothbrush, toilet rolls, antiperspirant.*

*We do not want talcum powder or cotton buds.*

*I am always happy to take cash donations which I usually spend on bulky items like toilet rolls but money can be paid directly into the food bank account if requested.*

*I am also planning to buy some shopping bags on wheels at £20 each from Argos to help some of the elderly people as they stagger out of the door struggling with 2 weeks-worth of food if anyone wants to contribute to that.*

*Thanks. Melanie*

So again thank you for your continued support. If you are willing and able to give any cash donations please let me have them and I will pass them on to Melanie.

Tony Leighton



## From the Master

### Appearances can be deceptive!

Six years ago, for a few days in March 2015, Leicester was the focus of much attention in this country and around the world because of the reinternment of King Richard III in the Cathedral. There was a procession of the coffin from Bosworth, Services in the Cathedral and thousands queued up outside the cathedral and the events finished with the awesome 'Leicester Glows' at the end. It was then, and remains, one of the most memorable weeks of my life. We knew, at each event, what was going on because everything had been well trailed, advertised and talked about and the media were there in great numbers.

But what would you have thought, if you been in Jerusalem on the day we now call Palm Sunday, when Jesus approached Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, with the people spreading cloaks and branches on the road and crying out -

*'Hosanna!' Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord'*

Had you or I been present and seen that extraordinary sight we might have concluded that all was going to be well for Jesus and his followers. You might have thought that Jesus was going to be recognised as the Messiah, the long-awaited, chosen and anointed one, coming to his own city. Now there would be action; things would change and all would be OK. How could you know that in less than a week the hero, now being applauded and welcomed, would be cruelly put to death on a cross and his followers physically scattered and emotionally shattered?

### Appearances can be deceptive!

The authorities in Jerusalem thought they were getting rid of a problem when, following beatings and various 'trials', Jesus was publically humiliated and killed by being crucified on a cross along with the common criminals. If you had been present on that day you would have thought that was the end, of yet another, popular movement against the Roman occupation of Jerusalem and Judea. Later it was understood by an ever increasing number of people from all sorts of backgrounds, that Jesus' sacrificial willingness to go to his death in that way was the decisive action that would bring about salvation for the whole world from the eternal consequences of sin. Thus what had been seen to be failure and defeat would come to be known as Good Friday.

### Appearances can be deceptive!

None of that however was yet understood when on the following Sunday, one of the friends of Jesus, a woman known as Mary Magdalene, approached the tomb where Jesus had been placed, to find it empty. In her distress, thinking that the authorities had taken the body away, Mary saw a man that she thought was a gardener. Following a conversation it became clear that he wasn't a gardener but Jesus himself, alive again. Her sadness was transformed into joy and life for her and all those who subsequently encountered the risen Jesus was never the same again.

### Happy Easter!



*Tony Leighton - Palm Sunday March 28<sup>th</sup> 2021*

**And Finally...**

**YOU MUST continue to wear a mask once you have been vaccinated, you may be protected but you can still spread coronavirus to others**

