

MEN'S BREAKFASTS 2017-2018

Cumbria's first woman Chief Constable lives in Wetheral. But last September she addressed the churches' Men's Breakfast when still Deputy Chief Constable. Michelle Skeer said that she had toyed with journalism as a career as her degree course at Leeds University had been in history and the media. She took the chance to work as a researcher on the BBC television programme, *Crimewatch*, and was offered a contract to continue after graduation but the pull of the police grew stronger. She sensed the excitement of serious crime and the moral imperatives faced by the police. She grew up in Carlisle; her family was Roman Catholic. Her faith was a cornerstone of her formative years.

The speaker in October was to have been the Archbishop of Canterbury's Adviser for Reconciliation, Sarah Snyder, who is also Director of the Rose Castle Foundation. However as she was detained at the Primates' meeting in Canterbury, Don Jary of Scotby Church gave an excellent extempore talk on his then recent walking holiday in the Andes, the highlight being Machu Picchu. Sarah Snyder has been re-booked for October 2018.

In November Canon John Higgins spoke of his links with Turkey which go back 55 years to his travelling there on the Orient Express as a student. More recently he served as Chaplain to the Anglican Church and British Embassy in Ankara. That city was chosen as the capital by Kemal Ataturk in 1923 when it had a population of 20,000; it is now over 5 million. His secular state following the fall of the Ottoman Empire is rapidly becoming an Islamic one-party dictatorship. "Have you noticed the geopolitical reality of the refugee crisis?" John asked. "The refugees virtually all want to escape from countries with a Muslim majority. The refugees virtually all want to reach countries with a Christian heritage."

Architect, Raymond Whittaker, came in December and mentioned that there is an association for living architects whose work has been demolished. It is called the Rubble Club. Raymond Whittaker, formerly of Architects Plus in Carlisle, is a member as his County Garage building off Hardwicke Circus met that fate. But the Royal Mail Sorting Office from his years with Johnson and Wright and the new BBC Radio Cumbria studios from 1993, which was his first major work with Architects Plus, survive. Living in Wreay, Raymond is Chairman of the Friends of the distinctive church designed by a wealthy spinster, Sarah Losh.

The man behind the Carlisle Diocesan 'Moving Mountains' weekend in March was Mike Talbot. The previous month he spoke about the importance of relationships. His starting point was within his own family background. He was sent to boarding school at nine and felt he had lacked a warm relationship with his parents, particularly his father, and is determined that this not be so with his children. He drew attention to the importance of encouragement: his parents seemed loathe to praise as a result of which he had long lived with low self-worth and striven to please others. He maintained that all people hold a world view informed either by faith or the lack of it. His aim is to re-connect people with the church ecumenically and hopes that 'Moving Mountains' will do just that.

As part of the 'Moving Mountains' weekend, open to men and women, we heard from the Bishop of Blackburn, "Unless the Church reinvents itself it will disappear like Lancashire's

textile industry.” Julian Henderson had launched a plan to attract younger people “otherwise there might be no Church of England by 2050.” He quoted the novelist Julian Barnes, the Man Booker prize winner now in his 70s who said, “I don’t believe God exists but I miss him,” to make his point that those who previously were imbued with the Christian heritage of this country have backed away from the faith at the very time other faiths are in the ascendency. In his own diocese, the city of Blackburn was, he pointed out, approaching a 50% Muslim population.

For the last in the season, in April, we heard from Bob Batson, a retired clergyman. His theme was ‘When Disaster Strikes.’ “It began as an ordinary day, if an early start, on 28 February 2001. At 5.15am I took my wife, Jean, and younger daughter, Sarah, to York railway station. They were to travel to London for Sarah to have a medical examination. On my way home, near Selby, I drove through a snow shower and then had breakfast. The telephone rang at nine o’clock. It was our elder daughter, Fiona, who then worked in London for the BBC. She told me to switch the television on as there were reports of a railway accident near Selby. We identified that it was Jean and Sarah’s train which had crashed.” His wife was seriously injured, his daughter less so. He gave a moving personal testimony to prayer, care and compassion at a time of tragedy.

Our ‘year’ concludes on 3 May when we welcome the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cumbria, Peter McCall, who will talk about his work over the two years since he was elected. Peter is a retired Army officer and an active member of Hesket Newmarket Church. Full details and booking arrangements feature elsewhere - guests are welcome to this dinner.

We are grateful to all our speakers, regular ‘breakfasters’ and the excellent service from Carlisle Golf Club in helping to make these meetings successful.

We pray that the Men’s Breakfast, which has pioneered cross-parish working over the past decade and more, will continue to grow as we develop as a Mission Community.