



Jon and Muriel Richards outside their tiny chapel at their home in Appleborough Green

## Husband builds 12-seater chapel in back garden for wife

A husband spent £25,000 constructing a working chapel in his back garden because his wife found their local church too crowded.

Jon Richards, 63, assembled the 12-seater place of worship – complete with altar, font, and a tapestry of the Last Supper – from items discarded by other churches.

Accompanied by his wife Muriel, 63,

Mr Richards scoured scrap yards and markets across Europe in a two-and-a-half-year “labour of love”.

Finally complete, the chapel next to their farmhouse in Mappleborough Green, Worcestershire now plays host to weekly services for the couple’s friends and family.

Although it has not been consecrated – meaning the couple have had to turn down wedding venue requests – a

local vicar has agreed to host home communion services in the building four times a year.

Mr Richards, a retired watch importer, said: “I built it for Muriel because she’s really passionate about her religion but the local church is often too busy.

“She’s delighted to stand at the front of services and hand out the bread and wine to everybody then

organise the music.

“The building is so peaceful that we often spend our long summer evenings in there relaxing when there’s no service.”

The 12ft x 8ft chapel is so small that the font they bought cannot fit inside, so is kept by the entrance. “We say it’s the most expensive bird bath in the world,” Mr Richards said.

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“The chapel is like a jigsaw puzzle of different church architecture and I would love to know the history of each part,” Mr Richards added.

The chapel, which they call called Twelve Crosses Church, did not need planning permission because it is no bigger than a garden shed. The couple remain active members of the congregation at their local Anglican church in the village, the Church of The Holy Ascension

Mrs Richards said she was delighted with her “sanctuary”, adding: “Jon’s become the expert on everything to do with the chapel – I just go in there to relax and pray.”

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## Thief sends library donation 32 years after stealing book

by Chris Irvine

16 Apr 2009: A guilty thief has sent a library an anonymous £20 donation 32 years after stealing a book. Helen Deacon, 49, manager at North End Library in Portsmouth, Hants, received a letter containing cash for the theft of “Railways between the Wars” by HC Casserley.

The anonymous note claimed he failed to return the book after borrowing it from nearby Paulsgrove Library in February 1977.

Miss Deacon said: “I was just going through the post after returning from the Easter break and found a brown envelope containing the note and the cheque. It is all very bizarre.

“It gives you a nice feeling to think after all this time someone has plucked up the courage to make amends for something they stole.”

The person also admitting to still having the book, but rather than return it, sent the donation because of its poor condition.

The library charges 12p per day for overdue items so on today’s rates the book would have cost £1,364.40.

The money has now been re-invested in Portsmouth City Council’s book fund to purchase new stock for loan.

Lindy Elliott, Paulsgrove’s acting library service manager, said: “Although stealing from a library can never be condoned, we would like to thank the anonymous benefactor for their belated honesty after 32 years.

“We very much appreciate this unexpected gesture and hope the book is still being enjoyed.”

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**LIGHTEN UP**  
Following a visit to an L.A. hair salon on Monday, Jessica Alba shows off her lightened tresses Tuesday in Beverly Hills. Tell us: Do you love it or hate it?

**ON HER OWN**  
Ashley Tisdale isn't letting her newly single status get her down! The High School Musical star, who's reportedly parted ways with musician boyfriend Jared Murillo after two years of dating, keeps a cheery outlook while stepping out Tuesday in Toluca Lake, Calif.

**Kristen Bell**  
Kristen Bell, Jaime Pressly and Anna Paquin were among the V.I.P. shoppers who had the first opportunity to browse items from the eco-friendly Loomstate for Target clothing line during an event at Big Red Sun in Los Angeles. The collection will be available to the public at select Target stores and at Target.com starting April 19.

**PURPLE REIGN**  
Undergoing yet another tress-formation, Lady Gaga shows off her purple-tinted locks while arriving Wednesday at London's Heathrow Airport. The “Poker Face” singer is headlining her Fame Ball Tour, which returns to the U.S. in Philadelphia on May 1.

**PILLOW TALK**  
Solange Knowles is a singer with cause! “Yes, Yes, Yes to safe sex to prevent HIV and AIDS,” she proudly wrote on her Twitter account Tuesday while attending the Body Shop and MTV’s safe sex event in New York City on Tuesday.

**SISTER ACT**  
Audrina Patridge (in Issa) and sister Casey wear matching grins at the premiere party for the Hills star’s straight-to-DVD movie Into the Blue 2: The Reef on Tuesday at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. Patridge revealed a bit about her upcoming reality show, telling PEOPLE, “It’s going to be a little spicier, edgier, older... There’s going to be new love, romances.”

**MAKING A BUZZ**  
Taking their romance overseas, Paris Hilton (in a bee-inspired frock) and boyfriend Doug Reinhardt get close Tuesday at the 40th anniversary celebration for Dutch hairstylist Rob Peetoom’s salons at the Pathé Tuschinski theater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.