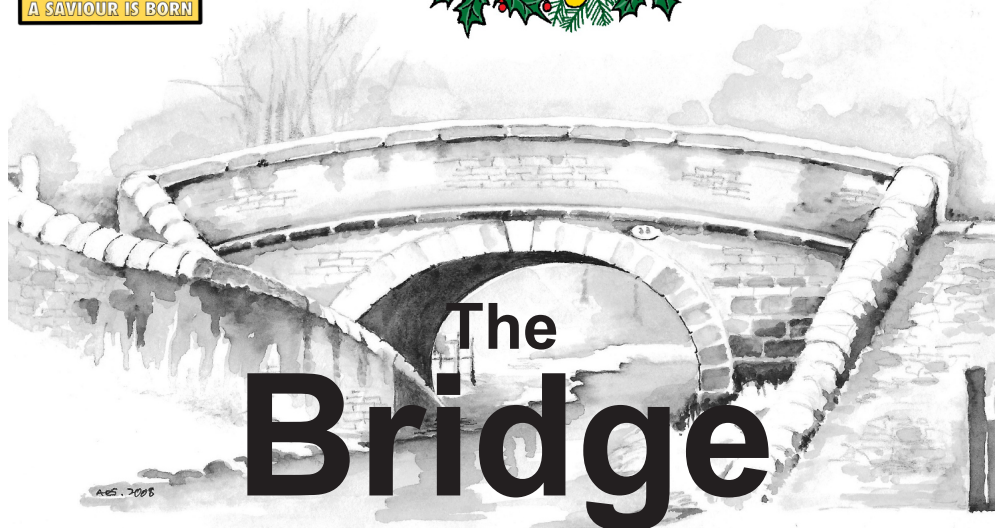




50p



December 2023 / January 2024

**Parish magazine serving the communities
around the churches of
The Sibsey and Carrington Group
and
The Brothertoft Group**

Serving Sibsey, Frithville, Carrington. New Bolingbroke, Westville, Sibsey Northlands, Wildmore, New York, Brothertoft, Langrick, Kirton Holme, Hubbert's Bridge, Amber Hill, Holland Fen, Gipsy Bridge, Langrillville, Anton's Gowt and those with connections to the area.

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The Sibsey Group of Churches can be found on Facebook.
Search for 'Sibseygroupofchurches'.

Welcome - December 2023 edition

Space is limited in this two-month edition. The next printed edition will appear in February. An online-only edition will appear in early January so if you have something to get publicised please send it through to the usual thebridgemag@outlook.com by the end of December.

To all our readers, contributors, advertisers and volunteer distributors we wish you a Peaceful Christmas and Happy New Year.

The Editor

200 years ago, on 23rd December 1823 the poem *The Night Before Christmas* was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in Troy, New York. It was written by Clement Clarke Moore.

800 years ago, on 25th December 1223 St Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene, in Greccio, Italy, after visiting Jesus' birthplace in the Holy Land. It proved enormously popular and inspired other communities to stage their own nativity scenes.

Special Dates in December

1st – Advent begins
1st - World AIDS Day
5-6th – St Nicholas Day
7th – Christmas Jumper Day
7th-15th - Hanukkah
10th - Universal Human Rights Day –
75th Anniversary
12th – UK National Workplace Day of Remembrance.
15th – Wear a Christmas Hat Day
24th - Christmas Eve
25th - Christmas Day
26th - Boxing Day
31st – New Year's Eve
January 2024
1st - New Year's Day
4th - World Braille Day
6th - Epiphany
18th - Winnie the Pooh Day
24th - International Education Day
25th - Burns Night
26-28th - Big Garden Bird Watch
27th -4th Feb-National Storytelling Week



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Amwes Archery Club Carrington Village Hall 6pm-7.30pm. Samantha & Alan. Phone: 07551 968962	Every Monday
Community Coffee Morning Kirton Holme Churchroom 10.00am – 11.30am	2 nd Monday
Coffee Morning 10am Sibsey Northlands Hall Tel 01205 750197.	3 rd Monday
Indoor Bowling Sibsey Village Hall 2-4pm	Every Tuesday
Indoor Bowls New York Village Hall 2-4pm Contact Ron 07951 313782	Every Tuesday
Dancercize Carrington Village Hall 6-7pm-£6 07737064128	Every Tuesday
Coffee Morning Carrington Village Hall 10am-12noon	1 st Tuesday
Coffee Morning Holland Fen Hall 10.30am-12noon	2 nd Tuesday
Country Roads Quilters Sibsey Northlands Hall 9.30am - 4.30pm	3 rd Tuesday
Jive Class Hubberts Bridge Comm. Centre 7.30pm-8.30pm 07767 149167	Every Wednesday
Pilates Sibsey Village Hall 10-11am	Every Wednesday
Slimming World Sibsey Village Hall 5.30-7.30pm	Every Wednesday
Auctions Carrington Village Hall	Every Wednesday
Indoor Bowls New York Village Hall 2pm-4pm Contact Ron 07951 313782	Every Wednesday
Sibsey WI Sibsey Northlands Hall 7.15pm	2 nd Wednesday
Friendship Group/Coffee Afternoon Sibsey Village Hall 2-4pm	2 nd Thursday
Cinema@The Beonna , Benington 7pm	2 nd Thursday
Amber Hill WI 7.15pm	2 nd Thursday
Quiz@The Beonna , Benington 7pm - 11pm	1 st Thursday
Bike Night/Social Night New York Village Hall 5pm-8pm	1 st Thursday
Archery New York Village Hall 7-8pm Steve 07896 534578. All ages and abilities welcome.	Every Friday
Craft Afternoon 1.30pm-4.30pm Holland Fen Vill.Hall	Every Friday
Craft n Chat Carrington Village Hall 10-12 (see Facebook)	Every Friday
Cash Bingo Sibsey Village Hall (see local adverts for times)	Last Friday of the month
Dog Training New York Village Hall 10am-12noon	Every Saturday
Dog Training New York Village Hall 10am-12noon	Every Sunday

Time for a Smile

Statistics prove we're all getting stronger. Fifty years ago, you needed an estate car to hold £50 worth of Christmas presents. Twenty-five years ago, it took two people to carry £30 worth of Christmas groceries – now a five-year-old can do it.

Children's version of the Christmas story

– When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.

– When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta

– Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

A father gave his daughter a young puppy for Christmas. An hour later, he found her in the kitchen, looking sadly at a puddle in the centre of the floor. "Look Dad," she said, "My pup runneth over!"

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

December is the month when the family begins to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some argue for a shirt; others hold out for a pair of socks. But the argument usually ends in a tie.

Grandfather was talking to his granddaughter, "When I was a child all

we got for Christmas was an apple and an orange."

The little girl clapped her hands in joy. "Brilliant! I'd love a new computer and a mobile!"

Getting ready for Christmas...

In this season of endless parties, socialising and constant hospitality, please remember:

~ No woman ever yet shot her husband while he was washing the dishes.

~ Light travels faster than sound. That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

~ He who laughs last, thinks slowest.

~ Everyone has a photographic memory. But sadly, some don't have film.

~ Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves, for they will never cease to be amused.

~ Many people's ambition: to be weighed and found wanting.

~ Seen it all, done it all, can't remember most of it.

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy." Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. "Easy," he said, "They are all nocturnal."

The history of Christmas

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of medieval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14

years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin

America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

[From: https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM](https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM)

12 Days of Christmas Quiz

1. According to the song, what gift was brought on the fourth day of Christmas?
2. When was the first Nativity scene invented?
3. Who invented the Nativity Scene?
4. Which King was on the throne when Father Christmas first appeared in the UK?
5. Who is Santa Claus named after?
6. Why do we have 12 days of Christmas?
7. Who invented the Christmas tree?
8. How many Christmas trees are grown in Europe?
9. Why is Christmas Day on 25 December?
10. What names have been given to the Magi and from where did they come?
11. Where in the Bible is the story of the birth of Christ?
12. Who told Joseph to call their baby 'Jesus'?

Answers on page 31.

250 years ago

On 16th December 1773 the Boston Tea Party took place in Massachusetts. American patriots boarded ships and threw chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company into Boston Harbour, as a protest against the British tax on tea.

Why King Charles never throws cake away

King Charles is on a mission to tackle food poverty and rising food waste. It is said that he and the Queen eat daily slices from the same cake until it is finished, as part of a drive to curb their personal food waste.

As for the nation, the king has been increasingly concerned that in the UK, 12 million tons of food is thrown away each year - even though almost three quarters of it could still be eaten, according to experts. In contrast, an estimated 4.7million people are living in food poverty. To combat this problem, King Charles has launched The Coronation Food Project, to coincide with this, his 75th year.

Up to eight new food hubs around the country will store food, prepare it, and package it, before redistributing it to organisations like food banks and community kitchens. The long-term goal is to circulate 200 million meals a year.

In the meantime, King Charles is careful not to throw his cake away. Is there one simple thing you could do in your own kitchen this Christmas, to curb your personal food waste?

Worried about your home being flooded?

The National Flood Forum has a range of good tips and advice on how to prepare for the worst. Go to: <https://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/about-flooding/preparing/emergency-flood-kit/>

175 years ago

On 19th December 1848 Emily Bronte, British novelist and poet, died of tuberculosis, aged 30. Best known for her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*.

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Sibsey WI

Last month, Sibsey WI celebrated its 89 years and to mark it we sang "Jerusalem". Twenty-seven members, a returning visitor and a new visitor were welcomed by President Fenella, who then read a short poem. Thanks to all who contributed to the October Harvest Supper. The auction raised a considerable amount for funds. Some members recently spent an evening at Boston Bowl, it was disappointing to find that the skittles are now on strings! A group of bursary winners organised and enjoyed a willow-weaving workshop, producing some magnificent willow pheasants and hens. It is hoped to run another similar workshop in the near future. Forthcoming events had been advised by email. Book-folding will be demonstrated and available to try at the craft afternoon this month and the next games session will include carpet bowls and curling. Our Birthday meal outing to Boston Tennis Club is later in November. An upholstery workshop is also planned. The Lincs South Council Meeting next year will be back at Spalding and includes speaker Jonathan Van-Tam. Our speakers for the evening were retired military fire-fighter, Kelvin and administrator, Sarah of Blackjack House Honey, Swineshead (but imminently re-locating to Devon, complete with bees). Following a tradition reaching back thousands of years, our beekeepers proceeded to give a fascinating insight into many aspects of bees and the production of honey. Other bee products harvested include wax, propolis royal jelly and venom. The honey bee is actually more closely related to the wasp than the bumble bee family. Enemies and pests of the bee, are many. Wasps, Asian hornets,

woodpeckers, mice, wax moths and the Varroa mite are all capable of wiping out a hive in their various ways (as sadly, are people and vandals). The native hornet doesn't usually cause problems, but often likes to sit on top of bee hives, enjoying the warmth. Using slides to describe the life cycle and activities of the bees and then with an actual (empty) hive, Kelvin and Sarah demonstrated the different compartments and purposes of the structure and of honey production. Part of the hive contains the honey required for the hive to feed and reproduce, part provides the honey to be harvested. It was fascinating to learn how the pheromones from the queen bee govern the temperament of the bees, also dictating when the bees prepare to swarm. Capturing swarms of bees was another task sometimes undertaken by our speakers. After finally learning about the extraction and bottling of the honey Fenella thanked Kelvin and Sarah for such a comprehensive and interesting account of their bees and all the amazing work involved. Honey was on sale and delicious honey cakes came with with our refreshments. We sang "Happy Birthday Sibsey WI" and the November bursaries were drawn, with two lucky winners. In December there will be a collection of toiletries and toys for Boston Women's Aid, our own "Secret Santa" (£3.00) and the Treasure Map treasure locations will be revealed. "The Music Makers", handbell ringers will provide entertainment. Visitors are welcome, please email us at sibseywi@outlook.com. Alternatively, ring Sally Grant on 01205 750403. Sibsey WI is also on Facebook.

Ann Mitchell

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Sundays 10am - 1pm



10th December

New York Village Hall

**7th December
4th January
1st February**

**5pm-7.15pm approx
(iFirst Thursday every month)**

Social Night

Stalls, Raffle, Refreshments ,
Auction. Indoors/outdoors. All
welcome. See the Village Hall
Facebook page for more details.

**7th Dec - Xmas Party
(with a live band)**

The Everlasting Turkey

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me
I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.

On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard

As we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.

On the third day of Christmas people came from just next door,
The turkey tasted just as good as it had done before.

On the fourth day of Christmas came relations young and old
We finished up the Christmas pud and had the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes scurried,
But we were nice and warm inside, and had the turkey curried.

On the sixth day of Christmas, the Christmas spirit died.

The children fought and bickered – we had the turkey rissoles fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love he did wince
When he sat down at table - and was offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas, the dog had run for shelter,
For he'd seen our turkey pancakes and the glass of alka-seltzer.

On the ninth day of Christmas, by lunchtime dad was blotto,
He knew that bird was back again, this time as a risotto.

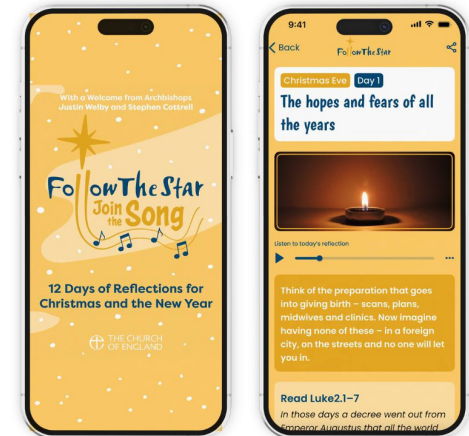
On the tenth day of Christmas we were drinking home-made brew,
Anything to help us face that steaming turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas our lovely tree was moulting,
And with chilli, soy and oyster sauce, the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas we had smiles back on our lips,

The guests had gone, the turkey too –
WE DINED ON FISH AND CHIPS.

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Seasonal orders taken for pumpkins, Christmas trees and holly wreaths.

10 December 2023: the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

One of the world's most groundbreaking global pledges: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR enshrined the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.)

The Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 and sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world – apart for the Bible, of course, which, as of September 2023, has been translated into 736 languages, while the New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,658 languages, and smaller portions of the Bible have been translated into 1,264 other languages according to Wycliffe Global Alliance.

12 December: The UK National Workplace Day of Remembrance

In 1866, the worst disaster in British mining history occurred at The Oaks Colliery, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. It was the worst disaster

in England, and remains so, and was the worst in the world for 50 years. But few people have heard of it. Worse still, the reports were conflicting about the causes, and there is still no final definitive list of who and how many died. Research and efforts to raise a memorial to commemorate the disaster in 2016 highlighted the huge numbers of unknown workers, managers, contractors and others who have died at work and whose service and sacrifice is unremarked and not memorialised. For many people it is considered a national scandal. Their actions for a memorial led a group, including the Mayor of the Sheffield City Region, Dan Jarvis MBE, MP and Paul Routledge of the Daily Mirror, to start a follow-up campaign to establish in 2019 an annual National Workplace Day of Remembrance.

Where does the name 'Jesus' come from?

The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, 'Yehosua', or Joshua. There is also the Hebrew-Aramaic form, 'Yesua'. In Greek, it became 'Ἰησοῦς' (Ihsoûs), and in Latin it became 'Iesus'.

The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh delivers' or 'Yahweh rescues', or 'Yahweh is salvation'. No wonder the angel Gabriel in Luke (1:26-33) told Mary to name her baby Jesus: "because He will save His people from their sins."

What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'. Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and

kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

Where did Christmas cards come from?

Christmas cards have a history which may surprise you: their origins are not of the Church, but of the Post Office and railways.

Of course, very early 'Christmas cards' had been around for hundreds of years, in the form of a simple exchange of Christmas greetings in private letters. The earliest such letter on record was written in England in 1534.

In 1611 a HUGE Christmas card made a one-off appearance. It measured a whopping 33" by 24", and was given to King James I of England (who was also King James VI of Scotland). It featured an illustration of a rose, four poems, a song, and a Christmas message for the king and his son.

Then in 1843 came the creation of Christmas cards as we know them today. One enterprising man was responsible for this: Sir Henry Cole, a senior civil servant who had helped launch the 'Public Record Office', now called the Post Office.

Sir Henry Cole helped to introduce the Penny Post, as it was called. Until then, only rich people could afford the Post, but with the building of the

railways, which carried far more packages than a horse and cart (and went much faster), suddenly the Penny Post became possible.

Sir Henry wanted to encourage 'ordinary' people to use the new service. So he came up with the bright idea of a creating a simple card that people could send each other for Christmas. His friend, John Horsley, was an artist, who designed a three-panel card. Two panels depicted people caring for the poor, and the middle panel showed a family enjoying a large Christmas dinner.

They printed about 1000 cards that first year, and advertised under the slogan: 'Just published, a Christmas Congratulations Card; or picture emblematical of old English festivity to perpetuate kind recollections between dear friends!'

The cards sold for one shilling each and could be posted to friends and family for a Penny. There was an immediate, warm response from the public.

Printing methods improved, and by 1860 Christmas cards were produced in large quantities. By 1870 the cost of posting one had dropped to half a penny, and the custom was rapidly gaining popularity. By the early 1900s, the custom had spread across Europe.

The first cards usually included a Nativity scene, and in late Victorian times, robins and snow-scenes. Robins were chosen because the postmen in those days were nicknamed 'Robin Postmen', because of their red uniforms.

Christmas cards appeared in the USA in the late 1840s. They were mass produced from 1875, and in 1915 John C Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards, which today

offers 2,000 different designs of Christmas card.

Charity Christmas cards began in Denmark in the early 1900s. They spread to Sweden and Norway, and then on throughout Europe and America.

Last year the Royal Mail estimated that it had delivered 150 million cards during the Christmas period.

100 years ago

On 6th December 1923 that Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister. The General Election had resulted in a hung parliament, and the Labour Party had formed a coalition with the Liberal Party.

75 years ago

On 24th December 1948 that the first Midnight Mass to be televised was broadcast from St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.



Sara preferred to let people work



2023 POPPY APPEAL

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&
Surrounding areas**

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10.30AM TO 12 NOON**

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or 07766486452 for more info or turn up on the day



**Saturday 16th December
Kirton Holme Church Hall
Doors open 6.30 pm
Eyes Down 7.00pm
Refreshment
Raffle**

O little town of Bethlehem

During Holy Week in 1982 I was with a party of Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land. We arrived in Tel Aviv at the time Israel and Lebanon were at war and were greeted on the first evening by a high ranking Israeli general who assured us that we were safe if we did not wander off on our own. And this proved to be true. One result of the war meant that on a few of the days our programme of visits was changed, sometimes while we were travelling in a coach. Whenever we set off, we were never sure where we were heading! On one occasion we were a short distance from a restaurant where we expecting to enjoy a traditional Israeli lunch, but we were hastily diverted to a different town. It was the only time our guide and the driver, showed any sign of concern. We learnt later that the original restaurant had been bombed.

Often in the morning it was very chilling to see aircraft flying low over our hotel heavily laden with missiles and bombs. And it was even more chilling when they returned later completely empty.

Another chilling place on our pilgrimage — although this time it was a pleasant chill — was the birth place of Jesus in Bethlehem, which was under Palestinian control. Having experienced the hustle and bustle of the wealthy cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the little town of Bethlehem came as a shock.

Jesus, Christ the King, was not only born in the poverty of a stable fit only for animals, but was also born in one of the poorest and most deprived

parts of our world.

It is easy to understand why Jesus showed such compassion and love for the poor and the sick people he met during his ministry on earth — he not only understood their situation, he had grown up with them.

If I have the opportunity, I would happily return to the little Palestinian town of Bethlehem that we will be singing fondly about this month during Christmastide, and also remembering it as we put up our nativity sets. It was during my visit to Bethlehem that I bought my first nativity.

Appropriately, it was made locally from olive wood — although, perhaps, it is not really appropriate, and neither are the other 160 sets I have, as they don't reflect the real poverty into which Jesus was born. If you have an opportunity, a more realistic image of Bethlehem is a small number of what are claimed to be Banksy's drawings on walls in Bethlehem. The drawings reflect the conflict of peace and violence that haunts the poor little town of Bethlehem that God chose to adopt for his son's birth.

There is, however, one place in the Holy Land that I would not choose to return to Jericho, the oldest city in the world. I have visited several capital cities around the world and always felt safe, even in Jerusalem when the country was at war, but the inhospitable atmosphere of Jericho frightened me and I was not the only one in our party who could not wait to leave.

Bob Peters

Church Services and Events

Sunday 10th December 2023

10.30am Sibsey 'The Christmas Story' Service for all ages
10.45am Wildmore Holy Communion

Sunday 17th December 2023

10.45am Langrick Joint Service/Holy Communion
Visit by Bishop Nicholas. Lunch afterwards (Please book)

Tuesday 19th December 2023

7.00pm Frithville Carol Service

Wednesday 20th December 2023

7.00pm Sibsey Carol Service

Thursday 21st December 2023

6.00pm Carrington Carol Service

Friday 22nd December 2023

6.30pm Holland Fen Carol Service

Friday 22nd December 2023

6.00pm New Bolingbroke Town Hall. Carols

Saturday 23rd December 2023

2.00pm Langrick Crib Service

Sunday 24th December 2023

8.30pm Sibsey Christmas Eve Holy Communion Service

Monday 25th December 2023

9.30am Brothertoft Christmas Day Holy Communion Service

Sunday 31st December 2023

10.30am Sibsey Joint Service/Holy Communion

Sunday 7th January 2024

10.30am Sibsey Morning Worship
10.45am Holland Fen Holy Communion

Sunday 14th January 2024

10.30am Sibsey Holy Communion
10.45am Kirton Holme Morning Worship

*Everyone is welcome to attend any service at any church or event.
Face coverings optional but welcome. Hand sanitiser will be available.
Refreshments may be served if volunteers available. Anyone not taking communion may receive a blessing from the priest.*

Sunday 21st January 2024

10.30am Sibsey Holy Communion
10.45am Langrick Morning Worship

Sunday 28th January 2024

9.00am New Bolingbroke Morning Worship
10.45am Wildmore Holy Communion

Sunday 4th February 2024

10.30am Sibsey Morning Worship
10.45am Brothertoft Holy Communion

Sunday 11th February 2024

10.30am Sibsey Holy Communion
10.45am Holland Fen Morning Worship

Wednesday 14th February 2024

6.30pm Frithville Joint Service/Ash Wednesday

Prayer Requests

If you would like prayers said in church for you at a time of illness or upheaval this can be arranged. If the request is for another person the prayers will not be said in public for confidentiality reasons. Contact the clergy or lay ministers listed inside the front cover.

The Sibsey Joint School Trust 1993

Starting a College or University Course?

Under 25 years old and live in the Parish of Sibsey?

You may be eligible to get a grant to help with books and equipment. The Trust exists to promote education (including social and physical training) of young people resident in the area of the parish of Sibsey whether or not they were pupils of Sibsey Free school.

To apply for a grant you should be under 25 years of age and require some financial assistance. The trustees are keen to emphasise this is not a charity but a trust: we wish to encourage and support the educational development of local people by providing funds for qualifying applications.

Applications should be made to the Clerk:

Mrs Christine Hewerdine, Avocet Lodge,

Main Road, Sibsey PE22 0TW

chewerdine@btinternet.com





Boston Community Transport are a small charity based in Boston who provide a transport alternative to the residents of the Borough.

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Fundraisers - To assist with fundraising events and promoting our charity. A good opportunity to meet new people and raise money for our charity. Hours to suit.

Trustees - serve on our Board, which meets six times a year. They oversee the charities governance, strategy and decision making. The positions are ideal for business professionals who have limited time available and wish to carry out a valuable role in the community, but anyone is welcome to apply.

For more information contact our friendly team in the office.

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Nativity Quiz in 20 Questions

- Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem
c) Jerusalem
- What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
- What did Joseph do for a living?
- Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
- Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
- How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
- Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
- Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) In a stable b) In hay
c) In a manger
- According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
a) sheep and a donkey b) cattle and a donkey c) donkey, sheep and cattle
d) None
- What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
- The wise men travelled to Jerusalem. a) northward b) southward
c) eastward d) westward
- What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
- How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
- What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
- Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
- What is the City of David also known as in the bible?
- Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
- What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean? a) God with us

- b) Son of God c) He who is God
d) Chosen One
19. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
20. Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?
- Answers - on page 27.**

THE PARISH OF BOSTON		
Christmas 2023		
Saturday 2nd December		
Lego Club!	10.30am - 12Noon	St Botolph's
St Thomas' Christmas Fayre	11am - 2pm	St Thomas'
Butterfly Light Up a Life Service	4pm	St Botolph's
Sunday 3rd December		
Deanery Advent Service	7pm	St Botolph's
Saturday 9th December		
Framework Carol Service	4pm	St Botolph's
Monday 11th December		
David Ross Educational Trust Lessons & Carols Service	1.30pm	St Botolph's
Scout & Guides Carol Service	7pm	St Botolph's
Sunday 17th December		
Traditional Service of Lessons & Carols	6pm	St Botolph's
Wednesday 20th December		
G4 in Concert <i>Tickets available online only</i>	7pm	St Botolph's
Thursday 21st December		
Carol Service	7pm	St Thomas'
Sunday 24th December		
United Parish Eucharist	10am	St Thomas'
Carols by Candlelight	4pm	St Botolph's
United Parish Midnight Mass	11.50pm	St Botolph's
Monday 25th December		
United Parish Eucharist	10.50am	St Botolph's
Sunday 31st December		
United Parish Eucharist	10am	St Thomas'

Tel: (01205) 510929 | Address: 1 Wormgate, Boston, PE21 4NP | Email: admin@parishofboston.co.uk
Website: www.parish-of-boston.org.uk | Facebook: #bostonstump | X: #stump_boston

New Bolingbroke Local History Group

9th January 2024

7.30pm

Jean Howard talks about
Church & Parsonage: Teulon's
Contribution to New Bolingbroke
& Lincolnshire

New Bolingbroke Town Hall

Admission £4.00



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of Sibsey and you are in real need
of something you cannot afford
we may be able to help you.

Write to us explaining your present
need, with as much information as
possible.

The trustees are here to help if
they can!

Contact Mr. John Wigner,
'The Gables', Frithville Road, Sibsey.
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Storm Babet 19th-24th October 2023

More than a month's rainfall fell in
24-hours while the already-
saturated ground from earlier
rainfall over the days and weeks
leading up to the storm meant that
there was nowhere for more
rainfall to go as it fell across
Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire County Council is the
Lead Local Flood Authority and is
responsible for developing the
Local Flood Risk Management
Strategy, carry out investigations
into flooding incidents and
undertake works to reduce flood
risk from surface runoff,
groundwater and ordinary
watercourses.

The Council has started preparing
flood investigation reports from
recent flooding but it needs to
ensure it knows about all local
incidents. If you were affected by
flooding from Storm Babet please
send the address or location of the
flooding by email to

FloodRisk@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Flood investigation reports may be
completed for

- one or more properties are internally flooded
- one or more critical service is internally flooded
- one or more critical service can't operate due to lack of access
- one or more flooded critical installation results in the loss of a service impacting on a local

community, or causes pollution to
internal property

- at least two hectares of grade 3+ agricultural land is flooded for more than two days
- any national 3+ category road is made impassable due to flooding
- flooding to a minor road occurs cutting off access to a village, hamlet or blocks a bus route
- flooding occurs to a railway/ station adversely impacting on normal timetables or cuts of a rail link

Further information is available at
<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/flood-risk-management>



We've got online carol-singers again!

A Challenge for 2033 (Yes, I do mean 2033!)

Have you ever wondered how many people there are living in the world? A precise answer is impossible because it is constantly changing. Every moment there are births and deaths, and because not all of them are registered only approximate figures are ever available. For an up-to-the-moment current estimate visit Worldometer: [https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#:~:text=World%20Population%20Clock%3A%208.1%20Billion,\(LIVE%2C%202023\)%20%2D%20Worldometer](https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#:~:text=World%20Population%20Clock%3A%208.1%20Billion,(LIVE%2C%202023)%20%2D%20Worldometer) and you will see how rapidly the numbers are changing. At the time of writing, it was estimated that there are over 8 billion (8,000,000,000) people in the world, and the total is growing rapidly.

An even more interesting fact is that of this 8+ billion people it is estimated that about 16% of the number do not identify themselves with any of the best recognised religions. Christianity is the most popular with 31% of the population. On 30 October 2023 the breakdown of faiths was: 2,173,180,000 Christians (31% of world population), of which 50% are Catholic, 37% Protestant, 12% Orthodox, and 1% other. 1,598,510,000 Muslims (23%), of which 87-90% are Sunnis, 10-13% Shia. 1,126,500,000 No Religion

affiliation (16%): atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any particular religion. One-in-five people (20%) in the United States are religiously unaffiliated.

1,033,080,000 Hindus (15%), the overwhelming majority (94%) of which live in India. 487,540,000 Buddhists (7%), of which half live in China. 405,120,000 Folk Religionists (6%): faiths that are closely associated with a particular group of people, ethnicity or tribe. 58,110,000 Other Religions (1%): Baha'i faith, Taoism, Jainism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Tenrikyo, Wicca, Zoroastrianism and many others. 13,850,000 Jews (0.2%), four-fifths of which live in two countries: United States (41%); Israel (41%). On the day before writing this, I took part in a Parish Eucharist attended by over 160 people, and in the evening I joined a similar number of people – the majority of whom had not attended our morning service. They had gathered in the same church for a very different type of worship and prayer service that involved a discussion with Nicky and Pippa Gumbel who shared with us the challenge facing the Alpha Course that they promote through HTB (Holy Trinity Brompton). Alpha began in 1977 when Charles Marnham, a curate at HTB, started a course for church members to explore the basics of

beliefs commonly held by many believers in Christ.

Alpha for everyone

In 1990 Nicky Gumbel, who was then a curate at HTB, took over running the course and began to revise and promote its use more widely. From just four courses in 1991, the number of Alpha courses rose to 2,500 by 1995 and reached a peak in 1998 when 10,500 courses were run. Today Alpha is running in over 100 countries and in over 100 different languages. More than 24 million people have taken the course which has been tailored for different Christian denominations including Anglican, Baptist, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic. Yet the Gumbels are not ready to put their feet up. Their inspiration for their latest Alpha project is driven by the Gospel of Matthew 28:16-20: The Great Commission: Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to

obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

'There is still a huge job to be done', said Nicky, 'Our vision is for everyone, everywhere in the world, to have the opportunity to explore the Christian faith through Alpha by 2033.

2033 is a key moment in history, it will be the 2,000th anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus. We hope to make exploring the Christian faith as accessible as possible, so that millions more might encounter the love of God.'

The Alpha course is ideal for everyone – from those who have never heard about Jesus to those who have been Christians all their lives. For latter it not only offers an opportunity to refresh memories, by often gives new insights into those sometimes difficult aspects of our faith such as the work of the Holy Spirit in us and the changing world around us.

To find out more about Alpha visit: <https://asiapacific.alpha.org/alpha-for-everyone/>

70 years ago

On 10th December 1953 former US Secretary of State George Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for creating the Marshall Plan. The aid package helped Europe rebuild after WW2.

The Big Bash!

JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS

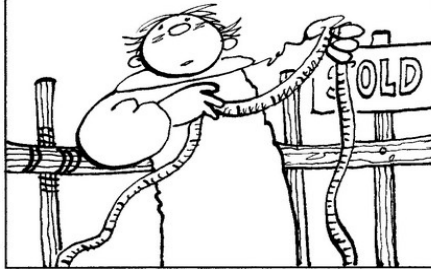


OH!! NO!!

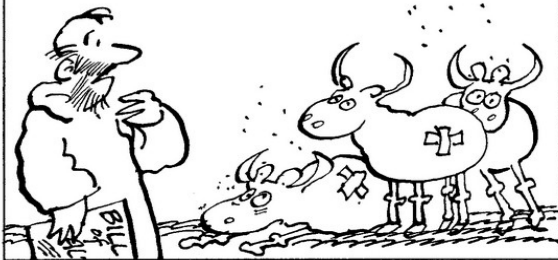


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!



SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



YES - I CAN COME TO YOUR PARTY

THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

Big Ben

Do you stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve? If so, this year will be special – it is 100 years ago, on 31st December 1923, that the BBC first broadcast the chimes of Big Ben to welcome in the New Year. That first year, the BBC engineers were not allowed into Parliament, and so had to access Big Ben from the roof of the Palace of Westminster. This meant that their microphone picked up not just the chimes, but a lot of traffic noise as well. By 1924 the Big Ben bongos were being broadcast every day. By then the BBC had installed low sensitivity microphones very close to the bells, so that they missed the sound of the clock mechanism. During the Second World War the chimes were broadcast across occupied Europe – encouraging millions in their struggle against the Nazis. The Big Ben daily time signal on the BBC is still cherished today, and Big Ben rings live for important events such as Remembrance Day and New Year.

“Christmas Sing-a-long”

With

The Sibsey Singers

Sibsey Church

Saturday Dec. 9th.

2.00pm to 4.00pm

Refreshments, stalls & raffle

Enjoy the seasonal spirit

Proceeds to church

heating.

1. Nazareth
2. Gabriel
3. Carpenter
4. Caesar Augustus
5. To register for the census
6. We are not told in the Bible
7. There was no room at the inn
8. c) In a manger
9. d) None
10. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all people'
11. d) westward
12. A star
13. The Bible doesn't say
14. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh
15. The shepherds
16. Bethlehem
17. Matthew and Luke
18. a) God with us
19. 8, according to the law
20. False; we don't know the date

Nativity Quiz Answers:



HOLLAND FEN VILLAGE HALL

QUIZ NIGHT

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Little donkey, little donkey

You are bound to sing about donkeys this Christmas, especially the little one that carried Mary to Bethlehem! But how much do you know about donkeys? They are really rather special.

Here are some fun facts:

1. There are more than 44 million donkeys in the world, of all shapes and sizes.
2. There are more than 186 breeds of donkey.
3. Donkeys have good memories. They can remember places and other donkeys even 25 years after they last saw them.
4. Donkeys are not stubborn, they are cautious. If they are fearful about something, they will do their best to avoid it.
5. Donkeys are naturally clean. Given the chance, they are always grooming themselves and each other.
6. Donkeys like to be warm and dry. They come from deserts and savannahs.
7. Donkeys are social. They make deep bonds with their family and herd and get very upset if someone they love is taken from them.
8. Donkeys have big ears for a good reason – it means they can hear each other at a great distance. They communicate by braying, grunting, whiffling, squealing and snorting.
9. Donkeys help the ecology of their desert homes by digging into the ground to access water. This provides little creatures such as birds and chipmunks with life-saving water.
10. Donkeys need your help. Millions round the world are being mistreated, and you can take action to help them.

<https://www.peta.org.uk/blog/world-donkey-day/>

Beatrix Potter

It was 80 years ago this month, on 22nd December 1943, that Beatrix Potter, the children's writer and illustrator, died. Her animal characters such as Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, and Jemima Puddle-Duck brought her worldwide fame. Helen Beatrix Potter (28 July 1866 – 22 December 1943) had enjoyed an upper-middle-class childhood, but it was also solitary. She was given numerous pets and spent holidays in Scotland and the Lake District, where she learned to love landscape, flora and fauna. Beatrix Potter was in her thirties when she first self-published *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in 1902. She began writing and illustrating children's books full-time. In all, Potter wrote more than 60 books. Her best-known ones were her 23 children's books. Her books went on to sell more than 250 million copies. In 1903 Peter Rabbit was made into a patented stuffed toy - the first. Potter used the sales of her books and a legacy from an aunt in 1905 to buy Hill Top Farm in Near Sawrey, in the Lake District. Over the following decades, she bought many additional farms, in order to preserve the unique hill country landscape.

In 1913, when she was 47, Beatrix married William Heelis, a local solicitor in Hawkshead. By now she was also a prize-winning breeder of Herdwick sheep and a farmer. In 1943, aged 77, Potter died of pneumonia and heart disease at her home in Near Sawrey. She left most of her property to the National Trust. She deserves the credit for so much of the land that now makes up the Lake District National Park.

More at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/helen-beatrix-potter-1794#>

A final thought about Christmas

During Christmastide we will have heard a great deal about the main characters involved in the story of the birth of Jesus: Mary, her cousin Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Gabriel and the angels, Herod the jealous king, the magi from the East, the shepherds, and even an innkeeper, but Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, seems to be overlooked.

Maybe, a main priority of the early church was to emphasise the virgin birth and playing down the role of Joseph could make it easier for people to understand – it's a standard journalistic and political technique to emphasis one side of any story more than another to make a point.

But Joseph's role is far greater than being the husband who remains in the background just to link Jesus to the house of David - this being an essential requirement for the expected Messiah. Joseph was not only of the house of David, his family tree takes him back to Abraham, the father of all nations. The Messiah being the saviour of 'all nations'.

Joseph is only mentioned in the Bible at the birth of Jesus and again a couple of times in the childhood of Jesus, of which there is very little detail. This led to the belief that Joseph died when Jesus was a boy, something that is confirmed when Jesus is dying on the cross and he entrusts his mother's care to his faithful

disciple, John. If Joseph had been alive, there would have been no reason to say this. This also led to the idea that Joseph was older than Mary, although some experts believe that when Joseph married Mary he was only 17 years old – Mary is thought to have been about 12, the usual age for a Jewish girl to marry.

Just as Mary has a mature faith in God, so does Joseph who was a man of principle. In some Bible translations he is called just, or righteous, meaning he lived according to the laws God had given to Moses. Like Mary, Joseph is obedient to God.

When Joseph is told that Mary is to have a child fathered by the Holy Spirit, the laws allowed him to divorce her – betrothal automatically applied all the rules of marriage except the woman had to remain a virgin. Divorce would mean humiliation for Mary. She would be outcast for life. But Joseph shows his love for her by not doing so, and then, following further instructions from God via a messenger, takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt, until it was safe for them to go to Galilee.

The messenger's first words to Joseph were, 'do not be afraid', thus identifying the messenger as being from God – often in the Bible when God speaks, either directly or through a messenger, he begins with those words – 'do not be afraid'. He said it to Abraham, Joseph's distant forefather, to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah,

Isaiah, and many others, just as Jesus said it many times to his disciples.

Clearly Joseph is a righteous, kind, loving, caring and a humble man, chosen by God to stand alongside Mary and support her in the miraculous event that was to change the world for ever. He could handle adversity and he was not only obedient to God but his trust and faith in God was reflected in what he did. This didn't mean great fame or wealth, he remained a carpenter and he was poor – we know this because when Mary and Joseph took Jesus, the firstborn child and presented him to God in the temple as the law prescribed, their sacrificial gift was that which only the poor were allowed to offer – two doves instead of a lamb.

The story of Joseph, son of Abraham, son of David, two of the greatest and most powerful characters in the Bible, teaches us that whether we are male or female, we are not all called to be leaders, and God values us if we humbly place our trust in him and seek to live righteous, caring, loving and faithful lives according to the way of Jesus our Saviour who, as Joseph named him, is Emmanuel – our God who is with us and of whom we should not be afraid to tell others about.

Bob Peters

Answers
1. Four calling birds. 2. 1223.
3. St Francis of Assisi. 4. Henry VIII. 5. Saint Nicholas 6. It is based on the Christian theology that marks 12 days between the birth of Christ and the arrival of the Magi. 7. German Lutherans in the 16th Century, when a tree was placed in the Cathedral of Strasbourg in 1539, under the leadership of the Protestant Reformer, Martin Bucer.
8. About 60 million. 9. It is 9 months after the traditional date of the conception of Jesus on 25 March. 10. Melchior from Europe, Caspar from Arabia, and Balthazar from Africa.
11. Matthew and Luke. 12. An angel of the Lord.

65 years ago

On 5th December 1958 that Britain's first motorway, the Preston By-pass, was officially opened. (It is now part of the M6 and M55.)

60 years ago

On 21st December 1963 the Daleks made their first appearance on the British science fiction TV series *Doctor Who*.

30 years ago

On 10th December 1993 that Monkwearmouth Colliery in Sunderland closed down. It marked the end of more than 800 years of coal mining in the region.

Sudoku Challenge

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9 without repeats.

6	1			7				
				4	5		2	
				8				3
	7		8			9		
		2				6		
		3			2		8	
4				5				
1		6	3					
				4			9	7

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Wordsearch

Find the words hidden in this wordsearch puzzle. Clues can be found in the text below. There are 25 words.

The much-loved carol, *Silent Night*, comes from Austria, where it was first sung as *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber, to compose a melody for his carol. Gruber was organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On Christmas Eve they presented the carol to the church during the midnight mass. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the version sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all time.

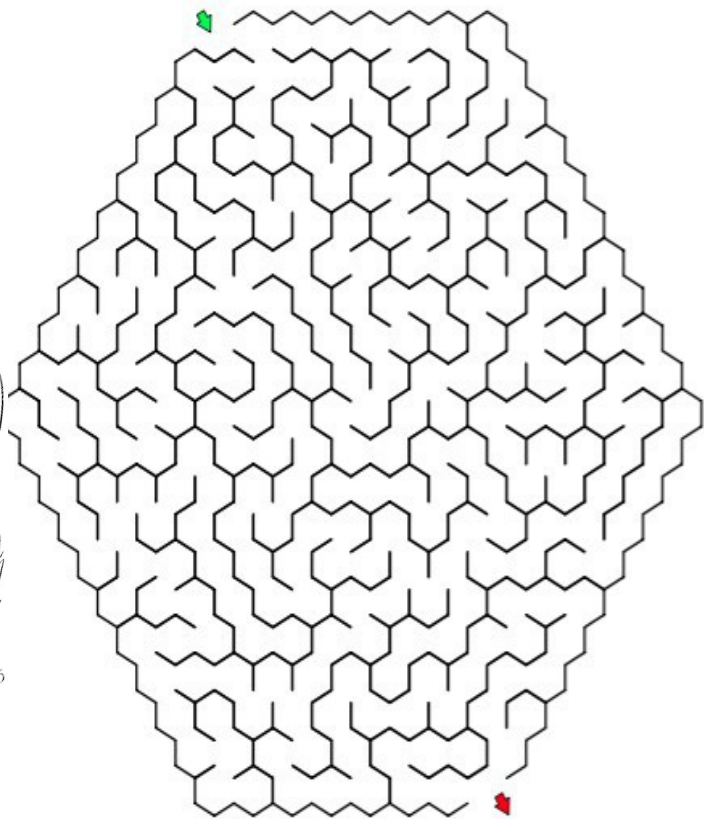
M	O	H	R	L	A	A	M	A	S	S	T
R	T	N	E	L	I	S	T	I	L	L	E
Y	E	M	G	L	I	A	N	R	D	N	E
J	L	B	I	N	G	M	M	T	T	O	M
I	O	A	L	D	U	T	L	S	G	I	E
T	V	S	I	T	N	S	E	U	E	S	L
O	E	I	E	T	S	I	N	A	G	R	O
Y	D	N	H	P	R	R	G	A	E	E	D
O	A	G	I	P	H	H	I	H	C	V	Y
U	I	L	O	R	A	C	T	F	T	H	E
N	D	E	D	O	T	A	D	R	I	H	T
G	C	A	G	A	F	R	A	E	H	A	U

Maze

Find your way from the top to the bottom.



"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."



Solutions for November edition

H	T	H	G	I	E	F	I	F	S	B	L	E
S	N	P	I	L	G	R	I	M	A	G	E	R
A	I	A	H	C	R	A	E	R	N	N	A	E
T	R	A	N	S	L	A	T	I	O	N	N	M
M	E	S	S	I	A	H	C	R	D	W	A	A
T	S	R	E	I	O	U	T	E	N	E	H	I
N	S	C	H	L	D	A	A	V	P	T	T	N
I	A	A	O	O	P	R	U	O	I	V	A	S
A	T	M	R	T	E	I	I	L	O	E	N	U
S	E	T	T	T	L	C	C	C	U	O	D	S
W	N	U	E	N	A	A	A	S	S	N	R	E
I	T	P	N	E	L	P	N	L	I	E	J	
P	H	O	N	O	U	R	E	D	P	D	W	T

6	9	3	7	1	8	2	5	4
2	4	7	3	5	9	8	6	1
8	1	5	6	4	2	3	9	7
1	6	9	2	3	4	7	8	5
7	3	2	1	8	5	6	4	9
5	8	4	9	7	6	1	3	2
9	7	6	4	2	3	5	1	8
3	5	1	8	9	7	4	2	6
4	2	8	5	6	1	9	7	3

St James the Least of All

The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

The Rectory
St James the Least of All



On how to make the most of carol singing

My dear Nephew Darren,
Carol singing is not what it used to be. My fond memories of a group of choristers, muffled in scarves and overcoats, carrying lanterns, and walking from door to door in the snow, as they sang 'While shepherds watched ...' had to be suddenly revised when I saw your own music group, in T-shirts inscribed with 'Jesus loves You', singing 'Little donkey', in your shopping centre. I suspect any money you raised would just about have paid for the electricity used to power your banks of electronic equipment. Singing in the main square of the Centre next to the fountain may have looked good, but it seemed to mean that the choir men were obliged to make constant trips to the lavatory.

Here at St James the Least of All, carol singing is regarded as a staff perk for the choir; the year when the Boys' Brigade tried to break their monopoly was suppressed with a ruthlessness that would have impressed Genghis Kahn.

Our annual carol-singing route involves months of meticulous planning. We find that a transparent collection box is vital, so that donors can see what earlier patrons have given. This means that those who are bound to put in notes must be visited first – '*pour encourager les autres*'. It also needs a detachable base, so that if coppers are given, they can be removed from sight before the next call.

Those homes that contain several children are visited just after bedtime, so that parents will give generously simply to get the choir to go somewhere else. Veiled threats to stay and sing more carols (unless they give generously) are usually very effective. Getting whoever looks the most innocent and photogenic to ring the bell and ask for money is a far more subtle way of ensuring a donation than planting any number of mafia lookalikes (such as our church treasurer) on the doorstep.

The choir always finishes its evening at the local pub – but again, the timing must be carefully managed. Too early and there will only be the landlord, his wife, and their Labrador to listen; too late and people will be so full of Christmas cheer that any carols will be hi-jacked and become the equivalent of back-of-the bus rugby songs.

Your loving uncle, *Eustace*

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