

Rector's Letter

I have been having a great time preparing for Christmas and New Year. I have trolled the internet to find Christmas gifts for my sons and their partners, our grandchildren and other family who live in Canada. But I also discovered, if the value of a parcel exceeds \$60.00 CDN then the person receiving the gift will need to pay tax. That means they will pay \$20 or \$30 to receive their gift. Ouch! And then I have discovered the cost of shipping. Parcel Force wants £28.00 to send a parcel that weighs about 1.5 kilograms. Ouch (again)! The added costs make Christmas expensive. So I thought, "you could just send money." So far there are no taxes or shipping costs to send money electronically. But money doesn't seem like such a good gift. It's so impersonal. What I would really like to send is a "Christmas Hamper" from Betty's Tea Room, filled with fine English cuisine; a proper Christmas Cake, or mince pies or some terrific tea from Betty's.

After pondering these things for a bit, I re-read the front cover of the Cowslip. The article seemed to contain some good advice about keeping Christmas in a more simple way without so much pressure and hassle. And I wondered why gifts are such an important part of Christmas. Well of course there is the story of the Maji to consider. They gave presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the baby Jesus. They gave gifts - and they were "wise men", which some people say is a

combination you don't see too often today.

But there is another more important gift at Christmas. One of our most beloved Carols is Charles Wesley's immortal, "Hark! The herald angels sing". In it Wesley refers to the baby Jesus as, our King, Emmanuel (which means, "God with us"), the Prince of Peace, healer of the nations, giver of light, God's gift of life who gives us second birth. Those are not just the attributes of the baby born in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago, they are also the gifts he brings to a troubled world. Gifts are an important part of Christmas; but they are not about glitz and glamour; these gifts are given for the benefit of many.

This year, I hope that you will find ways to give gifts of love that might make the world a better place. One way might be to give to the people of the Philippines whose lives have been devastated by Typhoon Haiyan; or you could give to help the people of Syria where more than 2 million people have fled the country since a bloody civil war; or closer to home you could help people in Cowley who use the services of the Community Emergency Foodbank. You might find that giving some gifts like these helps your Christmas to be even better this year.

HOWARD

Chronicle

December 2013,
January 2014

Editor's Letter

Dear Readers

Crib and Christmas tree festivals are at the moment very much in the minds of our two congregations. Now is the time to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas, isn't it? Let's hope that the charities we are supporting will reap substantial benefits from our festivals along with CEF who needs our help, particularly so as winter closes in.

Talking of charities we support I have to tell you about one big effort which (sort of) backfired last month. As ever our lovely knitting ladies made a huge quantity of little hats for Sainsbury's smoothie drinks, all in aid of Age UK.

Unfortunately (and we don't know why) the company brought the collection date for these forward by a couple of weeks. That meant that a big bagful of little hats missed the deadline.

However, let us not despair because they have been carefully wrapped in mothproof polythene and stored in the Church Centre loft ready for next year. Well done, ladies, you really are stars when it comes to smoothie hats.

Huge congratulations to all who worked so hard on the two big November projects in the parish. First of all the Caribbean evening at St Francis which raised over £1,000 and was, I understand the best one yet. I was so sorry to miss it and unable to help on the door as I did at the last one but Film Club at the Centre is my "baby" and the dates clashed. Please St Francis, next time you plan another super shindig don't set the date for the second Friday in the month!

The other roaring success was the Autumn Craft Fair (together with piped carols at the entrance!)

in the Church Centre. That too raised in excess of £1000 and was such a happy occasion. It is not often that people who seldom come to church notice, and remark on, the terrific atmosphere that was clearly there that day. A big round of applause for everyone involved.

The congregation at St James are rather sad this week because one of our stalwart parishioners is moving over to Launton to be nearer her family. Joy Harbison is so much involved in everything we do in this parish, most notably as a valued member of the church choir and a regular supporter of The Seashells Toddler and Baby sessions. We really hope that she and John, her husband, will be happy in their new bungalow and that life will be a little easier for John with no stairs to cope with. Thank you Joy for all your efforts and your friendship and God speed.

As I sign off my letter till the beginning of February 2014 may I wish all our readers and their families a very happy, peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year from Sally, Nicki, May (your Chronicle team) and myself. I am hoping for a little snow (not too much) to make a really white Christmas and lots of cosy evenings with a glass or two of mulled wine.

Cheers and God bless

Rosanne

**Time flies like an arrow.
Fruit flies like a banana.**

SEASHELLS DECEMBER 2013

2013 has been another brilliant year. Lots of new faces have joined bringing us great joy, but we have also lost several parents/carers, whose children have gone on to school or nursery.

Seashells has many supporters and I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one most sincerely for their help throughout the past year.

We end this year with a great deal of sadness as we are to lose Joy. Joy is leaving Cowley to live near her son in Launton, near Bicester. Joy has been with Seashells almost since it started, first bringing her grandchildren, then when they went to school stopping on to help with the organisation, running and anything that needed doing. She has been a good friend and a very loyal supporter of Seashells always working very

hard. We shall all miss her very much, but of course we wish her well and pray that she and John will be well and happy in their new home.

There is a permanent open invitation to anyone who would like to visit Seashells in the Church Centre. Why not drop in for a cup of coffee and friendly chat (between 10 - 11.30 any Tuesday) to see what goes on.

We shall be closed on 24th December 2013 and 31st December 2013, re-opening on 7th January 2014.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Blessed Peaceful Christmas and a very Happy 2014.

With my renewed thanks to you all.

May Morgan

CLERICAL JOKE

A vicar was out visiting his parishioners and he knocked at one door and got no answer. He knocked again without an answer, but he noticed one of the curtains twitch. As his wont, he got out his visiting card and wrote on it "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and opens the door, I will enter (Revelations 3 v 20)". The next Sunday, the card was on the collection plate, and at the bottom was written "Genesis 3. Behold, they were naked".

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MOTHERS' UNION NEWS

The November branch meeting was very well attended and members enjoyed a nostalgic afternoon as Les Hemsworth brought a section of photographs of bygone days in Cowley. The Victorian era right up to the mid-twentieth century reminded us of how Cowley has changed from three small villages with unmade muddy roads to the huge suburban conurbation it is now.

At the meeting we planned some details of our December Christmas Tea Party which will be on Monday, 16th. Members are encouraged to bring favourite readings with a seasonal flavour to add to the fun. It was agreed that the committee would provide the food.

A prayer afternoon has been arranged for 26th November at St Francis Church. Skye has very kindly agreed to lead us in prayer for those women all around the world who suffer any kind of abuse. This will also be the theme of our Christmas tree at the Christmas Tree Festival in the parish church.

It was also agreed that, as last year, those members who would like to will send Christmas cards to people in prison who receive nothing to mark the season. John Shreeve reported that the cards we sent last year were received by prisoners with much gratitude. He will collect our cards at the Christmas tea party and ensure that they are passed on to the appropriate person for distribution.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

He was blind yet God gave him vision;
He was deaf yet God spoke to him;
He was crippled yet God walked beside him;
He was alone yet God was always with him
He was ugly yet in God's sight he was beautiful;
He was despised by all yet loved by God;
Who was this man with such burdens?
He is you
He is me,
He is mankind

CARIBBEAN CAPERS

Caribbean celebrations at St Francis opened on Friday, 8th November with great anticipation. People began arriving well before 7 pm and the Hall and tables filled with excited people meeting up with friends. Extra tables had to be brought in to accommodate the numbers arriving. Music was provided with a disco. Raffle tickets were sold. People waiting for the food to be served, shared bottles of wine they had bought with them.

The food was served with each row of tables going up in turn. Various dishes of delicious West Indian food were enjoyed, with seconds if one had room! The tables were then moved back to accommodate the dancing. A few people got on to the floor but compared with other Caribbean Evenings, not many West Indian couples took to the floor. There was no limbo dancing which was disappointing as it was always a great attraction and much enjoyed.

However, in spite of that, and by general consensus a good evening was had by all. The fact that the evening was such a success was due in no small measure to the hard work of Norah, Catherine and their team of helpers.

THE LITTLE BOY WHO FORGOT HIS JAR

I go to Manor Street Nursery,
Its fun. I like it just fine
Miss Nightingale told us a story
One day in quiet circle time.

It was all about a new baby
Who was born and laid in some hay.
His mum and dad went on a journey
And didn't have no-where to stay.

Miss Nightingale said around Christmas
We might like to do a real play
About that dear little baby,
Sing carols and have things to say.

She told us what parts we could do,
Like innkeeper, angels and things
George, Henry and me, would be special
'Cos we would be the three kings

We practised a lot, learnt our carols,
Mums and dads could come, hear us sing.
Miss Nightingale had all the costumes,
But some things we needed to bring.

Us kings had to bring in our present,
Gold, frankincense, myrrh (in a jar)
George a gold box and Henry a bottle
Angel Wendy said she'd bring a star.

I asked Mum for a jar for my present
She did it up posh with tin foil.
"What's myrrh, Mum?" I asked. She told me
"I think it's some sort of oil".

This morning we were very excited.
We were given nice, quiet things to play
'Cos Miss Nightingale was real busy
Getting ev'rything right for today.

It was then that I suddenly thought.
"Oh no I've forgotten my jar!"
The others remembered their presents
And Wendy her lovely gold star.

Now, I've just had a new baby brother,
He came home in a lovely soft shawl.
When I wanted to give him something
Mum said "Babies only need love, that's all".

So today I got some white paper,
Cut a heart out and coloured it in
With the red felt pen from the table
For my present to take to the inn.

But where was I going to hide it?
Well I tucked it safe in my shirt
'Cos when it came up to playtime
It mustn't fall into the dirt

Our play was really lovely.
It was brilliant right from the start.
I stood in my line by the entrance
Holding my red paper heart.

It was our turn to offer our presents.
George laid his gold box down just right.
Henry stood down his bottle correctly.
My hand were shaking with fright.

But I laid my heart at the manger,
Then I looked up and, to my surprise,
Miss Nightingale sat at the piano,
And (guess what?) she had tears in her eyes!

Rosanne Butler



HOW IS YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE?

Each month we are going to challenge our readers to identify a Cowley landmark. Our roving photographer, Les Hemsworth, will choose a local view to get you thinking.

Answer next month.

Last month's answer:

St Christopher's Old Junior School Temple Road

Cowley at the turn of the Twentieth Century

(from Nan Davies' memoirs)

The school, St Christopher's, which is still there today, took the five year olds also the first and second classes, after that we had to go over to the little school by the Church in Church Cowley, still there, but now empty. After passing in that class we had to come back to Temple Road school for the higher classes. The rooms were only heated by one big iron grate, and often it hadn't burned up and remained sullen until nearly dinner time, but however cold it was, we were never sent home.

A lot of the houses are still in Temple Road today, but they have been modernised and look very different. Old Dorset Orchard is still there, but it had a garden that went almost to the bottom of the road where there are now houses and Temple Cowley school, leaving only a small garden for the present occupants. At the very top of the road was a Slaughter House and on Cattle Market days the cattle were bought by the butchers, so nearly every Wednesday we would have to run indoors, because some cattle would be driven, usually by two men, all through the town to Hedges Slaughter House to be killed there, with a knife in those days. I think that was on the right of the road going up.

Coming back down from there was Mrs Smith's shop and two or three other houses, then a very old house with no front door, you went down a little passage way, round the corner to the only door and the entrance had a very steep step. The well for water was just outside the back door. It must have been at least one hundred years old then and was only knocked down somewhere around 1950. Next to that house was another yard with five houses. Mrs Sawyer lived in one and her daughter Bessy was my friend. Her mother took in washing and she had to go down to an old barn to do it, and the copper was outside, so in wet weather she had to go outside to light it, put the clothes in to boil, go outside to push it down with the copper stick

and so on until finished (those were the days). She was such a happy faced woman, very big and when she laughed she really shook and made you laugh too. Such a good mother with six children but always made a lone one welcome.

When we had to go to Standard I as it was known, it was about a mile to walk to Church Cowley. We went through The Grates, still there today, but then it was all green fields each side, no houses anywhere until you reached the top; there the old vicarage stood in its own grounds and to the left of it the old blacksmiths forge. We loved to go and watch him shoeing the horses, the old vicarage was pulled down and the new one built in its place, modern of course, but so different to the kind of genteel look that we had been used to.

Now opposite them were about six little cottages, they looked old to me at my age. I was about seven or eight. They must have been built for at least a hundred years and are still there today and all are lived in. On each side of old Cowley Church are two more cottages which were also there then, so they must be about two hundred years old.

The next road to this was Cruel Lane now altered to Crowell Road. It seems there was a terrible battle years ago during the Civil War some called it, and the slaughter was so bad that the blood ran down the hill; there was only one house and a high grass verge on the left hand side of the road, with this little house built on top of it. You had to go up about a dozen steps to the front door; at the bottom a very large garden and another cottage which looked out to High Street now called between Towns Road and opposite very nice houses where the owners of Steamplough Yard, at least two families lived there, then came two small cottages; people named Willis lived there.

Film Club

Our club continues to flourish. In November a large group of members and guests enjoyed a delightful film, "The Bishop's Wife". It was issued in 1947 and filmed in black and white but the story is so heart-warming that it even enjoyed a round of applause as the credits rolled at the end.

The films we are planning for December and January could not be more different but that is the secret of our success, because the variety of programming appeals to different members.

For our December club night on Friday 13th we are showing "White Christmas" (what else?) starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Vera-Allen and Rosemary Clooney. It has a Universal certificate and is suitable for all ages. This should put us in really festive mood and mince pies with our tea and coffee will be a must.



The western film which members chose for January is "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid", starring Robert Redford and Paul Newman. Though a rather more gritty story it has become a film classic and one not to be missed. We meet in January on Friday, 10th.

A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Test family and friends to name the carols from the last lines printed below:

1. Glory to the new-born king
2. Begin and never cease
3. Sweet singing in the choir
4. God bless you and send you a happy New Year
5. Born the King of Israel
6. Doth rend the air asunder
7. Darling, darling, little man
8. For to let these jolly Wassailers in
9. Bye bye, lully, lullay
10. Christ is born in Bethlehem
11. Guide us to thy perfect light
12. And fit us for heaven to live with thee there
13. Our Lord Emmanuel
14. Shall yourselves find blessing
15. Worship Christ the new-born King
16. On Christmas Day in the morning
17. I give him my heart
18. Carry Mary safely on her way
19. The blessed angels sing
20. Oh tidings of comfort and joy

What the Donkey Saw

No room at the inn, of course
And not that much in the stable
What with the shepherds, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love or money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding
I did my best to make them feel wanted,
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

CHRIST BEHIND BARS

Yes, believe it or not, Christ is at work behind the bars of our prisons bringing his special message of forgiveness, reconciliation and hope to those whose actions have led to them being put inside, as the saying goes. Society has written them off, often their families and friends have written them off, they have sometimes written themselves off, but Christ never writes them off. Remember the record of his agony on the cross at Calvary and his conversation with the penitent thief – “Master, remember me when you come into your Kingdom!” The answer was instantaneous – “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise!” What a turnaround for that wretched man, from absolute dejection and despair, for glorious hope and joy.

You could say that the growth of Christianity in our prisons is one of the hidden success stories of our faith, for things are really happening there. More and more prisoners are responding to the Christian message in a really positive way, and as a result they become changed people, as the Holy Spirit works inside them. Once that inward change has been achieved, they start to have real hope in their lives and are able to operate as normal people. What is more, when they are finally released they stand a much better chance of integrating into society again, and going straight, and that is very important. And while still serving their sentences their attitudes change towards those in authority and towards their fellow prisoners. Also, they begin to want and achieve the things that Christians outside want. Alpha courses, prayer and study groups – Christian services and bible readings.

In all these things they are helped and assisted by members of the Prison Fellowship who go into the prisons with the approval of the au-

thorities to provide a link with those outside and to guide them into the right directions. This sometimes leads to quite tough actions, but they really do work. Their Sycamore Tree Course challenges prisoners to face up to what they have done, and try to make amends. In some cases a face to face interview can be arranged with their victims and apologies given.

The Prison Fellowship also helps the families of the prisoners particularly at Christmas-time when the separation is most keenly felt. In some cases where finance is a real problem, arranging cards and presents for the children who would otherwise get nothing.

There is little or nothing in the way of Remedial Courses being achieved by the prison authorities, who now have neither the staff, the time nor the money to put them into action. Big changes are being enforced by Government ministers in the way prisons are run, and staffing levels have been cut to the bare minimum. Most of the prisons are full to capacity and this has not been helped by the closure of several older prisons recently.

Anything that can be done to alleviate this situation has got to be a big plus, and so the work of those brave volunteers is a Christian mission that deserves our highest praise.

John Shreeve

CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

What do they do? They come down to earth and spend it with you.

So save them a space, one empty chair.

You may not see them but they are there.

DIARY DATES TO REMEMBER

Mothers' Union

Monthly Meeting on 3rd Monday of month from 2.30pm.

Cowley Parish Church Centre

Women's Group

1st and 3rd Monday of the Month

from 7.30 – 9 pm

11th December – Making a Wreath/Table Decoration

Cowley Parish Church Centre

Women's Institute

Monthly Meeting on 3rd Wednesday of month

from 2 – 4.30 pm

Cowley Parish Church Centre

Student Soup Supper

Upper Room, St Francis

2nd and 4th Thursday every month

6 -8 pm

Churches Together in Cowley

Advent Sunday: 1st December 2013, 6pm at St James Church

Cowley Festival of Christmas Trees

6 – 15 December (See article in The Chronicle for full details)

St James Church

Crib Festival

St Francis Church

Saturday, 7th December 2013, 10 – 2 pm

Jazz and Gospel Concert

St James Church

Saturday, 7th December 2013, from 7 pm

Cowley Local History Society

Tuesday, 19th November 2013 at 8 pm

Talk: the Journey to Chalgrove Field

An Illustrated talk by Mike Payne

United Reform Church, Temple Road

Film Club

Friday, 13th December 2013, commencing at 6.30 pm with coffee and cake

"White Christmas"

St James Church Centre

Family Fun Day

Saturday, 14th December 2013 from 2 – 4 pm

St James Church Centre

Churches Together in Cowley

Carol Singing in Templar Square: Saturday, 21st December 2013, at 2.00 pm

Film Club

Friday, 10th January 2014, commencing at 6.30 pm with coffee and cake

"Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid"

Epiphany Tea Party

Saturday, 11th January 2014, 3 – 5 pm

St Francis Church

Alpha Course

Commences 14th January 2014 at 7 pm in St James Church Centre

Mothers' Union – Puddings and Quiz Evening

17th January 2014

St James Church Committee

Date arranged is Tuesday, 21st January 2014, at 7.35 pm – BUT WILL BE CHANGED

St James Church Centre

St Francis Church Committee

Sunday, 26th January 2014, at 12 noon

St Francis Church

Snowdrop Weekends at St James

Saturday, 8th February 2014: 10.30 – 4 pm

Sunday, 9th February 2014: 2 – 4 pm

Saturday, 15th February 2014: 10.30 – 4 pm

Sunday, 16th February 2014: 2 – 4 pm

Parochial Church Council

Wednesday, 19th February 2014 at 7.45 pm

St Francis Church

Please note Additional Dates throughout the year:

To help raise funds for essential repairs to St. James' Church a home-made cakes and puds stall is planned. These will take place on the 3rd Tuesday of the month to carry over into Wednesday and will be held in the Church Centre.

If you enjoy baking and would like to help by baking a cake 2 or 3 times a year on a rota basis Chris Woodman or Margaret Weller would be pleased to hear from you.

FLOWER OF THE MONTH – HYACINTH

With its very heavy perfume hyacinths are flowers which people either love or cannot tolerate. They are regularly cultivated as house plants to decorate our homes at Christmas, often in special hyacinth jars, which were introduced by the Victorians and much prized in that era.

The bulb is a native of Turkey and was first grown in Europe in the botanical gardens of Padua in Italy. The German physician, Leonhardt Rauwolf, who travelled widely in search of medicinal plants, probably “found” it in 1573. Originally there were only four colours but by 1725 there were two thousand named cultivars including double hyacinths which are much prized today. As a garden plant they became hugely popular filling whole parterres in grand formal planting schemes and, of course, the Dutch, who love bulbs, soon took them to their hearts. Most of the bulbs we buy today are imported from Holland. It is, of course, closely related to our beautiful wild bluebell but since that is a harbinger of spring in Britain I shall not dwell on that cousin as part of our winter “Flower of the Month”.

There are though some very nice Greek legends about hyacinths to entertain us. Apollo, the Greek God, was great friends with a beautiful youth named Hyacinth and they would often play quoits together. Zephyr, the god of the wind, was jealous of the friendship and caused one of the discs, thrown by Hyacinth, to be blown against a rock, ricochet and kill him. The dying boy, cradled by Apollo, was wounded in the head. From the wound sprang this beautiful flower. The heads of the wild hyacinth always

bend towards the ground and on their petals have the markings – ai, ai – the Greek sound for a mournful wail. Apparently in Greece wild orchids and wild gladioli also have similar markings and are, along with hyacinths, used for wreaths for the dead.

Catherine Morland, in Jane Austen’s “Northanger Abbey” informs Mr Henry Tilney that she has “just learnt to love a hyacinth”, although she is “naturally indifferent to flowers”. He says, “But now you love a hyacinth. So much the better. You have gained a new source of enjoyment, and it is well to have as many holds on happiness as possible”. Of course they are not really talking about hyacinths at all. They are in the middle of a story about love, misunderstanding and jealousy but this time it has a happy ending.



FLOWER OF JANUARY - SNOWDROPS

(Words by Rosamond Richardson)

There's a legend that an angel flew down to console Eve as she mourned over the barren earth of Eden after the Fall of Man. Driving snow was falling, forming a funereal pall. The



angel caught a flake of falling snow, breathed on it, and commanded it to take life and flower as soon as it touched the ground. A snowdrop. Eve smiled, realising there was hope, and came to prize it above all others of the flowers in Paradise. The angel flew back up to heaven and where it had stood a ring of snowdrops sprang up.

Be all that as it may, it's believed that snowdrops were introduced into Britain by Italian monks in the late fifteenth century, and are not truly native anywhere in Britain except possibly in Wales.

They weren't recorded as a wild plant until 1583, by the Flemish horticulturalist Charles de L'Ecluse, but although they were cultivated in gardens from then on, snowdrops weren't mentioned in the wild until the 1770s, in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and it's likely that these were escapees.

Snowdrops have now naturalised widely in damp woods and by streams throughout Britain, although not in Ireland.

The 'snow-piercer' remains, from St Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century up to today, the flower of hope.

It's one of the first to push its way through the gloom of winter, flowering from January to March. It appears through the frozen soil like a spear, leaves tightly bound by a small protective spathe. This covers the tip of the flowering stem, enabling the flower to force its way up through snow. A white bell-shaped snowdrop emerges, nodding and drooping under three spreading sepals sheltering white, green-tipped petals and providing an early feast for bees, which pollinate it.

In the language of flowers, snowdrops stand for hope, humility, gratitude and virgin innocence.

They're often to be found in churchyards and around monastic ruins, since 'Candlemas bells' were grown in monasteries and convents for the qualities symbolised by the milk-white, modestly hanging flowers. They are the flower of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, the Feast of Candlemas which calls on 2nd February:

The snowdrop, in purest white array
First rears its head on Candlemas Day.

When the image of the Virgin was removed from the altar, snowdrops, representing purity, were strewn in its place. It's also known as Mary's Tapers because, when Our Lady went to visit Elisabeth, snowdrops blossomed where she trod.

In folklore, it's unlucky to bring the first – or any single – snowdrop into the house, because it will cause a death: country people associated it with a corpse in a shroud, and they blamed all February deaths on it. It was safer to pick a handful – and some people even brought a bunch indoors as protection.

But don't pick snowdrops before St Valentine's Day if you want to be married within the year.

Snowdrops are rarely mentioned in the old herbals apart from a poultice of the crushed bulbs applied externally to frostbite. However, scientists in Eastern Europe have recently extracted a substance called galantamine from snowdrops which appears to stimulate the regeneration of nerve cells, and may be of benefit in neuralgic complaints and degenerative diseases including Alzheimer's.

The snowdrop – snow bells, fair maid of February, February fairmaids – is not only a drop of snow, it's a snowy drop to wear as an earring or pendant, fashionable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The original Greek name means 'milkflower of the snow': gala is milk; anthos flower; and nivalis of the snow.

'LET'S LIGHT UP CHRISTMAS'

Cowley festival of Christmas trees 2013

6-15 December in St James Church

When you read this Chronicle, I hope up to 40 groups will be working on their Christmas tree – that signs will be appearing around Cowley, pointing people in the direction of the church – that Cowslip and the Festival card will soon be delivered to all homes in Cowley - that tickets will be selling well for the Jazz (Oxfordshire Jazz Collective) and Gospel (Oxford Gospel Choir) concert - and that the support rotas are filling up with names to help setting up the church, stewarding, serving refreshments, supplying Cowley cakes, supervising Fun Day activities - please be generous with your time. Come and enjoy the Festival!

Here's the confirmed programme

Wednesday 4 – Friday 6		set up
Friday 6	7:00	reception for all participants

Saturdays 7 and 14	10:00-4:00	church open
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Sundays 8 and 15	2:00-4:00	
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Monday 9 – Friday 13	2:00-4:00	
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*and by arrangement at other times for groups
live music and refreshments
quiz trail from Templars' Square*

Saturday 7	7:00	jazz and gospel concert
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Saturday 14	10:00-2:00	Christmas family fun day
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Sunday 15	4:30	festival carol service
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Most trees will remain in church or the Parish Centre until the New Year

Lesley Williams 01865 779 562 07982 439 828

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RIDE AND STRIDE

Dave Stanley and Jane Coutanche have raised £352 for this year's Ride and Stride and the Parish will get £176. I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their valued efforts. I would also like to thank everyone who sponsored them, without this joint effort we would not be able to participate in the Ride and Stride.

I am sure you are all looking forward to the 2014 Ride & Stride – watch this space!

June Smith

'Let's light up Christmas'

COWLEY FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS TREES 2013

JAZZ & GOSPEL CONCERT



Saturday 7 December : 7:00 pm

St James Church

Beauchamp Lane, Cowley, OX4 3LF

fundraising for



Respite nursing for
Oxfordshire's
Sick
Youngsters



Grief Support for the
Young in Oxfordshire

TICKETS £10

cheques payable to Cowley (Oxford) PCC

Lesley Williams 01865 779 562 07982 439 828
cft@cowleyteamministry.co.uk



NEWS FROM ST FRANCIS

Our specially planned 'All Age' Services have been going well. I was a bit apprehensive about using one on Remembrance Sunday. However it worked out well, which was good, because we had the Archdeacon with us then.

Our recent 'Fun Day' for families was well supported in spite of poor weather, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. Our Caribbean Evening was a smash hit (report on that separately).

Friends of St Francis has been plodding on steadily with a course on Old Testament characters, and we have just started a new group chaired by Dominique, a student at St Stephen's House.

The 'Little Stars' toddler group is still flourishing and keeps Skye very busy.

We are now looking forward to Advent, and our plans for Christmas events and services, which are creeping up on us quite quickly now. We

are hoping that these will draw in people from the parish who



do not normally attend our church. The Crib Festival is especially designed with this in mind.

We have a student from Ripon College, Cuddesdon, on placement with us, and he and his wife have fitted in well with our congregation. The Lady Chaplain from Brookes University also joined in our worship last Sunday.

It is at this time of year that we wish we had a choir to lead our Carol Service. But we shall just have to sing louder to make up for it.

Greetings for the Christmas Season from St Francis to all of our friends in the Parish. And our thanks to Skye for all her hard work.

John Shreeve

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SIGNIFICANT DATES IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

On 5th December 1933 the Prohibition Era (which was recently mentioned in "Downton Abbey") came to an end in America. For fourteen years it had been illegal to sell alcohol which had led to "bootlegging" – the illegal supply of liquor by gangsters.

Thirty-five years later, also on 5th December, in 1958 Britain's first stretch of motorway was opened by Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan. The motorway was, in fact, the Preston bypass.

In medieval times on every 6th December a school boy would be elected by their young friends to be the "Boy Bishop". He would rule from this date until 28th December, conduct mock services and process around the town. If a "Boy Bishop" died during his term of office he was buried with the full honours of a real bishop. This custom was held every year in most towns of England until 1542.

At 3 pm on 13th December 1904 the first electrically powered tube train left Baker Street station in London. Up until then the underground trains had been pulled by steam engines.

On 16th December 1653 Oliver Cromwell became the Lord Protector of England in the absence of a king. Charles I had been executed four years earlier. Amongst the least popular rules Cromwell instituted was the banning of Christmas celebrations.

The death penalty for murder in Britain was abolished on 18th December 1969.

The first successful appendix operation was performed in Iowa, USA, by Dr William West Grant on 4th January 1885.

On 6th January 1929 Mother Teresa arrived in Calcutta and began her legacy work of care amongst the poorest people in India.

The 11th January 1569 saw the first lottery ever held in England. Forty thousand lots at ten shillings (50p) each were available from St Paul's Cathedral in London. History does not tell us what the amount of the jackpot prize was!

In 1976 on 12th January Dame Agatha Christie, the world's most successful detective story writer, died at the age of 85.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald the first ever Labour government was formed on 22nd January 1924.

On 27th January 1926 John Logie Baird gave his first ever public demonstration of his new invention – television. With the aid of a pair of ventriloquists dummies the first flickering images were transmitted.

RECIPE

Here are a couple of Christmassy recipes to impress friends and family. The first one is one to keep the children happy between breaking up from school and waiting for Santa. The second one, I confess, I have never tried but, once I have “put The Chronicle to bed” this month I want to make as a special Christmas gift for my daughter.



Gingerbread biscuits/men

3 ozs + 1 teaspoon butter	12 ozs plain flour
1 tablespoon ground ginger	½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
4 oz soft brown sugar	4 fl oz dark treacle
1 tablespoon milk	

Use the teaspoon of butter to grease 2 medium-sized baking trays (not needed for non-stick)

Sift flour, ginger, soda into mixing bowl, add the sugar

In a small saucepan melt together the treacle and butter over a low heat

Add to dry mixture, then pour in the milk

Mix with a wooden spoon, then knead the dough with your hands till it is smooth.

Roll out on lightly floured board and cut into biscuits or with a gingerbread-man cutter

Bake in oven – gas mark 3, 170 C – for about 25 minutes

The little men, when cool, can be decorated, with a piping bag of soft icing, with faces, buttons etc.

If you want to hang these on the Christmas tree pierce the top of each little shape with a skewer (or similar) before baking. You can then, later, thread thin red ribbon through, make a loop and there you are!

Children love making these but do be careful with the warm treacle.

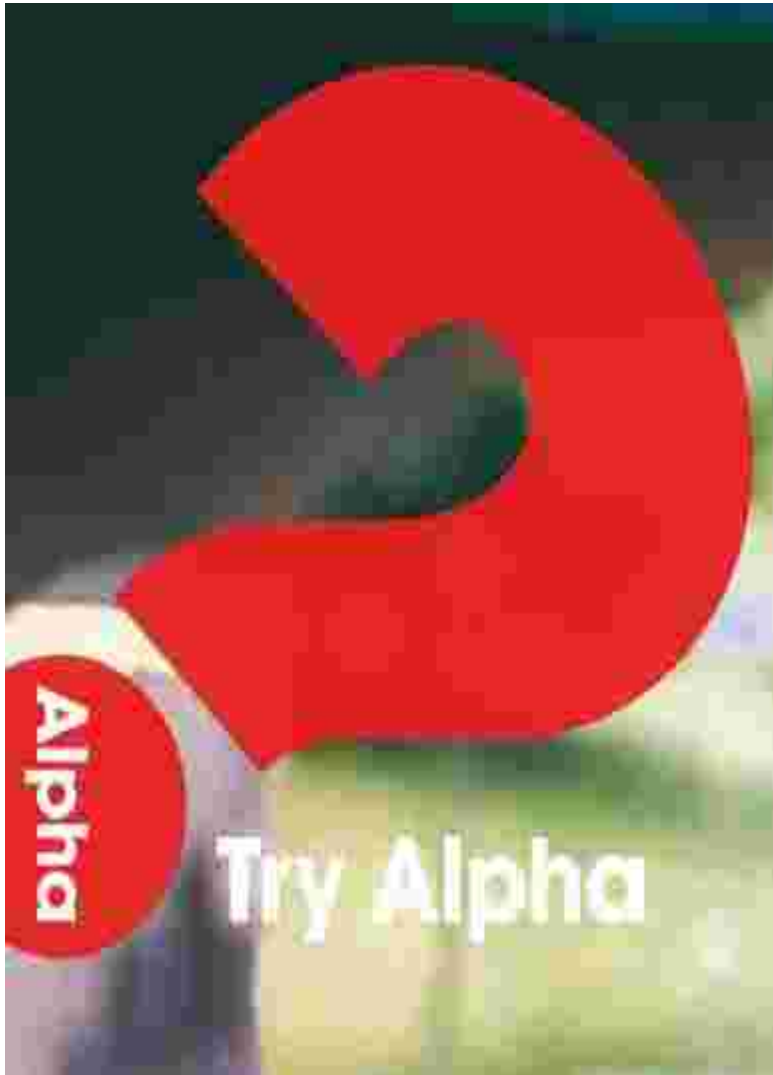
CHRISTMAS DATES

ST JAMES CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE:

Saturday 7th December	10:00 am to 4:00 pm	Festival of Christmas Trees
	10:00 am to 2:00 pm	Family Christmas Fun Day (in St James Church Centre)
Sunday, 15th December	4.30 pm	Festival of Christmas Trees – Carol Service
Sunday, 22nd December	4.00 pm	Carols by Candlelight, followed by mince pies, mulled wine and other refreshments
Christmas Eve (24 December)	4.00 pm	Children’s Christmas Crèche Service
	11.00 pm	Christmas Eve Midnight Service
Christmas Day (25 December)	10:00 am	Christmas Day Celebration

ST FRANCIS CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

Saturday, 7 th December	10.00 – 2.00 pm	Crib Festival
Sunday, 15 th December	10.30 am	All-Age Christingle Service
	6.30 pm	Advent Carols with Guest Choir followed by mulled wine and mincepies
Sunday, 22 nd December	6.30 pm	Carols by Candlelight followed by mincepies and mulled wine
Tuesday, 24 th December	3.30 pm	Crib Service – a chance to dress up as your favourite nativity character
Tuesday, 24 th December	11.00 pm	Midnight Mass
Wednesday, 25 th December		Family Service – 10 am start for Christmas breakfast and 11 am Family Eucharist



I'm sure you have heard of it before:
the Alpha Course.

Lots of people from the Parish of Cowley have
joined the 2.8 million in the UK – and 18 million
world-wide who have tried Alpha.

It's a no pressure, no follow up, no charge
course.

If you have been on Alpha – invite 1 or 2 or 3
people to Try Alpha. The Alpha Course
provides a bit of space to “Explore the Meaning
of Life” over dinner with friends on Tuesday
the 14 January 2014 at 7:00 pm in the St James
Church Centre on Beauchamp Lane.

If you have never been –

“Try Alpha.” It's a series of interactive sessions
that allows you to freely explore the basics of
Christian faith. Is there more to life than this?
Try Alpha!

More information?

Call 01865 747 680, or email

howard@cowleyteamministry.co.uk

CATHEDRAL VISITS

The Dean and Chapter of Christ Church warmly invite parishes in the diocese to visit the Cathedral, to share in its worship and discover its history.

The programme for the day is as follows:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 3 pm | Arrive at Christ Church for a guided tour of the Cathedral |
| 4 pm | Visit to the Treasury and Cathedral Shop |
| 4.30pm | Afternoon tea in the Great Hall |
| 5pm | Visit to Upper Library or Picture Gallery |
| 6pm | Choral Evensong |
| 7pm | End of visit |

The programme runs during term-times throughout the year:

19 Jan – 15 March 2014 / 27 April – 21 June / 12 Oct – 6 Dec

There will be a charge for the tea but not for the guided tours.

Forms to complete to book your visit will be available in both churches shortly.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Extracts from The Cowley Chronicle, September 1968.

TUNNEL TEST FOR CENTRE PROBLEM

Christmas shopping was as cold as ever in the Cowley Centre. Last year the experimental draught barriers under Hockmore Tower provided at least something to shelter behind. But the experiment was not successful. And so far there is no alternative. Cowley Traders' Association are aware of the problem and have been pressing the Oxford City Council to find some solution for the past three months. Writing on October 3, the chairman, Mr Stone, manager of Webbers, urged that priority be given to this problem. He also pointed out that Cowley Centre traders were aware of the high costs involved, and that this might cause an increase in the rents. But such an increase is acceptable to them, because the comfort of the shoppers is obviously of benefit to the Centre in the long run.

A possible answer to the problem might be to roof over Pound Way, but since this might increase the draught in other parts of the Centre, the City Architect has suggested that the next step should be to build a scale model of the centre for experiment in the wind tunnel of the Building Research Station. In this way it might be possible to work out where the draught comes from, and what permanent steps might be taken to counter it. A recommendation that money be provided for this experiment has gone to the City Treasurer. The cost of making and testing such a model would be £400, but no decision has yet been taken.

Meanwhile workmen spent some days before Christmas fencing in the area at the end of Knowles Road, bordering on Between Towns Road, to prevent it being used as a car park.

YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDER THEIR OWN PROBLEMS

The past few months have been busy for the young people of Cowley. There was first a weekend conference entitled "Love in or Loving" at the Cowley Community Centre and attended by 40 young people from the churches of Cowley and from the Cowley Youth Association. The conference was to discuss and examine personal relationships and some of the problems young people face as they grow up today.

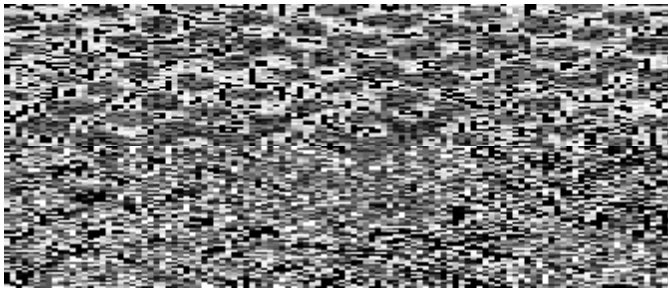
Then there was the first effort of the newly-formed Youth Council of the Cowley Council of Churches. On Sunday, December 3, they assembled at St James Church for a service prepared and conducted by the young people themselves. Each church group had prepared a part of the service. The Methodists chose the readings, the Caravan Club provided music from their folk group and so on. The guest preacher was Fr. Joe Williamson and the collection was given to him for his work. Afterwards the young people gathered in St James Hut for a social.

On December 16 the Caravan Club and Cowley Youth Association combined to give a party for children living on the Slade Camp. The money for this was raised by a jumble sale. And behind the scenes young people in Cowley are giving their talents in a variety of different ways.

Members of the Cowley Youth Association have been helping redecorate the home of an old age pensioner in Cutteslowe, and the new hostel for discharged prisoners. Members of the Caravan Club have been visiting older members of the parish, and entertaining children at the Ormerod School and the Wingfield Hospital. The skills and

talents of young people are needed. One gramophone enthusiast has been of considerable help to the George Street Pensioners' Club. Others have helped with half an hour's gardening.

Requests for help still come in. If you can spare a little time please contact Colin Greenop, Fr David Barton or Joyce Kent.



After the service organised by the Youth Council of the Cowley Council of Churches Sandra Alder and Mick Hope talk to Fr. Joe Williamson who had preached on his work in Stepney.



The students of Bishops' College, Cheshunt, at their meeting with the staff on Saturday, November 25. With them are the chaplain of the college, Fr. MacRory (centre of top row) and Canon W R E Browning, Diocesan Director of Ordination. Candidates, who arranged the visit to Cowley (bottom centre).

[NB Older parishioners will also recognise the Rev Tony Williamson, who was a Working Priest in Cowley – the son of Fr. Joe Williamson]

MY CHRISTMAS SURVEY

By Lucy Wainwright (Aged 12)

My Mum and Dad said 'Lucy
Its homework time for you
So here's my special
Survey of Christmas '92.

I went down to the High Street
To see who I could find
To answer Christmas questions
I hoped they wouldn't mind.

The friendly looking grandma
Had lovely sparkling eyes
She said she liked Christmas cake
And hot Tesco mince pies.

The lady with the pushchair
And shopping bags in tow
Said she's like actor Richard Gere
Beneath her Mistletoe.

The workman with the scruffy coat
Had not a lot to say.
Christmas was a time off work.
And that was without pay.

The schoolboy with two pointed ears
And a very dirty face
Said 'Scotty Beam me up!'
And vanished without trace.

And finally a postman
Came walking up to me
He said he liked the presents
Around the Christmas tree

This is the punchline:

I came home from my survey
It seems quite sad to say
That no one mentioned our Lord Jesus
Born on Christmas Day.

Children's Church

Children are wonderful gifts from God; Children's Church (formerly Junior Church) is a wonderful part of the church's life. Why? Because God is there and because children are there.

Children's Church is where we love to remember Jesus' words: 'Let the little children come to me'. Jesus welcomed the children of his day and our hope as a church is to welcome the children of the church and the Parish of Cowley.

How does this happen? Jesus is alive today and his words are alive today, full of hope and purpose. What the leaders at Children's Church do is help the children to encounter Jesus in all his goodness. We have high quality, fun and easy-to-use resources from a group called 'Urban Saints' – there are games to play and craft activities – colouring in and cutting out. The goal of all the activities is to help the children to enjoy being in church, read the bible and understand what Jesus is saying to them personally. Thanks to those who kindly bought the books we use, we have some really accessible ways of explaining the message of Christ, a simple way in to Christian faith.

Very excitingly, we have a wonderful group of leaders – Jill Ling, Will and Caroline Hartley, John

Blessing and Claire (Hordern). We're all really pleased to have the responsibility of looking after the children – whether there are many or few.

So here are two things to ask you:

Will you pray for the children of the church and the Parish of Cowley: that they will meet Jesus at home, at school and with us at church? Will you pray for more children to come with their families?

Will you help? We need to have at least 2 adults to look after the children and we are always looking for people to volunteer, if you didn't want to lead we also need people who could come out of the service for 30 minutes just to sit with the children as they do activities and learn about Jesus – no need to prepare anything in advance. If you could help like this just once a month, it would be a great blessing. If you would like to serve the children in this way, please let me know; either chat at church or use the email below!

Thanks so much for reading. Our church's prayer is that the little children will come to Jesus.

Josh Hordern
joshuahordern@hotmail.co.uk

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

We can't thank everyone individually as there are so many, from leaflet drop to cake making, many donated gifts together with all those who worked so hard on the day so may we just say a resounding, Big Big Thank you to everyone for making this year's Christmas Gift and Craft Fair such a success.

We do have a very few crafty things to sell and we are still taking orders for wreaths but at the last count we had made a profit of £1,250.

Thank You and Merry Christmas

Christine Woodman & Margaret Weller

News from the Bell Tower

On the 2nd November, four of us from Cowley – Margie, Jennie, Charlotte and myself – joined a group of about 20 other Oxford ringers for a trip to Worcester. Jonathan Cresshull of St Aldates kindly arranged it, and our group included ringers from St Aldates, St Giles, Headington, and as far afield as Essex.

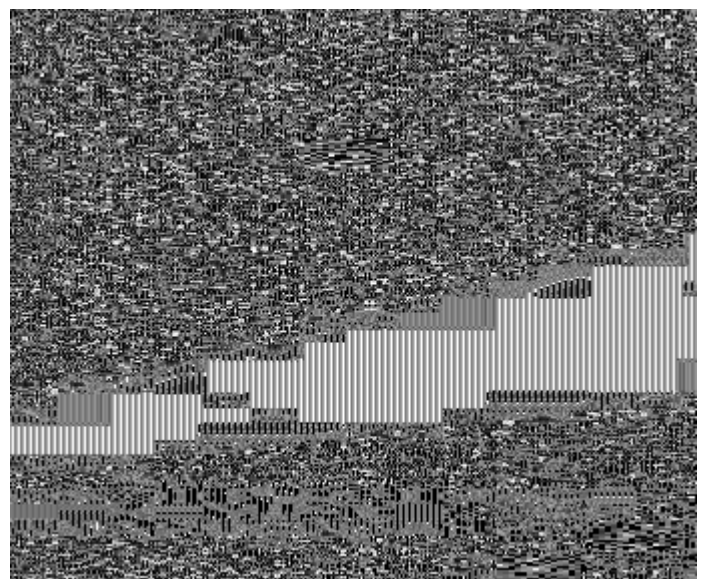
Our first visit, and the highlight of the day for many of us, was the morning visit to Worcester Cathedral. This was a wonderful experience, combining history and high tech, as Worcester Cathedral houses a teaching centre utilising computer technology that really aids all ringers. There are eight teaching bells which can be rung together, or individually hooked up to a computer simulation, meaning you can ring individually, wearing headphones and practice just about whatever method you want. Unlike usual ringing you have to concentrate on placing your bell by sound alone, and it made me realise just how much I relied on watching the bell in front of me rather than using my ears. Given that bell ringing is meant to be musical, this was a good lesson for me to learn. After this we had a tower tour to see the 15 bells that are rung for services, and which are the 5th heaviest in the world, then up on the roof to see the marvellous views over the river Severn and the Malvern Hills.

Having climbed over 200 steps, we were ready for lunch, and this was followed by two more towers. First was All Saints, a heavy ring of 12 bells, which still have four of the original bells cast in 1692. For many of us it was our first experience of ringing in a group of 12, and great precision is needed. It was only after I sat down between practices that I realised the tower was swaying. I was told that this was fairly common and that

many other towers sway a lot more, so shall look forward to finding some of those on future ringing excursions. Particularly of note in All Saints was the wall plaque celebrating the longest peal on 12 bells ever rung. This was of a method called Bristol Surprise Maximus, and involved 20,064 changes, and took 13 hours and 58 minutes in October 1987. The stamina and concentration of those 12 ringers is impossible to comprehend.

Our final visit of the day was to Old St Martins, which had 10 new bells installed in 2011. These were a complete contrast to our previous visit as they are very light, and took some adjustment for those of us who aren't so experienced, but we all managed to have a good practice on them, and the more experienced ringers with us had a chance to practice some advanced methods. After this, very tired but with a great sense of satisfaction we made our way home, hoping that some of the things we had learned could be put to good use in our own towers.

Lindsay Powell



LETTER FROM THAILAND

Aaron Blessing is volunteering within an organization called DEPDC or The Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities Centre in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The goal of the organization is to stop human trafficking. Many boys and young girls are taken and forced to work in the sex trade on threat of death. Before Aaron can be of much help he needs to learn about the culture, language and traditions of Thailand.

Hi All,

So I am starting my fourth week here at Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities Centre in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. I am finally getting into the groove of working in a Thai organization. I still can't get my head around the Thai understanding of "time" and "appointments".

There's almost no point in setting one up, as it seems that people just show up whenever they feel like.

Working with the kids is by far the most rewarding. They actually have a really difficult time pronouncing my name, usually something along the lines of "Allom" so I asked them to come up with a nickname for me. In the end the class agreed on "P. Gayang" (pronounced: gang). The P or Pii is a sign of respect for an elder and literally translates as "older brother," the Gayang loosely translates as "best" or "good." I forgot how difficult it is to respond to a name that you're not used to; but then again, Allom wouldn't always get my attention either.

In my last letter I spoke about how I was starting Muay Thai. I've only been to a couple of lessons and apart from being incredibly sore from the workouts, the "Kru" or instructor is even talking about me getting in the ring for a proper Muay Thai match, already. I think it's mostly because of my size. I know it's a bit stereotypical but I am about a foot taller than most people here. It's just a good thing I have

considerable experience in martial arts to begin with. I really enjoy the experience, it's the best place for me to practice the Thai Language and really get to understand the Thai culture.

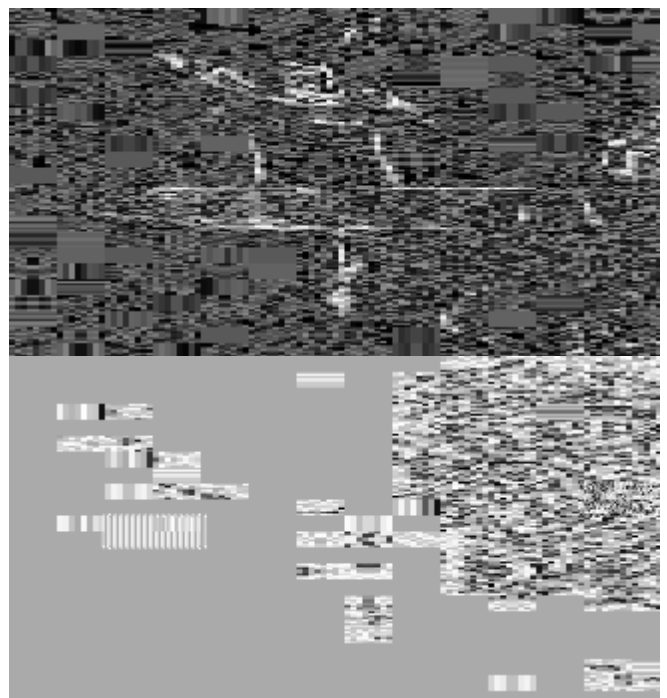
After being here for almost a month, I am finally able to speak some Thai. I am really lucky that there is a native English speaker working here at DEPDC, who is also fluent in Thai. She is teaching the rest of us volunteers how to speak the language and shortly, how to read it. My language skills, at the moment, are very limited to specific situations, such as ordering food or drinks, (phom ow roy that gratee-an sorng jaan khrap) is how to order one of my favorite dishes, garlic chicken, from the aptly named "garlic-chicken man".

It's amazing how fast the first month has gone by. It feels like I have only just arrived.

Until next time,

P Gayang (known to my English friends as Aaron Blessing)

November 2013



At St Francis Church, Hollow Way

We are hosting our next Community Event
On Saturday 7th of December 10-2pm



Crib Festival

The Crib Festival returns to St. Francis church after its successful debut last year. Come and see the array of Nativity scenes collected together from local schools, groups and the members of our congregation.

There will also be crafts, games, the chance to build your own crib to add to our collection, a story-telling corner, and coffee, mulled wine and mince pies to enjoy while you wander round enjoying the displays.

COME AND JOIN THE FUN!

THE STRANGER

A few years after I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around from then on.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in my family. In my young mind, he had a special niche. My parents were complementary instructors: Mom taught me good from evil, and Dad taught me to obey. But the stranger ... he was our story teller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries and comedies. If I wanted to know anything about politics, history or science, he always knew the answers about the past, understood the present and even seemed able to predict the future! He took my family to the first major league ball game. He made me laugh, and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn't seem to mind.

Sometimes, Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were shushing each other to listen to what he had to say, and she would go to the kitchen for peace and quiet. (I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave).

Dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honour them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our home – not from us, our friends or any visitors. Our long time visitor, however, got away with four-letter words that burned my ears and made my dad squirm and my mother blush.

My Dad didn't permit the liberal use of alcohol but the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished. He talked

freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I now know that my early concepts about relationships were influenced strongly by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked. And NEVER asked to leave.

More than fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in with our family. He has blended right in and is not nearly as fascinating as he was at first. Still, if you could walk into my parents' den today, you would still find him sitting over in his corner, waiting for someone to listen to his talk and watch him draw his pictures.

His name? We just call him 'TV'.

(Note: This should be required reading for every household!)

He has a wife now ... we call her 'Computer'.

Their first child is 'Cell Phone'.

Second child 'I Pod'

And JUST BORN THIS YEAR was a Grandchild: IPAD OH MY ... HOW TRUE THIS IS !!!

In my family the stranger had to be quiet at mealtimes! How about yours?



Snowdrop Weekends 2014

We know we have not yet celebrated Christmas but that is the time when New Year Calendars/Diaries are given and received. So you may like to make a note of the snowdrop weekends at St James Church:

- Saturday, 8th February 2014: 10.30 – 4.00 pm
- Sunday, 9th February 2014: 2.00 – 4.00 pm
- Saturday, 15th February 2014: 10.30 am – 4.00 pm
- Sunday, 16th February 2014: 2.00 – 4.00 pm

Notices will be posted in the church asking for volunteers to welcome people at the church and make cakes so you will be reminded again, but there is nothing like making that first entry in a new calendar/diary, is there!!

Margaret Martin

COWLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Tuesday, 10 December 2013
commencing at 8.00 pm

TALK:
Every Day Life in
Anglo Saxon England

An Illustrated talk by Martin Way

At United Reformed Church, Temple Road, Cowley
Annual Membership fee £18 (OAP £16)
Visitors welcome £3 per meeting



COWLEY WOMEN'S GROUP

There are still spaces to sign up to make either a wreath or a table decoration. Please let me, Margaret or Chris know if you would like to join us on the 11th December 2013, at 7.30 pm in the St James Church Centre.

Happy Christmas and look out for future events. We would like to thank everyone for their support.

Vicky Hall

KFA Moves KFA Moves KFA Moves KFA Moves

Dance Based Keep Fit Class with Barbara

St Francis of Assisi Church
Hollow Way, Cowley, Oxford OX3 7JP
Wednesdays 10.30 – 11.45 am

Improve your energy levels, muscle tone and flexibility
Come and enjoy the friendly, fun atmosphere

This class most suited to active 50+
Please bring a mat/towel **First class ½ price**

Dance Based Fitness Class, Lean Machine, Cowley – Tuesdays 7.30-8.45pm

For further details of both classes phone Barbara
07752626642
KFA Fitness through movement, dance and exercise
www.keepfit.org.uk

DECEMBER SAINT OF THE MONTH—St Birinus

If you visit the lovely old Abbey Church at Dorchester (near Oxford) you will find the tomb of St Birinus, recently restored. He was the first Bishop of Dorchester, many years ago. He is important to us because he brought Christianity to our part of the country at a time when most people were pagans.

He was sent by Pope Honorius I to continue the evangelisation of Britain. He was consecrated for this task at Genoa by the archbishop of Milan.

His original plan was to penetrate into the Midlands where no preacher had been, but he found the West Saxons so pagan that he decided to stay among them – this was in 635AD. He was helped by the desire of King Cynegils to be instructed into the faith, and by the plan of Oswald King of Northumbria to marry Cynegils' daughter. So it was that Birinus baptised Cynegils and his family – a great break-through for him in his missionary work, and received Dorchester as his see.

Dorchester at that time was a Romano British town conveniently situated on road and river in an area of dense Anglo Saxon settlement. Birinus built churches here and elsewhere in the area. Many people were baptised by Birinus, and his work lasted fifteen years in all. Towards the end of his life he dedicated a church at Winchester, a town of growing importance. After he died his remains were moved to Winchester but were finally restored to their rightful place in Dorchester after a plea by the Austin Canons of Dorchester, and by the early 14th century a shrine of fine workmanship was produced.

The village of Berinsfield near Dorchester was based on his name. Although his feast was not so widespread as he deserved, he was honoured as a fine Christian saint and remains so to this day. His saint day is December 3rd. He died in 650 AD.



because you're amazing

Would you love to lose weight, be supported by a warm welcoming group and be part of something amazing?
Come and join us and make your weight loss dreams come true!

Cowley Slimming World
St James Church Centre
Beauchamp Lane

Monday nights 5pm and 7pm Sessions

Call Rachel on 749852 or 07764844994

JANUARY SAINT OF THE MONTH—St Thomas Aquinas

Although this great Christian lived nearly eight centuries ago his writings on the faith and his logical reasoning are still to this day important statements of Christian doctrine.

He was educated between the ages of five and thirteen at the monastery in Monte Cassino, Italy, and then at the university of Naples. He was born into a knightly family from the Aquino region. When as a student he found himself attracted to the religious life of the Dominican friars his family were outraged. They were rich and influential and the Dominicans lived lives of simplicity and poverty. So affronted by Thomas' ambition were they that they actually imprisoned him in their home at Rocca Secca for over a year. Undaunted, though, Thomas bided his time and finally convinced them that he did not plan to wander the countryside preaching and begging for his bread but studying and writing for the rest of his life. He joined the Dominican Order in 1244 aged nineteen.

The first master of the Order said that though he was "a dumb ox" his teaching would soon be heard all over the world. By the word "dumb" he did not mean simple-minded, as it would be used today, but a man of very few words. One of Thomas' contemporaries described him as "tall, erect, large and well-built with a complexion like ripe wheat whose head early grew bald". He was a man of deep contemplative prayer with an intense power of concentration. It was said that when dictating his works to monastic clerks he could keep four themes going at once. He also hand-wrote much of his teaching some of which survives though it is difficult to decipher as his handwriting was poor and he used copious abbreviations to minimise the use of expensive parchment.

His first teaching appointment was in Paris where amongst his other works he wrote treatises on Isaiah and the Gospel of St Matthew. He was made a Master of Theology at the age of thirty-one. At this time Islamic writings were arguing against Christianity and extolling the reasoning of Aristotle.. There was also a huge onslaught from heretics, pagans and the Jews. Thomas' aim was to answer them from the work of Aristotle himself. This plan was put on hold for ten years as he was called to preach and teach in several towns in Italy and finally in Rome. He then began on his huge volumes of reasoned argument and explanation of his views on Christianity, the Summa Theologica. Although some of its ideas were criticised a couple of centuries later in more recent times it has been lauded as one of the most important summaries of the faith. Its intrinsic excellence is in its insistence on Aristotle's and Plato's philosophy, its learning and clear reasoning. Sadly Thomas never quite completed it. He returned to Paris for three years and then back to Naples. In December 1272 he experienced a revelation of God and declared that he would write no more because his work compared with what had been revealed to him was "like straw". About two months after this he was on his way to the Council of Lyons when he was taken very ill probably of a stroke as a result of his relentless hard work. He died aged only forty-nine.

Apart from his highly academic studies and teaching he found time to write commentaries on The Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the simple services so much appreciated by ordinary worshippers. Not all the details of his studies but certainly large tracts of them are still valued by present-day theologians. His saint day is commemorated on 28th January.

LETTER FROM BOSTON (Part 2)

The first part of this letter was in the November Chronicle – now for Part 2:

Luckily, many people depending on Food Stamps have a place to live. But a considerable number are without homes. It is these people without homes who are at the core of our community at St Paul's Cathedral.

We serve food to around 200 people without homes every week. Many of the members of the community spend a lot of time sitting on the steps of the cathedral, or in the church when it gets cold outside. It is comforting to know that for those who don't have a room or sheltered place to be, there will at least be the warm cathedral in the biting cold winter that is characteristic for this part of the world. You may wonder: 'But is a church a place where people should just be to stay warm, to find shelter? Why can they not go anywhere else?' Let me respond to that question with a story from one of our members of our community.

The other day this middle-aged man came to lunch with a huge bruise and a swelling on his forehead. 'What happened?' we asked. It turns out that he had been beaten up by security guards of a building in the early hours of the morning because he was sleeping in the doorway of an office building. They beat him up while he was asleep, punched him in the head, took his bag, which contained all his belongings he owns, and emptied it onto the street. He is the most peaceful person one could imagine - an Indian man, living after the principles of non-violence of Mohandas Gandhi. He hadn't done anything other than seeking shelter in the doorway of that building for a night's sleep. And his story is not an exception. We hear and see the results of similar incidents every single week when we serve and cook food and celebrate Eucharist together in our community.

St Paul's Cathedral lives what is called here a 'Radical Welcome' and a 'Radical Invitation', as its Dean, the Revd. Jep Streit outlines on the

Cathedral's website. The Revd. Stephanie Spellers, who used to work at St Pauls Cathedral in Boston until recently wrote a wonderful book about this approach, entitled 'Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other and the Spirit of Transformation'. The more I learn about it, the more intrigued I am by it and I wish our Church of England would increasingly take note of this approach too.

But the tradition of living and working in an inclusive and welcoming way goes a long time back at St Paul's Cathedral, which was established as a Church in 1818 by a group of wealthy and influential Boston patriots. During those times, families would pay for their own pews, which had little doors and their names on it, and which were reserved for their families only. It was around a hundred years later, in 1908, when the church officially became a cathedral, that the Bishop at the time, Bishop Lawrence, arranged for all the doors to the pews to be removed to symbolize that the new cathedral was indeed "a house of prayer for all people", welcoming anyone equally, without reserved privileges for anyone .

It is in this spirit that the work at St Paul's continues today, very much like the work you do and did over the past few weeks at St James and at St Francis: I have heard that you have been collecting a lot of food at the Harvest Thanksgiving Service a few weeks ago, for the Foodbank at St Francis , which will do a lot of good. Therefore, from Boston to Cowley – keep up the good work, especially with the winter months approaching! And in the mean time, stay warm and dry! And please keep your fingers crossed for the Red Sox!

Anne Katherine Geneits

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN COWLEY

Carol Singing in Templars Square: Saturday 21
December 2.00 pm

With the Salvation Army Band: all voices needed!

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

December

VILLAGE CHRISTMASES by Mollie Harris

If you like a touch of nostalgia with your Christmas Celebrations, this is just the book for you. Mollie is a well-known broadcaster in the Oxford region – with the Archers on BBC Radio for many years. She also wrote a brilliant autobiography about her childhood in Ducklington (near Witney) entitled ‘A Kind of Magic’. She covers all aspects of the Christmas Season covering many villages and going back many years. This is easy reading, with plenty of illustrations to enliven the text, and of course Mollie’s family feature in some of them. She also has a great sense of humour which comes to the fore in a special version of ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’:

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Beecham’s Pills are just the thing.
One for men, two for women,
Half for children under seven.
If you want to go to heaven,
You must take about six or seven.
Hark the Herald Angels Sing –
Beecham’s pills are just the thing!”

Hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

John Shreeve

January

THE MASTER (A Life of Jesus) by John Pollock

I am always a bit dubious about biographies of our Lord. Will they stick to the Gospel facts or will they get too fanciful? This one not only sticks to the bible stories, but does so with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. It is very easy to read and the background material given to fill the gaps is accurate and intelligent. In the words of the reviewer “John Pollock’s absorbing narrative brings the New Testament story freshly alive. Seen as through the eyes of the disciple John, the life and work of Jesus are brought into clear and compelling focus. The interested bystander will be caught up in excitement, and the Christian who is already familiar with the bible will marvel anew at the miracle of the incarnation.” And the famous evangelist Billy Graham says: “This vivid retelling of the life of Jesus may well become a modern classic. I highly recommend it”. And so do I.

John Shreeve

**Atheism is a non-prophet
organization.**

CHRONICLE

Editorial Team- Rosanne Butler, Sally Hemsworth, May Morgan, Nicki Stevens

Deadline for the February edition:

Wednesday 22 January 2014

If possible, please send entries by email to Sally at chronicle@cowleyteamministry.co.uk

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RECIPE

Stollen (traditional treat for Christmas from Germany)

4 ozs butter + 1 teaspoon butter	½ oz fresh yeast
6 ozs plus ½ teaspoon sugar	1 tablespoon lukewarm water
6 fl. ozs scalded milk	1 lb plain flour
1 teaspoon salt	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground mace	¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
2 eggs, lightly beaten	6 ozs chopped candied peel
3 ozs sultanas	2 ½ ozs chopped walnuts



For the icing

1 oz melted butter	8 ozs icing sugar
2 tablespoons water	½ teaspoon vanilla essence

For decoration, if liked – 8 halved walnuts or glace cherries

With teaspoon butter, grease large baking sheet.

Crumble yeast into small bowl and mash in ½ teaspoon sugar. Add water and mix to a smooth cream. Set this aside in a warm place for about 20 minutes.

Scald the milk, add the butter and stir till melted. Leave to cool to lukewarm.

Sift flour, sugar, salt, and spices into big mixing bowl.

Pour in the yeast, eggs and milk and butter mixture.

Using either hands or a spatula draw the whole mixture together until a dough is formed which comes away from the side of the bowl.

Turn the dough on to a floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes. Use more flour if the mixture becomes sticky. The dough should be smooth and elastic.

Wash and dry the mixing bowl thoroughly.

Shape the dough into a ball, return it to the clean bowl, dust with a sprinkle of flour and cover with a clean, damp cloth.

Leave the bowl in a warm, draught-free place for about 1 ½ hours till it has doubled in size.

Turn the dough on to a floured surface and knead for about 4 minutes. As you do this knead in the dried fruit and nuts. Shape the dough into an oval, put on the baking sheet, cover with a damp cloth and leave in a warm place for about 45 minutes.

Preheat oven to gas mark 6, 200C and bake for 15 minutes.

Reduce temperature a little and bake for a further 30 minutes.

You will know when the stollen is cooked if you tap it on its bottom (I know!!) and it sounds hollow like a drum. If not turn it upside down, pop it back on the baking tray and give it another 5 minutes or so in the oven.

Cool on a wire rack.

Mix up the ingredients for icing and spread over the stollen. Don't be too fussy with this, just drizzle it over the top. Decorate with walnuts and/or glace cherries.

Eat it up in thick slices whilst nice and fresh.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC met on the 19th November 2013, when the following items were discussed:

Finance: The Parish Share takes 85% of our income, and therefore all other costs have to be met from the remaining 15%. This is causing problems and following a great deal of discussion the PCC has decided that there will need to be a Stewardship Campaign in the New Year. This will be discussed further by the Church Committees in January.

The good news is that some legacies have been received which are very much appreciated.

The PCC had agreed a Legacy Policy and a leaflet has now been drawn up and will be available in the churches at the beginning of 2014.

The Terms of Hire for the three church premises are going to be reviewed.

There was discussion on the work required at both St James and St Francis Churches which includes:

Work on the Bell Tower at St James: A Faculty has been applied for so it is hoped the work will be

done early in 2014.

Refurbishment of the Vestry at St James: A small committee is meeting to prepare plans

Repairs to Guttering and Repainting of outside of St Francis: The guttering has been repaired and it is hoped that it will be possible to repaint the outside during 2014.

Approval was given to the Anglican Asian Living Church conducting regular Sunday services in St James Church, with fellowship in St James Church Centre, commencing on Sunday, 5th January 2014, for a three months trial period. A Liaison Committee has been set up which will meet regularly.

An up-date was given on the work undertaken at the old school in Beauchamp Lane, with the involvement of a group of students from Oxford University in drawing up plans for its future use.

Church Activities over the Christmas period were discussed, and full details have been included in The Cowley Chronicle.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----|---|
| 12. | Oh little town of Bethlehem | 1. | Hark, the herald angels sing |
| 14. | Good King Wenceslas | 2. | While shepherds watched |
| 15. | Angels from the realms of glory | 3. | The holly and the ivy |
| 16. | I saw 3 ships | 4. | Here we come a Wassailing |
| 17. | In the bleak midwinter | 5. | The first Noel |
| 18. | Little donkey | 6. | Unto us a child is born |
| 19. | It came upon the midnight clear | 7. | Little Jesus sweetly sleep |
| 20. | God rest you merry, gentlemen | 8. | Wassail, wassail all over the town |
| | | 9. | The Coventry Carol – Lullay, lullay, lullay thou little
tiny child |
| | | 10. | Oh come all ye faithful |
| | | 11. | We 3 kings of Orient are |

Quiz Answers

SUNDAY SERVICES

ST JAMES CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00am	Holy Communion
10.00am	Sung Eucharist
Every 2nd & 4th Sunday	Church at the Centre
Every third Sunday	Sunday Lunch

ST FRANCIS CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30am	Parish Eucharist
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MID-WEEK SERVICES & MEETINGS

Monday	8.30am	Morning Prayer—St James
	10.00-11.30am	Little Stars Playgroup— St Francis
	2.30pm	Parish Mothers' Union— St James (3rd Monday)
Tuesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer—St Francis
	10.00am	Seashells Toddler Group— St James
	12.00pm	Eucharist—St James
	12.30pm	Tuesday Lunch Club— St James
Wednesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer—St James
	7.30pm (alt wks)	Women's Group—St James
Thursday	8.30am	Morning Prayer—St Francis
	7.00pm	Cowley Parish Healing Service St Francis (1st Thursday)
Friday	2.00pm	Bingo—St James
Saturday	10.00am-12pm	Coffee Morning, St Francis (2nd Saturday)

HOME GROUPS

Leader	Time/Venue
Skye Denno	1st Monday of month, 7.30pm at Skye's home
Connie Uren	Alternate Tuesday afternoons at 2.30pm St James Church Centre, Ranklin Room
Friends of St Francis (John Shreeve/ Skye Denno)	2nd & 4th Tuesday afternoons at 2.30pm St Francis Church
Mark Oxbrow	Alternate Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm Mark's home
Rosanne Butler	Alternate Thursday mornings at 10.00am St James Church Centre, Ranklin Room
Helen Beetham	Alternate Friday mornings at 10am

The Parish Office in St James Church
Centre is open:

Tuesday, 2—5pm
Wednesday, 10—1pm
Friday, 9—2pm

The Parish Office is currently staffed by
volunteers and members of the ministry
team, and is open most office hours.

Contact details: Tel: 01865 747680
Email: office@cowleyteamministry.co.uk
Out of hours tel: 07501 908378
Website: www.cowleyteamministry.co.uk

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Revd Howard Thornton
Howard has Friday as his day off

Team Vicar:

Revd Skye Denno
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Email: skye@cowleyteamministry.co.uk
Skye has Wednesday as her day off.

Associate Priest

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Revd Gordon Hickson
Tel: 07713 688079

Revd Tony Beetham
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Norah Shallow Tel: 765199

Deputy Wardens
Margaret Martin Tel: 718532
John Shreeve Tel: 717987

St James Church Centre Manager:

Chris Woodman Tel: 778078

Hall Bookings:

Church Centre: Pat Sansom Tel: 778516
St Francis Church/St James Church:
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