

St James Church
Beauchamp Lane (OX4 3LF)



Cowley Carol Service
4 pm
Sunday
16th Dec



Come and join the celebrations

www.cowleyteamministry.co.uk 01865 747 680

Cowley day of Christmas music



Wednesday
12 December

St James Church Centre
Beauchamp Lane, Cowley, OX4 3LF

10.30 – 11.30 Church Cowley St James & St Francis School choirs
2.00 – 3.30 Pegasus School handbells
The Gals - Oxford Bach choir
7.30 – 9.00 Oxford Spires Academy choir
Rising Voices community choir

seasonal refreshments

Charity support for children and young people in Oxfordshire
donations for
Lesley Williams 07982 439 828 ctf@cowleyteamministry.co.uk

Nativity Festival
an exhibition of Nativity sets with Messy Advent craft activities and refreshments




St Francis Church, Hollow Way, OX3 7JF

just sing!
pop up choir
Saturday 15 December
11.00-11.45
with Cat Kelly and 'Rising Voices'
come to sing or just listen


donations for





Charity support for children and young people in Oxfordshire

Lesley Williams 07982 439 828 ctf@cowleyteamministry.co.uk

St Francis Church
St Francis, Hollow Way (OX3 7JF)



Cowley Carol Service
6 pm
Sunday
16th Dec



Come and join the celebrations

www.cowleyteamministry.co.uk 01865 747 680

Chronicle

December 2018 / January 2019

From the Editors

Sally Hemsworth and Nicki Stevens

Life is very busy in the Parish with the preparations for Christmas – details of services are given on cards and these are awaiting delivery to roads and schools in the Parish. They are also given in the Chronicle.

Things are quieter in January, but you will see lists are up for the holiday in Torquay. Please sign the list or speak to Pat Chambers if you are interested. To allow the holiday to take place Pat needs to know if there is any interest.

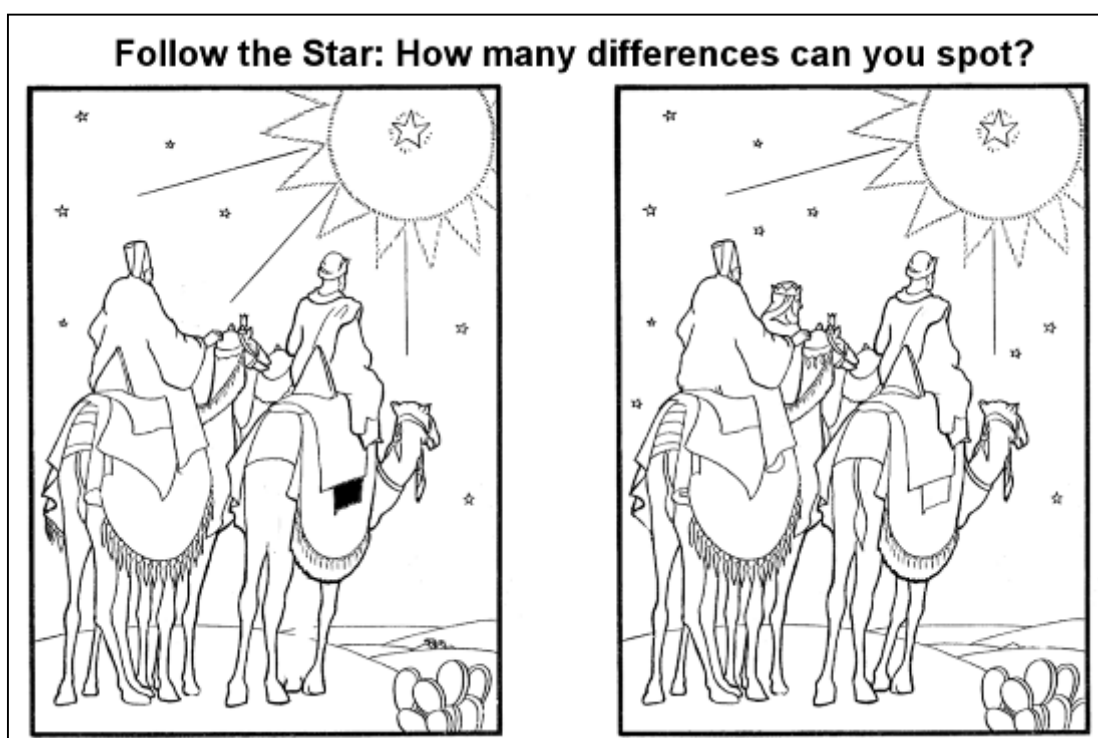
The Parish Walks continue – but another interesting idea has come forward. Liz Woolley does various walks within Oxford City, explaining the history of the areas visited, at a cost of £6 per walk. Lists will go up for these after Christmas so if you are interested please sign to express an interest.

The Craft Fair raised about £1,250, which included holding a Tombola in Templar Square, and sales of cake and marmalade after the actual day. This money is going into the “Flush” Fund for the toilet at St James Church, so many congratulations to Chris and Margaret for arranging it and to all who participated in one way or another.

Many people contribute articles to The Chronicle and we look forward to this continuing in 2019. However, we are always looking for more contributors – so please help!

We hope you have an enjoyable Christmas and our best wishes for the New Year. Please enjoy this month’s Chronicle,

Nicki and Sally



A word from the Rectory



.....is the call across the country this year. At the centre of the Christmas story is the call to follow the star that leads us. The shepherds followed the message of the angels to look out for the sign of a baby wrapped in cloth in a manger. The wise men saw a star in the sky and followed to the same spot.

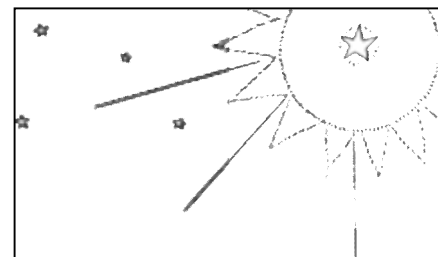
Humanity has an in-built calling to seek out truth and follow. We see it all around us. Autumn Television is full of encouragement to follow stars. Stars of 'Strictly come dancing', Stars of 'X-factor', stars of 'I'm a celebrity get me out of here!' We are held within a society that has an unhealthy interest in the lives of what are so called 'stars'; People with celebrity status.

Yet, in truth we know that these celebrities are no different than you, or me. So often they appear on our screens attempting to gain, or regain, their moment of fame. We need something better to strive for. That 'better' we



find in the story of God who loves us, cares for us, wants the best for us and came down to earth to walk with us so

that we might have some of the 'better life' we were created to experience.

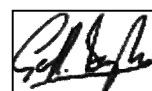


Why do we have such fascination in following 'Celebrity'? The answer is complex but some of our interest comes from the desire to have lives that are more vibrant than those currently experienced.

The recent Young People and Gambling Report 2018, found that 14% of youths aged 11-16 years (around 450,000 individuals), spent their own money in just one week. Such a high percentage in a country where gambling is not permitted for those younger than 18! Recently a report recognised that 48% of the British population gambled in a 3-week period. (33% if you ignore the national lottery).

Why is the figure so high? Again, the answer is complex but includes discontent with life, a desire to find something more vibrant, safer, more secure.

The Christmas message, calls us



Benson Cottage

to

Mothers' Union News

Our branch has been pretty busy through November, meeting fellow Mothers' Union members from all over the Diocese. First, on 13th November five of us plus two guests enjoyed an afternoon and evening at Christ Church Cathedral and College. This was the final "pilgrimage" day to mark the 130th anniversary of the foundation of our movement in the Oxford Diocese.

Meeting under the spectacular Tom Tower and awaiting our guides for the afternoon we found we were alongside a group from Marcham and another from Crowthorne, and we were also joined by our Diocesan President. Our first pause (on a pretty cold afternoon) was in the middle of Tom Quad where our excellent guide gave us information about not only the building of Christ Church but also the lovely lily pond with its enormous carp. Then we went into the cathedral where she conducted an excellent tour. The next visit was to the college library, an amazing place and well worth a visit if you get the chance. We were very lucky to be shown the foundation charter for the college. It is completely unique and very precious in that it has the signature (not a copy) of Henry VIII himself.

The tour ended with afternoon tea in the great hall. We mixed up our groups and I found myself sitting by a lady from Crowthorne. When she learned that our group was from Cowley she knocked me sideways (metaphorically) by asking "where is Cowley exactly?"! I tried to explain but she did not even know where Magdalen Bridge was. Another lady who was with her asked "Was the Morris/Oxford car actually made in Cowley?"

Believe me I was speechless.

The visit ended with choral evensong in the cathedral. I cannot quite put into words the experience of hearing the wonderful choir singing in such a spiritual place.

Our monthly meeting last month took the form of a Mothers' Union Area Forum with visitors coming from far and wide. We had people travelling from Witney, Bicester, Kidlington, Bodicote, Banbury and Reading. We began the day with a communion service in our lovely parish church and then continued to meet and chat over coffee in the Church Centre. After matters of business we had our packed lunches and then more chat (well we are quite good at it!).

Finally when the visitors had gone our branch committee members had a short informal planning meeting to organise our December Christmas party. It will, we hope, be a lovely start to the run into Christmas with readings, carols and a special tea. That will be held on 17th December and we hope as many members as possible will be able to come.

Rosanne Butler



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ADVENT

As we rapidly approach Advent, it is impossible not to notice that Christmas is coming. TV adverts communicate glamorous items and exciting toys. Our supermarkets are filled with seasonal foods, such as boxes of chocolates, minced pies, mulled wine and Christmas pud.

Advent precedes Christmas. This time of year reminds us of the years of waiting that Israel spent for the promised Messiah. They were anticipating, waiting for the coming of a Promised One, who would come from God. Many generations spent the entirety of their life in that waiting period, some never seeing its realisation in their lifetimes.

Jewish people would have grown up with these prophecies, which would have brought hope and encouragement, particularly in dark times in Israel's history.

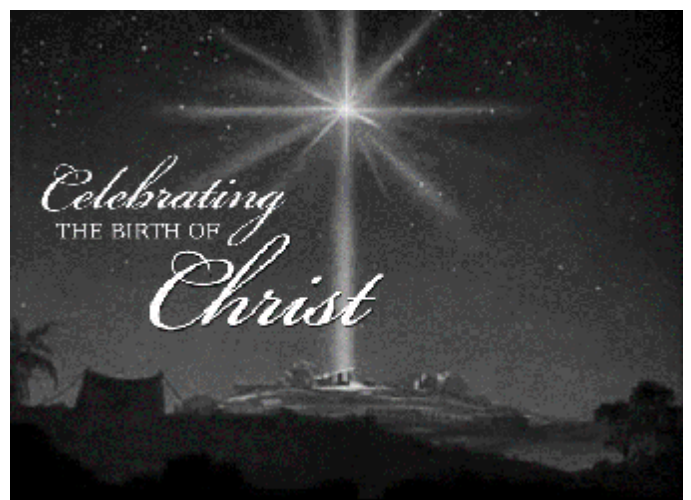
As we enter Advent and approach Christmas, we too are anticipating, eagerly awaiting Christmas day. We are remembering the Prophets, Patriarchs, Mary, John the Baptist, through the lighting of candles and are remembering those who foretold through the readings. We may also be reflecting, at this time, on the challenges and hardships, the "dark times", that we have faced this year. Christmas offers a light to the world, in its literal and metaphorical darkness; that there is a light that has come and pierced that darkness: the humble birth of a baby, who lived a human life and brought hope and salvation to all humankind.

In these coming weeks, in the depths of the excitement of celebrations, the gifts, the foods and fellowship, may we remember, as lovely as these things are, something bigger is coming. Something more is at hand.

It is Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who is a gift for the whole world.

"For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." -Isaiah 9v6.

David Benskin



THE 'IT'S NOT COWLEY FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS TREES' ARTS EVENT 2018

COWLEY SINGS FOR CHRISTMAS – two days to enjoy community music FREE

Wednesday 12 December: a café day of music and song in St James Centre

Meet with friends, enjoy a cup of tea/coffee with seasonal refreshments and live music:

- 10.30 – 11.30 am : St Francis School choir, Church Cowley St James School Y5
2.00 – 3.30 pm : Pegasus School handbell group, The Gals – *friends from Oxford Bach Choir*
7.30 – 9.00 pm : Oxford Spires Academy choir, Rising Voices community choir

Saturday 15 December: at the Nativity Festival - St Francis Church:

- 11.00-11.45 am : Rising Voices with a chance to join in and sing, led by Cat Kelly
and some drop in busking – all offers to Lesley Williams, please

Lesley Williams 01865 779 562 07982 439 828 lesleyjwilliams@btinternet.com

Prayer Space

O God, we thank you for the message of
peace that Christmas brings to our
distracted world. Give peace among nations,
peace in our land, peace in our homes and
Peace in our hearts, as we remember the
birth at Bethlehem of the Prince of peace,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Worship Now

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in:
Be born in us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to use, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel

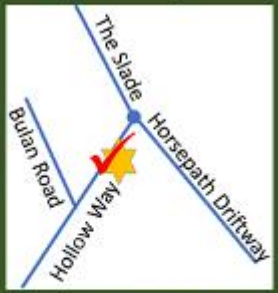
Philip Brooks
(The last verse of O Little Town of Bethlehem)

Christmas at St James Church, Beauchamp Lane (OX4 3LF) and St Francis, Hollow Way (OX3 7JF) .

Saturday 8 th	Get in the picture	10:00 - 4:00	Templars Square
Sunday 9 th	Christingle service	10:30	St Francis Church
	Get in the picture	1:00 - 3:00	Templars Square
Saturday 15 th	Christingle service	4:30	St James Church
	Nativity Set festival	10:00 - 4:00	St Francis Church
Sunday 16 th	Carol service	4:00	St James Church
	Carol service	6:00	St Francis Church



www.cowleyteamministry.co.uk/getinthepicture



www.cowleyteamministry.co.uk

01865 747 680

Christmas at St James Church, Beauchamp Lane (OX4 3LF) and St Francis, Hollow Way (OX3 7JF)

Parish of Cowley



Christmas Eve Monday 24 th	Pop up crib service (come dressed as a part of the Christmas story!)	4:00	St James Church
	Carols in the Corner House pub	6:00	
	Anglican Asian Living Church crib service	6:00	St James Church
	Midnight Mass	11:00	St Francis Church
	Midnight Mass	11:00	St James Church
Christmas Day Tuesday 25 th	Traditional language Christmas service	8:00	St James Church
	Family Christmas Communion	10:00	St James Church
	Christmas morning service	10:30	St Francis Church
	Anglican Asian Living Church	1:45	St James Church



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Cowley Women's Institute

As expected 4 of our members had a great evening quizzing with other WI teams from across the county. Although our memories did not serve us badly, we were not good enough to gain a prize.

Our WI has been very creative over the last few weeks with members attending a craft taster day, having fun painting ceramics and listening to Christine Green's talk and demonstration on Paper Cutting. Her talk was very inspirational, and I am sure some of us will give this craft a go in the future.

All of us are looking forward to celebrating Christmas with our WI friends at our Party later in December.

We also look forward to finding out more about the area where we live.

Our speaker in January is Liz Woolley who is going to talk to us about the Victorian and Edwardian Development of East Oxford.

Cowley WI welcomes women over the age of 18. If you would like to find out more, please come and have an enjoyable afternoon with us. We meet from 2pm to roughly 4 pm in St James Church Centre, Beauchamp Lane, Cowley, the third Wednesday of each month (except August and December).

Sarah Lawrence, Secretary to Cowley WI
cowleywi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk

5th Cowley Guides

Recently an article was in the chronicle by Una in which she mentioned how she thought our Guide Unit started. We researched this with Girlguiding HQ years ago and found out the following information. The unit was registered in January 1946 as 5th Cowley (Church Army), the Captain was Miss Shield of the Church Army. The form of registration was signed by Miss Shield and Father Whye. The Unit was re-registered in 1954 by Father Whye with Miss Maureen Chatterton as Captain as 5th Cowley (St. Luke's). The unit has run continuously since and still keeps the St. Luke's connection and celebrated our 70th anniversary in 2016.

Back to present day, we have one more Guide who has finished the Baden-Powell Challenge Award, Kiera Gough. Kiera's Mum also achieved the Baden-Powell Award when she was a Guide, so must be very proud of Kiera who will be the last to complete this in our unit as the award has now been discontinued.

Janine Higham has also completed the award along with two other Guides from 1st Blackbird Leys Guides and we will be celebrating the success of all these Guides in the New Year.

In September we started on the new Guide programme, which is based on skills badges. The Guides have a more limited choice of interest badges but these are linked to the skills we work towards each term. Most of the Guides have managed to complete a skills badge, one girl has also completed the connected interest badge so will gain a shield badge for this section. We spent quite a bit of time at the beginning of term helping the Guides understand the new programme and so far they seem to be enjoying the new activities.

In the run up to Christmas we are working towards a Christmas Challenge Badge this will include making Christmas crafts and games.

Cynthia Retter

PARISH MISSION AND SOCIAL PLANNER

DECEMBER

SAT 1st 10:30-11:30am *Advent candle painting & wreath making* (F)

SAT 1st 10:00-12:00 *Advent prayer morning* (J)

SUN 2nd *Advent bring & share lunch* (F)

FRI 7th 7:00 pm *Christmas dinner* (CC)

SAT 8th 10:00-4:00, SUN 9th 2:00-4:00 pm *Get in the picture* (TS)

SAT 8th 10:00 am *Christingle packs* for J & F (location tbc)

SUN 9th 10:30 am (F), 4:30 pm (J) *Christingle services*

WED 12th *Cowley Christmas Arts – schools + Rising Voices* (CC)

FRI 14th 3:00 pm *Set up Nativity festival* (F)

SAT 15th 10:00-3:00 *Christmas Nativity festival with Messy activities* (F) & take down + *Cowley Christmas Arts - choirs?*

SUN 16th 4:00 pm (J), 6:00 pm (F) *Carol services + refreshments*

MON 24th 6:00 pm *Carols in the pub* (CH)

JANUARY

SUN 6th *Bring & share lunch* (F)

MON 7th 7:30pm *Mission & Social meeting*
(venue tbc)

SAT 19th 4:00-6:00pm *Crumpets and Games + tea* (F)

SUN 20th 12:30pm *Sunday lunch* (CC)

FEBRUARY

SAT 16 4:00 – 6:00pm *Valentine's family barn dance* (CC)

(CC) - St James Church Centre - Beauchamp Lane (J) - St James Church - Beauchamp Lane
(F) - St Francis Church - Hollow Way (A.A.L.C) - Anglican Asian Living Church (J & CC)
(TS) – Templars Square (CH) – Corner House pub

Bell ringing update

When asked for a report on bell ringing at St James, my answer is, "We are still here and want to ring for Sunday and other festival services." We struggle because of other commitments to have more than one practice a month but we do get together with ringers from other towers and have had some excellent practice nights. Some of our ringers ring all the time at various churches in the area and are involved in training others and ringing peals and quarter peals. (Peals about 2-3 hours in length and quarter peals are about 40-45 minutes long.) Others join other practices elsewhere and some can only commit to this tower. All levels of commitment are appreciated and we are all becoming more confident and are challenging ourselves to new things. We are very grateful to those who come and train us and to those who help us in our bell maintenance. Lindsay is excellent at getting us to try new things and on occasion it can look very strange. For example instead of standing looking into the centre of the tower so we can see the other ropes we have been encouraged to turn around and face outwards. This helps us to listen to our bell and to learn how to place our bell in the right position. There is some activity to do with Velcro handcuffs which we have yet to try!!! I

have been told it is to help with ringing the bell correctly!!!

We have "appealed" (Ha, Ha- bad joke) for some new ringers recently but as yet no-one has come to join us. So if you would like a new challenge for the New Year please do get in touch with Mary Bayliss. You can come for an evening to see what it is like. If we have a few people who are really keen to learn, extra practice sessions may be possible. Bell ringing is one of those activities in which you can serve others, be constantly learning new methods, have the option of visiting many places that have bells in the county, country and world and are welcomed in any of these places. We have had ringers pop into our tower who are working in Oxford and fancied a ring on a Thursday evening. Perhaps your New Year resolution this year could be to try bell ringing. Please contact the church office if you are interested.

Mary Bayliss Tower Captain



Film Club at the Centre

Our November club evening was a great success due mainly to those members who volunteered to help with the organisation. Margaret Weller, ably assisted by Mandy Watts, served the tea, coffee and cake brilliantly (her usual partner, Chris Woodman, had a family birthday evening to attend). As Dave Stanley, who usually deals with the film projection was away, Sally Hemsworth stood in reserve and did so very professionally. The real success of the evening though was the film "Hope and Glory". Although several of us had seen it before a second viewing was still a pleasure and first-time viewers really enjoyed the reminders of life in an ordinary neighbourhood during the Second World War.

Our Christmas film this month is a request from several members, namely "Oliver". Released in 1968 I doubt if anyone has not seen it before but it is such a splendid musical that it is well worth another showing. Full of star names like Ron Moody, Oliver Reed, Harry Secombe, Shani Wallis and Jack Wild and brimming with songs like "Consider Yourself", "Who will buy?" and "You've gotta pick a pocket or two" it should put us all in holiday mood for Christmas. December film night is on the 14th.

We are pleased to have welcomed a new member to our club this month but don't forget we are always happy to also welcome visitors so if you are interested do come along.

Rosanne Butler

MEN OF COWLEY WHO DIED IN FIRST WORLD WAR

A few weeks ago I listened to an inspirational talk by Liz Woolley on the 66 men of Grandpont 1914 – 1918 who died in the First World War and whose names are on the war memorial in the local church. During 2014 – 2018 a number of people researched this subject and the talk illustrated what had been found, an amazing record to have.

At the 100 year anniversary service we were shown a picture of one of the men with his two young children, and discussion with others has shown that there is a strong feeling we should do more research on the other names listed on the screen by St Luke's Chapel in St James Church.

If you are interested in this please contact me. Liz Woolley has been very helpful and given me a guide she prepared for the work undertaken on the Grandpont men which is an extremely good starter for us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sally Hemsworth

CHILDREN'S CORNER

I have been asked by your editors to tell you one or two stories about my life. Of course I can't let you into any secrets but I will tell you about two very unusual things that happened to me some time ago when I was meeting you all in my Cowley Centre Grotto.

The young man was in a wheel chair pushed by his grandma. He seemed very quiet but grandma seemed to be in charge and doing everything for him and even volunteered his name and in a very 'hushed voice' told me he was blind. There seemed to be some mystery about John so I opened the conversation by asking him how old he was and he immediately told me he was 14and this was the first time he had 'visited' Father Christmas. He was blind and he had no idea how old I was or what I looked like! He had been blind since birth and he said he was pleased to meet me at last. He had read about me but always wanted to ' see ' me.

This was a new experience for me too, not that I was worried, so I held his hand and guided it around my face and beard, telling him that it was white. Then he wanted to feel the hat and the robe, which I said was bright red, and we continued to have a long conversation about how he coped with blindness. He could read, of course, but had a special way of doing this. He was pleased to find out as much as he could about me and what I was doing at the grotto, but never mentioned presents, so I asked him what he really wanted for Christmas. I don't want anything else, he said. I just wanted to MEET you and now I can SEE you in my mind. I've met Father Christmas at long last. That's all I

ever wanted for Christmas ! Thank you.

On another occasion a family arrived to visit me in the Grotto. There were two young ladies, one about nine years old and the younger one about six years old but riding in a tricycle wheel chair with quite large wheels. She seemed very active yet was not walking with her sister.

The elder young lady had a conversation with me but her sister seemed to go very quiet and coy when I asked her name and what she would like as a Christmas present. She was now smiling at me and obviously very happy. Her father then told me quietly that she was unable to speak or walk, but what she really wanted was to sit on my lap and give me a hug, if I would allow it. Of course, I said, if you don't mind.

With great care her parents transferred Jane to my lap and she gave me the biggest hug that I have ever had, even from Mrs. Christmas! She hugged me and looked into my eyes with real happiness clearly expressed. And another hug. That's ALL she has wanted for Christmas, her father said. And the glowing smile that she gave ME said it all. She wanted to GIVE something that I have remembered for a long time.

So when you are thinking of presents, remember that very day you can make someone happy by simply giving them a smile, or a hug if you know them well. Sometimes the best things in life are free. Make someone happy today, and give them a smile. A happy Christmas to you all.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

RECIPES

The following recipes are from Cakes, Bakes, Puddings and Prayers by Susan Over.



Ern's Coconut Treats (makes 16 squares)

Ingredients:

- 110 g (4oz) margarine
- 175g (6oz) caster sugar
- 110 (4oz) glacé cherries
- 110 (4oz) sultanas
- 175 (6oz) desiccated coconut
- 50g (2oz) plain flour
- 2 medium eggs
- 175 (6oz) plain chocolate

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F, gas mark 4). Line a Swiss roll tin 28cm x 17.5cm (11" by 7") with greaseproof paper.
2. Cream margarine and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Wash, dry and chop cherries and add to mixture with sultanas, coconut, flour and eggs. Mix well.
4. Spread mixture in tin and bake in centre of oven for 30-40 minutes until golden. Turn upside down onto a wire cooling rack.
5. When cold, remove the greaseproof paper. Melt the chocolate on a LOW setting in the microwave and spread over the surface, making a wavy pattern with a fork.
6. Cut into 16 pieces with a warm knife once the chocolate is set.

"Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things"
Psalm 107:8-9 (NIV)

Eternal Syllabub (serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1 lemon
- 75g (3oz) caster sugar
- 1-2 tablespoons brandy
- 2 tablespoons sweet dessert wine or sherry
- 284 ml (10 fl oz) double cream
- Lemon balm leaves or similar to decorate (optional)

Method:

1. Finely grate the zest of the lemon and then squeeze out the juice. Soak the zest in this juice for 2 hours.
2. Mix juice with sugar, brandy and wine or sherry, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
3. Whisk cream lightly until it just begins to hold its shape, then gradually add liquid while continuing to whisk. Do not over-beat.
4. Chill before serving in four individual glass dishes, decorated with a twist of lemon peel and/or a lemon balm leaf or similar.

Lord, it's easy to get bogged down in the trials and trivialities of life. Help us to remember that we are looking forward to an eternity with you, where we will be lost in wonder, love and praise. Amen

UNA'S CORNER

Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat
please put a penny in the old man's hat,
if not a penny a ha'penny will do
if not a ha' penny then God bless you.

One of my Uncles chanted that ditty all over the Christmas period.

I must explain that I am dictating this article to my computer, it is new software and I am not very good at it yet but I am improving. Some words are spelt strangely as they are written as they sound, this means there will be extra work for the editors in getting it right for the Chronicle.

When our children were young Rachel was terrified by Father Christmas. If she saw one in a shop or in the street she would run away screaming. The elder brother Simon got very peeved with his sister. He must have been about six so Rachel would have been about four. The thought of Father Christmas coming into her bedroom in the middle of the night terrified her, so on Christmas Eve we put her bed in Simon's room so that Big Brother could protect them. She went right under the covers and eventually they both went to sleep

At about 2.30 Christmas morning we heard little voices; we listened and could hear a conversation which went something like this:

Do you think it is real? Perhaps it is stuffed.

No, I think it's alive.

I am sure it is stuffed.

Oh dear it's alive, I hope I haven't hurt it

Yes I can see its eyes are open.

We went into the room. We had bought Simon a budgerigar in a cage, covered it with a cloth and put it up at the foot of Simon's bed. We had fetched it from the pet shop the

day before and my neighbour looked after it until the children were going to sleep. We put the cloth back over the cage and made the children settle down again.

There is a sequel to this. I suffer from asthma and I could not use cleaning materials as they brought on asthma attacks. I had a cleaning lady who was very good, she brought her small son under school age with her. Simon had christened the bird ZEBEDEE which was at the time a popular character in a children's TV programme. My husband had created a tape which would go on continuously. On that tape Simon said the name of the bird breaking it into syllables. We put the tape on for about an hour at various times during the day full stop - I got very fed up hearing this so often. One day my cleaning lady told me that her husband had asked what on earth was the boy saying all the time - the kid was saying the bird's name having heard the tape so many times. The bird never did learn its message name. It did not speak, say a word ever.

One year we went to my son's for Christmas Day. He had two children then, Rebecca was about four or five and Jason about 2 years younger. Rebecca came running to meet us, she ran backwards and forwards showing us what Father Christmas had brought her, she was wildly excited and solemnly told us that she had heard the reindeer land on the roof. While this was going on Jason was sitting on the sofa with his arms folded and crouched over in the most miserable position. I sat next to him and asked what was the matter. He was mumbling to himself, more or less like this:

"Father Christmas, it is all silly and she is a sappy girl, all girls are sappy. It is not Father

Christmas it's Mummy and Daddy. How could a fat man come down the chimney? With a sack as well. She says she heard them land on the roof, silly girl, how could all those reindeer and the sled with Father Christmas land on our roof? It's not a flat roof and they would all slip down onto the ground. I'm fed up with all her silly talk, she has been like this all morning."

One summer we had solid fuel central heating installed and our two children were small. Simon watched pretty much all day from the lounge door as a Parkray was fitted which heated a back boiler. He watched as the workmen threaded a fairly slender pipe through the chimney. The fireplaces in the dining room and the two small fireplaces in the two large bedrooms had been blocked off years before and the three unused chimney pots removed. Simon came to me and seriously pointed out that it was not possible for a fat man like Father Christmas to get down that tube and anyway he would not be able to climb through the Parkray and as well as that we kept the fire burning all night. I explained that Father Christmas was a story that most parents told their children and it was just a fairy story. He promised not to tell his little sister. One day several years later Rachel came to me one Christmas and pointed out that it would be absolutely impossible for one man to visit all the children in the world in one night and there really were no such things as flying reindeer and they could not land on a pitched roof. I gave her the same explanation which she accepted and solemnly promised not to tell Simon. When I told her Simon had known for some years she was furious and stormed off to demand an explanation from him.

Both our children did the same as we did, lots of little things in the stockings and then the

main presents after dinner.

My mother once said that she had never had a stocking. Her mother, my grandmother, was a very pious lady and perhaps she would not go on with an untruth. One year we filled one of Gordon's socks with little gifts and on Christmas Eve we left it hanging from her front door. When she went out to church on Christmas morning she found this and was startled at first, wondering what it was but then she recognised the sock and understood it was us. We were a bit disappointed with her response, she thanked us for all the little things she found in the sock but said it was a bit silly. Gratitude!

My daughter's two children, while alike in a lot of ways were very different. When writing letters to Father Christmas, Dean would write a long letter full of all the things he wanted, some expensive. Hannah thought a long time and then she wrote that "please she would like a bar of chocolate, a Mars bar if possible but any chocolate would do." That was all she put in her letter. Isla, one of my great granddaughters is very like Hannah, her cousin. I remember one Christmas not long ago when she met me at the door and said how lucky she was, look at the things Father Christmas had brought. She is very like her cousin Hannah, a happy nature and a grateful nature and not at all greedy.

I was two when the war was declared so all my memories of childhood are about war time. Christmas was very different compared to today. There were no decorations in the streets, no Christmas trees in the windows all lit up with fairy lights – I am not sure that fairy lights had been invented. One year my mother somehow got hold of a Christmas tree, a real tree not artificial trees in those days. I remember this tree was lit up by candles. I was

very excited about this tree. Of course the presents were minimal but I was used to that. Later on after the war we used to go for a walk and counted Christmas trees in windows. That was after dinner and presents but before Christmas cake.

My grandparents would join us for Christmas and by that time I had a younger brother as well. When all the presents had been unpacked, all the paper was recycled where possible. Incidentally when I was young we wrapped presents in newspaper and string so when pretty paper and ribbons appeared we were very careful not to tear it and not to waste anything. We would, all of us, collect the paper and over the next few days we would iron it and put it away. Next year it would come out again. I remember one particular unusual paper was used for several years backwards and forwards round the family, the piece getting smaller and smaller each year as we trimmed torn edges. We did not use sticky tape as that made the paper unusable again.

I remember the first Christmas after the blackout was lifted, I remember my excitement at the lights in the street and the floodlit buildings. I remember some shops had trees on the roof, some houses had Father Christmas on the roof. The shop windows were lit up and had special displays. Houses had fairy lights round the windows and lighted trees in their windows. It was so beautiful.

One Christmas my elder brother, when he was about seventeen, asked for a pipe and tobacco. Both our grandfathers smoked pipes and Roy rather fancied himself as the suave ladies' man. Sure enough when we had our present in the afternoon Roy had his pipe and tobacco. Later on in the evening he lit up for

the first time. He smoked the pipe of tobacco quite happily it seemed. When it came to supper time (we always had two chickens for our lunch, home grown chickens, and for supper we had cold rabbit, also home grown) my mother asked Roy if he was alright. Oh he was fine. As the food was served he took on a greenish pallor, he had to excuse himself and rush to vomit. He went to bed after that. He did get used to the pipe and he smoked it for a few years. He did not smoke cigarettes although at that time we were encouraged to smoke, there were advertisements of 'doctors' sitting smoking cigarettes and saying that cigarette smoking calmed the nerves. My father smoked a little and I remember when I was quite young one budget day the tax on tobacco went up and Daddy threw the cigarettes he was smoking into the fire and followed it with the packet off the mantel shelf. Later in life he smoked cigars. Servicemen in those days were given five Woodbines a day, the cheapest cigarettes available. Roy was unlucky enough to be called up for his two years National Service during the Korean War. He served on the front line as a medic. He used to sell his five Woodbines to the highest bidder as did all the non-smokers.

My father used to run a Bingo game for the family - there were my grandparents and sometimes girl or boy friends so there were quite a few of us. His prizes were enough for every one there to win something and each was bought with someone in mind, that was obvious. Somehow he played the game in such a way that all of us won one of his prizes and had something very suitable. I did not ever find out how he did it but he did.

I wish everyone in the Parish a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

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