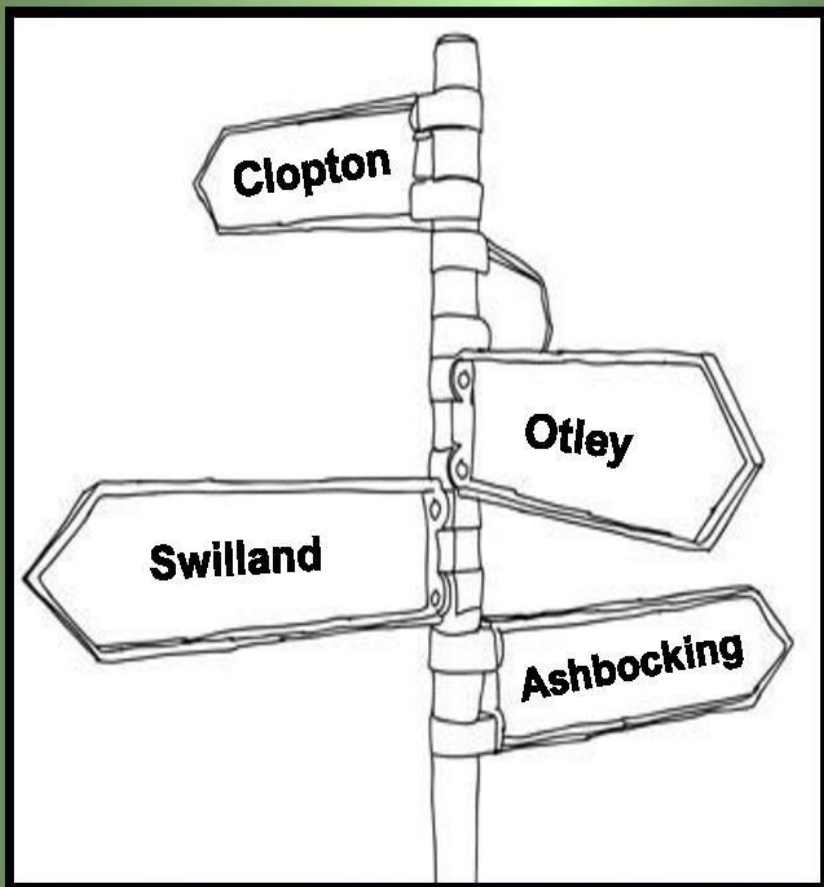




The Signpost



News from the Parishes



A Word from The Editor.....



Welcome to the **December** edition.

Here we are at the end of another year. How does time disappear so quickly and before our very eyes? For some, this year will have been good and for others, not so good, especially those sadly caught up in conflict. My only hope is that the next year is kind to us all and will bring with it some peace, much love and happiness with the creation of new and special memories which we can treasure for years to come.

I would like to say a **big thank you** to all those that contribute towards the magazine each month - I really do appreciate your support. Thank you also to those who send in page fillers, recipes, quotes and poems. Most of all, a **HUGE THANK YOU** to all of you lovely readers. It has been an absolute pleasure to create the magazine over the last year and I look forward to continuing next year. I now have to turn my attention to the farm and getting prepared for our busy time, so no rest for the wicked! It just leaves me to say that I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

If there is anything else you would like to see within next year's magazine, or if you would like to advertise or promote upcoming events that you are a part of, please do get in touch using my contact details below.

If you would like any special birthdays, exam results or anniversaries celebrated, then please do let me know and I will include in the next month's magazine.

The next Signpost will be the February issue,
With a deadline of 24th January 23.

To register to receive The Signpost via email, each month,
please email me at bakergirl174@gmail.com

News of the Carlford Churches and details of online Worship can be found on the website carlfordchurches.org and within the Mini Grapevine. If you would like to receive the Mini-Grapevine weekly via email, please register via the website carlfordchurches.org or with amy@carlfordchurches.org. There are links on the Carlford Churches website to the Facebook page, Mini-Grapevine and The Signpost. The Carlford Churches Facebook page can be accessed directly <http://facebook.com/carlfordchurches>.

Should you wish to speak with Rev'd Katrina Dykes or a member of the benefice team,
please telephone 01473 735183.

Keep safe and take care till next year.....

Amy



December

Wintry mornings wrapped in white,
Evenings, calm and still,
Snowflakes dancing all around,
Sled rides down a hill,
Gatherings with loved ones -
Such a pleasure to remember -
all memories and special gifts
That come with each
December.

October



October 2023 will, I am sure, go down in history as being the wettest month accompanied by high winds that has occurred in living memory and beyond. We have been very fortunate that these gales have not affected Otley to any large extent, the main problem has been the flooding at Otley Bottoms, Ipswich and Helmingham road which was too deep for cars to go through. This is the first year since I have kept records that rainfall total has exceeded 3.0 inches in one day and the monthly total has come to 7.70 inches.



The Heart of Christmas

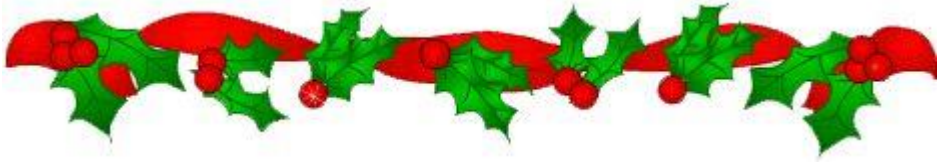
We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? At its heart, Christmas is all about a God who has showed up on earth. The Creator of the universe, whose hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.' (John 1:14)

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! Why do we do all this? It's to remind us that God deals with the mess of our world by sending His Son to die in our place. This makes it possible for us to have a relationship with Himself:

When the time came, He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start understanding the heart of the Christmas message. However, it's so much more than simply a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

*If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.*



Brainteasers

Here are some festive themed brainteasers.

1. Who is the most impolite and disrespectful of all the reindeer?
2. I come with many colours, so beautiful and bright, I turn so many houses into a beautiful sight. What am I?
3. What do you get when you cross a bird with a turtle?
4. When does Christmas come before Thanksgiving?
5. What did Mrs. Claus say to Santa when she looked up in the sky?
6. What did Adam say the day before Christmas?

(Solutions on Page 45)

Findings of Survivor Engagement National Survey Published

The results of a vital survivor engagement survey have been published. The aim of the national anonymous online survey was to listen to the views of victims and survivors about how they would like to work with the National Safeguarding Team, NST, to develop and implement a Survivor Engagement Framework.

The survey, which was open for nearly three months later in 2022, gathered the views of 171 adult victims and survivors of any form of abuse, with the majority of respondents identifying as victims of Church-related abuse.

Overall safety, empowerment, trust and communication emerged as key themes in relation to preventing re-traumatisation.



The next steps are to develop and implement an action plan to co-produce the Survivor Engagement Framework to include strategic outcomes, key milestones, resources, risk assessment processes, communication strategy and evaluation. There will also be a coproduction of a charter/code of conduct with victims and survivors.



If you or anyone you are in contact with wish to talk to someone independently, please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056 or visit www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the diocesan safeguarding team in your area or the National Safeguarding Team. If you would like to contact the National Team, please use the email address below:
safeguarding@churchofengland.org

4th December - Osmond, An Immigrant Before Brexit

Osmond is the saint for you if you regret Brexit and believe that immigrants can bring good to Britain. Osmond came to England from France back in the days before EU regulations. It was shortly after 1066, and he was a Norman, following William the Conqueror.

Osmond himself was no soldier, but a gifted and godly man, with a great gift of administration. He became royal chaplain, and then chancellor in 1072, producing numerous royal letters and charters for the king. In 1078 he was made bishop of Salisbury. As such, he completed and consecrated the cathedral, and formed such an outstanding chapter and constitution that it later became a model for other English cathedrals.

Osmond took part in the preparation of the Domesday Book and was present when it was presented to William in April 1086. He died in 1099, well respected for his purity and learning, and his lack of avarice and ambition.



Wildlife to Spot in December



- **Red Admiral Butterflies**– with their orangey/red bars and velvety wings, which you may be able to see flying on mild, sunny days.
- **Buff-tailed bumblebees** – some of which will have established winter colonies and can be spotted feeding on winter-flowering clematis (such as *Clematis cirrhosa*), mahonia, daphne and winter honeysuckle.
- **Fieldfares and redwings** – may visit the garden to hunt for rowan and holly berries, especially in very harsh weather when food is scarce.



Where Did Christmas Cards Come From?

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

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

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



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

Sir Henry Cole helped to introduce the Penny Post, as it was called. Until then, only rich people could afford the Post, but with the building of the railways, which carried far more packages than a horse and cart (and went much faster), suddenly the Penny Post became possible.



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



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

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

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

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



Christmas cards appeared in the USA in the late 1840s. They were mass produced from 1875, and in 1915 John C Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards, which today offers 2,000 different designs of Christmas card.

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

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



Legend has it we hang stockings by the chimney with care because one year a poor widowed man didn't have enough money for his three daughters' dowries, making it difficult for them to marry. Generous old St. Nick dropped a bag of gold down their chimney one night and into the freshly washed stockings the girls had hung by the fire to dry. After that, the tradition stuck!



Pets' Corner VII December 2023

WOW! What a week! We have had the most phenomenal start since we opened the doors to our practice in mid November.

We have registered so many beautiful pets and are so enjoying providing care and finally being able to use our fabulous facilities to help make our patients feel better.

This week we were fortunate to have Curate Gail Minter from the Carlsford Benefice come and bless our little practice which was a very special event.

We are holding an open day on Sunday 17th December from 11am-1pm. There'll be free parking, a chance to meet our veterinary team and have a tour of our little practice building. We'll also be serving mulled apple juice and mince pies.



We look forward to welcoming you and your families, and if we don't see you to say it in pawson, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Kind regards,
Dr Emily Nightingale DVM MRCVS



OTLEY AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

Dear Readers,



It's beginning to feel like Christmas already and we're only in November as I write this. The fairisle jumper is on, and we've made the Christmas pudding, just the mulled wine and mince pies to go. I think the mulled wine will accompany the mince pie making.

Unfortunately, I've slipped a couple of discs in my back recently, so gardening projects have been at a standstill that involve me. My sister Sarah has been busy putting the mulch on the beds to help keep the warmth in the soil. It's the perfect time to be doing this essential soil improving practice. Whatever you choose to mulch with, (bark, well-rotted manure etc) it really makes a difference especially to clay and sandy soils.

This month at Otley and District Gardening Club I've put myself forward, with the skilful aid of Sue Montgomery, in showing how to make a Christmas Table arrangement or if you wanted to go bigger... a front door arrangement, not a wreath but something for the side of your door. This will involve some essential bits of kit. Firstly, the container you wish to make the arrangement in. A zinc bucket always works well for a large front door display, where a smaller ceramic vase or pot can show off your Christmas creativity. You'll also need some sand or gravel to weight it down, and some large gauge chicken wire. This gets crumpled up inside your container to help support your foliage and decorations. Then you'll need to have something to put in your displays. Conifer, Spruce, Scotts Pine, Nordmann if you have any from the bottom of your Christmas tree, anything that can survive the harsh winter night temperatures if you're having it outside. This will also be good if you're making a table arrangement as these really smell nice and look very festive. Then all you need are some bits and bobs like baubles, tinsel, pinecones on sticks... The world really is your oyster. I'll be bringing a bit extra with regards to the foliage, so please bring plenty to share if you can. Gardening Club will start at 19:30 promptly and is at Otley Village Hall. If you could kindly let me know if you plan on coming and you're not a member, just so we get enough tables etc. There is no cost other than your entrance fee of £2 for member or £4 for non-members.



My email is phil@florabundant.co.uk if you wish to ask any further questions or wish to join us for our December meeting. There'll be plenty of mulled wine and mince pies to share and even a Christmas raffle which will include some extra special choccies and a bottle or two of something nice. Please bring along a raffle prize if you can, as this is our last meeting until the spring.



We don't meet in January and February as such, but we do have a Winter lunch in February for members to meet up and share a meal and a glass or two. So, our next meeting will be March 4th.

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Phil Pollard, The Green Chairman

Prospect of Winter Energy Bills Causing Anxiety for Millions



Millions are looking ahead to this winter with 'fear and anxiety' about the cost of heating their homes, the Archbishop of York has said as he backed the recent launch of a campaign to provide a network of warm spaces for people who struggle to pay their energy bills.

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell is encouraging churches to consider getting involved in the [Warm Welcome campaign](#), a network of venues from community centres to churches providing warm spaces over the winter for people struggling to heat their homes.

Archbishop Stephen said: "Sadly, what began as a cost-of-living crisis has simply become the new normal for many.

"Millions of people will look ahead to this winter with fear and anxiety, wondering how they are going to cope with high living costs. That is why I am proud to endorse the Warm Welcome campaign this winter.

"But a warm welcome isn't only about the temperature. It is about kindness and community, giving people the chance to be seen and known, to belong

Worried about your home being flooded?

The National Flood Forum has a range of good tips and advice on how to prepare for the worst.

Go to:

<https://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/about-flooding/preparing/emergency-flood-kit/>

and to be part of something. It is about celebrating the God-given value and dignity of every single person, finding hope and community together. But of course, none of that will happen if people are cold.”

The Warm Welcome campaign is led by a coalition of over 50 charitable organisations who joined together in response to the cost of living crisis to provide emergency support to communities struggling to pay for rising food costs and to heat their homes.

No more ‘postcode lottery’ recycling



Life is going to become simpler when it comes to recycling.



From 2026, the national recycling laws are to be standardised, with Councils across the UK all having to collect the same glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food waste and garden waste. It is expected that the plans will lead to packaging that is clearly labelled ‘recyclable’ or not, without the need for households to check local provisions.

“Simpler recycling will help us all recycle more easily, doing our bit to help save the planet and make the best use of precious resources that we use every day,” said Therese Coffey, the Environment Secretary.

“Alongside weekly food waste collections, we are ending the postcode lottery of what you can put in your bin, so that wherever you live in the country, you will be able to recycle the same products with confidence.”



DID YOU KNOW.....

- 1st 2003** Using a handheld mobile phone while driving became illegal in the UK.
- 5th 1958** Britain's first motorway, the Preston By-Pass was officially opened. (It is now part of the M6 and M55).
- 5th 2013** Nelson Mandela died. This anti-apartheid revolutionary and politician had become President of South Africa 1994-99. He served as President of the African National Congress (ANC) 1991-97. Winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize.
- 6th 1923** Ramsey MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister. The General Election had resulted in a hung parliament, and the Labour Party had formed a coalition with the Liberal Party.
- 10th 1948** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.'
- 10th 1953** The former US Secretary of State George Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for creating the Marshall Plan. The aid package helped Europe rebuild after WW2.
- 11th 1936** King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England to marry a twice-divorced American named Wallis Warfield Simpson.
- 12th 1915** Frank Sinatra was born – his most famous song was “I'll never smile again” (1940) which sold 900,000 copies.
- 16th 1773** The Boston Tea Party took place in Massachusetts. American patriots boarded ships and threw chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company into Boston Harbour, as a protest against the British tax on tea.
- 17th 1903** The Wright Brothers made the first recorded flight in history of a powered, heavier than air, aircraft – it flew for 12 seconds & covered 120 feet.
- 19th 1848** Emily Bronte, British novelist and poet, died of tuberculosis, aged 30. Best known for her only novel, Wuthering Heights.
- 21st 1963** The Daleks made their first appearance on the British science fiction TV series Doctor Who.
- 21st 1973** The Geneva Conference opened in Switzerland, aimed at finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. No agreement was reached, but Israel signed a military disengagement agreement with both Egypt and Syria 1974.
- 22nd 1943** 80 years ago on this day, Beatrix Potter, children's writer and illustrator, died. She created animal characters including Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs Tiggly-Winkle, Jemima Puddle-Duck and many more.
- 23rd 1823** The Night Before Christmas was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in Troy, New York. It was written by Clement Clarke Moore.
- 24th 1948** The first Midnight Mass to be televised was broadcast from St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.
- 25th 1223** St Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene, in Greccio, Italy after visiting Jesus' birthplace in the Holy Land. It proved enormously popular and inspired other communities to stage their own nativity scenes.
- 28th** Is widely regarded as the unluckiest day of the year, be careful what you do!
- 31st 1923** 100 years ago the BBC broadcast the chimes of Big Ben for the first time, to welcome in the New Year. A tradition which continues to this day.

Christmas all wrapped up!



Do you ever dread wrapping all those Christmas presents? The large roll of fragile paper that slides around on the table, the lumpy gifts that defy wrapping, the tape that sticks to your fingers... what is so important about wrapping presents, anyway? Why not just hand them over?

Well did you ever consider that the very first Christmas present EVER was wrapped up – in swaddling clothes? In biblical times, after a birth, the umbilical cord would be cut, the baby would be washed, rubbed with salt and oil, and then carefully wrapped in swaddling clothes. The swaddling is described as a cloth or blanket, tied together like bandages. This process was carried out with great love and care and was thought to have health-giving benefits.



On the other hand, to ignore the swaddling process was seen as abandonment and rejection. *"And as for thy nativity, on the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to soothe thee. Thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all."* (Ezekiel 16:4 KJ21)

So why wrap your presents? Because just as the baby Jesus was swaddled as a sign of great love and care, wrapping our gifts is a sign of our own effort, love, and care towards those whom we love. So be patient with the wrapping paper, and Happy Christmas!





Hi everyone,

Light at the end of the Tunnel?

Until recently research into a cure for Alzheimer's disease – the most common form of dementia – has proved fruitless and treatments limited. Currently, the only medications that are routinely prescribed for mild to moderate Alzheimer's symptoms are Galantamine, Rivastigmine, and Donepezil. These drugs work by helping to reduce or control some cognitive and behavioural symptoms, but they are not always suitable for all patients.

But, at last, a breakthrough has been achieved. Two new drugs have been announced. Lecanemab, as having been fully approved in the US for the treatment of early Alzheimer's disease. And Donanemab, which successfully completed its full-scale trials. Rapid approval is expected for their use in the UK. The drugs are claimed to offer up to a 30% slowing of the progression of the disease by targeting and removing amyloid, a sticky protein which forms toxic clumps in the brains of Alzheimer's patients. Without intervention, amyloid contributes to cognitive decline by slowly destroying the brain's neurons over time. What makes this breakthrough really special and exciting is that, for the first time, we have the prospect of attacking the **cause** of the disease and not just **treating** some of its symptoms.

However, on a note of caution, the benefits of these drugs have been shown only in the early stages of the illness, and there can be serious side-effects in some patients. Also, even once fully approved, there will still be a long waiting time before they can be widely prescribed.

Finally, I want to thank all who generously give their time and donations – You are what makes this project work. Also, do remember if you need transport to a medically related appointment, or might like to borrow a wheelchair, please do not hesitate to ask.

With all my best wishes,

Lynden Jackson

www.the-debenham-project.org.uk ; 01728 862003



Pets' Corner VIII January 2024



Firstly a huge Happy New Year to you all. I hope that your festive season was everything you hoped it would be.

The start of the new year means so many different things to different people. New Year's resolutions, getting fit, doing more for good causes, or maybe 2024 will be the year you welcome a new pet into your life?

Whatever 2024 looks set to bring you, you can be sure that having a pet in your life will make everything lighter, brighter and more wonderful. At Nightingale Vets we know just how true this is as we see the difference pets make in our lives every day. Read on to hear how to choose the best new pup for your lifestyle and how our Welcome to the World Puppy Programme can support you in that first challenging year of petparenting.

With love from Dr Emily Nightingale DVM MRCVS, owner of Nightingale Vets.

Here's our handy guide put together with help from our friends at FirstVet.

Dog breeds: choosing the right pet for you, your family and your lifestyle

There are so many dog breeds that it can feel like an overwhelming task to choose your perfect pet, whether as a puppy or at a rescue centre. You need to feel confident that you will meet your new friend's needs and that you can enjoy spending time together in a way that suits your lifestyle. All dogs need care, exercise and training but there are definite breed differences so here are some top tips to consider.

1) Best family dogs

Some breeds are known to be patient, tolerant and loving towards the younger members of the family. Famously, Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers and

Flat Coat Retrievers are an excellent choice. Some Terriers mix well with children too such as the Border Terrier, and Boxers are traditionally a loving companion for the whole family.

2) Size

Choose the right size of dog to fit your lifestyle. Whether some of the important factors to consider are your home, car, children, garden or access to outdoor spaces for exercise, the breed size that you choose will have to fit all of them. Consider who else might need to spend time with your dog, or provide care, if you are away on holiday, for example. There is often a lot of size variation within breed groups, so be sure to do plenty of research to make sure that you have seen them all.

3) Exercise

If you are looking for a sleepy Sunday then the Greyhound or Whippet is your breed of choice. They are known for their laid back nature and love nothing more than a 'duvet day'. On the opposite end of the spectrum are some of our working dog breeds. Border Collies and Springer Spaniels are full of energy so, if you love the great outdoors, then you will find they are a willing companion.

4) Grooming

Some breeds need a lot of grooming whilst others are very low maintenance by comparison. Grooming may involve frequent brushing at home, or regular appointments with your dog groomer. Most breeds have their own individual needs; for example, Alaskan Malamute's have a very thick coat, which is shed twice a year. Shar-Pei's have lots of skin folds, which require careful cleaning to prevent skin infections. Newfoundland's have droopy lips and therefore dribble a lot. When you have shortlisted your favourite breeds, try to meet those breeds in person. [Discover Dogs](#) and [Discover Dogs at Crufts](#) are great ways to meet different dog breeds and talk to their owners who know them best.

Alternatively, visit your local rehoming centres to meet a wide variety of dogs that need a new and loving home!

5) Hypoallergenic

Human pet allergies can be really difficult to manage and may prevent dog ownership. In this situation, Poodles and Poodle crosses (Labradoodle, Cavapoo etc.) may be just what you are looking for. They don't shed much hair, are good family pets, and come in all shapes and sizes, including miniature breeds. Use the Kennel Club's [Breed Information Centre](#) to find out which dogs do and don't shed their coat.

6) Intelligence

For those looking to train their dogs to do a special job, intelligence is key. Mountain rescue dogs, drug sniffer dogs, agility champions and working farm dogs are some examples of the jobs that man's best friend can undertake alongside us. Border Collies are very clever and also really enjoy working with their owners, however, Spaniels, German Shepherd Dogs and Pointers are also top of the class. You may also want to think about what level of training you want to reach with your dog because some dogs learn [agility](#) or [fly ball](#) easier,

whilst some prefer [CaniCross](#) or [showing](#), amongst many other activities that you can do with your new canine friend.

7) Healthiest

Some breeds are predisposed to certain diseases and, unfortunately, have a shortened life expectancy because of this. Brachycephalic breeds (those with short noses), such as Bulldogs and Pugs, suffer with breathing difficulties and a variety of other conditions. Giant breeds are more likely to encounter joint and bone problems, and many purebred dogs have inherent risk of certain diseases because of their genetics. The winner of the healthiest dog category must then go to cross-breeds. Our adorable mongrels are often the fittest and longest lived of all dogs.

8) Standing out from the crowd

If you are undecided, why not support a rare breed? Red Setters, Otterhounds and Lancashire Heelers have all fallen out of fashion in recent years and these breeds, amongst others, are under threat. A real individualist's choice. The Kennel Club has lots more information about [vulnerable native breeds](#) on their website.

Please follow the links for more guidance from the Kennel Club about [buying a puppy](#) or [getting a dog](#).

If you need advice at any stage please feel very welcome to contact us at Nightingale Vets on 01473 598 398.

Nightingale Vets Welcome to the World Programme

We understand that having a new pet in your life can be a worrying time as there is so much to think about and so many different resources to navigate.

Our Welcome to the World programme is a health plan designed to help you spread the cost of your new pet's healthcare in the first year of their life.

This initiative gives you the peace of mind that you're being the best petparent you can be, at the same time as protecting your new pet and saving you money.

We want to make veterinary care accessible and easy, and with two options of health plan you'll be able to choose which suits you and your family's needs best.

We are very proud of this special programme we have created. Far from just a quick visit to the vet for vaccinations, this is a complete experience, giving your newest baby family member the best possible start in life from the day they join your family, until they reach adulthood. Nose to tail, every step of the way.

To welcome your puppy, kitten or baby bunny to our programme, please call 01473 598 398 and we will be happy to help.

In the meantime, from nose to tail, we're here for you and your pet every step of the way.



The Story Behind 'The Night Before Christmas'



It was 200 years ago this Christmas, on 23rd December 1823, that the famous poem '*The Night Before Christmas*' was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in Troy, New York.

It was light-hearted and full of fun, and not at all what you might have expected from its author, Clement Clarke Moore.

For Moore had been born in 1779 into a prominent New York family. His father, Benjamin Moore, the Episcopal bishop of New York, had even taken part in the inauguration of George Washington as the nation's first president.

As for Clement Moore, he was a scholar of Hebrew and a professor of Oriental and Greek literature at the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan.

But on 24th December 1822, the night that Moore composed the poem, he was traveling home from Greenwich Village. He had gone there to buy a turkey, in order to fill the last of a number of baskets that his family donated to the poor during the Christmas season.



Perhaps Moore was inspired by the plump, bearded Dutchman who took him by 'taxi' sleigh on his mercy errand through the snow-covered streets of New York City that night. But whatever it was, Moore scribbled down 'A Visit from St. Nicholas' for the amusement of his own six children, to whom he read the poem when he got home that evening. His description of St Nicholas drew upon the Dutch-American and Norwegian traditions of a magical, gift-giving figure who appears at Christmas time.



Did you know that Christmas was actually banned in England for 13 years by a puritan leader named Oliver Cromwell in 1647?

The following year, Christmas 1823, the poem was made public, without his permission. Moore was said to have been at first embarrassed to be named as the author of such a light-hearted verse, and then astonished by its quick rise to popularity. He finally published it under his own name in 1844.

...But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

Big Ben

Do you stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve? If so, this year will be special – it is 100 years ago, on 31st December 1923, that the BBC first broadcast the chimes of Big Ben to welcome in the New Year.



For it was not until 31st December 1923 that the chimes of Big Ben were ever heard outside of Parliament and Westminster. But then the BBC got permission to broadcast them to the nation, and history was made.

That first year, the BBC engineers were not allowed into Parliament, and so had to access Big Ben from the roof of the Palace of Westminster. This meant that their microphone picked up not just the chimes, but a lot of traffic noise as well. But a tradition had started, and by 1924 the Big Ben bongos were being broadcast every day.

By then the BBC had installed low sensitivity microphones very close to the bells, so that they missed the sound of the clock mechanism.

The nation quickly came to love the sound of Big Ben, and during the Second World War the chimes were broadcast across occupied Europe – encouraging millions in their struggle against the Nazis.

The Big Ben daily time signal on the BBC is still cherished today, and Big Ben rings live for important events such as Remembrance Day and New Year, when the BBC sends the sound right around the world.



Universal Human Rights turns 75



This month marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This ground-breaking global pledge was first proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10th December 1948. It set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

The UDHR enshrines ‘the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.’

Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world.

Throughout this year, a year-long initiative focusing on universality, progress and engagement, has culminated in a high-level event this month, which will announce global pledges and ideas for a vision for the future of human rights.

Stop Mist on Your Windscreen

If you will be out in your car a lot this Christmas, here’s an easy way to stop your windscreen from misting up:



Simply clean it with shaving foam. It provides a protective barrier which stops mist forming. Ice hockey players use it to stop their face masks from steaming up while they’re on the ice. It’s easy to do. Put a good dollop of shaving foam onto a clean towel, and then wipe it all over the windscreen. Then take a second clean towel, and gently wipe off the shaving foam. This leaves a protective barrier, but it will need to be regularly reapplied, to continue to work.

This tip can be found on the RAC website: www.rac.co.uk



WINTER

Its dark outside but its time you were rising
In a house that is warm from crackling breakfasts.
When you open the front door it is surprising
How the winter is silent, because everything is hiding.

The bumbles sleep in their honey comb hives –
No pollen to collect from flowers now past.
And if they tried to fly they wouldn't survive –
Their wings would freeze mid-air in these cold skies.

If you look up in the trees there is no sound
Of the squirrels; they're asleep in their dens
Under their tails, and spread all around
Are the piles of nuts that in summer they found.

The hedgehogs curl up in a big spiky ball
Ready to fend off the wind, rain and snow.
They close their round eyes – so black and so small.
To sleep through winter and wait for spring to call.

So, there is no noise in the fields or the trees,
The fish are stuck under a frozen river roof.
The sheep are quiet and glad to have their fleece.
The horses have coats on – and all around there is peace.

We humans even try to do this; hibernate –
Desperate to keep warm, inside, by the fireplace.



Abbi Baker

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

ASHBOCKING

We have had a good year here in Ashbocking Church, although the village itself did suffer from the recent flooding. Fortunately, things now seem as if they are under control.



It's amazing how quickly the year has gone and now with the start of Advent we commence another year. We are looking toward another interregnum and are so very sorry that Katrina and Phil are moving on but are sympathetic to their reasons.

Nothing stays the same and sometimes the best made plans change. It is my belief that family always come first.

We wish them well in their new Benefice and new home.



We are continuing with our two services a month with the second service alternating each month with Swilland.

We also hope to get back on track with fundraising for church alterations and if this is something you would like to help with either new ideas or practical help, then please do contact us.

Most of all we are hoping to that we can increase our numbers in church, they have unfortunately dwindled of late.

We have lots of families and newcomers to Ashbocking and would like to hear from them how the church can best serve them.



Coffee Mornings have been very successful, and our next one is on December 1st at 10:30am and is at Hawthorns, The Green, Ashbocking, found at the end of Ashley Grange off The Green. We have parking and welcome anyone from the Benefice to join us for coffee and cake and a chance to chat. We are hoping that our local MP Dan Poulter will be visiting us this time, but I am still awaiting confirmation of that.

Coffee morning in January is on the 5th at 10:30am, same venue. All are welcome.



The Carols by Candlelight service at Ashbocking is earlier than usual this year 10th December at 4pm.

We look forward to welcoming everyone to this lovely service, a chance to get in the festive spirit. Marcus Peel will be playing the music for our carols, and you are invited to share in mulled wine and mince pies after the service. A non-alcoholic alternative will be available. Parking is at the Hall and will be signed. Please bring a torch as it will be dark when you leave and there is no street lighting.

There is no Lay-led service in Ashbocking in December as it is Swilland's turn and will be on the 3rd December.

The Christmas Day service, with Holy Communion is at 10:30am, earlier than normal services, and we welcome everyone to join us on this special morning with a glass of 'something' on arrival.

Services in January, February and possibly the beginning of March, are not held in the church but as last year will be held at Hawthorns to avoid the worst of the winter temperatures.

14th January is our normal Family Service, 11am at our home, in the warm with Katrina, and sadly this will be her last service with us. There will be refreshments available.

On the 28th January at 11am we are hosting Café Church at Hawthorns. A relaxed service with croissants or toast with coffee/tea on arrival. We do hope you will join us. Everyone is welcome.



Finally, Knit and Stitch will be held on Monday 4th December and Monday 8th January, 10:00am-12:00noon, at Hawthorns. Coffee, biscuits and plenty of chat as always.



There are a few other things to mention, that is the Churchyard Clear-up on Saturday 9th December at 10am. Volunteers with this are most welcome but please bring your own tools. E.g. rakes, sheers etc. We aim to finish by midday but the more help we get the quicker we can get it done.

We will also be putting the final touches to the decorations in the church ready for the Carol service and any greenery you are able to donate will be welcomed. You may put these donations you have in the porch from Wed 6th December, this would be much appreciated.

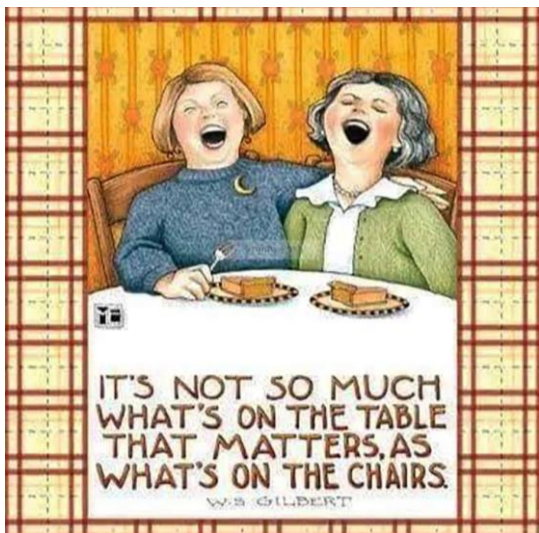
There are still a number of books and puzzles at the back of the church. Available anytime. Take as many as you wish but a small donation in the Almes box would be appreciated.

May all of us here in Ashbocking wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Linda Pollard

Tel 07887537152 if you require further information

Church Wardens: John Pollard 07786 803490 or Duncan Bray 07933 705350



CLOPTON



Christmas is coming.....! Calling all singers! Join us for Carol Singing around the village on Saturday, 9th December. We shall gather at 5.30pm in the village hall car park. Wrap up warm and don't forget a torch. We shall certainly cover the Shop Road/Rouse Hall area at least and we shall venture further afield, weather permitting and if we can organise cars! You will be well

rewarded and warmed up by mince pies and mulled wine at Pear Tree Farm at the end of the evening. All are welcome. It will be a really fun village event.

Our 11am church service on Sunday, 10th November will be our Village Gift Service. We shall be collecting toys, new or "as new", for children of all ages who are in need this Christmas, to be distributed by the Felixstowe Salvation Army. Please bring the toys along to the service or leave them under the Christmas tree in the church - Thank you. All are welcome to the service, and particularly children as we expect a visit from a very special visitor - ST. NICHOLAS! Children should bring along a spare shoe to receive a special little treat. It should be a lovely occasion and a great way to start your Christmas festivities! Hope to see you all there :)

And after the service there will be special home-made treats for the grown-ups too, so don't miss out!



And we are all looking forward to **Clopton's Traditional CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIT SERVICE, Sunday, 24th December at 6pm**. There is always a lovely atmosphere, and the church will be looking wonderful - decorated and lit by so many candles. Enjoy singing your favourite carols and listening again to

the amazing Christmas story. We shall be collecting for several good causes so just a gentle reminder in advance that we can only take cash during our service collection - thank you. And as always, the service will end with us all sharing mince pies and mulled wine at the back of the church. What a perfect way to begin your Christmas!



Looking after the church and keeping it heated for the Christmas

Services has become a costly business. We would really appreciate it if you were able to scan this QR code to help to support your village church. Using your smart phone and the QR reader app, the code links you directly to the giving page for Clopton Parish Church. We rely entirely on donations to maintain this beautiful building and the churchyard.

Thank you very much.

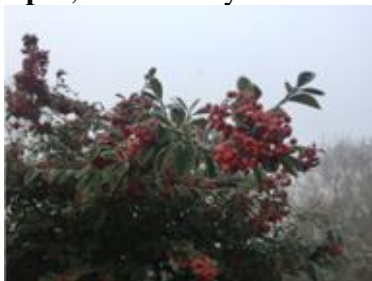


December's village get-togethers will be held as always on the first and third Wednesdays of the month, between 10.00am - 12.00pm, in the village hall (IP13 6QN).

- Hobbies/Craft Group will be on **Wednesday, 6th December**, with tea/coffee, biscuits and friendly chat. (Just £2 to cover the hall expenses).
- And our parish **CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING** will be held on 20th December. This is always a "must"! There will be lots of Christmassy refreshments and good cheer - its a great village gathering. See you there!

Our Parish services at St. Mary's Church have already been mentioned, but here is a quick recap:

- **Sunday, 10th December, 11am**, the **VILLAGE GIFT SERVICE** with a visit from **ST. NICHOLAS**, and special refreshments after the service.
- **Sunday, 24th December, CLOPTON'S CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS EVE CAROL SERVICE, 6pm**, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.



“Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly”.... We look forward to seeing you in church to share a very happy Christmas with you all!

Jenny Schurr

OTLEY

On the 5th of November we had our regular monthly service with Holy Communion which was taken by Katrina with Gail giving the address. At the end of the service Katrina gave us the sad news of her leaving our Benefice to take up a post in Somerset in the new year. The decision was not taken lightly but for family reasons she needs to be closer to her relations. Her last service will be on the 14th of January 2024 and she will be licensed in her new parish on February 8th. We had hoped to have her for much longer in our Benefice and will miss her.



On the 8th of November 13 of us enjoyed ‘cuppa and cake’ in the Village Hall and we are likely to carry on with the Wednesday afternoon ‘cuppa’ next year. On the 12th of November we gathered at the war memorial for a service of Remembrance which was led by James. Wreaths were laid and the children planted crosses at the foot of the memorial as the names of the fallen soldiers were read out.





At the end of this month Otley and Witlesham Primary Schools are holding a Christmas Market in Otley Village Hall from 10am - 3pm with crafts, face painting and more. There will also be a Santa Grotto. In the backroom of the Hall Gail has organised an activity for children either on their own or with their parents. If last year is anything to go by it will be very busy in the hall and the backroom may give a moment of rest for the adults.

Looking ahead to December our regular monthly service is on December 3rd which is the first of Advent. We are having our Carol Service at 5pm on Saturday the 16th of December with mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. The Christmas service will be at 11 am this year. Please join us for some or all the services. You will be very welcome.

You can also find information about all the services in December on the church notice board.

We wish you and your families a happy Christmas and a happy New Year.

Karin Upson

Otley Neighbourhood Plan Update

In 2019, Otley parish residents were asked to input into the process of developing a neighbourhood plan for the parish via a questionnaire that was delivered to all households. The results were then presented to the parish at a public meeting in 2020. Since then, the Otley Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) has been working hard on producing a neighbourhood plan for the parish and is now at the next stage of the process, the 'Pre Submission Consultation', where input from parish residents is required.



Otley Parish Council would like to encourage parish residents to have their say on the Otley Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Draft. Leaflets will be delivered to parish households with information about how and when comments can be made prior to the Pre Submission Consultation in the

new year which will run between 8th January - 26th February 2024. Comments made will then be considered by the NPG prior to the plan being submitted to East Suffolk Council for consideration. For any queries, please email otleynp@gmail.com or ring a member of the NPG on 01473 890 232.



CHRISTMAS POST

Over the last few years, a group of Otley ladies have delivered Christmas cards to the residents in Otley village.

We have supported many Charities and this year will be **THE DEBENHAM PROJECT** – supporting many people in our Village.

Dementia Support

Dementia Friendly

THE DEBENHAM PROJECT

Dementia - Caring for the Carers

- Simple
- Straightforward
- Personal

Practical help • Emotional support • Social involvement

Information & Advice • Lunch Clubs
Carers' Club & Info Cafe • Transport
Exercise Therapy • TLC Peer Group
Signposting • Professional Liaison
Post Diagnosis Support Team

Serving Debenham and its neighbouring villages

01728 862003 www.the-debenham-project.org.uk

Otley Village stores has kindly said we can put our post box in the shop again this year and it will be available from December 1st – 15th. Delivery will be during the following week.

The price is 25p/card **minimum**. (please put the correct money in the box with your cards.)

Your cards will be delivered by foot so complete addresses **WITHIN** Otley village only please.



Thank you for your support

Jayne, Issy, Terry, Marilyn & Jude

Otley Quiz

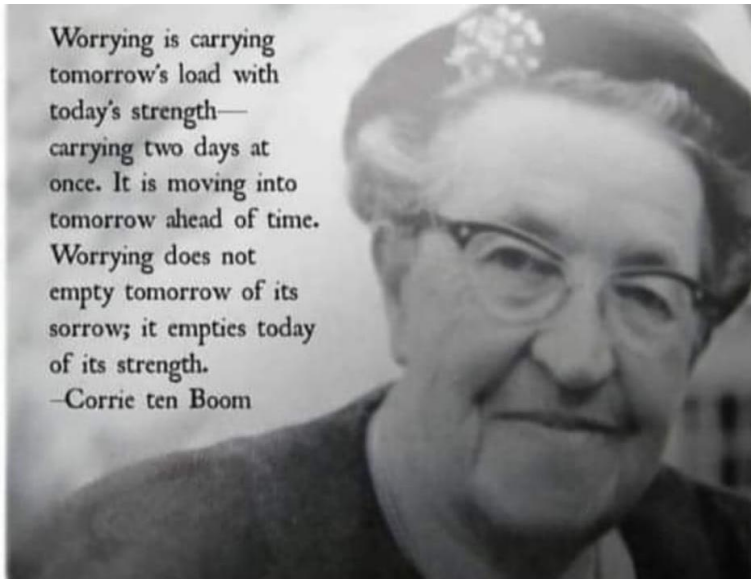


Get out your 2024 Diary and before you hang up the next Countryfile Calendar make a note of that annual event enjoyed by all who take part ...

Saturday 10th February 2024 - St Mary's Village Quiz with supper

It's the usual format ... doors at 7pm, questions start at 7.30pm, £12.50 a head, teams of any number up to 8, individuals or couples can form teams on the day, includes jacket potato supper, cash only bar.

Please reserve your place by contacting Ruth Farnhill (01473 890543 /mob 07902024976) or Ruthie Bullock (01473 890970).



SWILLAND

We had a successful morning tidying up the churchyard and cleaning brass. Thank you to all those who helped and to Robert Stennett for taking everything away.

We also planted 400 daffodil bulbs on the roadside verges, mainly filling where they were a bit sparse last year. Thank you to the Parish Council for providing these.



Earlier in the year William Barraclough gave us three oak trees. Two were planted in the spring on the roadside near Little Shambles. The third one was planted recently by Elizabeth Barraclough in the churchyard. This will hopefully grow to be a fine tree and last for centuries. Many thanks to Katrina for holding a little service for the planting of the oak tree and to William for giving these trees. Thanks to Richard Easton for helping with this also.

Our next church services are:

The **Carol Service** is on **17th December at 11 o'clock**. Do come and join us.

There will be a **Communion Service** on **Christmas Day at 9.30 a.m.**

There will be a **lay led service** on **3rd December at 11 o'clock**.

May I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

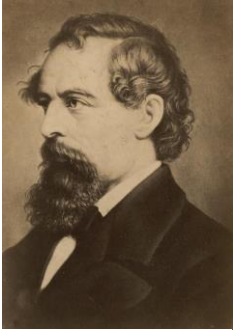


Ann Kent

Mistletoe's smelly history

Did you know that the word 'mistletoe' means dung on a tree? The Anglo-Saxons thought that mistletoe grew in trees where birds had left their droppings. Mistel means dung, and tan means twig.

Thank Dickens for Christmas as you know it!



Ever wonder where many of our Christmas traditions come from? A surprising amount of our modern Christmas celebrations can be traced back to the well-loved story of ‘A Christmas Carol’, by Charles Dickens.

When you read ‘A Christmas Carol’, you discover almost a template of the ‘ideal Christmas’ which we still hold dear today. Dickens seems to have selected the best of the Christmas celebrations of his day (he ignored some of the odd excesses)

and packaged them in such a way as to give us traditions that we could accommodate and treasure – more than a century later.

So, for instance, in *A Christmas Carol*, Christmas is a family day, with a family-centred feast. In a home decorated with holly and candles the characters enjoy a roast turkey, followed by Christmas pudding. They give their loved ones presents. Scrooge even gives donations to charity (!).

And all the while outside, there is snow and frost, while church bells ring, and carol singers sing, and hope for mulled wine. In ‘A Christmas Carol’ there is even a Father Christmas – in the shape of Christmas Present. Only the Christmas tree itself came later, when Prince Albert imported ‘a pretty German toy’ that won the heart of the English court, and hence the rest of Victorian society.

Little Donkey, Little Donkey

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

Here are some fun facts:

- There are more than 44 million donkeys in the world, of all shapes and sizes.
- There are more than 186 breeds of donkey.



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

Why King Charles never throws cake away

King Charles is on a mission to tackle food poverty and rising food waste. It is said that he and the Queen eat daily slices from the same cake until it is finished, as part of a drive to curb their personal food waste. As for the nation, the king has been increasingly concerned that in the UK, 12 million tons of food is thrown away each year - even though almost three quarters of it could still be eaten, according to experts. In contrast, an estimated 4.7million people are living in food poverty. To combat this problem, King Charles has launched [The Coronation Food Project](#), to coincide with this, his 75th year. Up to eight new food hubs around the country will store food, prepare it, and package it, before redistributing it to organisations like food banks and community kitchens. The long-term goal is to circulate 200 million meals a year. In the meantime, King Charles is careful not to throw his cake away. Is there one simple thing you could do in your own kitchen this Christmas, to curb your personal food waste?



STORIES FROM THE STRANGER SIDE OF LIFE

Girl Scout Cookie

An enterprising girl scout in the United States has found a novel way of boosting business for her cookie sales - by setting up shop outside a legal marijuana dispensary to help customers "deal with the munchies". The store owners cut a deal with the girl and were reportedly selling a "Girl Scout Cookie" strain of the drug to go with the biscuits. The Girl Scouts of the USA association is reportedly unhappy about the arrangement. However, the girl's aunt told reporters that "they don't condone this, but it's not against the rules".



Man Changes Name to 'Bacon Double Cheeseburger'

Bacon Double Cheeseburger has revealed he changed his name after a night at the pub with his friends. Originally named Sam Smith, he chose his new moniker because "it was the first thing that came up" during a conversation about names. "My mum was furious, but my dad thinks it's hilarious," 33-year-old Cheeseburger told reporters. "He's more than happy to use my new name. I've no regrets at all."

Fat Penguins Fall Over More

Researchers in Antarctica have released a study into how weight effects king penguins' ability to walk and evade predators – and discovered that fatter animals fall over more than their thinner counterparts. Ten king penguins weighing more than 22lbs were caught by scientists and put on treadmills, with their weight monitored closely to study the effects of bulking up for mating season.



Moon Music

Newly released audio tapes from the Nasa archives have revealed that astronauts on Apollo 10 heard "weird space music" as they passed around the far side of the Moon. They debated whether or not to tell mission control in Houston about what they had heard, according to the mission recordings. No explanation of the noises has been given by Nasa.

50 Million, Not 50 Cent!

Rapper 50 Cent has been ordered to appear before a judge to explain images that show him surrounded by bundles of cash despite filing for bankruptcy last July. The musician, aka Curtis J Jackson III, uploaded the series of photos online last week, with one spelling out the word "broke" in stacks of \$100 bills. "Bankruptcy Judge Ann M Nevins is worried the rapper is being outright dishonest" about his financial situation.



Theme Park Seeks Lazy Workers to Dress Up As Pandas

Chessington World of Adventures in Surrey is recruiting for the "wildest job imaginable" - dressing up as a panda for their forthcoming show Pandemonium. Applicants must be able to "sit around and act lazy for the majority of the day" and "be comfortable wearing a warm, thick coat all day long". One 23-year-old man from Woking "My girlfriend said I might as well apply for the job as I just sit around all day, so I might as well get paid for it."

Female Frogs Fake Death Instead of a Headache!

Female frogs appear to fake death to avoid unwanted advances, researchers have found. In a test, "tonic immobility" – stiffening with arms and legs outstretched as if playing dead – occurred in 33% of all females "clasped by a male" "Females in these dense breeding aggregations are not passive as previously thought," said Dr Carolin Dittrich, from the Natural History Museum of Berlin.

Thieves Make Schoolboy Error

Thieves in the US managed to "swipe" thousands of dollars in merchandise from a vintage clothing store but overlooked a "glaring issue with what they took". The Lincoln Police Department said the thieves mostly made off with a bunch of shoes only for left feet. "They then broke into the building through a window and stole a bunch of... left shoes. You heard that right, single shoes," it said.



What does your TV licence cover?



Imagine something unlikely! This Christmas, there is one television programme that the whole family wants to enjoy, but everyone will view it differently. So - you are resting upstairs and watching it on the portable set in the bedroom. Your partner is still at work and watching it on a laptop in the office. Your son is at university and watching it on his computer live. Your daughter who lives with you is on the train coming home for Christmas, loaded with dirty clothes, and using her mobile phone to see the programme. Your neighbour does not have a television but will listen to the King's speech on the radio. A happy typical family scene!

You are covered if you have a television licence as it includes the whole house. If you have let out a part of your house on a separate tenancy, the tenant needs a licence.

Your student son must have his own TV Licence if he watches or records programmes as they are being shown on TV or live on an online TV service, download or watch BBC programmes on iPlayer. If he shares a house, then one licence is sufficient for the house.

Your partner needs a separate TV Licence for the office if he watches live on an office phone, tablet or computer. Staff or customers do not need a licence if they watch live TV at the business address using their own device, if it is not plugged into the mains, and there is a TV Licence at their home address.

Your daughter is covered by your home licence. The neighbour does not need a licence to listen to the radio.

You must have a TV Licence to download or watch BBC programmes on iPlayer – live, catch up or on demand. If you already have a TV Licence, you are already covered.

As always this is only a guide, and if in doubt get advice. The TV Licensing website has some very clear and helpful advice and a set of FAQs.
<http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/>

Beatrix Potter



It was 80 years ago this month, on 22nd December 1943, that Beatrix Potter, the children's writer and illustrator, died. Her animal characters such as Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, and Jemima Puddle-Duck brought her worldwide fame – and made her loved by children right round the world.

Helen Beatrix Potter (28 July 1866 – 22 December 1943) had enjoyed an upper-middle-class childhood, but it was also solitary. Instead of access to childhood friends, she was given numerous pets and spent holidays in Scotland and the Lake District, where she learned to love landscape, flora and fauna.

Beatrix Potter was in her thirties when she first self-published *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in 1902. Its immense success meant that she began writing and illustrating children's books full-time. In all, Potter wrote more than 60 books. Her best-known ones were her 23 children's books. Her books went on to sell more than 250 million copies. When in 1903 Peter Rabbit was made into a patented stuffed toy, he became the first fictional character to have this honour.

Potter used the sales of her books and a legacy from an aunt in 1905 to buy Hill Top Farm in Near Sawrey, a village in the Lake District. Over the following decades, she bought many additional farms, in order to preserve the unique hill country landscape from developers.

In 1913, when she was 47, Beatrix married William Heelis, a local solicitor in Hawkshead. By now she was also a prize-winning breeder of Herdwick sheep and a farmer.



In 1943, when she was 77, Potter died of pneumonia and heart disease at her home in Near Sawrey. She left most of her property to the National Trust, which means that she deserves the credit for so much of the land that now makes up the Lake District National Park.

28th December - Holy Innocents

The death of a very young child is perhaps the hardest grief of all to bear. So, the 28th December is a very poignant day in the church calendar. It is when the worldwide Church joins with bereaved parents to grieve the loss of babies and young children. For Holy Innocents Day recalls the massacre of the young male children of Bethlehem by Herod the Great.



Herod had been told by the Magi, or Wise Men, that a great king had been born in Bethlehem, and he felt shaken. How could a child in unimportant little Bethlehem be so powerful that the stars in the night sky honoured His birth?! Herod took the Magi so seriously that he decided to try and kill this new young rival. He decreed that every male baby of two years and under should be killed. (Matthew 2:1-18).

Bethlehem was not a large place, and Bible commentators estimate that between six and 25 infants were slaughtered by Roman soldiers. Their mothers were inconsolable at the death of their babies, as indeed mothers have always been.

The death of these innocent baby boys of Bethlehem became a feast-day in the western Church by the 4th century. This was because the Church considered them to be martyrs because they not only died *for* Christ, *but instead of* Christ.

Down the centuries, the tragic loss of the Holy Innocents has touched the imagination and hearts of poets, preachers and artists. Though heart-broken parents still grieve today, the Church can offer them one firm assurance: that young children who die to this world will undoubtedly “this day be with Me in Paradise.” The One who eagerly said “Suffer the little children to *come unto Me*” will be the last person to turn them away.



*“Constant kindness can accomplish much.
As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes
misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate.”*

– Albert Schweitzer

RUSSELL LING REPORTS

THE 1987 GALE



In October there were two gales Babet and Ciaran, fortunately neither of these caused much damage in this area unlike the 1987 gale which most certainly did. For this reason, I thought that it would be of interest to those who were not here at the time as how we were able to cope with the aftermath.

Chris Clark and I had been appointed emergency advisor's by the Otley Parish Council who were at that time encouraged to make preparations in the event of an emergency taking place in the village. The emergency at this time was related to the Cold War with Russia as it was then considered that there was a real possibility of them dropping a nuclear bomb on us. This of course was not mentioned to us at the time as it could have caused a panic. I certainly thought that this was the reason as I discovered later that bomb proof shelters had been dug under the Ipswich Police Station. As it turned out we were prepared for an emergency but fortunately not a nuclear bomb being dropped.

On the morning of the 16th of October I was awakened by Chris Clark shouting outside my bedroom window, pulling on the light cord I realised that there was no electricity. Poking my head out of the window he informed me that the electricity and the telephones were not working. Although I knew that there was a high wind I had no idea that it was so strong. Going out of my back door I was confronted with the sight of my apple trees blown over and the greenhouse totally demolished. The driveway was covered with tree branches and the power lines were down, most of the tiles had been blown off my barn and being a farmer this was not good news as I milled and mixed all my feed in it.



The first requirement was to open up the highway for traffic, Chris and I got out our chainsaws and by 11am had cleared the roads up to the village boundaries. No one could get to work as the roads to the town were completely blocked by fallen trees and branches and these didn't get cleared completely for two days. The villagers were wandering about the roads discussing how to overcome the problem of being without electricity and not being able to contact



the outside world "mobiles were generally not available then". There was no milk delivered but fortunately a farmer who lived at Bastings Hall Framsdon had a milking herd and couldn't get his morning milk production collected due to the blocked roads he put some milk churns on a tractor trailer and was able to cross over the fields to bring it to Otley Post Office where it was gratefully received. The next problem was heating and cooking for households who relied on electricity only. I had a number of paraffin lamps that I bought in a sale and these I handed out to those who required them, fortunately we had a garage in the village, which stocked paraffin. For cooking, neighbours who had solid fuel heating systems helped out. Many households who had deep freezers lost all the contents except a few who had access to a generator.

As regards to the farm it took me the best part of a week to clear all the branches from the fields before I could carry on with ploughing and drilling. The electricity was cut off for a whole week and I was becoming desperate for feed for the pigs and cattle when much to my relief the power was restored. It was the longest period of time that I have ever known for the village to be without electricity. After the field work was finished the next job was to make the buildings as waterproof as possible. The barn which dated back to the 17th century had originally been thatched but the weight of the tiles had put a strain on the structure which hadn't been braced for this extra weight and this had caused it to lean over slightly. I was able to purchase some lightweight plastic sheeting which solved this problem and also quickly covered the roof. Fortunately, the weather remained dry for a period of three weeks which enabled us to get all this work completed.



An American in Otley: A Brazilian Delight

For several years I bought holiday cactus (*genus Schlumbergera*). As they grew, I transplanted the four plants and now their blooms brighten my dining room every year. Admittedly, they don't all bloom at the same time, in the same color, or throughout the entire plants. But, they do flower quite predictably from American Thanksgiving to Easter, depending on the variety. I will not bore you with the technical differences between Thanksgiving, Christmas, Whitsun and Easter cactus. Suffice it to say, the cultivars vary in the shapes of stem segments.



Leave it to the Victorian age explorers to bring these plants back to Europe when they discovered them in the cloud rain forests of Brazil and Bolivia – in cool mountains, regions along the coast of Brazil and the higher regions of the cloud forests in Bolivia. They are epiphytic, usually growing on the

trunks of trees and getting their nutrients and moisture from the air, rain, and debris accumulating around them. They can also grow on rocks, in which case they are epilithic.

British botanist Allan Cunningham went on an expedition to Brazil between 1814 and 1816 in search of specimens for Kew gardens. Among his finds were flowering cactus hanging high off the trunks of trees in Brazil's coastal forests. He returned to Britain and shared his specimens, some of which ended up in the possession of Frederic Schlumberger, a French collector of rare plants. He began hybridizing the plants and they became popular in Europe where they were called "crab cactus" because of their stem segments' appearance.

In Brazil, these plants flower in the late spring and are known as Flor de maio (May Flower). Because their blooming cycle in the northern hemisphere coincides with the winter holiday season, they have become seasonal favorites on our windowsills and often referred to as Christmas cactus.

Another reason these cacti are crowd pleasers is the ease with which they grow. "These plants are true members of the cactus (*cactaceae*) family even though they

bear little resemblance to other species of cacti adapted to desert heat: they have photosynthetic stems rather than leaves and areoles rather than branches.”

<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=50947> . They require good indirect sunlight (mine bask in an east facing window), temperatures between 60F and 80F, and soil that is allowed to dry out between watering. They like being root bound and lightly fertilized every month or so, especially in late summer. These plants can grow to be large and live for over 50 years.



Enjoy them this holiday season as we enjoy ours, now blooming prodigiously. Our family in Utah wishes you the happiest of Christmases and a peaceful New Year.

Mary Miner

susiespinner36@msn.com

SMILE LINES



Christmas in my heart

Christmas is in my heart twelve months a year and, thanks to credit cards, it's also on my Visa card statement twelve months a year.

Red

What's red and white, red and white, and red and white? Father Christmas rolling down a hill.

Sums up Christmas

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to Men'; and 'Batteries not included'.



Stronger

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



Snowman

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? – Frostbite.

Santa

What do you call Santa's helpers? – Subordinate Clauses.

The Christmas stars

Any astronomer can predict with absolute accuracy just where every star in the universe will be as the clocks chime midnight on Christmas Eve. He can make no such prediction about his teenage daughter.

Runs over

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



We've got online carol-singers again!



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

Solutions to the Brainteasers on Page 5

1. Rude-olf
2. Christmas Lights
3. Turtle Dove
4. In the Dictionary
5. Looks like rain dear
6. It's Christmas Eve



How did you do?

CHILDREN'S CORNER

How to Make a Salt Dough Nativity Handprint Ornament

- **Make your salt dough.** This involves mixing 1 cup of flour, 1/2 cup of salt, and about 1/2 cup of water together. Mix the flour and salt together first. Then add water and keep mixing until you get a dough-like consistency. It needs to be wet enough to stick together but not so wet that it sticks to your hands.
- **Get your little ones to press their hands into the dough,** making handprints.
- **Bake your salt dough** at around 200 degrees Fahrenheit for about an hour. How long it takes will actually vary quite a bit depending on the size and the thickness of your salt dough. Keep checking on it every 10 or 20 minutes until it is hard, but not brown.
- **Paint your nativity scene.** We painted baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and 3 wise men. But I've also seen handprints that feature baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, 1 wise man, 1 shepherd, and 1 angel.



Making The Salt Dough | Simple 3-Ingredient Recipe

Salt dough is really hard to get wrong! *If your dough is too dry, add more water. If your dough is too wet, add more flour.*

Mix together 1 cup of flour, 1/2 cup of salt, and about 1/2 cup of water. You may need a bit more or less water. What's important is getting the consistency right (not following the amounts of ingredients exactly).



Mix your dry ingredients first, and then add water until you get the consistency of dough.

Your dough should stick together. You don't want to have bits of flour left at the bottom. But you don't want your dough to be so wet that it sticks to your hands (and the table, and the baking sheet).

Shape your dough into its final shape. If you are making handprint nativity ornaments, then

you will want to shape your dough into a big, flat circle, and have your kids press their hands into it to make handprints.

Bake your dough at about 200 degrees Fahrenheit. How long will depend on how big and thick your salt dough is. We baked our handprints for about an hour. Check on your ornaments as they bake every 10 or 20 minutes (especially near the end). If they are hard when you tap them, then they are done. If they are still mushy in places, then they need to be baked more.

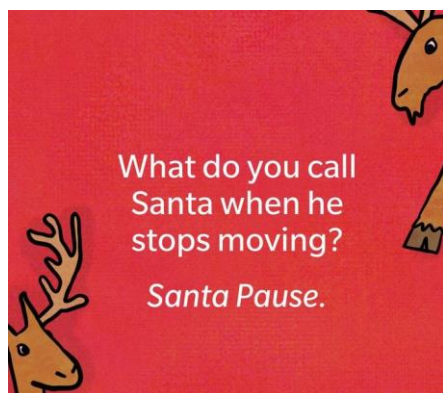
You can get as creative as you'd like with your nativity scene. You can add wise men, shepherds, and angels.



Christmas Spot the Difference

Can you find all 8 differences between these pictures?





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