



Christchurch Forest of Dean
St Mary the Virgin English Bicknor

**Church and Community
News and Events**

December 2020 and January 2021

40p



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With Christmas Greetings to you

Magazine editor Judith Brickwood 01594 781436

Magazine Treasurer Jeff Carrick 01594 860936

Articles for the magazine should be sent to the Editor at **judithbrickwood33@gmail.com** no later than the **15th of the month**. Please include your name and contact details. *Please note new email address and deadline*

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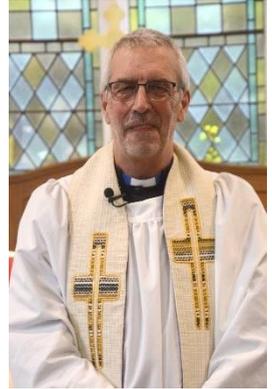
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The magazine is available in full colour at christchurchfod.org.uk where you will also find recordings of past Reflections , information about streamed services and much more

Please look at the centre pages, pages 24 and 25 for information regarding the arrangements for the various Christmas services and events.

FROM THE VICARAGE.

So, it's that time again! Or not! I am unwilling to go along with the idea that what we are all facing is the 'NEW NORMAL'. There can't be anything 'normal' about families not being able to visit each other; nothing 'normal' about businesses struggling or people being in fear for their jobs. There is nothing 'normal' about having to keep our distance or living in fear about where we go and who we meet.



At the time when Jesus was born, his country had been under Roman occupation for over 60 years. That occupation wasn't going to end for another 60 years or more. In fact, Jesus country had been pretty much occupied by other empires for the previous 600 years. So you might think that they would have accepted occupation and oppression as 'normal'. They never did!

The Old Testament tells these stories, as does the New, but the overriding message throughout is one of HOPE! Passages like this one from Isaiah the Prophet:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Speaking of the coming of Jesus, in a passage we always read at our Carol Service, St John says this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.!

Even in these dark times, we can look forward and hope. But, hope is not just wishful thinking. It is also about having a confidence in the future. One passage from the New Testament calls us to have 'Faith' that God is at work whatever we do. It is from the book of Hebrews ch.11 and, if you have a bible, it is worth reading the whole chapter as it tells lots of stories about faith in God and the future: verse 1 says:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The experience of the people in the bible, the experience of those who went through the two world wars, the experience of those who suffered under Apartheid, all give us reason to hope.

My prayer this Christmas is that none of us accept a new normal!

We must live by the rules to keep each other safe. We must work together to keep each other sane. BUT, we must look to the future with HOPE!

Hope, is the real meaning of Christmas. Hope is what Jesus brought when he was born in that stable.



Have a blessed Christmas and lets all look forward to a hope –filled and better New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Tony Williams'.

Tony Williams Rector

December Prayers

Lord, now winter is here and we try to keep warm, open our hearts to your love. Help us to find you in our busy lives. To look beyond the rich food, colourful presents For the real meaning of Christmas. May we find the joy of that first Christmas when Mary and Joseph wrapped the baby Jesus up in swaddling clothes. Welcoming the Shepherds and the three wise men in to the glory of his arrival. May we experience the love that is revealed on this joyous day.

Lord be with those that are feeling lonely at this at this time of year and wrap your loving arms around them. We pray pray especially for all those dealing with Covid and the effects of this virus. Be with those who are ill and have lost loved ones. We pray for those that are sick in other ways and we pray especially for those who look after them. Help us to stay focused on you this Christmas and always. Amen.

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight O'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.



Mercy is love being gracious.
Eloquence is love talking.
Prophecy is love foretelling.
Faith is love believing.
Charity is love acting.
Sacrifice is love offering itself.
Patience is love waiting.
Endurance is love abiding.
Hope is love expecting.
Peace is love resting.
Prayer is love communing.

Drawings on this page and the opposite one are by Charlotte Woodward, age 10,



Jesus, new-born child of all time,
We greet your birth with wide-eyed delight.
You are precious beyond words
for our world needs your presence more than ever.
Let the angel's promise of your good news
offering joy and peace to all the world
be heard by those who lead and guide.
Let Kings bow down and all creation greet this holy mo-
ment
as we seek to grasp its magnitude.
For you are God's gift
silently delivered to every human heart.

A Christmas blessing

God grant you the light of Christmas,
Which is faith;
The warmth of Christmas,
Which is purity;
The righteousness of Christmas,
Which is justice;
The belief in Christmas,
Which is truth;
The all of Christmas,
Which is Christ.



Glory to God in the highest and on earth Peace, goodwill toward men.
St. Luke 2-14.

Have a wonderful Christmas,

Blessing,

Love Sally.

January Prayers



Lord at the start of this brand new year be with us and guide us to serve you in all we do.

Help us to begin afresh with energy and excitement to spread your word.

We pray for this beautiful world and all creation. Help us to care for the planet and all animals and insects that are all interwoven together.

Help us to care for each other, but most of all to love each other through you Lord.

Heavenly Father, protect and bless us we go about our daily lives. Amen.

This New Years Day we are reminded that by your amazing grace:

Each day is new,

Fresh and bursting with love,

From here to eternity.

Thank you Lord.

Through every minute of this day

Be with me, Lord!

Through every day of this week,

Be with me, Lord!

Through all the years of this life,

Be with me, Lord!

So shall the days and weeks and years

Be threaded on a golden cord.

And all draw on with sweet accord

Unto thy fulness, Lord,

That so, when time is past,

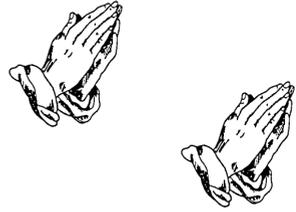
By grace I may, at last,

Be with thee, Lord.



John Oxenham [1853-1941]

Bless us, O Lord, in this coming year.
May dew and rain be a source of blessing.
Bless to our use the fruits of the earth
and let the earth rejoice in them.
And bless all that we do
and the work of our hands. Amen.



Dear Lord, the New Year begins and with it comes expectations.
Guide us to a path that will please you Lord. Guide us to do your work, to
be pilgrims and spread your word throughout this beautiful world. May the
Holy Spirit be in us and surround us to open our minds to you Lord. Amen.

Lord, you make all things new.
You bring hope alive in our hearts and cause our spirits to be born again.
Thank you for this New Year for the potential it holds.
Come and kindle us a mighty flame
So that in our time, many will see the wonders of God
And live forever to praise your glorious name. Amen.

May God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace by means of
your faith in him, so that your hope will continue to grow by the power of
the Holy Spirit.

From Romans 15.

God the Father, bless us;
God the Son, defend us;
God the Spirit, keep us
Now and evermore.

Happy New Year to you all,

Sally.



Senior Ramblings

This morning's service (15th November 2020) has inspired me to write a few words. There is no significance intended in relevance or importance in the various points, just thoughts as they flowed from brain to pen.

So, thank you to Andy for a clear first line introduction to each hymn so that we know when to start singing, even though no-one else can hear us.

Thank you to Sandie for all her technical skills, big learning curves, re-learning curves and worry lines from keeping us all connected.

Many thanks to David, for keeping up with Skype/Zoom so that those of us with a fear of 'on-line' idiosyncrasies and a need for some interaction, can join in.

Thank you to all the leaders, lesson readers and prayer composers for keeping us in the picture with local and international events. No names here because you are all so good at what you present and provide us with, that I'd be afraid of missing someone out. However, I would like to mention Helen who always gives me food for thought and Tony whose reflection this morning 'hit home!'

I have to admit to having felt a little distanced and disconnected during the interim period between lockdowns. This would seem rather selfish when everyone else was glad to be out and about, visiting, helping, shopping, attending church – albeit with caution, and getting back to relative normality. However, in our enforced isolation *it was so good to see you all again* and feel that community spirit flowing out from all those chats and smiles. Hello and Welcome!

Well I have to say that Tony's reflection obviously worked today because I felt the need to join all those busy people with their 'bags of golden talents' (Matthew 14: 14-30) and offer my small bag if it can be used in a 'vocal' way for Christmas services. I am not suggesting that my voice is in anyway a talent (especially the singing aspect) but will be happy should it be useful, bearing in mind my mother's advice to "Sit still and pipe down Esther!!" Thank you also to Linda whose talent is to always bring us prayers pertinent to the day and to touch our inner selves.

Songs of Praise

Finally on this ramble, we usually watch Songs of Praise around lunchtime and today's episode I found rather moving as Aled Jones included a friend of a different faith. It was good to see in this time of anxiety and separation.

Thank you for listening.

Esther.

Esther has been a faithful listener to the on-line services since they began during the first lockdown. It is so good to get feedback! There will be another 'rambling' from Esther next month. Ed.

During Lockdowns our 11a.m service is held online. When back in church, for those shielding we still hope to have this available. If you do not do Facebook, where the service should be live streamed, please contact us: christchurchfod@gmail.com

Beautiful words from Gifford Savage

Pandemic Beatitudes

Blessed are those who socially distance;
For God will be near to them.

Blessed are they who are kind to others on social media;
For they shall be comforters.

Blessed are those who do not share misinformation;
For the truth shall set them free.

Blessed are those who wear a mask;
For God looks upon the selflessness within.

Blessed are those who wash their hands;
For they shall sanctify all they touch.

Blessed are they that do not hoard;
For they shall help those who have less.

Blessed are those who teach;
For they shall learn from little children.

Blessed are the artists: painters, poets, musicians;
For they shall console.

Blessed are the scientists;
For to them will mysteries be revealed.

Blessed are those who care for the vulnerable;
For gratitude shall be their reward.

Blessed are the unappreciated: the cleaners, carers, shop-workers,
and delivery drivers;

For those that were last shall be first.



These sweatshirt
logos were spotted
in a shop by one
of our readers.



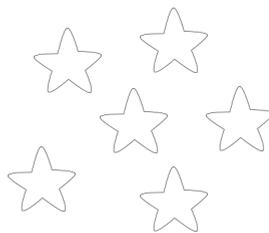
One of the daily blessings which I have experienced thus far in the second lockdown, has been the following text from Paul's Letter to the **Colossians chapter 1 verse 11** (taken from **The Living Bible**)

We are praying, too, that you will be filled with His mighty, glorious strength so that you can keep on going no matter what happens – always full of the joy of the Lord

It seems to me that this might be an encouragement to many during these difficult and unpredictable times

God bless,

Helen



St Mary the Virgin English Bicknor

**Are you looking for Christmas Treat,
for yourself or for a friend?**

If so, don't forget that

**Sue Cole , Gill Carne Helen Rodwell have been busy
in their kitchens and Jams, Pickles and Preserves
and cakes are available**

contact Sue , Gill or Helen for more information



Christmas in Berry Hill

Every Autumn the Berry Hill Christmas Lights and Community Events committee start to plan for the festive period and lots of organising goes into the Christmas tree and village light switch on. This event includes the Berry Hill band, readings, speeches and prayer, songs from the Under 5's, a lantern parade from the children of the Primary School and a decorated tractor parade, along with Father Christmas on the fire-truck! This year, unfortunately due to lockdown and the guidelines on the virus, none of this is possible.

We still wanted to spread some much needed Christmas cheer, so a group of willing volunteers put up the tree and light frames on the buildings, and we them and the homes and businesses for powering them. There is also a big thank you to Andy and Maureen Bessant at Forevergreen Ltd. for donating the tree and to Maddocks for supplying the cherry picker. The lights were switched on, on the 27th November, but this year the event was live streamed on Facebook and the tractor parade will hopefully take place later on in December.

It has also become tradition that a Christmas lunch is provided for free, to our over 75's living in Berry Hill, Christchurch and Edge End, and this year an alternative had to be found. Hampers were agreed upon. To date, 105 people have requested a hamper, the contents have been sourced and the hampers made up by volunteers, following the government guidelines, at Christchurch church, to whom we are grateful for the space and resources. In our usual community spirit, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of local businesses and individuals who have either donated goods or given us great deals on produce. We thank the following for their contributions; Berry Hill News, The Globe, Hot Pot Pottery, David Lloyd, Forest Deli, Lucozade Ribena Suntory, The Happy Apple, Tesco at Lydney, Coleford Co-op, Waitrose at Monmouth, and Rev Tony, Sue Boulter and Erin Hall from FAH. Berry Hill Under 5's, Berry Hill Primary and Five Acres High School, worked together to create marvellous table decorations, each one unique and guaranteed to spread the Christmas cheer! We are also very appreciative of West Dean Parish Council and Forest of Dean District Council as we were successful in gaining community grants from each. We would not be able to do all these things without the hard work of the committee. Each person has their role and together make up a terrific team. Finally thank you to the community who contribute to the charity boxes and support us each year.

Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year,

Jo Revill, on behalf of Berry Hill Christmas lights and community events

Thank you to the Churchyard Team at Christchurch

I want to thank the churchyard grass cutting group:- Roger and his son Gavin; Charlie and the other Roger. They have worked very hard to keep the churchyard in good condition.

It has been a difficult year as we could not start cutting until June because of the first lockdown. Lisa and Lesley were working long hours and could not help but we very much value their time and interest and we are grateful that they are part of the team.

Thank you also to Gavin for regularly winding our church clock and changing the time in Autumn and Spring.

We are thrilled with the newly painted church railings. Another church friend called Roger asked if he could do this and has made a wonderful job. Roger also varnished the benches outside the church. We really value all our church helpers for their enthusiasm, skills and precious time. Thank you.

If anyone else is interested in joining the helpers please get in touch. Trevor Harvey. Church Warden at Christchurch FoD. 01594 835897



The Food Bank

As well as all the usual things the Foodbank is particularly short of

- Washing up liquid
- Washing powder or liquid
- Tinned Spaghetti hoops etc
- Noodle/rice/pasta instant meals
- Sponge puddings and long life desserts
- Rice pudding
- Tinned potatoes



Please leave your donation in the usual place and thank you

What Charity? A seasonal warning

Having spent some 15 years as CEO of a national charity, I have come across some pretty shady charities, who are not always what they claim.. There are different types of charities, and most but not all do what they say.

There are charities that morph into whatever the state want, in order to bid for state funding for a contract, delivering what the state want in the way the state want it delivered, but at a lower cost than a non charity company, could deliver.

There are charities who have a core function and deliver what they set out to, to the benefit of their client.

There are charities that raise funds to distribute to other good causes, a good example and very good charity is Children in Need.

There are charities that are run totally by volunteers with no paid staff, and who rely on donations or investments from money left by the original founder, as their only income.

Some public schools are also charities, So which charity should you support.?

When donating to any charity, one should do the homework. Do they do what they claim? is the money wasted or well used?. Do they make a difference?, and do they spend your money where they claim, or are they building enormous sums of money in the bank? What % of the income is actually spent helping the cause they claim to help, or in helping the end user.

I am avoiding naming some well know charities that spend far less than they make, or you give them, on their clients, or on those who they claim to help. There are many charities that have 10's of millions of pounds in the bank, yet still plead poverty and ask for your money. Every charity needs reserves, it is the sensible thing to have 6 or 9 months turnover in reserve, but it only takes a look at the accounts of some to see that they are sitting on many years worth of reserves.

However, there are many who do great work and struggle from week to week just to keep going. And it is possible to check just what a charity has in reserve and what they spend their money on.

Before you give to any charity, or support them, have a look at their web site, and in particular, their accounts. Have a look on the charity commission web site, where the accounts should be available. Look at what % of their income is spent on the end user and what % of their income is spent on raising funds, and how much they have in reserves. Also look at what the directors and senior managers are paid. Remember, it's your money, and you are giving it to help a cause or people you want to help. You are not giving it to fund huge salaries, expensive offices and to build up 10s of millions of pounds in a bank. Charities need help, they need funds, but make sure the charity you support uses your money properly, and if not, don't donate again, find a different charity where your money can make a difference.



Happy Christmas GOM



English Bicknor
Local
History Group

The website development and logo design were Alec Scales' half-term project. He has brought together our summaries of previous meetings, some nice photos and a bit of local history together with our future programme and some useful links. Do have a look (and obviously let me know if we have got anything wrong!) and I hope it will give you a little taster to keep you going whilst the Group is unable to meet.

www.englishbicknorlhg.go.uk

NB: You may have to put in the full address as above until the various search engines have got it indexed.

Claire Scales

An unusual look at the outdoors

Many of us have found great pleasure these last few months in the natural world and count our blessings to have gardens, fields and woodlands right here on our doorsteps. As the days shorten and more time is spent at home, there is comfort in knowing that other people's stories can bring these pleasures alive in different ways.

The Wainwright Prize for the best writing about the natural world has been awarded annually since 2013. It celebrates the life of Alfred Wainwright, the fellwalker and author of the famous guide books for walkers in the Lake District. This year's winner was the youngest ever - Dara McAnulty for his "Diary of Young Naturalist", covering the twelve months between his 14th and 15th birthdays. Dara was born and lives in Northern Ireland. He is autistic, the eldest of three children, all of whom, and his mother also, are autistic. His father is not. Through all the difficulties of his early school life, keeping a diary of his love of the natural world became a refuge and a salvation. The writing is extraordinary - it flows effortlessly from the first page, carrying the reader through the daily life of Dara and his family as they prepare to move house and schools, cope with the heart-breaks and begin to celebrate successes.

Dara sees the natural world with the intensity of a child and writes with the understanding of an adult. Nothing is too small to be ignored or to be given the care and protection it needs. His gift to the reader is to share the autistic way of seeing, so that our eyes are opened a little more and the world becomes a more vivid, vibrant and beautiful place.

If you feel in need of something like this, or know someone else who might, either teenager or adult, this book would be a lovely present. It is available in Rossiters, the independent bookshop in Ross and Monmouth.

Sue Brooks

Sue is a new contributor to the magazine who will be reviewing books for us over the coming year.

FIVE FINGER EXAMEN

The Jesuit's have been using this method of engaging with the Examen or one very similar for hundreds of years. Part of Ignatian spirituality, it's a guided way of spiritually reflecting on your day.

Start by getting the young person to close their hand into a fist, and then open each digit (finger or thumb), read the text and pause in order to reflect.

WHAT HAS STOOD OUT?

As our middle finger sticks out, think about the moments that have stood out to you today - why have they stood out? Were they good or bad?

WHERE HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED GOD?

As our index finger is often used for pointing at things, look back on your day as to where you have encountered God during your day. Why do you think it happened there?

WHAT HAS BEEN GOOD?

As a thumbs up often conveys something as good, think about the moments that have been good this week and thank God for those moments.



WHAT DO YOU NEED GOD'S HELP WITH?

Our ring fingers are named after where we put our wedding rings. Think about the promises you've made and the responsibilities you have. What do you need God's help with?

WHAT LITTLE CHANGE CAN YOU MAKE?

Our little fingers are often used to balance us when we are holding something. Reflect upon the balance in your life, either between what's helpful and what isn't about the joys and challenges. What stuff do you need to say sorry for? What changes do you need to make?

English Bicknor and District Garden Club

After having met twice at the start of 2020, sadly Covid 19 meant that all the club's activities have since had to be suspended, including our normal AGM and Christmas entertainment.

However, the committee have been able to meet, following government guidelines and , and the accounts for 2020 have been audited and adopted. The figures are available by contacting one of the committee. At the meeting it was decided that, all being well, we would aim to start 2021 activities in May with the 2020 programme of visits and speakers who have kindly agreed to carry forward the 2020 schedule. It was further agreed that the club would extend 2020 membership through 2021 to members who subscribed in January 2020. The club will also subsidise garden visits which means that members will pay a maximum of £5 per visit.

The posts of Chair, Treasurer, Programme Secretary and three committee members are open for election next year so members are asked to contact one of the officers to volunteer or propose members (with their prior consent) to fill the posts.

Finally, the club extends warm Christmas wishes to everyone and looks forward to 2021, hoping that it will be a healthier and happier year.

For all information please contact

Chair: Agnes Wallis on 834159

Treasurer: Pat Bowen on 835382

Programme Secretary: Pat Drinkall on 861025



Open the Book

Our Open the Book Team, who, pre-Covid, would normally be going into our two primary schools, have been recording some Bible stories for the children to watch during their assembly time.



Church Discussion Group

Church Discussion Group meet on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at and we will begin again, all being well, after the New Year. However, we may change the meeting time from evening to morning, certainly during the dark evenings.

At the time of writing we are not certain if we will be able to meet at Christchurch, in which case Covid restrictions will apply, or on line.

For more info, please contact Jacqui on Tel 01594 726144

fudgejacqueline@gmail.com

Wherever we meet, we extend a warm welcome to everyone.





Shoe Box Christmas

A reflection while packing our shoeboxes

There is someone called Santa, well that's what I've heard
 But he doesn't come here; we're in the Third World.
 He visits children, with presents for Christmas Day
 All over the land – that's what people say.
 And the children write letters saying just what they'd like,
 A doll or an engine, a teddy or a bike.
 And I've heard that they get what they asked for – and more.
 I guess that this Santa must have a large store.
 These are the stories that have been handed down,
 But I'm in the Third World and he's never been round.
 Then only last year a big plane flew in.
 It was making a loud noise, a terrible din.
 Then a man with something held to his face
 Shouted to the villagers to meet at this place.
 Men and women were there to greet us with smiles,
 Their plane was full of boxes – piles upon piles.
 They were covered in paper all lovely and bright,
 Silver and gold, red, blue and white.
 "Do I get a whole box? Is there one there for me?"
 Has someone sent us this magic for free?
 I hope I'm not too old to be given
 A beautiful box of my own – I'm eleven.
 I looked round to see how the happy faces glowed,
 Bare feet dancing in the muddy road.
 And into every outstretched hand a precious box was placed.
 The children shouted "Thank you" and home again raced.
 I received my parcel and shed a tear of joy,
 As it said upon the label 'For an 11 year old boy'.
 There is someone called Santa – that is what I've heard,
 But now I know he's out there, I believe it, every word.

This was written by a lady in Cheshire.





Thank you so much to all those who filled shoeboxes or donated items for boxes.

Teams4U also thank you:



If you would like to see a short video of some of last year's boxes being distributed visit:

<https://youtu.be/rODKXcXBfYA>

SORRY MR 'GRINCH'. Christmas is NOT cancelled!



It seems like everything is 'up in the air' as to what might or might not be possible this Christmas. At the time of going to print we have no idea what we are going to be able, or allowed to do at this special time of year.

Given the uncertainty as to what the rules and restrictions will be over Christmas, and the possibility that Lockdown may be extended, or new rules may be stricter than before, the sad conclusion is that in the interest of public safety during the current and future COVID 19 restrictions, we cannot offer the community-based events that we normally do during December.

Sadly this affects the following:

Christingle, Orchard Trust Carol Service, Christmas Bazaars, Christmas Concert, Carol Service, Crib Service, Midnight Communion and Christmas Morning Services.

HOWEVER, CHRISTMAS IS NOT CANCELLED!

- 1 Our normal Sunday Services and Thursday Communion at Bicknor Village Hall will begin again as soon as permitted.
- 2 Both Churches will be decorated for Christmas with Tree and flowers and we hope, a Tree outside the building. We invite all members of our communities to come and tie a decoration on the tree!.
- 3 We are planning a '**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION**' WITH LOTS OF LOCAL TALENT TAKING PART and carols galore. This will be available via Facebook and web site for the whole community to enjoy.

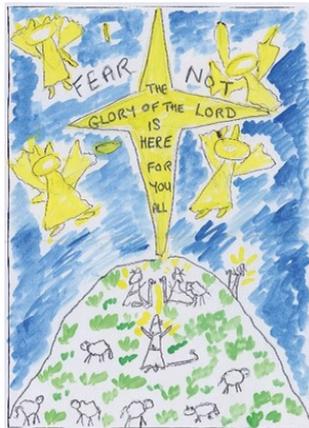


- 4 We will also be holding an on-line **INTERACTIVE CRIB SERVICE** on Christmas Eve afternoon for families. (look out for your interactive packs at school!)

- 5 There will be a quiet and reflective Christmas Service available to download for those who want to take 'Time Out' of the busy Christmas rush

- 6 Both our Church will (if we are permitted) be open for private prayer and the opportunity to light a 'Christmas Prayer' candle on Sunday 20th December between 2-5pm.

It is certainly going to be a strange Christmas for all of us. So, lets look out for one another and maybe think of a way we can bring some special Christmas Joy into everyone's day this Christmas.



English Bicknor WI News

Now that we are in lockdown 2 our activities have had to be further curtailed. Before the current lockdown we had been quite busy in our groups of 6 – enjoying walking, netball, and craft where we made delightful robins and snowmen led by our tutor Cathy.

Hopefully, these activities will resume very soon.

We continue to hold our Zoom coffee mornings on the days when we used to have meetings. This is a poor substitute but at least gives us the opportunity to have a chat.

Our members have been busy at home making little drawstring bags for Great Oaks hospice which will contain a tea light which people light while participating in an online service.

Members have also been collecting food and children's clothes for the food and clothes banks which are especially necessary now.

In normal times meetings are held at 7pm on the first Thursday of the month at the village hall.

For further details please contact Sue Yemm on 01594 860845



A seasonal treat in favour all year round

Carol's Rock cakes

These are always popular at our coffee mornings so I thought you might like to make some while you're missing mine!

The original recipe comes from my 1975 Marguerite Patten Easy Cook Book and I must admit I still bake them in ounces but I've added the metric equivalent!

They're quick and easy when you want something sweet in a hurry.

Ingredients

8 oz / 200 g SR flour
1 tsp mixed spice/ cinnamon
4 oz / 100g margarine
4 oz / 100g caster sugar
4 oz / 100g dried fruit
1 egg and approx. 2 tablespoons milk
a little sugar to glaze

Method

Sieve flour and spice into a bowl and rub in margarine.

Stir in sugar and dried fruit.

Add beaten egg and milk to give a sticky consistency.

Put mixture in 9-12 small heaps onto greased baking tray.

Dust tops of cakes with sugar before baking in oven,
temp 180°/ 160° fan for 12-15 mins.

(I usually slightly undercook them to get a soggy middle!)

Best eaten the same day, or the same hour if you're my husband!

Yummy! Editor.



Spotlight on.....who? Every Christmas needs a mystery so here is a Spotlight where you are invited to see if you can work out who the subject may be. The photograph is the first clue: her husband said this was his favourite photograph as she had never looked more beautiful.



The subject – for reasons of ease of grammar I will call her Christine – is not a stranger to a spotlight for she began her ballet training before she started school and by the age of six was taking the lead in dance school productions. Her early promise led to an audition at the Royal Ballet School where she was rejected on grounds that she would ‘grow too tall’. She did not! Christine continued to dance however and once performed in front of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

Dance was in her blood as her parents were competitive ballroom dancers and were in the World Valetta Championships several years running. The championships were organised by Butlin’s Holiday Camps and for the championship years the family spent their summer holidays at one of the Butlin’s camps.

Christine was born in Weston Super Mare but when she was six the family moved first to Bedford where her abiding memory was of the cold, and then a few years later, to London. Their first house there was one her mother inherited but, as was common just after the Second World War, the house was multi-occupied and despite being the owners the family lived in the back bedroom. Later, they moved to Ealing Broadway taking two of their previous lodgers with them and later acquiring others. Christine remembers sharing just one bathroom for the whole house. During this period her father, a highly skilled woodworker, trained by correspondence course as a teacher of woodwork and technical drawing and taught for the rest of his working life. Christine and her brother went to a Catholic school, the only one available to take the children, where Christine eventually became Head girl.

Summer holidays were spent in the Forest where Christine’s aunt ran the Post Office and Stores at Viney Hill, while her grandmother had a butchers shop in Cinderford where she made black pudding in the kitchen. The two children spent idyllic hours exploring the Forest and collecting acorns to take back to their father who ran a pig club at his school. When it was time for the pig to be shared amongst the members of the club, it was Christine and her brother who were expected to clear up the resulting mess.

On the advice of her mother Christine took a night school course in shorthand and typing. She was working as an etcher in a glass works but once qualified moved to the Laboratory as a clerk/typist. Working gave her the independence to make the most of London which included regular theatre visits and evenings at the Proms. She also travelled to Italy, Austria and took her first ever flight to Majorca. However, Christine needed to spread her wings and was recruited to the Foreign Office. On her first morning at her new job she was told she was being posted to Ankara on Boxing Day for two years. Two eventful years followed during which Christine learnt to ski courtesy of an American champion, met Dame Ninette de Valois, helped form an International club and enjoyed an active social life. The posting also nurtured her love of travel as she and friends would take a bus on a Friday night to far-flung places returning after a night in a hotel costing just 10p, and with a group from the American Church, visited the Holy Land. At the end of her posting Christine returned to London via a cruise through the Corinth canal to Venice and that most iconic of train journeys made famous by Agatha Christie.

Peking followed, a surreal experience with travel restricted to 12 miles from the embassy except for the foreign set pieces of the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs and the Summer Palace. These places were usually empty of the Chinese citizens, who, if seen at all were uniformly dressed to resemble Chairman Mao. Christine returned from Peking at the end of her posting via a cargo boat having turned down the alternative plane journey or a train across Russia.

Next came Luanda, a consulate rather than an embassy, with a staff of just four. Shortly after arrival it was the 4th July and accepting an invitation to the party at the American Consulate, a cliché came true. Alan and Christine married after she resigned from the Foreign Office and began the life of ex-pats in Angola and later Nigeria. After their eventual return to England the family, which now included two daughters, Helen and Barbara, settle in Portsmouth where Alan worked for Wightlink and Christine took on a variety of part-time posts including, at one point, working for three separate parishes at the same time.

The life of an ex-pat involves much socialising and heavy drinking. Some, like Christine are able to return to social drinking once back in England. Others, unfortunately, cannot. Alan spent an uncomfortable month at a rehabilitation unit and never drank again. Sadly, he died of lung cancer aged just 61.

Christines' parents had retired to a former fishing lodge near Monmouth, not far from where Christine's brother was living in the Scowles but her mother was by now herself a widow and Christine moved to Coleford to help take care of her. Christine, by her own admission, is not a carer and fond though she was of her mother she needed work. She volunteered in the Forest of Dean Craftworkers Association shop and shortly afterwards became a 'necessary woman' at the Chepstow Garrison, a re-enactment society. She picked fruit at a farm near Ross and joined LETS, a Local Exchange Trading System. She also joined Christchurch but later moved to St Mary's where, amongst other activities, she began to ring bells, a skill she had acquired in Portsmouth.

She continued to travel: New Zealand, where she walked a famously difficult volcano trail, Las Vegas and a casino, and as a volunteer teacher to Ecuador where she stayed with a family in Patate. Although her living conditions were poor, she and the headmistress at the school got on well and once returned to England Christine was able to help fund some necessary equipment for the school. While there, she visited the Galapagos Island but was unimpressed by the terrain although the point of going, the extraordinary animals, left a lasting impression. A further four months was spent in Nepal where she travel on the back of a motor bike but would walk 200 steps from the road to the terrace of a hotel in Dhulikel where she watched the sun rise over the Himalayas. Later, she went to The Gambia where she helped repair the roof to the school having raised finance from Mondo.

The list of countries visited by Christine, and her travel companion, reads like an atlas. Usually travelling by public transport, when available, or walking once arrived in the country she sees the real people and the real county and although visiting the 'tourist spots' she does so with an understanding of the life of the people she meets.

Lockdown has curtailed her travel and a trip to India and the Taj Mahal has had to be postponed. Onerammargau was also to be visited this year and that, too, will have to be seen once Covid releases the world. Christine is indefatigable both at home and abroad.

And, dear reader, I wonder at which point you recognised the indomitable Jenny McHattie?



FARMHOUSE BREAKFAST

This very popular once yearly event is taking place again

at

ENGLISH BICKNOR VILLAGE HALL

on

SATURDAY 23rd January

9am – 12pm

THERE WILL BE LIMITED TABLES AVAILABLE.

TO RESERVE

Tel. 860259 Email daphne@drysladefam.co.uk

or

Tel. 07766631988 ON THE DAY FOR AVAILABILITY

Adults - £6.00 Children - £3.00

Tea, Coffee, Orange Juice, Toast.

Proceeds to Village Hall

Nine good reasons for owning a dog

Dogs have been a boon to many this year. Dog-lovers may appreciate the following and those who are yet to be convinced of the joys of dog ownership may just be persuaded.....



1 The later you are, the more excited your dog is to see you.

2. Dogs don't notice if you call them by another dog's name.

3. Dogs like it if you leave lots of things on the floor.

4. Dogs' parents never visit.

5. Dogs agree that you have to raise your voice to get your point across.



6. You never have to wait for a dog; they're ready to go, instantly, 24 hours a day.

7. Dogs find you amusing when you're tipsy.

8. Dogs like to go hunting and fishing.

9. If a dog has babies, you can put an ad in the paper and sell 'em.





Santa Claus

4h · 🌐

It has come to my attention that children around the world are being told by their older siblings, parents, other adults, and even friends, that Christmas is not coming this year due to the covid pandemic.

This is simply not true.

I have been practicing social distancing just as you have.

No one here at the North Pole has been infected.

All the toys and other presents will be totally disinfected before and after they are wrapped and put into my sleigh for delivery to your home, or to wherever you will be this year.

Do not worry my friends, I will not be spreading the virus nor will I be getting sick from anyone that has it.

Christmas is not cancelled.



ETHICAL CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

When I'm out and about during the year I always keep an eye out for Christmas presents. I like mooching around Independent shops which sell unusual gifts which are eco friendly and made by small businesses in Britain. This year however my secret stash of presents is rather bereft. Maybe by the time you receive this issue of the magazine we will all be out again, buying our gifts locally. But increasingly we are all using online shopping not just for groceries but also gifts. With Christmas looming we need to get present shopping, but in these days of consumerism and waste its good to feel you can search and shop ethically.

When searching online we use a search engine, but if you use the right search engine, you can also give to charity or help the planet. Here are three search engines which will do good, every time you search;

SearchScene

SearchScene give 95% of their profits to charity more than any other search engine. They also have excellent reviews from users.

Ecosia

Launched in 2009 this is the longest running and best well known charity search engine. Ecosia donates 80% of its profits to tree planting projects and provides income to the workers who plant the trees in the world's poorest places.

Ekoru

Powered by Bing Ekoru donates 60% of its revenue to Big Blue Ocean Clean-up which helps keep the oceans clean of plastic, and also operation Posidonia which replants seagrass on the ocean floor.

What ever we search online Amazon will have a big presence. Most people have heard of Amazons poor record on paying taxes. In 2012 Ethical Consumer called a boycott on Amazon which continues to this day. In 2011 Amazon generated UK sales of £2.9 bn and paid £1.8m in tax. The correct figure (according to Ethical Consumer) should have been over £8m. Avoid paying tax by funnelling money through tax havens. It is not just about paying taxes either Ethical Consumer also highlight poor records in workers rights, pollution and toxins, climate change, human and animal rights, factory farming and animal testing, arms and military supply and political activities.

Its difficult to avoid Amazon, it is convenient and easy to use, they have a huge choice of good value products with next day delivery. If you own a Kindle you can only buy your e-books from Amazon.

But there is increasingly more choice out there. In particular we can look for ethical, eco friendly, plastic free, fairtrade, organic gifts. Search any of these things with your new search engine and a whole host of interesting web sites will come up.

To help you on your way looking for Christmas gifts here are a few web sites I saw on a blog called wild-and-green. I liked their suggestions because these web sites offer not just ethical and eco-friendly shopping but their products are also from UK based companies.

Ethical superstore (ethicalsuperstore.com)

I use this website for a lot of my cleaning products but they also do gifts, clothes, children's toys, groceries, toiletries etc. and all their products have at least one ethical credential.

Peace With The Wild (peacewiththewild.co.uk)

"Selling plastic-free and eco-friendly products with the aim to promote a sustainable lifestyle".

Plastic Freedom (plasticfreedom.co.uk)

As the name suggests, they focus on plastic-free products.

Lush (uk.lush.com)

On the high street and online Lush always comes out good with ethical credentials.

Georganics (georganics.com)

Tooth hygiene products and other toiletries.

Rapanui (rapanuiclothing.com)

Sustainable, ethical, zero-waste clothing. They promote "circular economy fashion" which means they request you return Rapanui clothes to them when they wear out so they can be turned into new clothes.

World Of Books (worldofbooks.com)

Second hand books with free delivery. (some are new books) I always check this Website for my book club book as the prices are always good. They classify their books by condition so at the top you have new, like new, very good, good, or well read. For a gift "like new" or "very good" in my experience are good descriptions.

My Little eco shop (mylittleecoshop.com)

Health and beauty, hair care and other toiletries.

Buying ethically is more expensive, but perhaps that means we buy less, which is good. Instead of buying a pack of cheap socks for a nephew why not buy one pair of bamboo or organic cotton ones? Gifts chosen with care and our planet in mind are always going to be appreciated, if not now then in the future.

Lindy Lathan

Sourced:

www.ethicalconsumer.org

wild-and-green.blog

and the web sites specified

December Quiz **Ans. on p 31**

A quiz about all aspects of Christmas and the festive period.

1. Held at King's College Cambridge annually since 1918, which carol traditionally opens the "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols"?
2. Set at Christmas time, the fantasy novel "Box of Delights" was written by which Poet Laureate?
3. In the 1992 movie "The Muppets Christmas Carol", which muppet acts as narrator?
4. Known as Pohutukawa in Maori, what is this evergreen coastal tree more popularly known as?
5. What is the title of the 1972 play by Alan Ayckbourn where each act is set on successive Christmas Eve parties at different couples houses?
6. With eight to his credit, who holds the record for appearing on most UK Christmas number ones?
7. With the first act set on Christmas Eve in Manhattan, what is the title of the Jonathan Larson musical that opened on Broadway in 1996?
8. Which confectionary associated with Christmas was invented by the choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral to keep the choristers quiet during the service?
9. Which British magazine has published an Advent Calendar on the cover of its November edition every year since 2007?
10. Who managed to top the UK Christmas singles charts in both 2018 and 2019?
11. Which future superhero actor starred in the 2004 movie flop "Surviving Christmas"?
12. The mistletoe is the emblematic flower of which English county?
13. What cartoon do families in Sweden sit down to view every Christmas Eve?
14. Played by Henry Travers in the 1946 movie, what is the name of the Guardian Angel in "It's a Wonderful Life"?
15. What was the title of William Shatner's 2018 Christmas album?

Farmyard Frolics & Rural Snippets

At the tail end of the winter it was apparent that we needed a newer trailer as the muck had rotted the sides of our old one. A Farm sale came up in September at Much Birch so I sent for a catalogue.

Daph read the small print relating to Covid rules – one person per vehicle, no children, no dogs, no socialising. My brother in law drove me so that was the first rule broken !

We had a whale of a time meeting up with farming friends and their families that we hadn't seen for ages. Not to mention dodging children and dogs.



I did however manage to concentrate on the bidding and was fortunate enough to purchase a bargain trailer and luckily my nephew was available to drive their tractor to pick it up. It did need a few repairs but nothing that my other nephew with a bit of weld, heat, large hammer and some grease couldn't fix.

When I asked him what I owed he said "Uncle Phil, you cross my hand with a bit of silver and everything will be right". Long live cash!





We all know and many of us have a favourite version of the carol
On the First Day of Christmas
.....but did you know this?

During the 16th century, Catholics were not allowed to practice their faith, so to teach their basic doctrines to their children they made up 'nonsense songs', which would not arouse the suspicions of those around them.

A Partridge in a Pear Tree – Jesus and the Cross

Two Turtle Doves – The Old and New Testaments

Three French Hens – The gifts given by the Wise Men

Four Calling Birds – The four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Five Gold Rings – The first five books of the Bible

Six Geese a-laying – The six days of Creation

Seven Swans a-swimming – The gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12: 6-8)

Eight Maids a-milking – The blessings listed in Matt 5: 3-10

Nine Ladies Dancing – The nine fruits of the Spirit (Gal:5 22-23)

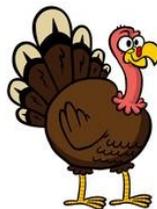
Ten Lords a-leaping – The Ten Commandments

Eleven Pipers piping – The 11 faithful apostles

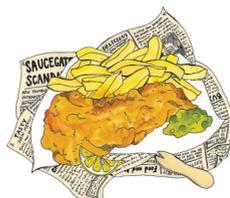
Twelve Drummers drumming – The Apostles Creed (I believe in God the Father.....)

Thanks to Sue and Bob Boulter for reminding us that the familiar can have a different meaning in a different time or place.

On the first day of Christmas



my true love said to me,
“I’m glad we bought fresh turkey and a proper
Christmas tree.”
On the second day of Christmas, much laughter
could be heard
as we tucked into our turkey, a most delicious bird.
On the third day we entertained the people from next door.
The turkey tasted just as good as it had the day before.
Day four, relations came to stay; poor Gran is looking old.
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.
On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes flurried.
But we were nice and warm inside, for we had our turkey curried.
On the sixth day, I must admit, the Christmas spirit died.
The children fought and bickered, we ate turkey rissoles, fried.
On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love he did wince,
when we all sat at the table and were offered turkey mince.
Day eight, and nerves were getting frayed, the dog had run for shel-
ter.
I served up turkey pancakes, with a glass of alka-seltzer.
On the ninth day our cat left home, by lunchtime dad was blotto.
He said he had to have a drink to face turkey risotto.
By the tenth day, the booze had gone (except our home-made brew).
And if that wasn’t bad enough, we suffered turkey stew.
On the eleventh day of Christmas, the Christmas tree was moulting.
The mince pies were as hard as rocks and the turkey was revolting.
On the twelfth day, my true love had a smile upon her lips..
the guests had gone..
the turkey too..
and..
we dined on...**FISH AND CHIPS!**

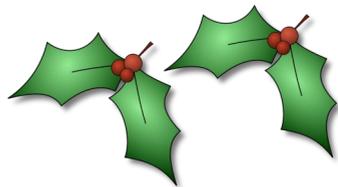


For a Christian there is nothing particularly difficult about Christmas in a prison cell. I daresay it will have more meaning and will be observed with greater sincerity here in this prison than in places where all that survives of the feast is its name. That misery, suffering, poverty, loneliness, helplessness and guilt look very different to the eyes of God from what they do to man; that God should come down to the very place which men usually abhor; that Christ was born in a stable because there was no room for him in the inn, - these are things which a prisoner can understand better than anyone else. For him the Christmas story is glad tidings in a very real sense. And that faith gives him a part in the communion of saints; a fellowship transcending the bounds of time and space and reducing the months of confinement here to insignificance.

These words are from a letter which Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to his family on December 17th 1943. He was in prison because of his Christian stance against Hitler and for which he eventually paid with his life.

December Quiz answers

- | | | | |
|----------|--|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Once in Royal David's City".</i> | 9 | <i>Country Life.</i> |
| 2 | <i>John Masefield.</i> | 10 | <i>Ladbaby.</i> |
| 3 | <i>The Great Gonzo.</i> | 11 | <i>Ben Affleck.</i> |
| 4 | <i>New Zealand Christmas Tree.</i> | 12 | <i>Herefordshire.</i> |
| 5 | <i>"Absurd Person Singular".</i> | 13 | <i>Donald Duck.</i> |
| 6 | <i>Paul McCartney.</i> | 14 | <i>Clarence Odbody.</i> |
| 7 | <i>Rent.</i> | | |
| 8 | <i>Candy canes.</i> | | |



The Story of Donkey Fred by Charles Disbry

Old Fred he stands with downcast eye, he shakes his head and wonders why,

This empty meadow for my home, and I stand sadly here alone.

He calls to mind a summer day, and folk who walked the Bridleway,
Who stayed awhile and had a chat, and gave old Fred a friendly pat.

He wonders if it's true, that when, a donkey went to Bethlehem,
That Mary on his back did ride, with Joseph walking at her side.

And now the stars are shining bright, and darkness falls, once more 'tis night,

Now all is quiet, and donkey Fred, walks slowly to his humble shed.

And underneath the starlit beams, old Fred the donkey sleeps and dreams,
With shepherds poor and the wise men, he walks the road to Bethlehem.

And one bright star looked down and led old donkey Fred to Jesu's bed.
He lowly kneels and with a bray, greets Jesus Christ on Christmas Day.

And Mary said, "We thank you Fred, for coming to our manger bed.

What the donkey saw by U.A. Fanhope

No room in the inn, of course, and not that much of a stable,

What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary, Joseph and the heavenly host - not
to mention the baby, using our manger as a cot

You couldn't have squeezed in another cherub for love nor money

Still, despite the overcrowding

I did my best to make them feel wanted

I could see the baby and I

Would be going places together.



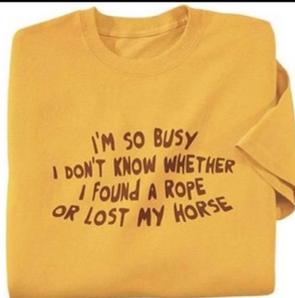
Bottles to Bricks Update

The collection bin at Christchurch is slowly filling up: but we need to keep going!

Much of the plastic that cannot be recycled can be stuffed into a reusable plastic bottles. Keep the pieces of plastic small and make sure you make the bottom of the bottle as firm as you can. Ram everything down as you go.

The main website is www.ecobrick.org. You will find all sorts of information there including a more accurate estimate of weight—a 2lt bottle weighs about 600gms when filled. That takes some doing but also represents a lot of plastic which has not gone to land fill. The sides of the bottle should be rock-hard with no give at all. Keep going!

The collection bin for filled bottles is at the side of Christchurch.



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Community Organisation Contact Page

The Gloucestershire Wellbeing Trust

A support service in times of difficulty

If you would like to talk to someone in confidence please contact the Community Wellbeing Service at Forest of Dean District Council on 01594 812447 or 01594 812399.

Gloucestershire Police

Find out about local police activity and link in to the various ways you can find support and information by going online to <https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/neighbourhood-policing/>

English Bicknor Chit Chat

The Facebook page contains information about the village and local events. If you are not a Facebook user and would like anything added then please email Daphne@drysladefarm.co.uk

Barnwood Trust

Information and help applying for grants from the trust is available from the Forest of Dean Office on 01594 839191

Or visit www.barnwoodtrust.org

Christchurch and English Bicknor churches website

www.christchurchfod.org.uk

If you run a community organisation and would like the details published in the magazine on this page, please contact Judith on 01594 781436

Christchurch, FOD and St Mary's English Bicknor

Parish Contacts

Rector: Revd. Capt. Tony Williams, CA

Christchurch Vicarage Ross Road Christchurch Coleford GL16 7NS

01594 836751 revtonyw@hotmail.com

Ministry Team

Joan Atherley, Sue Boulter, Sandie Bradley, Maggie Fisher,
Jacqui Fudge (Reader in training), Helen Rodwell , Carol Turley (Pastoral Team Leader),
Glenda White-Miller (Reader) , Sally Whittington , Tony Williams,

Safeguarding Pam Iddiols and Andy Iddiols 01594 334598

Or email: pamelaspooner@sky.com

Christchurch

Church Wardens: David Fudge 01594 726144

Trevor Harvey 01594 835897

PCC Secretary Judith Brickwood 01594 781436

Treasurer Barbara Davies 01594 837270

English Bicknor

Church Wardens ; Jennie McHattie 01594 834855

Jan Furnival 01594 541566

PCC secretary Jan Furnival 01594 541566

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Magazine editor Judith Brickwood 01594 781436

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(Friday)**

Art Club at

Pludds Village Hall



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who can**

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