

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

FORDINGBRIDGE AND RINGWOOD PARISH MAGAZINE

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Fr Paul Says.....



As half-term ends and the celebration around Halloween and Bonfire Night come to a close, preparations for Christmas begin. Already at the end of October, when I am writing this, Morrisons is stocked with mince pies and other Christmas fancies. The lead up to Christmas is always a pleasure for so many. Parties, mulled wine, the search for presents, the sending of Christmas cards and times for celebration as the darkness of winter deepens always come as moments of joy and light.

The busy season which comes to its highpoint on Christmas Day must not be allowed to squeeze out the beautiful season which the Church gives us. The season is called 'Advent' and it begins this year on

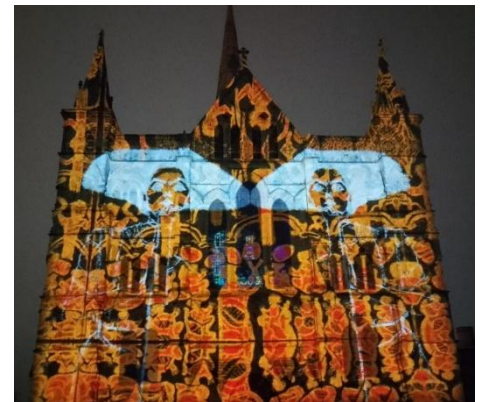
Sarum Lights



"Your Country Needs You!"

Sarum Lights at The Cathedral has become an annual event. I'm not sure if this is the fourth or fifth. I think the first (but it might have been the second) was just before the Lockdown Christmas.

The theme on this occasion was "Time", and above you can see Lord Kitchener summoning the lions to the slaughter that was The First World War. The whole building became a time machine and depicted different aspects of the mystery of time supported by stereoscopic sound effects. As always, it was immensely impressive, although I don't think I'm the only one to wonder just what we were looking at. For instance, here is The West Front. I'm not quite sure what is going on, but it is certainly startling!



Some parts were clearer than others and there was one interesting physical exhibit of a desk overflowing with books, photographs, postcards, writing materials of all kinds and tables set out with blank postcards, one of which you were invited to take and address to your past or future self. The cards then became part of the exhibit. I wrote to my future self "Just do it all again, but better!"



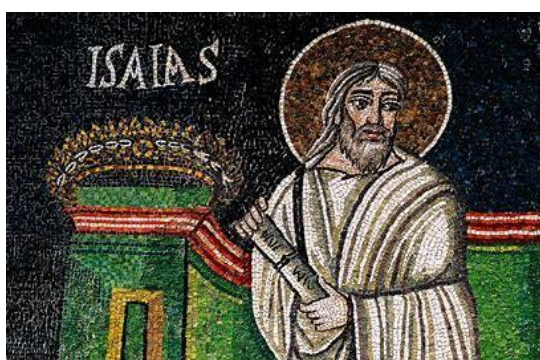
Images and colours blended with the music and sometimes startling sound effects – a mesmerising event!

(Chris Basham)

Sunday 1st December. There are four Sundays during Advent, and they bring an opportunity for us to enter more deeply into the reality of the birth of Jesus or the Incarnation of the Word of God. That of course is the reason why we celebrate the birth of Jesus each year. So that the great truth that God in Christ unites himself with us in our humanity might touch our hearts and help us see the difference that the Incarnation of the Word of God makes for each of us. The people of our time are searching for meaning in their lives and to enter the truth that Christmas proclaims, year by year, provides that meaning. The celebration of Advent and Christmas become a continuum which offers us a time when we can say, as part of our prayer, 'Come Lord Jesus'.

Our liturgies during Advent offer us three figures whose lives and message help us on the Advent journey towards our celebration of the Incarnation of the Word.

The first figure is the prophet Isaiah whose writing is to be found in our liturgies during Advent and Christmas. Isaiah lived and worked in the kingdom of Judah around 740 and 700 before Christ and he served for forty years. His life was marked by war which continued between Judah and Israel with Assyria being the powerful nation that they were both trying either to defeat or placate.



Isaiah was strong in his message against the worship of false gods and the injustice and oppression which followed. He urged his people and leaders to be guided by the true God of Israel, but they refused, preferring military power and intrigue. Isaiah turned his thoughts and message to a future king who would be loyal to the God of Abraham. His words inspired the future hope of a messiah who would bring blessing, unity and abundance to the land. That messiah, foretold by Isaiah, is Jesus, the Son of Mary, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Isaiah's message reflects the desire deep in every human heart of all times and places that God, who is love, would "tear open the heavens and come down".

Isaiah proclaimed the holiness of God of which he had a vision in the Temple. The seraphs who surrounded the Lord called to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory".

Advent comes as an opportunity to grow in our understanding that the Lord is working in our lives to bring humanity and creation to peace, harmony and fulfilment. It is also

“The Present” - A Story For Christmas

Mary Clay looked out of the window of the old farmhouse. The view was dreary enough—hill and field and woodland, bare, colourless, mist-covered—with no other house in sight. She had never been a woman to crave for company. She liked sewing. She was passionately fond of reading. She was not fond of talking. Probably she could have been very happy at Cromb Farm—alone. Before her marriage she had looked forward to the long evenings with her sewing and reading. She knew that she would be busy enough in the day, for the farmhouse was old and rambling, and she was to have no help in the housework. But she looked forward to quiet, peaceful, lamplit evenings; and only lately, after ten years of married life, had she reluctantly given up the hope of them. For peace was far enough from the old farm kitchen in the evening. It was driven away by John Clay's loud voice, raised always in orders or complaints, or in the stumbling, incoherent reading aloud of his newspaper.



Mary was a silent woman herself and a lover of silence. But John liked to hear the sound of his voice; he liked to shout at her; to call for her from one room to another; above all, he liked to hear his voice reading the paper out loud to her in the evening. She dreaded that most of all. It had lately seemed to jar on her nerves till she felt she must scream aloud. His voice going on and on, raucous and sing-song, became unspeakably irritating. His "Mary!" summoning her from her household work to wherever he happened to be, his "Get my slippers," or "Bring me my pipe," exasperated her almost to the point of rebellion. "Get your own slippers" had trembled on her lips, but had never passed them, for she was a woman who could not bear anger. Noise of any kind appalled her.

She had borne it for ten years, so surely she could go on with it. Yet today, as she gazed hopelessly at the wintry country side, she became acutely conscious that she could not go on with it. Something must happen. Yet what was there that could happen?

It was Christmas next week. She smiled ironically at the thought. Then she noticed the figure of her husband coming up the road. He came in at the gate and round to the side-door.

"Mary!"

She went slowly in answer to the summons. He held a letter in his hand.

"Met the postman," he said. "From your aunt."

She opened the letter and read it in silence. Both of them knew quite well what it contained.

"She wants us to go over for Christmas again," said Mary.

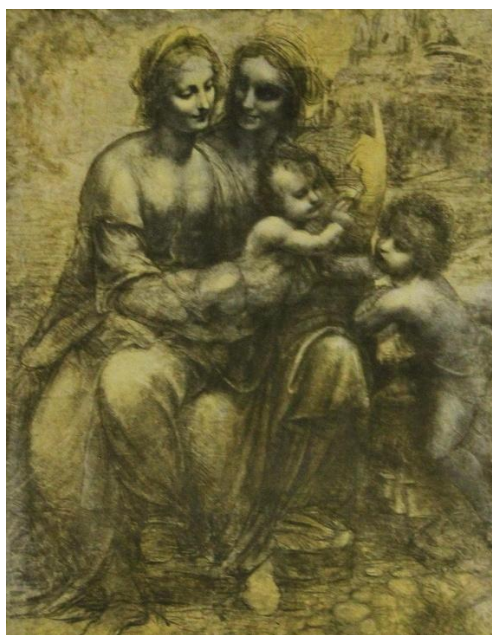
He began to grumble.

"She's as deaf as a post. She's 'most as deaf as her mother was. She ought to know better than to ask folks over when she can't hear a word any one says."

Mary said nothing. He always grumbled about the invitation at first, but really he wanted to go. He liked to talk with her uncle. He liked the change of going down to the village for a few days and hearing all its gossip. He could quite well leave the farm to the "hands" for that time.

a time to see in all the gifts we receive and the beauty and unity of creation a reflection of God's holiness.

John the Baptist is the second Advent figure. His message was one of corporate reform and he followed in the footsteps of Isaiah. He preached repentance and a change of heart and invited conversion and a reordering of relationships. John was the son of Zechariah who was an institutional figure because he was a Temple priest. John turned his back on the Temple and went to live in the Judean wilderness. He saw the institutional corruption of religion and politics and he saw that the only possibility of change was to be found in personal conversion to the love of God.



As so many are turning their backs on institutional religion, John the Baptist's message and life come across the centuries with extraordinary relevance. For us, there is a call to personal conversion and change and a call to encourage those around us towards a change of heart. That change of heart is about recognising a movement and a hope that love will bring the fullness of life because our creator is love itself. People flocked to John the Baptist, we know that from the scriptures and from a contemporary Jewish historian called Josephus. They flocked to him in huge numbers because he was able to give them hope and confidence in the closeness and love of God. That, of course, is our mission and purpose, which we do by our words and manner and style of life, which takes us back to continual conversion, a strong Advent theme.

Mary the Mother of the Lord, is the third Advent figure. The 4th Sunday of Advent is devoted to her. Before celebrating Christmas and the birth of her son, we must pause and reflect on the fact that Mary made that birth possible. There is a temptation to think that Mary had a merely passive role in the birth of Jesus and that God was fully in control. He was of course, but part of that control is about giving freedom to human beings to say 'yes' to him, or, sadly 'no'. The Annunciation described by St. Luke, describes the visit of the Archangel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she was to become the mother of the 'Son of Most High' whose name would be Jesus. Mary listened to

The Crewe deafness was proverbial. Mary's great-grandmother had gone stone deaf at the age of thirty-five; her daughter had inherited the affliction and her grand-daughter, the aunt with whom Mary had spent her childhood, had inherited it also at exactly the same age.

"All right," he said at last, grudgingly, as though in answer to her silence, "we'd better go. Write and say we'll go."

* * * * *

It was Christmas Eve. They were in the kitchen of her uncle's farmhouse. The deaf old woman sat in her chair by the fire knitting. Upon her sunken face there was a curious sardonic smile that was her habitual expression. The two men stood in the doorway. Mary sat at the table looking aimlessly out of the window. Outside, the snow fell in blinding showers. Inside, the fire gleamed on to the copper pots and pans, the crockery on the old oak dresser, the hams hanging from the ceiling. Suddenly James turned.

"Jane!" he said.

The deaf woman never stirred.

"Jane!"

Still there was no response upon the enigmatic old face by the fireside.

"Jane!"

She turned slightly towards the voice.

"Get them photos from upstairs to show John," he bawled.

"What about boats?" she said.

"Photos!" roared her husband.

"Coats?" she quavered.

Mary looked from one to the other. The man made a gesture of irritation and went from the room.

He came back with a pile of picture postcards in his hand.

"It's quicker to do a thing oneself," he grumbled. "They're what my brother sent from Switzerland, where he's working now. It's a fine land, to judge from the views of it." John took them from his hand. "She gets worse?" he said nodding towards the old woman.

She was sitting gazing at the fire, her lips curved into the curious smile.

Her husband shrugged his shoulders. "Aye. She's nigh as bad as her mother was."

"And her grandmother."

"Aye. It takes longer to tell her to do something than to do it myself. And deaf folks get a bit stupid, too. Can't see what you mean. They're best let alone."

The other man nodded and lit his pipe. Then James opened the door.

"The snow's stopped," he said. "Shall we go to the end of the village and back?"

The other nodded, and took his cap from behind the door. A gust of cold air filled the room as they went out.

Mary took a paper-backed book from the table and came over to the fireplace.

"Mary!"

She started. It was not the sharp, querulous voice of the deaf old woman, it was more like the voice of the young aunt whom Mary remembered in childhood. The old woman was leaning forward, looking at her intently.

"Mary! A happy Christmas to 'ee."

And, as if in spite of herself, Mary answered in her ordinary low tones.

"The same to you, auntie."

"Thank 'ee. Thank 'ee."

Mary gasped.

"Aunt! Can you hear me speaking like this?"

The old woman laughed, silently, rocking to and fro in her chair as if with pent-up merriment of years.

"Yes, I can hear 'ee, child. I've allus heard 'ee."

Mary clasped her hand eagerly.

"Then—you're cured, Aunt—"

"Ay. I'm cured as far as there was ever anything to be cured."

"You—?"

"I was never deaf, child, nor never will be, please God. I've took you all in fine."

Mary stood up in bewilderment.

"You? Never deaf?"

The old woman chuckled again.

"No, nor my mother—nor her mother neither."

Mary shrank back from her.

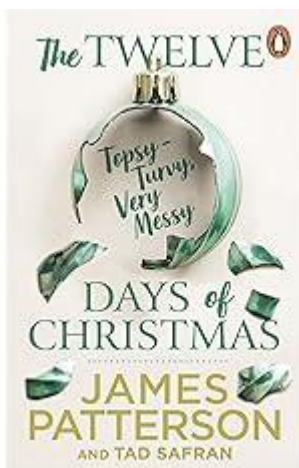
"I—I don't know what you mean," she said, unsteadily. "Have you been—pretending?"

"I'll make you a Christmas present of it, dearie," said the old woman. "My mother made me a Christmas present of it when I was your age, and her mother made her one."

Gabriel and in prayer agreed that it could happen. Mary said, "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said".

Mary gave her free assent to become the Lord's mother, which shows us that God respects human freedom which he gives each of us. A freedom that we might become signs of God's love and presence in the world as Mary did. That freedom gives us a choice. Either to say 'yes' as Mary did, or to go in the opposite direction of non-cooperation with our God who is love.

Reading Recommendations



I realised that the last few novels I have reviewed have been quite gloomy with tragic or horrific endings. So I thought that, as we approach the festive season, something light-hearted and frivolous would 'cheer us on our Christmas way' and this novel is frivolous and lighthearted and also quite funny.

The Patterson family (two parents and Will and Ella, adorable toddlers) live in a Victorian house in a leafy road in South London, when the mother (Katie) dies, leaving a grieving husband (Henry, history professor at the University of Greenwich) to raise the two children. He gives up on Christmas altogether, so in subsequent years there are no presents, no decorations, no tree etc. Five years on the children, tiring of this, decide that their father needs a new wife to cheer him up, so they approach an online dating site in his name, and find a perfect match, Ms. Trulove.

Henry is not pleased with this, especially when Ms. Trulove begins to send them daily (increasingly bizarre) presents in the run up to Christmas. It begins mildly with a small tree, out of which emerges a partridge chick. The next day, two doves start flying round their garden, and eventually migrate into the house. Next, they find the hens pecking round the garden, and laying huge quantities of eggs. Next, four noisy black birds appear in a cage....you get the drift.

However, it gets complicated when the house is filled with milkmaids, dancing girls, leaping lords, etc. And there is no response from Ms. Trulove to Henry's increasingly threatening e mails. And the

I haven't a lass of my own to give it to, so I give it to you. It can come on quite sudden like, if you want it, and then you can hear what you choose and not hear what you choose. Do you see?" She leant nearer and whispered, "You're shut out of it all—of having to fetch and carry for 'em, answer their daft questions and run their errands like a dog. I've watched you, my lass. You don't get much peace, do you?" Mary was trembling.

"Oh, I don't know what to think," she said. "I—I couldn't do it."

"Do what you like," said the old woman. "Take it as a present, anyways—the Crewe deafness for a Christmas present," she chuckled. "Use it or not as you like. You'll find it main amusin', anyways."

And into the old face there came again that curious smile as if she carried in her heart some jest fit for the gods on Olympus.

The door opened suddenly with another gust of cold air, and the two men came in again, covered with fine snow.

"I—I'll not do it," whispered Mary, trembling.

"We didn't get far. It's coming on again," remarked John, hanging up his cap.

The old woman rose and began to lay the supper, silently and deftly, moving from cupboard to table without looking up. Mary sat by the fire, motionless and speechless, her eyes fixed on the glowing coals.

"Any signs o' the deafness in her?" whispered James, looking towards Mary. "It come on my wife jus' when she was that age." "Aye. So I've heered." Then he said loudly, "Mary!"

A faint pink colour came into her cheeks, but she did not show by look or movement that she had heard. James looked significantly at her husband.

The old woman stood still for a minute with a cup in each hand and smiled her slow, subtle smile.

(Richmal Crompton)

Christmas Past

It is a sobering thought to think that I have experienced seventy four Christmases - of which about sixty nine I have a misty recollection.

My mother and father always went to a lot of trouble to give my brother and I a good time. Those were the days when we did not have central heating and Christmas was the time when there was a roaring fire in each of our rooms. I can even remember a coal fire in my bedroom. Winters were cold in the 1950s and the early morning task was to scrape the ice from the inside of our bedroom windows.

These were the days when I was an altar server, and the liturgy was extraordinary. Everything was in Latin and the form of the Mass was very different from our present day one, especially at Christmas. There were clouds of incense and squads of altar servers each with a particular job for which they were assiduously trained by our parish priest, which included learning by heart all the Latin responses. It all changed when I was about thirteen



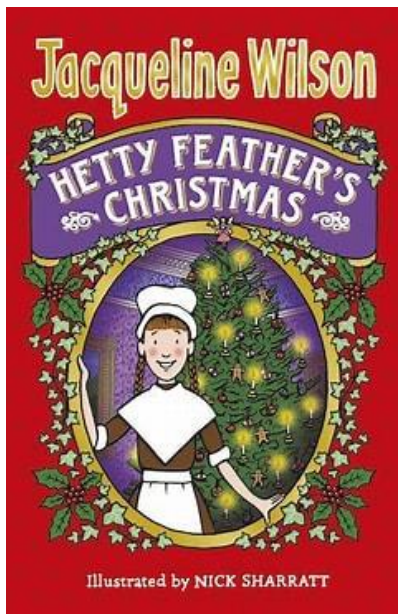
Of all the childhood Christmases, the one of 1962 is firmly stuck in my memory. Christmas Day was with my parents and brother, then on St. Stephen's Day or Boxing Day, we would walk across town to my grandmother's house for lunch and to spend the afternoon. In the evening, we walked home, and I can remember exactly the spot we had reached when it began to snow. There were small flakes

and a light dusting, and everyone thought it would be fine the following day. Fine it was not. Everyone in the country woke to see the land covered with inches, and in some places, feet of snow. The snow and freezing conditions lasted for months. I had a fortyminute bus ride to school and I can remember the double-decker bus frequently sliding across the road. The winter of 1962 and 1963 turned out to be the coldest on

stress of this is making his work at the University increasingly erratic.

Anyway, I won't give away any more, except to say that there is romance for poor old Henry, but not with Ms Trulove.

This is a great Christmas read, very well written and highly entertaining.



Here is a nice heart-warming story for a nine year old girl (I don't really think it would appeal to many boys! Don't bank on it, Penny, I like a lot of books considered 'girly'! Ed) by the prolific Jacqueline Wilson. Jacqueline Wilson has written three books a year for over thirty years, and whatever you may think about her books, she has a huge insight into the issues concerning small and teenage girls growing up in this century; she is responsible for the reading of a generation of girls, and she is an important figure in the canon of children's literature.

However, this story is about a girl living in a different century, in Victorian England, and has all the important elements of a good children's story - an orphan as the main character living in a terrible orphanage, with a strong villain in the form of the matron of the home. She also has a guardian angel, Miss Smith, who is on the board of governors and has taken a shine to Hetty.

Hetty is a feisty girl and is in frequent trouble for fighting, and in this particular Christmas Day, she is locked in a cupboard for bad behaviour, and not allowed any Christmas dinner etc. But wonderful Miss Smith rescues her and takes her out to some rich friends where she has a Christmas Day beyond her wildest dreams

(Penny Sharp)

Poetry Please!

"The Oxen" by Thomas Hardy

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
 "Now they are all on their knees,"
 An elder said as we sat in a flock
 By the embers in hearthside ease.

record. I don't remember the traffic problems we would have today if it snowed like that now.

The other Christmas which is burned on my memory is the one of 1968. I was at College of Education in Lancashire – where it rarely snowed but frequently rained. At the end of November and the beginning of December, our year was on teaching practice. My school was the Catholic School in Kirkham, known as the Willows. It was between Preston and Blackpool. The teaching practice ended on Friday 6th December and then we all travelled home. I would catch the Standerwick overnight bus which only cost forty-eight shillings return to London Victoria. The last day at school was very Christmasy and the children were very jolly. One little boy in my class was very lively and came up to me saying with glee, "I've got mumps" and, without hesitation, blew a raspberry at me. That Christmas at home in London was spent suffering with my own adult version of mumps.

On a brighter note, the Christmases when I was teaching were always very happy with countless staff Christmas dinners and school nativities. And the frequent importation of Father Christmas with his sack full of presents.



And for the past forty Christmases I have been a priest. They have all been memorable and full of joy. When I was assistant priest at the Cathedral in Portsmouth, the then Bishop would insist on a lavish lunch to which would be invited the local clergy who had nowhere else to go. I can remember how tired everyone was after lunch, having celebrated midnight Masses followed by mince pies and mulled wine with the people in the parish hall and not getting to bed until 3.00am and rising at 5.30am for prayer in preparation for the 8.00am Mass. Most of us had a siesta on Christmas afternoon.

May this Christmas be happy and joyful for everyone.

(Fr Paul, photos from internet)

'Ask not for whom the bell tolls...'



The Barn Dance that never was!

All systems go for a parish barn dance -our first fund-raising event for the reinstatement of the church bell - only for the band to be suddenly struck low by Covid. An intense round of calls, texts and smoke signals followed, delivering news of an unavoidable cancellation to all ticket holders ahead of the event as well as arrangements to reimburse all concerned.

It's never easy to cancel an event at the eleventh hour - a barn dance without music doesn't quite have the same vibe as a silent disco - so cancellation was inevitable. However, what followed provided a

fascinating insight into the typical psyche of our parish people. The reimbursement plan actually realised a net gain for the fund as every ticket holder simply donated their purchase and others contributed more.

Our PPC is determined to offer parishioners and friends something to enjoy in exchange for their support of the fund-raising effort for the bell. We are immensely grateful to everyone who has generously donated their ticket money, plus additional cash donations and to those kind souls who paid not to come! (how many two left footed are there out there, Editor?)

As a consequence, the fund stands at £1300. You are all very kind.

Roll on a few months and our next effort will be **an evening of 'unplugged' music on 12th April 2025**. Please do diarise the date now so that we can fill the hall. If you'd



We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
“Come; see the oxen kneel,

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,”
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

Published in the Times on Christmas Eve
in 1915.

A combination of the early simple and sure
belief of the widespread folk tradition of
oxen kneeling at midnight on Christmas Eve
to acknowledge of the birth of Jesus,
together with reflection of the doubts
developed alongside a changed world with
war and mechanisation. A nostalgia for
younger days, for a gentler and more
trusting world, and for a stronger faith are
all wrapped up together here. Kneeling
oxen, possibly a reference to Isaiah 1:3

(Provided by Sheila Wade)

Good News!

John Elliott continues his New Testament
history from last week where he left us with
the order and dates of the four Gospels. This
week he moves on to the writings of Paul),

Paul’s travelled widely in the Gentile world
and many of his letters most probably pre-
date the gospels. Most scholars generally
accept seven of his letters as having been
written by Paul, while expressing some
doubt about the authorship of another three.

The likely dates of the seven are:

Galatians 48 AD
First Thessalonians 49-51 AD
First Corinthians 53-4 AD
Second Corinthians. 55-56 AD
Romans. 55-57 AD
Phillipians. 57-59 AD
Philemon. 57-9 or 62 AD

The three that have a less certain authorship
are:

2nd Thessalonian 51-52 AD
Colossians 57-9 or 62 AD
Ephesians 62 AD

While the reason for Paul’s letters is

like to help please let me know.

The bell is now back in our possession and you are welcome to test your strength in
lifting it before it is reinstated.

Thanks again.

(Larry Bartell)

Fabulous Forest

About a month ago when we had a few
dry days I decided to try my usual forest
walk again. We were enjoying it until we
met a group of large black cows straggled
across the narrow path. Most moved
easily out of the way but one would not
move. Jester took one look and hid
behind a gorse bush. I told myself it
would not be out on forest land if it was
dangerous. We eventually got safely past
but later hearing about the death of a
woman in the forest near Godshill I
realise I had not been wise. The fright put
me off visits to the Forest for several
weeks.



Last week on a sunny day we returned
and the Forest was most definitely in
Autumn mode, most of the bracken was
brown, leaves on the deciduous trees
were colourful and falling, gorse was
flowering but unfortunately no fungi
(hope they will return next year once the
land has had longer to settle from the
tearing up of large areas of gorse)#

The leaves of Deciduous trees, such as
silver birch and oak in this area of the
Forest, change colour in the autumn as
the length of daylight decreases and the
nights become colder. The chlorophyll in
the leaves breaks down revealing the
other chemicals which had been hidden
by the green chlorophyll. These include
red anthocyanins, yellow flavonols and
orange carotenoids. The exact mixture
depends on the type of tree. These trees
lose their leaves as winter approaches in
order to survive. The lack of leaves
means that the tree conserves moisture in
the trunk and allows wind to blow
through the branches so less strain in
winter storms.

Gardeners’ Corner

The last month in my garden has been
interrupted by two visits to Austria. The
first to Pertisau, near Innsbruck, is an
annual, very happy week with a group of
friends and the other was to see my sister
who lives in Vienna.

It is not a good time to be away with all
the leaves falling. However, until they
started in earnest, I took the opportunity
to cut out dead wood from my Leylandi
hedges. Not a shrub I would choose but
they came with the house. Over the years
I have discovered that, if you cut out the
brown branches, the gaps will be closed
over by new growth. They won’t sprout
like beech or laurel but, in a miraculous
way, know their branches should cover
the holes.



My hedges were
cut at the
beginning of
October so there
was a lot to burn.
I have to wait
until the wind is
blowing in a
certain direction
to avoid

smoking-out my neighbours and the first
opportunity I had was in the first week of
November. I save all the dead wood from
the Leylandi in my garage and shed to
keep it dry so was longing to burn it was
taking up valuable room. I am happy to
say, everything has now burnt with
enough wood remaining for the leaves
that are still hanging on the oaks.

As many of you know, I have a lot of
apples! I don’t like letting them rot so
collect and store the good ones as best I
can. I am very happy that many
parishioners enjoy them when I take them
to the church. If anyone ever wants
some, please get in touch with me.

I am always amazed by people who say
there is nothing to do in the garden in the
winter because there certainly is in mine.
In the next issue, I will tell you what that
is and how I am going to go about it with
the help of my lovely John who gives me
one day a month. In the meantime, I am
watching with bated breath, my heavily-
berried holly tree. I hope I get the berries
and not the person who one year, rather
than a gentle snip here and there, cut the
whole tree down and took it off!

reasonably clear – to spread the work to a Gentile audience – the reason that the Gospels were produced is less clear.

Quite clearly, those followers of Jesus who remained after his ascension continued to tell others about what had happened, and in time, this aural tradition started to become a written one, with different writers recording what they knew at different times.

Then there was an advance of the Jewish Christians into the Gentile world. This, and Paul’s work, almost split the Jesus movement when the question arose about whether Gentile Christians needed to also become subject to the Jewish traditions.

There was also a series of major events between 41 AD and 73 AD. There was a crisis in 41 AD when Gaius Caligula was assassinated. There was further turbulence within the Roman Empire during the 60s AD and there was a Jewish war with Rome in 66-73 AD. All of these events tended to create a need for the Christians to form a separate identity backed by details of its historical development.

(John Elliott)

Save The Date!

Saturday 12th April 2024

'The Shenanigans' (aka Phat Larry's Big Roll Band) plus guests at Our Lady of Sorrows, Fordingbridge

Supporting the church bell appeal.

It's a while off but we all get very busy.....

(Larry Bartell)

End Bits

Following on from John above, I went to a lecture at Salisbury Cathedral (all free, gratis and for nothing!) on the subject of Luke. I’m always fascinated to find out about the transmission of the Gospels.

After The Crucifixion, it seems the disciples expected the Second Coming very soon, so there was no need to write anything down, while stories and snippets about Jesus circulated orally amongst the various little groups of adherents. As time passed, we get the written records from the different sources because it became important to ‘fix’ and record the oral stuff for following generations

Luke, it seems, and it is he we will be hearing from next year, has something of an understanding of Greek, and traditionally is believed to have been a medical man, so has had something of an education. He identifies himself as travelling in the company of Paul and Timothy, so it is likely he drew on them for information.



(Barbara Geatrel)

Cookery Corner

Pesto and cheese Christmas tree



Ingredients

- 2 x 320g/11½oz packets ready-rolled puff pastry
- 50g/1¾oz pesto
- 80g/3oz cheddar, grated
- 1 free-range egg, beaten
- 2 tsp sesame seeds, optional
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

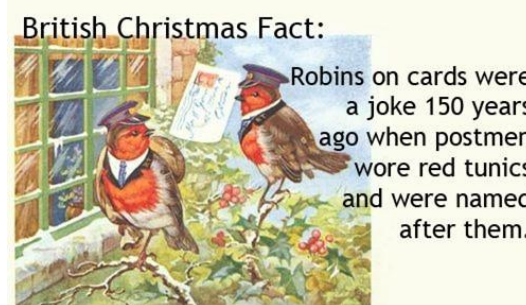
Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4 and line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2. Lay the two sheets of puff pastry one on top of the other on the lined baking tray, taking care not to allow them to stick together. Cut into a long triangle shape. Cut a little stump for the end of your tree at the wider end, remove and reserve any scraps of pastry covered in the fridge.
3. Carefully peel the top layer of pastry off the ‘tree’ and set to one side.
4. Spread the pesto over the base and sprinkle with the cheese before sandwiching the base with the reserved layer of pastry to cover.
5. Starting at the pointed end, using a sharp knife, cut evenly spaced lines on each side that get longer towards the base of the tree. Make sure to leave a gap running up the middle as the trunk of the tree.

Happy Christmas to you all.

(Jill Coke)

Christmas Robins



So.... If you have ever wondered why robins are associated with Christmas.... Here is one of the reasons. And it’s all to do with Christmas cards. The first commercially produced one was printed in London in 1843. The card was commissioned by Sir Henry Cole, who had helped introduce the penny post service in 1840.

And here we have the connection with the robin: postmen in Victorian Britain were nicknamed “Robins” because of their red-breasted coloured uniforms.

So the Robin on the Christmas card came to represent the postman who delivered the cards at Christmas time.

(Sheila Slade)

Christening Garment



My deceased Canadian cousin was rather artistic (her side of the family). Before she died, she sent me tis rather beautiful, but really-not-me, gown which I think belonged to her father’s family. It is a bit girly, but none of the girls in my family seem to want it. As you see, it is mounted as a wall feature. But it could come out of the frame. Beautifully made! No idea what to do with it. Ideas?

(Chris Basham)

The Cathedral puts on some good stuff. Worth looking out for!

As the end of the year approaches, I would like to thank everybody who has contributed text, ideas and photographs, all of which I need to continue with this project. I keep saying I can't do it without you, and it remains true. Please continue to supply me with material based on your thoughts, experiences and interests to keep us going through 2025.

Finally, Merry Christmas to all our readers and contributors. After that, we can look forward to Spring and some better weather. We were lucky here with Bert. Others not so much!



A cat which followed me up the Cathedral tower last week.

Chris

6. Starting on one side, take two of the strips and twist them together. Repeat on both sides.
7. Remove any scraps from the fridge and, using a cutter (or just with a knife freehand) cut decorative stars, placing a large one at the top of the tree and smaller ones along the middle.
8. Brush with beaten egg all over, season to taste with salt and pepper and sprinkle with the sesame seeds, if using.
9. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before serving.

Merry Christmas!



(BBC Cookery pages)

Four Thoughts

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, they are just the stepping stones to success.

When you're wrong admit it. When you're right, keep your mouth shut.

I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford, then I'll move in with them.

The Four Stages of Man:

1. You believe in Father Christmas.
2. You do not believe in Father Christmas
3. You are Father Christmas.
4. You look like Father Christmas

(David Saunders)