

# FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

## FORDINGBRIDGE AND RINGWOOD PARISH MAGAZINE

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## Soldier Pilots



### Fr Paul Says.....



Our Jubilee Year is well underway. Jubilees have a long tradition in the story of faith. For the people of Israel, the jubilee year was a time of joy and universal pardon. Slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven, and the mercy of God would be seen to be present. The biblical foundation is to be discovered in Leviticus 25 verse 8: “You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven, so that the period of seven weeks gives forty-nine years.” Once the 49<sup>th</sup> years ended, the 50<sup>th</sup> year became the jubilee year.

For Christians the tradition began when Pope Boniface began it in 1300 and it continued every 25 or 50 years. Sometimes there is an extraordinary jubilee as there was in 2015.

In our tradition a jubilee or ‘Holy Year’ offers an opportunity for forgiveness. It is a time for reconciliation between adversaries, of conversion and for regular reception of the Sacrament of Confession. We are also encouraged to join a pilgrimage and there is one detailed on the diocesan website.

Our Holy Year is entitled ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. Pope Francis begins his introduction with the words ‘Hope does not disappoint’ and he sees

During World War Two a special Glider Pilots’ Regiment was formed in the British Army (and the US Army) to provide pilots for the airborne forces inserted early into enemy territory during invasions, and, especially on D-Day and at Arnhem.

Sending infantry and equipment by parachute into a DZ is all very fine, but the troops, initially are not effective until they have grouped and organised on the ground. You don’t have time to do all this if you have to suppress centres of resistance and strategic objectives in advance of a conventional attack, and dispersed troops are rapidly mopped up before they can concentrate. The answer was to use gliders, big heavy ones, capable of carrying numbers of fully equipped men and even vehicles, as fighting units delivered directly to the immediate vicinity of the target and ready to go into action at once to secure objectives.



On D-Day, Pegasus bridge over the Caen Canal which the German Army would need to use to reinforce their troops attempting to repel the bridgeheads being established on the invasion beaches further West was a prime example of a glider borne attack and took place in the small hours well in advance of the arrival of the main naval invasion force. It was the first part of France to be liberated, and you can visit today and be sure of a welcome.

Training of army pilots took place at Tilshead on Salisbury Plain and our ever resourceful researcher, President Ron, has sent me this fascinating article about the process. The author is one Cyril Needham, whom I take to be a member from the early days of the Club at Keevil.



600-800 hp aeroplane to tow it, so this ab initio training on Tiger Moths and Magisters made sense. My pupils were members of the newly formed Glider Pilots Regiment and this training was on

“This is my second involvement with people wishing to glide. My first effort was over forty years ago when I was an RAF instructor teaching Army types to fly powered aircraft so they could convert to their monstrous gliders later (when they’d been built!). Their smallest glider was an eight seater needing a



the gift of hope as firmly part of our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. So, what does it mean for us as we continue our journey of faith, often surrounded by challenges and uncertainties of one kind or another.

So where to begin?

As we search the scriptures, we discover that for all those who met Jesus, he was absolutely real both before and after his Resurrection and Ascension. That has to be our starting point not just during a Holy Year but during every moment of our lives.

It is prayer that puts us into communication with Jesus and deepens our sense of his presence in our lives. The temptation is to see Jesus as either not really human or less than God. Jesus is completely and perfectly God and completely and perfectly human, which is why our hope in his love and action in our lives is assured. A jubilee year, with its invitation to change, is an opportunity to evaluate and review our way of praying and giving time in our relationship with Jesus.

The celebration of Mass is at the heart of our lives as Christians because here we encounter the living Word of God in the scripture and draw life from the gift of the Lord's Body and Blood. This is so that we can become a presence in the world making visible and tangible the love which Jesus is. We are called to be agents of change and a transformation which brings peace and human flourishing. We are to become what we eat and drink at Mass which is the presence and action of Jesus's love for the sake of the world.



As well as being a Jubilee Year, 2025 is the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in 325. The Council, which included the 300 or so bishops of the Christian world, had to resolve an issue which threatened to divide Christianity. The man who was at the centre of the debate was called Arius. He taught that Jesus, in his status as the Son of God, had not existed for ever. In other words, there was a time when the Son of God and second person of the Trinity had not existed. He was not, therefore, God but a kind of super being.



The story of the Council of Nicaea, called by the Roman Emperor Constantine, is complex and there is no room to expand on it here. Sufficient to say, the outcome of the Council of Nicaea

Salisbury Plain, Keevil.

The Tiger Moth was machine. It had not and was a little properly handled, it we then taught. It process through, diving to get up enough speed for some maneuvers, and its progress upwind is best described as stately. It had no flaps, but didn't need them as it sideslipped most effectively. Everybody liked it.



The Magister, mostly one mm plywood, has long since rotted away. It was a flapped low wing, about thirty mph faster than the Tiger on the same engine - which shows what the drag of a few struts and wires does to an aeroplane. It was a good aerobatic machine, coped with windy weather both in the air and on the ground, and was the better trainer of the two since it was less forgiving. Unlike the Tiger Moth, which was loth to spin and quick to recover, the Magister was quick to spin and loth to recover - it took its time and needed proper spin recovery action. This may not have made it popular, but it was good for those pupils who were to progress to nasty unforgiving spin-prone operational aircraft. What made it even more unpopular was the fact that now and then, it failed to recover at all - the spin became slow and flat. This led to the development of 'strakes', the flat, tray-like arrangement fitted in front of the tailplane still seen on Tigers, Chipmunks etc. These strakes made the Tiger Moth just about foolproof, but the Magisters still continued to spin in now and then. Be glad that the Bocian and probably most other gliders, spin well nose down and recover very quickly.

These potential glider pilots were taught the same aerobatics as we taught to RAF pupils. Few of them could slow-roll a Tiger, or do a tidy roll off the top of a half loop, but this didn't matter, as we weren't trying to produce aerobatic pilots, just pilots who could recover from whatever position they got themselves into. For this reason, we also did a bit of inverted flying with them. Inverted flying meant inverted GLIDING as the engines would not run inverted. The inverted glide was peculiarly nose high due to the wing section and its positive angle of incidence. I think the hard part was reacting correctly laterally when a wing dropped (or did it rise?), especially when trying to do an inverted turn, but most pupils let the nose drop and the speed built up inverted: a half loop pull out then used up quite a lot of height and easily reached vne. (Do not try it in a glider: they have not the aileron power for a roll out of trouble, and they accelerate rather quickly). There is only one suitable glider at Keevil I believe - Jeremy Menzies' LO-100 - but you really need to be good at it before you start!



There was one forbidden aerobatic - not taught, but I expect a few pupils were shown it (most reprehensible): the flick roll - forbidden because at the wrong speed and engine rpm combination, it would flick the engine right out of the aeroplane. Forbidden, not only to our Tigers and Magisters, but for nearly all Service aircraft. It's just a horizontal spin and at about the same rotation as a normal spin. The Magister flick-rolled very well indeed, but one had to be very quick to stop it at 360°, i.e. to come out right way up. We kept doing it until somebody's engine fell out!

Occasionally the engine would cut during aerobatics, that is, the propellor would stop. So, we had to teach budding glider pilots how to re-start engines in flight - by diving until the airspeed was enough to 'swing' it. Those of you who 'swing' the Auster's prop may like to know it takes a good 140 mph to produce the same result. This is a poor gliding angle in a Tiger Moth, but it does give an unimpeded view of the ground available for the forced landing, inevitable if the prop does not start. (Derek Piggott is right, in his book 'Gliding' about not landing downhill even if it is upwind; I wonder if he found out the hard way too?)



Glider Pilots' window' Salisbury Cathedral

Night flying was taught. Just circuits and bumps, using little paraffin flares (the watering can shaped things one finds at Keevil occasionally). Although we three-pointed Tiger Moths in daylight, at night we wheeled them on and it takes a light touch not to balloon - nor to dig the propellor in either! Night flying then was in a blackout of course. Nowadays at night the ground is a blaze of light but then you were in a little dark world on your own once you'd taken off, especially in a place like Salisbury Plain. Not a glimmer of light, except the tiny pinpoints of the flarepath - perhaps a searchlight somewhere. In those pre-myxomatosis times there were lots of rabbits around the aerodrome and as you cleared the boundary on take-off, a million little green specks of light would switch on as half a million rabbits looked up at the noise: equally abruptly, the little green lights would all switch off as they all decided 'not to worry' and to get back to their noshing (or whatever else they'd been doing).

In case of engine failure at night, we had magnesium flares under each wing tip, ignited electrically from the cockpit. They gave a good amount of light, but as the aeroplane landed and trickled to a standstill, there was no way of preventing the burning flare setting fire to the wing tip. Only airflow

about fifteen miles from

a very pleasant docile been designed as a trainer weak on aileron power, but could do all the aerobatics lost plenty of height in the progress upwind is best described as stately. It had no flaps, but didn't need them as it sideslipped most effectively. Everybody liked it.



was the Nicene Creed, which is the Creed we say every Sunday at Mass because it is fundamental to our faith and contains 'infallible' teaching.

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### Reading Recommendations

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It is good to read a teenage novel that isn't set in some fantastical parallel universe, or one that deals with 'issues' such as drugs, family break-up etc. (important though these genres are).

This book is based on the true story of the Derbyshire village of Eyam in 1665, one of the few villages outside London to suffer from an outbreak of the Plague.

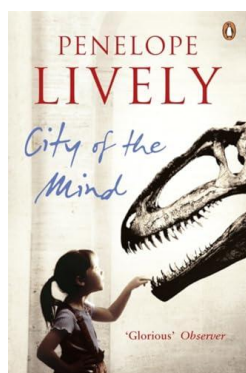
The narrator of the story is 16-year-old Mall Percival, the daughter of a respectable gentleman, who has a flock of sheep that she tends daily. The parson's young wife, newly arrived in the village, requires a dress of a style not familiar to the local tailor. He sends to London for the pattern, which arrives in a parcel sodden from the journey. He hangs the sackcloth parts out to dry, and within a day he is dead. And so the Plague is introduced to the village, and rages through the population, afflicting men, women and children, many of whom die hideous deaths.

The story of how they manage the outbreak, and how they isolate the village in order to prevent the disease spreading to other villages, is remarkable, not least because we have experienced something similar ourselves.

Mall is brave, and has her own difficult decisions to make. Although a fictional account, it is historically accurate, based on contemporary documents.

It is probably a book for the older teenager - 15 say - who knows a bit of the historical context. I have really loved re-reading it. This incident is also the subject of an adult fiction title, A Year of Wonders by Geraldine Brooke.

(Penny Sharp)



I've just been revisiting Penelope Lively – not

stopped this happening in flight.

They also had some instrument flying training. Both aircraft had hoods over the pupil's cockpit so he couldn't see out. This permitted a spinning practise 'improvement'. A flaw in most practise spinning is that one knows in advance which way the machine is rotating, and 'opposite' rudder is the only one available. The Magister would spin from a straight stall, rudder central, so the pupil under the hood had to think about it quickly.

They had 120 hours and left us to go to their Gliding Training Schools. From now on - excluding of course, the probable one only operational flight they were to make - it would be nearly all 'straight and level' and most of it looking at the back of a tug aircraft.

I expect they missed having their own engine!!

(There is a commemorative window in Salisbury Cathedral dedicated to these guys, accompanied by another dedicated to the modern Army Air Corps.)

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## Celebrating Spring

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Last Sunday at the local village church, we were considering the Wedding Feast at Cana and its role as a celebration. That Sunday each month, at the Church of the Ascension, we have a very informal service where we are encouraged to contribute during the homily (Fr Rob who I work for at St Joseph's, Aldershot would have kittens... but the CofE sometimes do things differently!)

So, we (all twelve of us!) were thinking of things we would/could be celebrating... birthdays, the life of someone at a funeral, the return to good health after the Christmas flu etc...

My contribution was that on my morning dog walk that day, before the service, I had heard the songbirds properly singing for the first time this year... so I was celebrating the hope of the start of spring soon.

This fitted in well with the Wassail carol we were about to sing (unexpected brownie point for me from Jan our Lay Minister ) and the blessing we asked for on the orchard crops and other farm crops for the coming year. And we then went on to think of other signs of the hope for spring...

Not surprisingly we had all seen some early snowdrops out and had the usual discussion these days about how much earlier spring is than in our younger years.

So that led me to think of places to go to see snowdrops soon. And Kingston Lacey, a National Trust property the other side of Wimborne sprang to mind.... sorry for the pun!

They even do a volunteer guide early morning snowdrop walk at the end of January and into February, where you can get down close and find out all about the different varieties. Google Aagntional Trust, Kingston Lacy, events!

Have a lovely month looking forward to the Spring, and I hope those little birdies I heard last Sunday were all tucked in safely during the storm that has just gone through

(Sheila Wade)



in the flesh, but reading one of her more recent books. Penelope was a well-read children's author ("The Ghost of Thomas Kemp") and I wrote my MA dissertation on her work for teenagers, which she promptly abandoned in favour of writing for adults. She has been much awarded and recommended for the Booker prize, probably best known for "Moon Tiger". This one "City of the Mind" was written in 1991 and continues to explore her major theme, the past in the present, which happens to be the title of my dissertation.

Set in 1980s London we find architect Matthew managing his new life after a distressing divorce, which ended what had once been a happy marriage, juggling and reflecting on his life as a designer of a new city rising from the ashes of the old, his continuing relationship with his daughter, and finding, quite by chance, a new love. Not really a very 'blokey' read, but I'm just an old romantic!

I really do recommend it, and Penelope Lively in general. She manages to be both introspective and interesting, particularly if, as we all have, I think, an interest in how our pasts affect our presents.

(Chris Basham)

## Poetry Please!

Here, in the absence of any other suggestions, is one of my favourites from one of my favourite poets. You can analyse it to death if you want to, the metaphors, the creative word choice, the aptitude to the subject of the run-on lines, but the best thing is to read it and feel The Wind!

You can say I put it in before if you like! Just seems appropriate.

### Wind

This house has been far out at sea all night,  
The woods crashing through darkness, the  
booming hills,  
Winds stampeding the fields under the window  
Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky  
The hills had new places, and wind wielded  
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,  
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.

At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as  
The coal-house door. Once I looked up -  
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of  
my eyes  
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its  
guyrope,

The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,  
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap;  
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-  
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The  
house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note  
That any second would shatter it. Now deep  
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip

# What Makes a Parish Tick?



Have a guess....

At Fordingbridge we invited parishioners to attend our most recent Parish Pastoral Group meeting. Unfortunately, the weather did its utmost to deter all but the hardiest as the wind and rain absolutely belted the south. Nonetheless, several parishioners battled the elements to join us for some very valuable discussion.

A pastoral group meeting focusses on the issues and

challenges we face in trying to sustain our faith community. The agenda can cover multiple aspects; at its heart is the desire to ensure that we continue to be a vibrant and welcoming community of practising Catholics and maintain our parish estate precisely for that purpose.

Our church faces particular challenges at this time; they will be familiar to readers – falling church attendances, the devastating impact of child abuse scandals, financial demands and constraints, an ever-increasing burden of compliance, the list goes on.

Father Paul used the opportunity of our encounter to identify what a parish community of our size needs to address if we are to continue to offer an authentic Roman Catholic church for the benefit of Catholics in our region and which also serves a wider community purpose. Over the coming weeks we will do our best to disseminate more of Father's vision for a healthy parish, beginning with an invitation.

We are very fortunate in one specific regard - while we are numerically small, we manage to keep our parish alive and doing. Our parish funds are kept under constant scrutiny - our spending is underpinned to the best of our ability by considered budget planning. Crucially, many parishioners are already actively engaged in the work of maintaining our parish – welcomers, liturgists, ministers of communion, servers, readers, sacristans, flower arrangers, singers, musicians. We have a dedicated safeguarding lead, marriage, baptism and bereavement counsellors; cleaners, counters, coffee baristas, gardeners even! We support local, national and international charitable and social justice causes to positive effect. People unable to attend Mass in person can participate using modern technology. And, of course, we have our own newspaper – 'Forty Days and Forty Nights' - the pandemic brainchild of the irrepressible CB.



Which all sounds great – only we need as much help and support as possible if we are to continue to demonstrate our viability. We need you. Please know there is a place for you if you wish to make a contribution to our parish or indeed if you simply want to join something in the parish that is already up and running. We lose people for numerous reasons – relocation, illness, bereavement, family and other commitments. The more of us there are, the easier it will be for us to continue to cover these areas. Be assured of the warmest welcome - you will encounter laughter and fun, you will make new friends (if you haven't got enough already!). And you may well bring something very special in your own right.

What makes a parish tick?

**YOU!**

(Larry Bartel  
Chair – Parish Pastoral Group, Fordingbridge)



Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,  
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,  
Seeing the window tremble to come in,  
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

(Ted Hughes)

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## Gardeners' Corner

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The weather has stopped me getting into the garden very much. I cannot remember such a long spell of damp, gloomy and cold weather. Where are those lovely crisp, sunny days of the past? I got very excited when they told us we were about to have a foot of snow, but we had a few wet snowflakes.

On one of the only sunny days, I managed to mow the lawn on a high setting which made the garden look a lot better. That made me happy but the mountain of leaves blown against the fence that still needed collecting did not. I spent a good week picking about half of them up and then my garden-help arrived with his leaf-blower and finished the rest in about twenty minutes. I do have one but it doesn't reach far enough.

Having finally got down to actual earth, I started pruning the roses down that border, edging it and digging out the weeds. I want to put some of it down to grass and so did a bit of levelling. As there is another bed I want to grass over too, I will need to buy some topsoil which I get from a very good source in Rockbourne.

I am not sure I've beaten the deer as I have noticed some droppings. Where they are getting in, I don't know but I will have to try and find out since I have taken the wire-netting down and will have no flowers come the summer.



Wild life is not doing me any favours at the moment. Apart from the deer, something – probably mice – has made holes in my bags of compost and tipped out bulbs from the container I had put them in for the winter. I have already replaced the bulbs twice and put all the bags of compost into new ones. Today, I found it all over the shed floor so I will have to spread it before I want to just to keep ahead of the rodents.

My sit-on mower doesn't get close to the edges so today I used a little one to tidy what it misses. Whilst mowing with the big machine, I looked round to see quite a large piece of machinery

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## Come and Join Us!

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There are about 30,000 bell-ringers in the UK 'ring the bells.' I'm surprised there are not more because it's a worthy, wholesome hobby and I should expect it to have a greater following.

We welcome new ringers – we need more of them. There are about 5300 bell towers in the world that lend themselves to the English change-ringing. Over 5000 of them are in the UK and the others are mainly in places that that Brits have emigrated to such as Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada and South Africa. In Europe, they're not as energetic as we are – a machine does a carillon. We stalwarts English ring by the sweat of our brows.

With only 30,000 ringers it works out at an average of six ringers per tower. Towers typically have six bells, or eight, sometimes ten. In Ringwood, we have eight, soon to become ten. Fordingbridge has six. Ringing is energetic so we need breaks, so ideally we have at least twelve ringers per session. In short – more ringers please!



Our tower is often quite full because we ringers enjoy sampling other towers' bells so we are blessed with visitors. Sadly, there are towers of functioning bells with no ringers so they lie redundant.

The practicalities of being a ringer are these: each Wednesday night, we ascend fifty-four steep steps to the ringing chamber. Some of our older arthritis sufferers can no longer manage that haul, so they ring at Sopley, where the bell ropes are in the church on ground level. The ringing master calls 'Take hold for rounds and call changes,' which is the easiest ring. 'Rounds' is ringing clockwise around a circle. When the ringer before you pulls, you pull very soon after. The ringing master may say 'Closer Susan!' or 'Wider!' so you have to adjust. You should listen for when your bell strikes.

Then there are methods which are established sequences and involve 'holding up' which is giving a longer pull to the bell causing it to let it stay up longer, so giving the opportunity for another bell to strike. Conversely, we need to 'pull in' which is pulling on the bell rope to bring it down before it rises so it will strike sooner. 'Plain Hunt' is the easiest method and all the ringing methods are based on it.

Our very welcome new starters begin by having a 'duet' with the ringing teacher taking responsibility for the tail end of the rope, whilst the teacher controls the sally – the fluffy part. Then they swop over until the learner can control both; the process takes a few weeks.

Bell ringing practice is for the purpose of ringing for the Sunday service, but you may ring as an activity. Bells are much loved at weddings – a round of applause was given to me at my nephew's wedding in Devizes, for bringing my Ringwood tower mates to step into the breach, while the Devizes ringers were at bell-ringing conference!

We are a lovely group of people and get on extremely well. We have the use of the church facilities so we enjoy a meal in the church at least once a year and we have a carol service which was in Ringwood last year. We host the visitors to a tower tour at least twice a year, and they observe the bell ropes in the ringing chamber, the actual bells in the belfry as well as Ringwood from its highest vantage point on the parapet. They give first-rate feedback and effusive thanks, so that it is a gratifying afternoon for us.

Ringwood bells date from 1552 so bellringing is steeped in history. Bellringing is keeping a quintessentially piece of English culture alive. Bellringing is music.

Bellringing is appreciated by virtually all – the most beautiful sound is birdsong and second – bellringing.

Bellringing is proclaiming to the locals that God's name is being uplifted.

Bellringing is co-ordination, concentration, exercise, social, and above all fun.

So what are you waiting for?

(Susan Hammer)

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## Fabulous Forest!

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It is interesting to see that since the dreaded COVID, many more people get into The Forest in the Winter than was the case before. The car parks have been very full whenever the weather

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## Cookery Corner

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### Venison and apricot casserole

Here is a nice winter lunch for your friends which can be prepared in advance - in fact, it is improved by being cooked the day before. For



lying on the ground. What it is, I have no idea but I dare say it will be something expensive to put right. Oh dear, it is lucky that I enjoy my garden because it costs more to run than the house.



I hope by the time of the next article, we will have had some warmth on our backs and that I haven't broken my legs skiing!!

(Jill Coke)

### Counting the Cost

Do you remember collections? You know – when people passed round plates and put money in them? Quaint! Much easier today letting the banks take care of it all, and we stick in a hymn to fill up the space.

When the Fordingbridge collection was wafted off into the sacristy it all went into the safe. On the following Monday, a pair of mathematically literate (with one notable exception!) counters would arrive to divide it up and count it out and deliver it up to the actual physical bank building in the town. Sometimes there was quite a lot of it and it was always complicated to get the various funds right it paid into: First Collection, Second Collection, various charities and.....Gift Aid Although collections may be almost a thing of the past, we still have Gift Aid, and, occasionally, envelopes are provided.

Gift aid is a rare concession by The Government whereby, provided certain rules are observed, we can claim back the tax you have paid on it to enhance its value. The tricky bit is the 'certain rules' which have to be complied with. For tax to be reclaimed the wretched taxman has to know whose tax is being reclaimed, so it is vital that when you put it in an envelope, you absolutely MUST write your name and address on it to enable the connection to be made.

Last week I had to open a whole pile of white envelopes without identification on them and pay the contents in without being able to apply the relief, so the tax was lost, although the donors had dutifully used the envelopes provided. Shame! Please remember every Gift Aid contribution must be attributable to a taxpayer!

We do not claim Gift Aid on behalf of other charities. This is why they provide their own envelopes. When you do fill in Gift Aid information our administrator, Mellisa, posts them on to the charity.

If you would like to begin Gift Aiding to the church then please complete a Gift Aid form (there are some in the porch). If you need help ask Melissa or Donna. The Gift Aid contributions do make a huge difference to our finances and costs you nothing, However, you must be a tax payer who pays more tax than we claim back.

(Donna Kerrigan and Chris Basham)

has been fairly dry, but, if you walk for a bit, you soon find the visitors get left behind.

The Forest itself, in January seems to be holding its breath; the deciduous trees are bare, the leaves lie rotting beneath your feet, only the gravel tracks make easy walking while elsewhere puddles and mud make the going hard, and treacherous.



The hardy ponies have little to eat but gorse and holly, which they actually seem to enjoy. They are well adapted in their winter coats and the forest agisters keep an eye on them. If they fall ill they are taken off the forest and get veterinary attention, but, sadly, we lose a few every year.



In very bad winters, hay is put out for them. In the dreadful winter of 1962/3 the RAF used their Whirlwind helicopters to drop hay into inaccessible parts.

Frost hangs all day in the hollows where the sun can't reach, and everything is still as nature waits for patiently for Spring.



(Chris Basham)

### End Bits

Well, that about sews this edition up. Many thanks to all contributors. I have had such an embarrassment of riches, that I have held two very interesting articles from John Elliott over for you to enjoy next time, and, in order to fit in, I have had to do violence to one or two bits. Apologies if you don't like what I have done. Please keep stuff rolling in!

Chris

four people:

- About 1kg stewing venison
- Large onion
- About 250g lardons or chopped smoked bacon
- Some red wine
- About half a packet of dried apricots
- Juniper berries
- Chicken stock
- Dessert spoon red currant jelly
- Rosemary and bay tied in a bundle



Brown all the meat in batches in a ovenproof casserole. Remove, and add lardons or bacon with some rapeseed oil. Fry for a little before adding the onions, and fry all together until the onions begin to brown a little. Put in a little flour and stir around so that it cooks, then add about a wine glass of wine, and let it bubble away until it is thick and gloopy and the liquid has reduced. Add the apricots, the chicken stock (not too much about a wine glass full - you can always add more) and the red currant jelly. Let it bubble around a bit and then put the meat back in , add salt and pepper and herbs and cook it in a very slow oven - I cook it in the simmering oven of my Aga for about four hours.

At Christmas I substitute cranberries for the apricots. You could also use prunes.

A good creamy mash goes well with this, made from half white potatoes and half sweet potatoes, or chopped swede. Mash it with a lot of butter and cream.

For pudding you could have almond and blueberry cake



- 150g soft margarine or butter
- 150g sugar
- 3 eggs
- 150g self-raising flour
- 50g ground almonds
- Zest of a lemon
- 250g blueberries

Grease and line 9in cake tin. Heat the oven to 170C gas 5. Cream together the margarine or butter until pale, then add eggs one at a time. Stir in the flour gradually and then the almonds and lemon zest. Then add the blueberries.

Pour into the tin and cook for about 45 - 60 mins, until it is cooked and a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin, turn out. Sprinkle with icing sugar before serving.

This can be made the day before, along with the venison, leaving you calm and relaxed as you welcome and entertain your guest

(Penny Sharp)

(Chris Basham)