



St John's and St Katharine's CHRISTMAS EXTRA Friday 25th December 2020



Happy Birthday to Beth A, Natalie P and Emily C
this week

Thought for the week

Eds: Our thanks to Janet for all of her input this year and for once again providing the week's 'thought'.

Charged with (or rather, invited to undertake) the task of writing the 'thought' for this Christmas edition of *Weekly Extra* I wondered just what note to strike as I sat down at the laptop on this Monday morning of Christmas week.

I had wandered round the house switching on the various sets of Christmas lights, some in places where only we can see them, others in windows where only the neighbours and passers-by will notice them. I had had my first mug of coffee while watching the breakfast news where, despite the determined cheerfulness of the presenters and the gaudiness of the baubles filling the screen, it was clear that this morning's news was awful.

A pattern began to emerge.

When Elaine and Mandy first had the idea of this *Weekly Extra*, back in March when the news was truly awful and we weren't sure how we were going to cope, its purpose was to communicate some optimism and a feeling of togetherness among our scattered St John's and St Katharine's family. It gave us something to look forward to.

In the same way, I think the twinkling lights in the windows and corners lighten a dark, grey morning. The smiles and the Christmas jumpers of the television presenters go a little way to lift the spirits.

Yesterday in church the talk was all about the members of our congregation who had received the vaccine. Many of us heard again the narrative of the first Christmas and listened to carols, and some of us even managed to sing. Seven Christmas bags, overflowing with chocolates and other goodies, generously donated by our congregations, are waiting in St John's ready to be distributed to the people working in our local residential homes.

Today marks the Winter Solstice, that day in the year with the fewest day light hours. Tomorrow, although we might not be able to discern it, there will be more light.

This year I found among my Christmas resources, a prayer which I have

Continues ⇨⇨⇨⇨

used in services, and some of you may have received it in your Christmas cards. It seems to me to express our confident hope in Christ, the light of the world.

Light of Christ, fill our hearts.

Light of Christ, direct our path.

Light of Christ, brighten our days.

Light of Christ, shine in our darkness.

Light of Christ, transform our lives. Amen

Janet C



Christmas greetings from St John's School

On Wednesday last week, the whole school was mobilised for a day of filming their Christmas performance. The school newsletter reports: *it was busy, festive, fun and very well organised! The children were so well behaved as they moved around the one-way system in school in their bubbles, waiting their turn, keeping to the timetable, remembering various props and costumes, and then singing each song so well while they were being filmed. In between songs, some of the older children were recorded doing readings, introductions and the school prayer. They really did all do fantastically. In the afternoon, we managed to get everybody in school together outside for the final song, and there was something particularly special about getting together as one – we haven't been able to do that since March.*

The school is sending out a link to the whole-school song instead of a Christmas card this year. Our school contact Jo says:

It comes with lots of love from all of us here to everyone at St John's Church. We wish you a peaceful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year

Here's the link: <https://vimeo.com/491762086/83f4f2e45e>

The Crib

There has been a certain amount of one-upmanship about the age of treasured Christmas decorations among the letters in the paper we read – 'Our fairy on the Christmas tree was given to my mum in 1938'; 'Our baubles date from the First World War' – you know the sort of thing.



I thought I would start a similar thread by sharing with you the story of our Crib. The stable is a farmyard constructed by my Uncle Leslie and given to me as a Christmas present when I was very little. It must be well over seventy years old. In 1955 we moved to a very large (and extremely cold) farm house with a vast (and freezing) hall and my mother had the idea of creating a crib to brighten one of its chilly corners. The farmyard was appropriated and the principal figures purchased, probably during one of Mum's weekly shopping visits to Downham Market. So they must be at least sixty five years old.

Looking closely. I can see that they have been joined over the years by another extremely tacky plastic shepherd and various stray animals (inevitably there is a black cat), together with the rather deranged angel on the roof.

Of course you must realise that I have arranged this photo specially for *Weekly Extra*. Usually at this point in the Christmas week the stable has only the animals present. The characters arrive in stages. The baby in the manger is usually placed in position after Midnight Mass. Meanwhile the Magi are journeying along the bookshelves ...

Janet C



Yuletide Music and Readings

In December 2008, at Orchardleigh House, and December 2012, at the Bennett Centre, we held evenings of 'Yuletide Music & Readings' to raise funds for St John's Restoration Appeal.

We tried to give an intimate feel to the evenings – so ... muted lighting, blazing log fires, a fireside chair for the readings, a Christmas tree, garlands and lights twinkling all around. And on the candle-lit tables wine (mulled and traditional), mince pies, sausage rolls and an assortment of festive delicacies.



We had choir members from St Katharine's and St John's directed and inspired by Rosemary, readers and soloists, and tubular bells. The music included traditional renditions of *Masters in this Hall*, *In Dulci Jubilo*, *Sing lullaby* and *Sussex Carol*, and a selection of favourite carols. And who could forget the choirs valiant tubular bells take on *Silent Night!*

The music was interspersed with readings and poems – Stephanie Cole, Hilary Daniel, Martin Bax, Janet and others read seasonal Christmas classics. One of Rudyard Kipling's poems *Eddi's Service* has been included opposite and an adaptation of the *Twelve Days of Christmas (A correspondence)* by John Julius Norwich gave a graphic day-by-day description of events. (Remember Beth's reading as Emily, pleading with her 'beloved Edward': 'Please, please STOP' as poultry, cows and wild-life ran amok and ruined her garden?)

These magical evenings were rounded off with a rousing 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'. Sadly we can't host a 'Yuletide Music and Readings' at the moment, but we can still wish everyone a Merry Christmas and hope to stage something similar in 2021. In the meantime – here are a few clips:

The Twelve Days of Christmas: https://www.monologues.co.uk/Parodies/Twelve_Days_Correspondence.htm

Sussex Carol: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZm2NsZnJHE>

Masters in this Hall: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPxipjPcr04>

Eddi's Service

(AD607)

By Rudyard Kipling



EDDI, priest of St. Wilfrid
In his chapel at Manhood End,
Ordered a midnight service
For such as cared to attend.

But the Saxons were keeping
Christmas,
And the night was stormy as well.
Nobody came to service,
Though Eddi rang the bell.

'Wicked weather for walking,'
Said Eddi of Manhood End.
'But I must go on with the service
For such as care to attend.'

The altar-lamps were lighted, –
An old marsh-donkey came,
Bold as a guest invited,
And stared at the guttering flame.

The storm beat on at the windows,
The water splashed on the floor,
And a wet, yoke-weary bullock
Pushed in through the open door.

'How do I know what is greatest,
How do I know what is least?
That is My Father's business,'
Said Eddi, Wilfrid's priest.

'But – three are gathered together –
Listen to me and attend.
I bring good news, my brethren!'
Said Eddi of Manhood End.

And he told the Ox of a Manger
And a Stall in Bethlehem,
And he spoke to the Ass of a Rider,
That rode to Jerusalem.

They steamed & dripped in the
chancel,
They listened and never stirred,
While, just as though they were
Bishops,
Eddi preached them The Word,

Till the gale blew off on the marshes
And the windows showed the day,
And the Ox and the Ass together
Wheeled and clattered away.

And when the Saxons mocked him,
Said Eddi of Manhood End,
'I dare not shut His chapel
On such as care to attend.'



Anniversaries in 2020: 1st December The Channel Tunnel

On 1st December 1990 British and French construction workers on the Channel Tunnel broke through the last wall of rock separating the two halves, and Britain and France were linked for the first time in thousands of years.

The Channel Tunnel is a 50.45 kilometre (31.35 miles) railway tunnel that connects Folkestone, Kent, with Coquelles (Haute-de-France). At its lowest point, it is 75m (250 ft) deep below the sea bed and 115m (380 ft) below sea level – and at 37.9 kilometres (23.5 mi), the tunnel has the longest underwater section of any tunnel in the world.

Since 1802 there have been several proposals to build a tunnel under the English Channel. The project was resurrected in the 1970s. Public opinion strongly favoured a drive-through tunnel, but concerns about ventilation, accident management and driver mesmerisation led to the only short-listed rail submission, CTG/F-M, being awarded the project in January 1986. Reasons given for the selection included that it caused least disruption to shipping in the Channel, least environmental disruption, was the best protected against terrorism, and was the most likely to attract sufficient private finance.

Working from both English and French soil, eleven tunnel boring machines or TBMs cut through chalk marl to construct a service tunnel and two rail tunnels. Tunnelling commenced in 1988, and the tunnel began operating in 1994. The tunnel carries Eurostar passenger trains, the Eurotunnel Shuttle for road vehicles – the largest such transport in the world – and international freight trains. The speed limit for trains through the tunnel is 160 km/h(100 mph).

In 1985 prices, the total construction cost was £4.65 billion (worth about three times as much today), and an 80% cost overrun. At its peak 15,000 people were employed in construction with daily costs over £3m.



The Channel Tunnel exhibit at the National Railway Museum in York, showing the circular cross section of the tunnel.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR IN THAILAND (Part 1)

Eds: Our thanks to Chris for this insight into Christmas abroad.

Part 2 will be in the New Year edition

Thailand is nearly 90% Buddhist, so its festivals are associated with Buddha. But it is a modern country interacting with the world, and Buddhists tolerate all religions. This means the Christmas period is also special in Thailand. Although for many Christmas Day is a normal working day, from shortly afterwards until after the New Year most work places shut down and people are encouraged to visit their families and their ancestral villages. To make it easier, all motorway tolls are stopped for about a fortnight, thus reducing the cost of travel.

There are no presents or Christmas trees. Essentially, Christmas/New Year holidays give Buddhists time to restore themselves by 'gaining merit': by prayer, meditation and visiting temples and by observing traditions: eg cleaning family shrines; giving money to the unemployed who may do small jobs for you (cooking, ironing, gardening); or by giving strangers small amounts (my wife tips unpaid cleaners in temples). You also 'gain merit' by contacting friends and relations, feeding tame baby elephants, sometimes with Santa Claus hats on, or inviting neighbours to party. A modern trend is to put a photo of what you did on Facebook, with a comment 'making merit'.

There are no Christmas or New Year Buddhist services as such, but it is common for someone in the village to celebrate some event (widely



defined: new cars count, as do anniversaries) by inviting up to a dozen monks to your house to say prayers and all the neighbours to join in the feasting. Last year one of our neighbours celebrated retiring from being Chief Scout by holding a service and feast in his house.

Chris L

Places we love to visit

Niagara Falls

Eds: Thank you to Lois for her account of a trip to inspire us and definitely one to add to the bucket list.



Terry and I flew to Toronto for our trip to Canada and New England in the Fall (autumn to us!) of 2017. We then travelled to Niagara Falls, Ontario, 80 miles away, and stayed at the Hilton Hotel, which has fantastic panoramic views of the falls from the rooftop restaurant. It is especially beautiful at night as everything is lit up with colourful lights, which makes it really spectacular.



The Niagara River runs between Canada and America and is linked by the Rainbow Bridge. The view of the Falls is far better from the Canadian side as you can get right up to the brink of the Horseshoe Falls, so next morning we took a boat trip on the *Hornblower* – on the Canadian side of Niagara. We were each provided with a pink plastic cape with hood to try to keep us as dry as possible (see photo of Terry). (The boat trips from the American side are on the *Maid of the Mist*, and they have blue plastic capes!) You need them as you get absolutely soaked, but it is worth it – the sights were spectacular and the sounds were amazing.



The voyage started off very calmly, and the water was covered with a brown foam at one section, which is not dangerous – it's made up of mostly decayed vegetation from Lake Erie. Then as we approached the Falls it got quite rough, the boat bobbing up and down by the force of the water, and you had to hold on to the bars to keep standing up. Trying to hold your phone in the other hand to take photos was quite tricky, so much so it was nearly impossible to do both! The force of the falling water was so vigorous and noisy we



could not talk to each other – only shout and point! In fact, the water comes from Lake Superior down through Niagara to Lake Ontario and then on to the St Lawrence river and into the Atlantic Ocean. Some 3,160 tons of water flow over Niagara Falls every second, providing over 1 million people with energy and fresh water etc. It was a really memorable trip as you can imagine. Terry wanted to take a zip wire over the falls, but he was told he was too old! You can take a trip behind the Falls, but we did not have time to do both that and the boat trip, and we decided the boat trip was the best option.

After changing out of our wet clothes we had lunch in the 240-metre-high revolving restaurant at the top of the Skylon Tower with 360 degree spectacular panoramic views across the Falls. You could not put your handbag down on the window ledge, because five minutes later it would be across the other side of the room! A truly remarkable day!

Lois B



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Eds: Our thanks to Chris L for providing us with this seasonal quiz. Answers in the New Year edition of WE next week.



1. 'How far is it to Bethlehem?'
2. Who introduced the Christmas Tree to England?
3. Complete this Betjeman poem about Christmas:
'No carolling in frosty air, Can with this single Truth compare ...'
4. Where is Christmas Island?
5. Which famous scientist was born on Christmas Day 1642?
6. Who first sang 'Mary's Boy Child' and when?
7. What do Germans have for their Christmas dessert?
8. Complete the names of Santa's reindeers in 'The Night Before Christmas': 'Now, now, now, and! On, COMET! on CUPID! on, DONNER and BLITZEN
9. Which film includes the song 'Walking in the Air'?
10. What was the date of the very first Christmas card ever sent? 1823, 1833, 1843?
11. What did my true love send to me on the 6th day of Christmas?
12. What three things is King Wenceslas supposed to have taken to the poor peasant?
13. What was the name of Ebenezer Scrooge's partner in *A Christmas Carol*?
14. Some people hang a pomander on their Christmas Tree. How do you make a pomander?
15. What is the star sign of someone born on Christmas Day?
16. Where was the epicentre of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami?
17. What is in the popular American Christmas drink called Tom and Jerry?
18. Between 1996 and 1998 which UK girl band celebrated three consecutive UK Christmas No. 1 singles?
19. What is the Saint's day on which Boxing Day falls?
20. Which Hollywood actor played six different roles in *The Polar Express*?

STOP PRESS!

Yesterday (Tuesday), nine goodie bags were delivered on your behalf: one to each of the seven care homes in Frome, one to the Virus Test Centre and one to the YMCA.

Thank you to everyone for the donations of chocolates, biscuits and hand cream that made this possible. Janet reports that everything was very joyfully received!



The Daily Hope Line: 0800 804 8044

If you are not coming to church at Christmas, don't forget that we can all join in worship on our telephones.

The Daily Hope line is a free service that was launched in April in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, offering inspiration and hope to people who do not have access to the internet, and the phone line has received more than 325,000 calls. For Christmas they have prepared a wonderful range of festive content including Bible readings and Christmas Carols.



Next Christmas

A grandson had just taken a photograph of his grandmother who'd come to stay for Christmas and her 89th birthday. 'Grannie, I sure hope I'm around next year to photograph you on your 90th birthday,' he said tactfully. 'Why not?' his grandmother shrugged. 'You look healthy enough.'

This week's SUDOKU

4		3						
8	9					7		
		1		4				
7	3		6			9	8	
			8		3			
	8	9			4		6	2
				1		8		
		6					4	1
						6		3

© 2013 KrazyDad.com

Editors: Elaine (elainegilburt@live.co.uk) Mandy (amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk)