# CONNECTIONS



The Community Benefice Magazine of
Richmond with Hudswell,
Downholme and Marske

Dec '26/Jan '27

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## THE BENEFICE OF RICHMOND WITH HUDSWELL, DOWNHOLME AND MARSKE

www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk
www.facebook.com/StMarysRHDM

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Bishop John Pritchard - Revd Jennifer Williamson - Revd Pauline Shepherd
Revd Martin Clarke - Revd Stewart Ridley

#### OCCASIONAL PREACHER

Paul Perry

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|---|---|---|---|
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## CHURCH SERVICES — St MARY THE VIRGIN, RICHMOND with Hudswell

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8.00 a.m. | Holy Communion | | Every Sunday |
| 10.00 a.m. | Parish Communion | | Every Sunday apart from1st Sunday |
| | Morning Worship | (no communion) | Every 1st Sunday |
| 4.00 p.m. | Café Church | | 3rd Sunday (every 2 mths — Jan, March etc) |
| | Fun-Key Church | | Last Sunday each month |
| 6.30 p.m. | Choral Evensong | | Second Sunday each month |
| 9.15 a.m. | Holy Communion | | Every Wednesday |

### CHURCH SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY CHAPEL, MARKET PLACE , RICHMOND

**10.30 a.m. Holy Communion — Every Thursday**

## PARISH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, DOWNHOLME

### CHURCH OFFICERS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reader | George Alderson | (07487) 257646 | 68, Brompton Park, Brompton on Swale DL10 7JP |
| Church Warden | Andra Sison-Ham | (07753) 842246 | andrakrumins@gmail.com |
| Church Treasurer | Phil Ham | (07920) 884103 | 'Sundale', Reeth, DL11 6TX philip.ham@outlook.com |
| PCC Secretary | Andra Sison-Ham | (07753) 842246 | andrakrumins@gmail.com |

### CHURCH SERVICES AT DOWNHOLME

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **9.30 a.m.** | **Morning Prayer** | **Every second Sunday** |
| **9.30 a.m.** | **Holy Communion** | **Every fourth Sunday** |

## THE PARISH OF ST EDMUNDS, MARSKE

### CHURCH OFFICERS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Church Warden | Ruth Tindale | (01748) 823371 | Skelton Lodge, Marske |
| Organist | Jennifer Wallis | (01748) 822930 | 1 School Terrace, Marske |
| Treasurer | Peter Coates | (07801) 521954 | Orgate Farmhouse, Marske peter.coates54@hotmail.co.uk |
| PCC Secretary | Andra Sison-Ham | (07753) 842246 | andrakrumins@gmail.com |

### CHURCH SERVICES AT MARSKE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **11.00 a.m.** | **Holy Communion** | **Every Sunday, except 2nd (& 5th) Sunday** |
| **11.00 a.m.** | **Morning Prayer** | **Every 2nd (& 5th) Sunday** |

## EDITORIAL from connections.ed24@gmail.com

For this double-month issue we have a bumper edition with some new contributors, so plenty to get your teeth into over the festive season.

Revd Lorna's letter asks if you are ready for the 'big day', then, as we enter an interregnum following Revd Martin's retirement, Wendy Pritchard encourages the whole church family to help Lorna and play its part until a new rector is appointed and in place. There is an update from Steph Williamson about the Passion Play, before Jim Jack reminiscences about his childhood Christmases. Later on, Jim has also provided his usual update on the Friends events, past and upcoming, and shares what he discovered about the development of Bank holidays. John Pritchard has a topical Hard Question about the Virgin Birth, and later offers some thoughts on the troubling rise of Christian Nationalism.

Christine Porter has contributed an uplifting account of the Italian Chapel on Orkney, with a sobering reflection on contrasting events elsewhere, while Judith MacLeod's visit to St Mary's, Norton-on-Tees brought back many memories. Carole McCormack encourages everyone not to overlook the joy and meaning of Christmas, while her Nature Notes focus on man's best friend – her dogs.

Stuart Rowan has written a thought-provoking article about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and offers some practical advice, while Alèxe Finlay has been reflecting upon recent government warnings about Resilience. A former resident of Richmond tells the story of the arrival of the first telephone in Richmond and how things changed over the next 60 years or so, and we have details of the Charities of the Month for December and January, together with a list of those we shall be supporting next year. There are several posters for various concerts and performances in the next couple of months and, if you still need Christmas cards, Andy Lovell is offering packs of his aerial pictures of snowy Richmond at a bargain price – all in aid of the Friends of St Mary's. Finally, as well a poem from George Alderson, we have included a puzzle page for children which might help to keep them occupied – and there are the usual puzzles for you too.

On behalf of the editorial team, may I wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and a New Year full of peace and joy.

*John McCormack*

**Cover photo by Carole McCormack**
***Christmas at Auckland Palace***

# Lorna's letter

# December 2026



## Are you ready?

I am not a patient women. I am a woman far better in the throes of a crisis than I am in preparing for one. For example, this whole business of Being Ready that the Government wants us to do is winding me up good and proper, because how will I know what I'm going to need? Sure, I've got my water and my soups and my various canned goods; Ylfa has all her food sorted until the New Year; but still!

I'm also writing this letter once more in the strange ephemeral time of Martin being here, knowing that by the time this letter is published he will have sailed off into the sunset with the good will and good wishes of all ringing in his ears. Martin has prepared extensively for his departure, both himself and those around him. I look, pleased, upon rotas that he has arranged and that I don't need to think deeply about for months to come. He asked me the other week if I had questions about the handover, and I answered the same way I usually do in these situations: "I don't know yet, I don't know what will come up, but that will be my sink-or-swim time".

But upon thinking about it, the only reason I'm good in a crisis is because I've been so well prepared for it. If I face a pastoral or ecumenical crisis in the next few months, I have thousands of emails with plentiful information to look back on, not to mention deeply knowledgeable churchwardens and retired clergy. Martin has ensured that when a crisis hits, I won't be left floundering around completely on my own. It's like how the government doesn't want me to be starving and cold the next time I am snowed completely into my home. I'll be good in that crisis, because someone has told me how to handle it beforehand.



We are in a period of waiting and preparation now, with it being Advent and going into the Christmas season. Now, I'm not saying that the Christmas season is a crisis (although that depends on how the run up to it goes), but the coming of Christ is a Big Thing that we all need to prepare for. Advent isn't a time that we can really spend dandering about, but it is instead a time of preparation.

There are, of course, many ways we can do this. There are advent courses that are offered by the diocese; books we can read; prayers we can say; services we can attend; but preparing ourselves spiritually is not quite the same as preparing ourselves in reality. Being a Christian and preparing to welcome Christ is more than just prayer – it's about good deeds as well. So, if I may suggest something, maybe an advent calendar of good deeds you can do on the run-up to Christmas might be a good idea? Some of them small things like picking up some litter that you see in the street instead of ignoring it; some of them easy things, like giving a fiver to charity or popping something in the Open Pantry; and some of them big things like volunteering somewhere or putting yourself out to help someone else. The great thing about this is that it takes 21 days to form a habit (allegedly), so it's something that you can do as part of your New Year routine as well.

That way, when Christ comes at Christmas, and beyond, you can face this Big Event head on knowing that you're really ready, all prepared, and welcoming anything that can be thrown at you.

Blessings,

*Lorna*



## WHAT NOW?

As our parishes enter this period of interregnum, **WENDY PRITCHARD** reminds us that we all have a part to play in the life of our churches.

Last month we said 'Goodbye' to our much-loved rector, Martin, with our thanks for all he has given us in his time here, and with our heartfelt best wishes for his future. Now though, we are not a ship without a rudder, sailing unguided into the storm! We are a family, pulling together, listening to one another, sharing our stories, our hopes and fears and looking forward with trust.

As in every family, we will have ups and downs as we wait on God to guide the right person towards us to be our new rector. Hopefully though, the next few months will see a blossoming of our talents as we all rise to support one another.

What we can do:

1. Support Lorna. She will be taking on a lot of things previously covered by Martin, but we need to remember she is still a curate and not a seasoned incumbent, however loved and talented she might be. We are so fortunate to have her.
2. Martin was great in spotting peoples' gifts and encouraging us to use them. Let's not stop now!
3. If you see something we can do to improve things, please tell someone. Peter Trewby and I are legally in charge of the church during a vacancy and we will try our very best to sort out any problems.
4. If you know of someone connected to the church who has become ill, please tell Lorna, so that she can share it with the pastoral team. We also have a prayer circle, who are committed to pray from their own homes. If requests for prayer are emailed to prayer@richmondhudswellparish.org.uk they are passed to the people in the prayer circle by email. The prayer circle would always welcome new members if you'd like to join.
5. Coffee time after the service is an important space where we can talk to people we don't know well or who are new to the church. Let's maintain our reputation for being welcoming!



6. More important than any of these, though, is to hold fast to our faith. We have a glorious God, who loves us through and through, and loves equally all of our friends and neighbours who would be reluctant to step into a church. Let us share that love with one another.

Onwards and upwards, in faith and love!

*Wendy Pritchard*




**From Ruth's window in St Mary's**

# St Mary's Church Richmond Services/Events December 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sun 6 Dec** | 4:00 pm - Christingle Service |
| **Mon 7 Dec** | 7:00 pm - Blenkiron Memorial Service |
| **Wed 9 Dec** | 7:00 pm - Mayor's Carol Concert |
| **Fri 11 Dec** | 7:00 pm - British Army Band Colchester |
| **Sat 12 Dec** | 7:00 pm - Station Singers Carols by Candlelight |
| **Sun 13 Dec** | 6:30 pm - Advent Carols |
| **Thurs 17 Dec** | 6:00 pm - Richmond School Service |
| **Sat 19 Dec** | 8:30 am - Richmond Town Hall Coffee Morning |
| **Sun 20 Dec** | 6:30 pm - Nine Lessons and Carols |
| **Christmas Eve** | 4:00pm - Crib Service<br>Children are invited to come along dressed up as angels, shepherds or any other Nativity character.<br>11:30pm - Midnight Mass |
| **Christmas Day** | 8:00am - Holy Communion<br>10.00am - Christmas Communion |

For more details find us at :
www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

## PASSION PLAY UPDATE

The organisers of next year's Passion Play in Richmond — on Good Friday 2027— continue to be very busy, but still need lots of help. Could you help them, or know of someone who would be willing to do so?

The Passion Play Costume Team took a trip to York last month to visit the costume store for York Theatre Royal. It was fruitful, but not in the way we expected! Picture a large modern warehouse on the outskirts of the city. Then imagine a very small section of double-height hanging space, crammed to the rafters with biblical through to mediaeval costume, and then a vague wave towards a section for roman soldiers at the end of the racks. We found plenty of ordinary robes for disciples and local inhabitants of biblical Jerusalem (easy to make), but only one roman soldier (difficult and complex costume), which isn't very helpful when we need about a dozen. We were offered Spartan from the current comedic and all female production of the Odyssey, but I cannot describe how far from suitable they were! So, in a rapid change of plan, we will hire the easy costumes and make the difficult ones, so if you would like to help cut, sew, spray a costume, please join us. And on that note -

An army is coming to Richmond…..



**Watch out! – the Romans are coming!**

You might also have noticed a flurry of activity on social media as the Passion Team scour the town for likely young men to play Roman soldiers. Roman soldiers played a significant role in the events surrounding the final days of Jesus. They are central to some of the most pivotal and powerful moments in the Passion story, so we are looking for men aged between 18 and early 40s to bring these moments to life. For one of the cast, there is also one of the most significant lines in the script to say at the moment Christ dies, "This man really was the son of God."

We are still casting. Please be assured that whether your faith is strong, your questions are many, or you don't believe at all, there is a place for you in our story. Taking part isn't about what you believe, but it's about community, coming together and sharing a powerful story. The best way to link to us is via the contact page at:

www.richmondpassionplay.org or email producer@richmondpassionplay.org.uk

*Steph Williamson*

***Still in need of some Christmas cards?***



**What a Bargain !**







**5 for £2 with envelopes**



See Andy Lovell at back of Church after Sunday service

All proceeds to the Friends of St Mary's

## OUT OF KILTER – CHRISTMAS DAY OR HOGMANAY?

Regular readers will be aware of **JIM JACK's** references to his Scottish birth and roots. With Christmas approaching, he was leafing through some old family photos of Christmas get-togethers and was reminded that his Scottish relatives never appeared in these. There wasn't a family fall-out, so there must have been another reason.



**Part of a 1950s Jack Family Christmas. Author and his sister were round the corner to the right on the children's table, so not in the picture.**

When my sister and I were of primary school age in the 1950s, we always looked forward to Christmas – not just Father Christmas, presents, and carol singing, but the chance to see some of our cousins who would come to stay over the Christmas period and all much the same age as ourselves. But it was only relatives from my mother's side of family – the Elliotts (a good north-country name, whose forebears had a taste for Border reiving – stealing cattle and grain from other border families). There were no Jack relatives present.

And why were they not there with us on Christmas Day in the '50s? Because the uncles and one of my aunts were all working. On Christmas Day? Yes. Could they not come on Boxing Day then? No – for the same reason. But they could have come for 1st January, when there was a public holiday in Scotland. Well, no, because 1st January wasn't a public holiday in England, when most of the Elliott relatives were – working! So how was the United Kingdom so disunited in this small matter of when to holiday and feast and when not to?



**Henry VIII**

The difference lies in religion and branches of the Christian faith, and also that England and Scotland were two separate countries. To understand this particular difference, I needed to look back to the Reformation**s:** one in England, when Henry VIII took England and Wales out of the Roman Catholic church — a sort of religious Brexit — and one in Scotland, where the preachings of John Knox led the Scots on a fundamentally different route away from Rome's religious leadership.

In England, the newly formed Church of England continued many of the worship structures and practices of the Church of Rome, with one or two fundamental differences, especially around the meaning of Holy Communion and the celibacy of the priesthood. Indeed, the cycle of readings which we hear in church at St Mary's is often the same as those read out not only in Anglican churches but also in Roman Catholic churches across the land. And, of course, that the Head of the Anglican church is the Monarch, not the Pope.



**John Knox**

What about Scotland? Those who can recall their history lessons at school may recall that the term 'Reformation' was applied to a movement which rook place across all of Europe, influenced by the teachings of Martin Luther. These teachings found a receptive audience in Scotland and six noblemen took leadership responsibility in the Scottish Parliament to reform the practices of religion in the country. These would be based upon the 'infallible truth of the word of God', rather than interpretations and edicts from the heir to St Peter in Rome. They decided what form the 'Reformed Faith' should take, and appointed John Knox as the superintendent of the work of creating this new way.

The logic of this system was to cut out the 'middleman' between God's word, as set out the Bible, and the people (i.e. the pope and church establishment) which, in turn, meant the congregations of each worshipping community were in charge of their own worship, appointing their own ministers, but governed by their local presbytery (the Presbyterians), or Congregations (Congregational Church). These committees of church members were led by scripture rather than papal edict.

'But what's all this got to do with your lop-sided family Christmas?' I sense you may be thinking by now.

In 1560, the newly formed Kirk (Church) set out to order public worship according to the Kirk's understanding of scripture. So making Sunday, the Lord's Day, a binding day of rest (on the seventh day, God rested) in law made sense, but there was no obligation to observe any calendar of festivals imported from the medieval church. They weren't in the scriptures, so there was no dispute about the incarnation — simply no religious obligation to observe an annual Christmas festival.



**Jenny Geddes throws her stool at a preacher in Edinburgh, when he starts to read out the Book of Common Prayer from England.**

There followed 400 years of legal 'tennis'. In 1575 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland rejected any holy day observance other than the Sabbath – there being a strong scriptural base for this. So only if 25th December fell on a Sunday would there be observance by having a day away from work – and indeed from everything else apart from prayer.

Sixty five years later, parliament abolished the Yule holiday for the courts – trials on Christmas Day had specifically resumed – only to be stopped with the restoration of the monarchy in 1661 and then restarted again in 1691. And so this chopping and changing at national level went on until 1871, when Christmas Day was expressly included in Scottish Bank holidays. But it was not until 1958 that it was given general public holiday status.

Needless to say, this historical explanation of why my two Uncle Davids and Aunt Jean had to work on Christmas Day was not given to we primary school attenders — and perhaps wasn't even fully known by our family. Custom and practice handed down was simply that the English Christmas Day was a custom not observed in Scotland.

The reality was that the strength of the Congregational, Presbyterian and other 'free churches' in an area probably dictated how much or how little Christmas Day as we know it was celebrated in Scotland. My home village, and the ones around us, were in strongly Congregationalist or Presbyterian areas, so working on Christmas Day — apart from financial institutions — was the norm.

One thing was certain, however. There was no obligation on any employer — apart from banks — to give any employee the day off on Christmas Day until the late 1950s and perhaps as late as 1971. So the two uncles, who both worked in 'hot metal' trades in Glasgow (the 'foondry') may well have had their Christmas turkey and trimmings – but only after their shift at work and a 14-mile bus journey home.



**Up Helly Aa — Hogmanay celebrations on Shetland**

What the Scots celebrated instead around the winter solstice was, and is, Hogmanay – marking the end of the old year and the beginning of the new, a fixed date and time of celebration, which pre-dated the arrival of Christianity.

Whilst the Scots in Newcastle celebrated Hogmanay, the local English custom in the 1950s was that New Year's Day was a day of work for many. With the Kirk's insistence that Christmas Day was not a day of celebration, people sought ways to avoid the ban and transferred their gift-giving, feasting and bringing in the New Year to New Year's Eve. Because this was non-religious but rooted in ancient folk traditions, it did not attract the same ire as celebrating Christmas Day did from the church in Scotland.

Thus it was that my Dad and a fellow Scot, Mr Pallister, from the same road felt it important to introduce our neighbours to the Scottish customs of seeing in the New Year on Hogmanay (New Year's Eve), a task pursued with almost missionary zeaL

So the symbolism of a Scottish New Year was brought to our street. Ashes from the fireplace were swept out to give a clean start to the year. The 'first footer' across the threshold after midnight would be feted, as long as he — and ideally a tall, dark-haired man — would enter the house carrying whisky, coal, shortbread and some salt to symbolise food, warmth and prosperity. With a greeting of 'Lang may yer lum reek' — meaning 'long may your chimney contain a lighted fire' and

therefore no poverty — toasts were made and all joined hands to sing Auld Lang Syne ('literally 'old long since' — or 'days gone by') a ballad not specifically about new year, but a new year commitment to friendship and support of each other in times ahead. You will see from this how much the English nation has adopted these Scottish customs, in parallel to the Scots celebrating Christmas Day more than they used to when I was 'a wee boy' – a 'wain'. Possibly to cater for the after effects of revelry, the Scots have 1st and 2nd January designated as public holidays.



**First footing.**

So there we are. One small way in which the two nations are less out of kilter than they were. An interesting footnote, however, only recently learned from my readings. The quite oppressive nature of the practices in the reformed church in Scotland, and its insistence on not taking the word of the pope or bishops or kings, but on the infallible word of God as set out in scripture, was a need for people to learn to read and write. So from the 16th century onwards, the church promoted popular access to scripture by promoting the learning of reading and writing. This Is said to have meant that literacy levels in Scotland were at a much higher level than in England, possibly as far as the 19th century. In turn, this also contributed to the primacy of a number of Scottish philosophers, industrialists and writers, given the size of the country, and the higher quality of basic education for all in the 18th and early to mid-19th centuries. Perhaps a debate for another time. As young children with a Scottish Congregationalist father and an Anglican mother, we celebrated both Christmas Day and New Year's Day, whilst our (Methodist) Church Youth club went carol singing on Christmas Eve until 2.00 a.m. on Christmas Day and also visited the same houses to first-foot on New Year's Eve. Happy days!

*Jim Jack*

## CHARITY OF THE MONTH — DECEMBER

This month, **Mark B-P** provides some background to
**DARLINGTON WOMEN'S REFUGE**
and explains why it is still in need of our support.

Celebrating its 50th year, the Darlington refuge, run by Family Help Darlington, is one of the longest standing refuges in the country. Comprising 8 units, it provides a safe, temporary haven for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. It is aiming to expand its accommodation with a new refuge, and to increase specialist services.

The team works on-site and the highly-skilled staff are well placed to meet the needs of the women and children. There are sessions to assist with budgeting, benefits, education or employment, and housing matters. An in-house counsellor provides regular emotional support and a weekly domestic abuse programme, aiming to enable women to have a future free of abuse. There are children's workers on hand, meeting the needs of the families staying in the refuge.

Appallingly, 1 in 4 women in the UK will become victims of abuse at some time in their lives, and homelessness is often among the distressing results. Within the refuge, residents are given the space, time, knowledge and resources to build on their strengths and find their own solutions. The average stay is 6 months, before it's time to fly the nest and move into their own home — safe, happy and free.

*"Without your help and support, I would have probably returned to my ex and possibly wouldn't be alive today."* - Client M.

*"I would say to anyone worried about going to refuge, if it's Darlington refuge you are going to, do not be afraid. It is a wonderful place!"* - Client R.

Family Help provides a phone helpline for anyone affected by domestic abuse, directly or indirectly, regardless of gender, age, race or religion. This is available Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm, on 01325 364486.

There is also a support group, led by experienced domestic abuse support workers.

For more information, or to offer support, their email is:

**contactus@family help.org.uk**

Thank you.

*Mark Beresford-Peirse*

## HARD QUESTION

As Christmas Carol services approach, we're going to hear again about a Virgin Birth. But is it possible to believe in a virginal conception today? **JOHN PRITCHARD** looks at the perennial question.

## What about the Virgin Birth?

Let's be clear at the start. Although 'born of the virgin Mary' is in the creed, believing in the virgin birth is not a faith-defining choice. There are Christians who believe in it and those who don't, and probably far more who have never really thought much about it. We shouldn't get it out of proportion. Nowhere in the Bible is the deity of Christ, or his incarnation or what we shorthand as his 'sinlessness' stand or fall by the method of his birth. The virgin birth is hardly mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament.

So, let's look at what we know and what we assume.

- Both Matthew and Luke's gospel state that Jesus was conceived by the action of the Holy Spirit without the intervention of a human father, and thus born of a virgin. Mark and John don't mention it. It might be that they assume a virgin birth or that, to them, it's not a necessary part of the good news.
- The birth stories in Matthew and Luke are so different (one based on Joseph's experience, the other on Mary's) they can hardly be dependent on one another. In other words, the story seems to have been widely known in the earliest days of the church. They surely can't have been passed on unless people had good reason to believe them to be true. Otherwise, with Mary still around, they were a hostage to fortune. Not only does Luke say that Gabriel was sent 'to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph,' but he has Mary objecting, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' (Luke 1.34)



- To both Matthew and Luke, the important point is that the conception is the result of an action of the Holy Spirit, more than that there was no human father. (The quip says, 'Yes, Jesus was a Jew, but only on his mother's side…'). As the resurrection showed, here was the start of a new humanity. In Jesus a new age was dawning, brought on by the Spirit.

- It can be argued that the virgin birth (conception) can't be discounted simply because it's a miracle. If God could give us Jesus as both fully man and fully God, then the way he did it can hardly be a problem. It's the incarnation itself that's the most incredible event; all else follows.
- On the other hand, the gospel writers were addressing a first century audience, not a twenty-first century one and our questions are a bit different. We might ask, what was it that the gospel writers wanted to convince their audience about? It must have been that this was no ordinary child, but God's own. We are then entitled to ask, 'If so, is a virgin birth necessary to ensure that Jesus was divine as well as human?' Jesus could be called divine in a number of different ways, e.g. he was the unique human being who was completely centred on God, open to him, obedient to him, so that we could say he was the human face of God – God's 'self-portrait' if you like. This doesn't require a virginal conception.
- It's sometimes pointed out that Isaiah foretold a virgin birth in that superb reading from our Carol services that says, 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel,' (Isaiah 7.14) but the word Isaiah uses is 'almah', meaning a young woman, not necessarily a virgin. There is no doubt, however, that both Matthew and Luke want to assert that Jesus was conceived without paternal intervention.
- So we're probably left with a personal choice. How do we read the mind and actions of God? Does the divinity of Christ require a virgin birth, or is there a different, maybe preferable, way of understanding that divinity? We must have a leaning towards the convictions of Scripture, but the task of interpretation still rests with us.

Over to you!

*John Pritchard*



## IN TIMES GONE BY

The article below was kindly submitted by a previous resident of Richmond — **JOHN CRANSTON** — some time ago. It seems appropriate to include it now, as this month marks the 123rd anniversary of the telephone first coming to Richmond.

### Richmond's first telephone exchange

Nine days before Christmas in 1903, the Mayor of Richmond, George Nash, went into the recently-opened Post Office in King Street and made a phone call. He rang up Aske Hall to speak to the Marquess of Zetland, who had contributed £200 towards the building of the Post Office. He thanked his lordship for his help and added that he was glad to hear the peer's 25-year-old son, Lord Ronaldshay, was home safely from (yet another) trip abroad.



**Lawrence Dundas**
**1st Marquess of Zetland**

It was a very formal conversation but, then, it was part of a very formal occasion: the Mayor was opening the town's telephone exchange and this was the first phone call to be made in Richmond. (At least, it was the first *official* call; quite a few test calls must have been made by engineers, as they spent the previous weeks rigging up wires all over the town and installing telephones in more than 20 homes and businesses.)

Lord Zetland was congratulated on becoming the town's first telephone subscriber – a bit of flattery since everyone else was also connected on the same day. And when it came to phone numbers, he was actually last. The rules dictated that the Post Office was given the number Richmond 1 and thereafter the initial subscribers were numbered alphabetically: game dealer William Cherry was numerically first – his shop in the Market Place became Richmond 2 – while Zetland came last and Aske Hall was given the number Richmond 22.

The telephone service had taken its time to reach the town. More than 25 years had gone by since Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated his new invention to Queen Victoria. The private companies licensed to develop the phone system had set up networks in the larger towns and cities, but they saw little money to be made in places like Richmond. It took state intervention, and an injection of cash, to get the Post Office to create its own telephone exchanges in rural areas.

Only the most prosperous householders could afford to have a phone, and at first only a few did. Why bother, they probably thought, when there were servants on hand to carry messages? And for communications further afield, there was always the telegraph service, which had been serving Richmond perfectly adequately since the late 1840s.

So, aside from the Marquess, the only private residents to join the list of subscribers were racehorse owner Captain JH Jackson, who had just taken over Sylvio House and its stables; golf club captain Owen Pease; and a couple of his lordship's hunting and shooting chums: Captain Hennah in Frenchgate and Colonel Mackeson at Hill House.

Professionals were rather quicker to sign up, such as the town doctor Hugh Eyres; dentist Thomas Page; solicitor Robert Hudson; and banker George Roper. All could now be in contact with Richmond Corporation, the barracks, the police station and the railway station, the King's Head and Fleece hotels, as well as tradespeople – grocers Tennet and Sons, the paper-makers Cooke and Co, ironmongers Spence and Co, and Stephen Close the butcher, among them.



The system installed in Richmond was up-to-date by Edwardian standards. No longer was it necessary to turn a generator handle to make a call. A battery-operated instrument of wood and blackened brass was fitted in the house or office and the subscriber simply lifted the telephone receiver to hear the request, "Number, please" from the switchboard operator in the Post Office. She (because it was normally a woman) would connect the call – provided, of course, it was during post-office hours; there was no service at night and the switchboard was only staffed for two hours on Sunday mornings.

Calls within the town were not timed and were normally free to subscribers, but long-distance calls were charged – and they were pricey. If Lord Zetland wanted to ring up his town house in Mayfair, a three-minute call would set him back three shillings, or about £20 in today's money.

Getting a phone in the first place wasn't cheap, either. For the two phone lines linking the exchange to Aske Hall (the second served the estate office), Lord Zetland would have paid an annual rent equivalent today to about £3,400.

Nonetheless, the list of subscribers rose steadily through the decade. More businesses signed up, possibly for fear of losing trade to their better-connected

rivals. The number of citizens realizing the convenience of being on the phone grew, too. Mrs Yeoman at Prior House; banker Miles Backhouse at St Trinians; and The Hon. Bobby James at St Nicholas soon chose to be connected (still no-one you wouldn't expect to meet riding with the Marquess or taking tea with Lady Zetland, though.)

Even small expansions of the service made the newspapers. The *Leeds Mercury* of 12th June 1913 reported that "Telephonic communication was yesterday established between Richmond and the village of Marske in Swaledale." It was a rather pompous way of announcing that Marske's post office, where blacksmith Matthew Eden was the postmaster, had been provided with a phone box. (Curiously, it retained the phone number Marske 1 until the mid-1950s.)

Richmond exchange's coverage was extending to the south and east as well. Extra lines were laid on to serve Catterick Camp when it was set up in 1914. And a six-mile meandering party line allowed homes and businesses around Catterick village a cut-rate way of getting a service. Eventually it became clear the service couldn't just be run from a single switchboard in Richmond. In 1924 Catterick got its own exchange and, as the pressure grew to lay on ever more phones in the homes and messes of army officers, and provide kiosks for the troops, another new exchange, initially called Hipswell, was opened to serve the Camp in 1929.

Some may have found these changes a little irksome. Spare a thought for Catterick landowner Gertrude d'Arcy-Hildyard OBE (as she insisted upon being known in the phone book, although the records suggest her nursing work in the Great War had won her a mere MBE) of Colburn Lodge. In little more than two years, she ended up with three different phone numbers – Richmond 98, then Hipswell 33 and finally Catterick Camp 33. If it messed up any of her personalised stationery, there was little she could do about it. As the conditions of service put it rather high-handedly, "The Postmaster-General is not liable for any loss or inconvenience attributable to a change of telephone numbers".

And there were changes afoot in Richmond, too. A new post office was built in Queens Road (now the Ralph Fitz-Randal pub) and opened in 1933. With the new post office came a new telephone exchange. Only this time, it was an automatic one. The telephones of the town were fitted with the new-fangled 'dials'. Finally, after 30 years of personal service provided by the operating staff with their plugs and cords and their "Number, please!", the switchboard in Richmond's first telephone exchange fell silent.



*John Cranston*

# FROM THE REGISTERS



## Wedding

On 18th November 2026
At St Mary's Church, Richmond

**Hannah Rafferty to Andrew Dalton**



*Wishing you both a long and happy marriage.*
*May God guide you along your journey and bless you each day.*



**We give thanks for the lives of those who have died.**



| | |
|---|---|
| Rosemarie Scott | 23rd September '26 |
| Jacqueline Ann Dyer | 3rd October '26 |
| Alan Bennett | 11th October '26 |

***May they rest in peace and rise in glory.***

*Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.*
*Speak of me in the easy way in which you always used..*
*Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.*
*Let it be spoken without effort, without the ghost of a shadow in it.*
*Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?*
*I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near…*
*All is well.*



## CONNECTIONS 2027



**HAVE YOU REMEMBERED?**

Our thanks to all those of you who have already returned your order form and subscription for next year's magazine. This is very much appreciated. If, however, it has slipped your mind, please do so without delay to ensure you get your copy.

## THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

In the run-up to Christmas, with all the hype and commercial pressures to spend, spend, spend and over-indulge, **CAROLE McCORMACK** urges us to pause and think what it is all about.

It's always tricky handling the edition of *Connections* which spans the months of December and January. Each month naturally has a different focus: the essence of December is celebration; whilst January tends to be a time of reflection and evaluation, and looking towards the future, whatever that holds.

I'm writing this on Remembrance Sunday, with Revd Lorna's powerful sermon still very much in the forefront of my mind. Her message was this: even though we are understandably fearful of the threats that surround us (climate change, war and its atrocities, epidemics, violence, extreme nationalism, artificial intelligence – the list goes on …) we need to enjoy every day, every hour, every second of our lives and not miss the beauty and love that surround us. No thinking person can forget the huge negatives that lie behind our fears, but in dwelling only upon these things, the joy with which we are surrounded can elude us.

Joy is a word which stands apart. It suggests a feeling far beyond the normal state of 'happiness' or 'contentment'. Animals are content. When someone's basic human needs are met, a person can be described as happy. But joy – that is something else. To me it is a glimpse of something far beyond what we can see, hear, touch or feel. It is a spirit-lifting, all-encompassing feeling – so overwhelming that no other emotion can co-exist with it.

The word 'Joy' appears more than 200 times in the Bible, throughout both Old and New Testaments. A couple of examples are given below, but there are many, many others.

*"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand"*

*Psalm 16:11*

*"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"*

*John 15:11*

I have always thought that my approach to my belief is too simplistic, too straightforward. I have always avoided getting too bogged down in any bits of the Bible which are very complex – such as some of St Paul's letters and St John's gospel. But I love those parts which I can immediately get my head around. For example, everything Jesus said, because although He spoke about mind-boggling truths, He did it using words that I can readily understand; and the Psalms, because I respond to their poetry and their intense emotion.

I suggest that this Christmas, just for once, we should all get off the proverbial 'hamster wheel' of trying to come to terms with global disasters, inhuman violence, cruelty, and narcissism, and quite simply focus on the facts which delighted us as children. That, at Christmas, Christ was born as a vulnerable baby to a very young woman in the most adverse conditions. That His life set a template for ours, and His words a guide book for our lives. That He promises us Joy – now, and forever, if we follow Him and hold His teachings in our hearts.

When we look at our children and grandchildren, wondering at all the tinsel trappings of Christmas; or listen to the sublime singing of choirs such as King's College, Cambridge; or receive a gift, handmade with love by someone feeling the exigencies of the cost of living; let us, too, revel in the simple Christmas message, expressed by John Betjeman:

*Nothing can with this single Truth compare*

*That God was man in Palestine*

*And lives today in bread and wine.*






**Meeting Santa and Mrs Claus**

*Carole McCormack*

## TIME OF MY LIFE

On separate occasions several years ago, **CHRISTINE PORTER** visited two places where prisoners-of-war had been incarcerated over 80 years ago. They both left long-lasting impressions upon her — but for very different reasons.

### The Italian Chapel in Orkney:

### with reflections on humanity and inhumanity

The Geneva Conventions protect the rights of prisoners of war, wherever they may be. In many cases, however, these prisoners have been treated appallingly, as highlighted in World War 2 films such as *The Great Escape* (about British prisoners in a German POW camp) and *Bridge over the River Kwai* (British prisoners in a Japanese camp). In Britain there were also POW camps, and the story of one of these camps throws a very different light on how such prisoners were treated here, and how an astonishing Italian Chapel was created, which I was fortunate enough to visit some years ago.

In 1939, the British battleship *HMS Royal Oak* was sunk by a Nazi U-boat in Scapa Flow in Orkney, resulting in the loss of 834 lives. In response, Winston Churchill approved the building of a series of sea defences in a bid to make the waters around Orkney more secure. Because of severe wartime labour shortages, over 1,000 Italian prisoners-of-war captured by the British in North Africa were transported to Orkney in February 1942 to build these structures. Known as the Churchill Barriers, these defences were four massive concrete causeways, linking small islands and designed to block German submarines from entering the naval



**One of the Churchill Barriers — with the Italian Chapel in the distance, top centre**

anchorage at Scapa Flow. Since the Geneva Conventions restricted POWs from working on direct military assets, the project was officially categorized as a civilian road scheme.

Around half of the Italian prisoners were housed in Camp 60 on the tiny island of Lamb Holm and the remainder in Camp 34 on Burray. After a few months, the prisoners on Lamb Holm realised they needed a place of worship. Following a request from the camp priest, Fr. Giacobazzi, it was agreed by the Camp Commander, Major Buckland, that two Nissen huts would be joined together to provide a chapel.



**The Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm**

Among the prisoners in Camp 60 was an artist, Domenico Chiocchetti, and he was given the task of transforming these huts into a chapel. He was helped by other tradesmen, in particular Giuseppe Palumbi, a blacksmith, and Domenico Buttapasta, a cement worker. Working to Chiocchetti's design, and with him undertaking most of the fine painting, the group created an intricately decorated Catholic chapel with a concrete facade, making use of scrap metal, corrugated iron, debris from shipwrecks and concrete left over from work on the barriers.



**One of the ceiling lights**

The unsightly corrugated interior of the huts was covered with plasterboard, which the Commander had managed to obtain, to create a smooth finish above and a panelled effect below. The altar and rail and the holy water stoop, all beautifully designed, were moulded in concrete. The ceiling light holders were made from corned beef tins, and the inside of a car exhaust was used to make a baptismal font, which was then covered in a layer of concrete. For the entrances on either side of the sanctuary, gold curtains were bought from a firm in Exeter and paid for out of the prisoners' welfare fund. Palumbi, who had been a wrought iron worker in America, was

asked to make a rood screen and gate, which took him four months to complete.



Interior of the Chapel, with rood screen

Chiocchetti carried in his pocket a small prayer card with an image of the *Madonna and Child* by Nicolo Barabino, given to him by his mother before he left his home in Italy. It was on this image that he based his painting above the altar. When the Camp Commander realised that Chiocchetti was a very talented artist, he was excused from further heavy duties and given permission to work full-time on the chapel. With the help of Buttapasta, an impressive facade was constructed to hide the ugly outline of the huts, with a central archway supported by cement pillars. Finally, a belfry was mounted on the facade, with Gothic pinnacles on either side.

As relationships improved between the military leaders and prominent figures among the prisoners, a greater degree of freedom was granted, especially the freedom to socialise, to grow their own food, and eventually to host leisure activities in the camps. Sports tournaments, such as football matches with soldiers against POWs, were organized. One of the prisoners, Coriolano "Gino" Caprara, later said that the chapel and football had also provided emotional connections to his home while he was in the camp, and "If you're imprisoned, artistry of any kind provides that means of escape from reality".



The Altar, with paintings

The Italian POWs left Orkney on 9th September 1944, following the Italian armistice and the winding down of their construction duties. When his fellow prisoners returned home, however, Chiocchetti remained on the island until he had finished decorating the font in the newly consecrated chapel. When the chapel was almost finished a special service

was held, with gramophone records in the vestry playing the bells and choir of St Peter's, Rome. The chapel had only been in use for a relatively short time by the POWs before they left, so the Lord Lieutenant of Orkney, P.N. Sutherland-Graeme, who had taken much interest in their welfare, promised the prisoners that the Orcadians would cherish and care for their chapel.

Chiocchetti returned to Orkney in 1960 and on several more occasions to restore his artwork, sometimes accompanied by members of his family, before he died in 1999 aged 89. There were also postwar visits by other former prisoners and their families, which built a lasting bond between Orkney and Moena in Italy, Chiocchetti's home town. In 2014, a special mass was held at the chapel to mark its 70th anniversary, when Angela Chiocchetti, daughter of Domenico Chiocchetti, sang *Panis Angelicus*. The chapel is now a protected Category A listed building, still used for worship, and is one of the region's top heritage sites and tourist attractions, with over 100,000 visitors every year.



**The statue of St. George**

When we visited in 2016, our first glimpse of the chapel was from the causeway as we drove across one of the Churchill Barriers to tiny Lamb Holm. It was an incongruous sight: an ornate red and white frontage, standing alone in a treeless landscape. All other traces of the wartime camp had disappeared, apart from an equally ornate statue of St George nearby, also made by the Italians. Stepping inside, the interior of the chapel is breathtaking, and as beautiful and awe-inspiring as any cathedral we'd visited at home or abroad. The 3D imagery of stonework and panelling, created from just a flat painted surface, is extraordinary. For me, the lasting impression of the Italian Chapel was much more than its beauty and the creativity of the prisoners: it spoke to me of the humanity that can be found even in wartime. It was somewhere I wanted to linger.

On the other side of the world, and at the same time as the Italian Chapel was being constructed, British and Allied POWs were building the "Death Railway" from Thailand to Burma. A decade or so earlier than our visit to Orkney, we'd toured sites in the far north of Thailand associated with the infamous railway. We visited Hellfire Pass, a railway cutting blasted and hacked out through solid rock, where so many POWs had been worked to death in the heat and humidity.

Nearby, we went to the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum with its information panels and horrific photos. Thousands who died of cholera had been cremated, but we visited the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery that has the graves of 7000 others. The majority of Allied soldiers who worked on the railway (British, Australian, Dutch, and American) were 21-25 years old, some still in their teens. As I walked along lines of graves, reading names and dates and ages, I was totally overwhelmed by the sheer brutality and inhumanity of the Railway. I could linger no longer, and fled to the gift shop. Later that day we walked on the famous wooden bridge over the River Kwai, and then took a train ride across the bridge and along part of the original railway itself, which audibly told its story to our carriage full of quiet, thoughtful tourists, as the clackety-clack of wheels repeated their message: death upon death, death upon death.



**Dove of peace on the Italian Chapel ceiling**

In Orkney, during one of her visits to the Italian Chapel, Angela Chiocchetti told BBC Scotland that she was proud of the work of her father and his fellow prisoners. "My sister, my brother and I consider the chapel a legacy, left not only to us, but also to the inhabitants of Orkney." Angela Chiocchetti said her father never talked about the living conditions in the prison camp, but instead spoke of friendships formed with other prisoners, soldiers and the people of Orkney. She added: "The message of the little church in Lamb Holm is a message of peace and hope, which each of us can make our own and carry into everyday life." The Italian Chapel has become one of the best-known symbols of reconciliation in the UK and a symbol of humanity, whereas the Death Railway remains a painful symbol of inhumanity.

*Christine Porter*

*Both the Churchill Barriers and the Italian Chapel in Orkney were built between 1942 and 1945, their main construction taking place in 1943. No prisoners died while building it.*

*The Death Railway from Thailand to Burma was built between September 1942 and October 1943. More than 100,000 prisoners died while building it.*

## MOTHERS' UNION

On the afternoon of Remembrance Day, St Mary's Mothers' Union held a special service, which also provided an opportunity to say goodbye to Revd Martin.

Throughout his time at St Mary's, Revd Martin has always been a strong supporter and encourager of the Mothers' Union. He put together a lovely service, which skilfully combined the story of the warrior saint, St Martin of Tours; Remembrance of those who fought for our freedom; and the Mothers' Union now working to promote family life and campaigning for the status of women and against gender-based violence.

The United Nations 16 days of activism are from 25th November to 10th December. Ripon Cathedral is marking the days with an exhibition and special evensong on 25th November. There will also be a Walk of Witness, Silent Vigil and service in the Cathedral on 5th December. Details are on a poster in St Mary's, and it is hoped that some of our members will be able to participate.

The next meeting of the Mothers' Union will be their Advent Service of readings, poetry and music at 2.00pm on Tuesday 8th December in St Mary's.

*Margaret Clayson*



**Members and friends at the Remembrance Day service.**

## EVENTS REPORT



The **Fashion Show,** staged with the strong support of Larches, who selected the clothes and gave a hamper to raffle, was another highly popular event and well attended. A most attractive selection of seasonal clothes was modelled and a wide selection available to try on, all available at a discounted price. Christine Stedman once again graced the catwalk; Andy Lovell provided the bar facilities; and time just sped by. There was nary a thought for the grand finale of 'Traitors' on TV and we are already hoping for a return of this ever-popular event in eighteen-months' time. A big thank you to all who attended; to all who helped; and to Larches from Rosemary Lane for their generous support. The event raised over £700 for the funds of the Friends.



The **Quiz Night,** another very popular evening held in the Town Hall, has just taken place at the time of writing. It was a sell-out community occasion, ably organised by Andy Lovell with support from other members of the Friends. Dave Tucker, our excellent Quiz Master, always provides a most entertaining evening, and over £1000 was raised for the Friends' funds. The next one will be held on **7th March '27**, so make sure you put the date in your diaries.

This issue of *Connections* should reach many of you just in time for an **evening with the Royal Northern Sinfonia on Saturday, 27th November**. (See poster in last issue — with correct details but wrong date!) This candle-lit concert is an example of the other type of event which has become part of the Friends role. In addition to staging our own events for social purposes for church members (such as our coffee mornings and the annual BBQ) and events for the whole community (such as the Quiz Nights, Folk Concerts etc), we have also become the first port of call for stewarding events where performers simply hire the space i.e. the church, for concerts and other events — Richmondshire Choral Society, Station Singers and the Royal Northern Sinfonia exemplify such events. Occasionally we are able to negotiate the possibility of providing a bar or other refreshments but, other than that, the hirer sets the price and sells their own tickets.

This concert was a huge success last year and enjoyed by audience and musicians alike. Do try to come along. Tickets are available direct from the RNS on-line or on the door. The performance starts at 7.30 p.m. and ticket prices range from £5.00 - £20.00 **www.theglasshouseicm.org**

We are also hosting another **Army Band Concert** on **11th December**. Unfortunately, our friends in the Army Band at Catterick have tour commitments and are unable to offer a December Christmas Concert this year, but the Army Band (Colchester) have generously offered to step in. See the poster opposite for details. This is always a full-house occasion and it would be great to give the Colchester Band a great Richmond welcome.

The final event of this year is our traditional **Christmas Coffee Morning** at the **Town Hall** on **Saturday, 19th December**. The Friends are always looking for helpers to serve, sell raffle tickets, bake for the cake stall and provide prizes for the Tombola much loved by regulars. Please offer your time in one way or another to make this a good starter for Christmas. Contact one of our Churchwardens or phone or text me on 07754 283161.



**THE BOOTLEG EAGLES**, a nationally celebrated touring band, have booked to come us on **Saturday 23rd January** — see the poster on page 50. The programme is advertised as unplugged i.e. limited amplification and by candlelight, so promises to be a high-quality evening. Blasts from the past could include such hits as *Hotel California, Take It Easy* and *Desperado.* Tickets are being sold on-line for £29 - www.bootlegeagles.co.uk Their next performance in Leeds is selling at over £50 per ticket!! They're already sold out on 11 December in Alnwick. The internet has some great footage of their live performances – a band who are seen to be one of the leading tribute bands in the UK. Don't miss It! Tell your friends and wind the clock back for this great musical evening.

Finally, I am pleased to report that, although one of our church boilers finally gave up the ghost at the beginning of November, the Friends have been able to step in and offer the PCC the money to underwrite the cost of an immediate replacement. This will ensure that the church is properly heated over the winter period, giving a bit of financial breathing space to assess what other future costs are anticipated or need to be planned for and how these will be funded.

*Jim Jack*


MERRY CHRISTMAS
BRITISH ARMY BAND COLCHESTER
INVITE YOU TO A
Christmas
CONCERT
Journey with us from the magic of The Night Before Christmas to the joy and celebration of Christmas Day
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, RICHMOND
DECEMBER 11 7PM - 9PM
DOORS OPEN 6PM
REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE
Admission Free



## 60 SECOND INTERVIEW

This month **LIBBY SANDS** has kindly agreed to answer the questions posed by John Pritchard. Libby is a very busy lady, for as well as her roles within the town, she is also on our PCC, looks after the church flowers and is on both the coffee and cleaning rotas.

**First memory:** Sitting on my Grandmother's lap, aged 2 years, listening to her singing.

**Favourite meal:** Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding Dinner.

**Favourite music and musician:** The Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky.

**Pet dislike:** Litter on the roadsides.



**Best holiday:** Going to Australia via Fiji and Japan.

**Childhood hero:** Robin Hood.

**Favourite hobby:** Arranging flowers and Embroidery.

**Luxury on Desert Island:** A Wind-Up. Radio.

**Recent TV you've enjoyed:** The Blue Planet.

**Worst fault:** Trying to do too much.

**Two best films ever:** My Fair Lady and Mama Mia.

**Favourite drink:** Wine - Sauvignon Blanc.

**Regret:** Not being able to play a musical instrument.

**Best recent book:** *The Weekend* by T. M. Logan.

**Favourite charity:** Cancer Research.

CANCER RESEARCH UK

**Place you feel happiest:** Here at home in Richmond.

**Three dinner companions:** Queen Elizabeth the 2nd, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Dame Judi Dench.

**What do you pray for most:** World Peace.

**Traditional or new Lord's Prayer:** Traditional.

**Epitaph:** Think of me once in a while.
Remember the flowers that made you smile.

*Libby Sands*

## 'CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM' — A STOLEN CONCEPT

Recent press reports have spoken of a troubling use of this term by far-right movements and the rise of its appeal to certain groups. **JOHN PRITCHARD** has some thoughts on the matter.

You may have heard of 'Christian nationalism.' It's been in the news a lot recently because of the antics of Tommy Robinson and what's been happening at various open-air rallies and demonstrations. It's a dangerous misuse of both words.

Robinson says he accepted Christ in prison earlier this year, which may of course be perfectly genuine and to be welcomed. However, he now encourages the public use of the cross and the reading of Bible passages at rallies, and there are choruses of 'Christ is King' alongside anti-immigrant football chants. At the 'Unite the Kingdom' rally in May, 100,000 people gathered and Amazing Grace was sung. Daniel Thomas, who slashed a migrant dinghy at sea, has called his vigilantes a 'pure Christian national resistance movement.' Christianity is being called essential to Britishness – no immigrants of other religions need apply. And, according to a recent poll, six million Britons agree.



What's going on here is that 'Christian nationalists' are trying to draw Christianity in Britain towards the extreme political right. The Reform MP Danny Kruger and Cambridge theologian James Orr, formerly head of Reform policy, are both involved. In effect, what such people claim is that migrants, especially Muslims, are at least diluting the culture and at worst attacking it, so Christians must rally to defend the Kingdom. This is MAGA-style Christianity.

How should we assess this movement?

- Christianity cannot be essential to Britishness. Millions of people of other faiths in our land are justifiably full British citizens. Moreover, Christianity is a worldwide faith with 2.3 billion adherents. It's a global family that welcomes people of any race and colour, having a clear biblical mandate to care for the stranger and the alien in our midst. Christianity cannot be allied too closely to

Britishness, when the average Anglican, for example, is a young African woman.

- Sarah Mullally, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has warned against religious identity being misused to intimidate and divide. Our own Bishop of Kirkstall, Arun Arora, says the cross of Christ at protest rallies is being used as an accessory by political opportunists, not with its proper religious meaning.
- The whole movement really reflects cultural anxiety and racist conspiracy theories that make out there's a deliberate European policy to replace white citizens with migrants from Muslim countries. Has anyone told the Home Secretary?

What, then, is a better way to respond to this phenomenon?

- Engaging in conversation with those who hold such views. Listen, identify the key anxieties that drive such beliefs, and offer a better narrative. At the 'Unite the Kingdom' rally, Bishop Arun, dressed in his purple shirt, set up a table with an invitation to anyone to talk and engage in a proper exchange of views. Engagement is better than simply shouting at each other. We might also ask why so few who claim the badge actually attend church…
- We should avoid the term 'Christian nationalism', because it actually makes no theological sense. It's neither Christian nor true nationalism. So I apologise for using the term here! It's important to resist any agenda that tries to tie the Christian faith to any one flag, be it British, American or any other. Remind people that Christianity is international and multi-racial
- We need to continue to weave together social trust and reconciliation right across society, undergirded in our case by the fundamental Christian virtue of loving our neighbour, including our imagined enemies. Theologically and politically, we need to keep examining why authoritarianism continues to attract so many people, especially younger males.




Bishop Arun has warned that this movement is trying to park its tanks on the lawns of the Church of England. It needs to be resisted.

*John Pritchard*

## WHAT'S IN A WELCOME?

Keen to discover if there is anything we, at St Mary's, can learn from other churches, **JUDITH MacLEOD** decided to visit a childhood haunt — St Mary's at Norton on Tees — on Remembrance Day, and found the village brought back many memories.



St Mary's, Norton

With fond memories of childhood years spent in Norton on Tees, I decided to visit the church to which we were taken for high days and school services. My recollection of the village with its picturesque green and the approach to the church with its pleasant old brick vicarage was completely accurate, but I did not remember much about the church itself, except that it was very old and much smaller than our St Mary's in Richmond.

As it was Remembrance Sunday, there was a short service in the churchyard attended by a few dozen people of all ages. A service sheet was handed to everyone on arrival making them feel included. After the prayers and poems and the laying of the wreaths, those who were attending the Holy Communion service moved on to the church.

It is a splendid, grade I listed building – the only surviving Saxon cruciform church of its kind in the country. Moreover, a good deal of the stonework is original.



**Some examples of the Anglo-Saxon stonework, including knotwork around the now blocked-up door (left)**



As soon as I was inside, the service booklet from outside was exchanged for another 2 booklets for inside use. This struck me as a good deal of paper compared to our system of offering only a pew sheet. At St Mary's, Norton, the pew sheet is more rudimentary, but it is combined with the texts of prayers and all 3 Bible readings – useful to peruse afterwards.

My first impression on entering the church was that it was deliciously warm. The space, being so much smaller than in our church, must be very much easier to heat. I would have liked to ask whether they had more than one boiler!

The old dole-cupboard, which now houses books, is Elizabethan and was originally used for the distribution of bread to the poor. In the late-sixteenth century, traditional private almsgiving was evolving into a state-mandated welfare system. The space looked inviting to both children and adults wishing to read, but I only saw 2 children during the service.



**The Elizabethan dole cupboard**

I liked the modern pews made by Thompson of Kilburn — the Mouse Man — which are low and well-spaced, but no more moveable than ours. On the shelf behind each pew there is a Bible and a hymn book. I enjoyed looking up the readings and singing the hymns which were well known, fairly modern and in a manageable register. We were accompanied by a robed choir of 6 women and 6 men. Later, the organist lamented the lack of young choristers, and organists!

The giving of communion impressed me. First of all, there was a mention of a gluten-free wafer available on request. There was also a choice between receiving communion in 2 kinds and intincture. They were delivered in different parts of the chancel and ran smoothly.

Notices were given before the end of the service. Volunteers were requested for an event later in the week and the time commitment was made very clear – one to two hours at most – a very helpful touch, in my view.

By way of voluntary, the organist played some jaunty tunes from the Second World War, while those who were staying for refreshments made their way to the table at the back of the church. You could choose tea or percolated coffee in 2 cup sizes. There were also fig rolls, one of my favourites.

This was, I thought, the big opportunity for me to experience the welcome. There were only a few people milling at the back of the church, however, and it lacked

the buzz of St Mary's. Welcoming visitors really is an area in which we excel. I have rarely seen a newcomer standing alone after the service on a Sunday morning. After 10 minutes or so, one of the church stewards asked me if I was happy to be alone or would like to chat. I told her about my connection with Norton and my reason for coming.





The church may be small, but the churchyard is enormous. It looked particularly picturesque with the late-autumn leaves.

Keen to revisit old haunts I walked from the church to the duck pond on the green and was pleased to see the fountain still in operation.

I rounded off my visit with a glimpse of our childhood delight – the sweetshop run by the Misses Elcoate. We really loved them, not only because of the sweets but because of their homely wisdom and their menagerie of dogs, cats, chickens and peacocks. I was sorry to see that the shop has been re-purposed, but at least its stock of curios is fittingly reminiscent of a bye-gone age.

*Judith MacLeod*



**Village Green, with pond and fountain**



**The old Sweetshop**

THE STATION
Singers

supporting

**Save Scorton Lakes**

present

# *Carols by Candlelight*

An evening of seasonal music

Saturday 12th December 2026
at 7pm

(Doors open 6.30pm)

St Mary's Church, Richmond

**Tickets £12 on the door**
**Early bird tickets £11**
Accompanied under 18s free

Please bring cash for refreshments, raffle and bucket collection

Tickets available from
**www.ticketsource.com/the-station-singers**
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**www.richmondstationsingers.co.uk**

For more information
**stationsingers@gmail.com**
**info@scortonlakes.org**

## A BIGGER MESS, QUICKER?
## OR A BETTER WORLD, SOONER?

Everyone has an opinion about Artificial Intelligence, and most of them are worried. **STUART ROWAN**, whose job includes making computers accurately read company accounts, suggests one simple way to think about it.



**The Gutenberg printing press**

Around 1455, in a workshop in Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg finished printing a Bible. Within a lifetime, printed Scripture was reaching ordinary people in their own language. In 1526, William Tyndale's English New Testament was smuggled into this country hidden in bales of cloth. The same technology served both sides: the printing presses also churned out vicious pamphlets, crude propaganda and the kind of bitter religious argument that ended in burnings and wars. The Bishop of London bought up Tyndale's Testaments and burned them. Tyndale himself was executed in 1536. The printing press itself had no opinion about any of it.

That, I think, is the most useful way to think about Artificial Intelligence. AI is an accelerator. Give it a good idea and clear directions and you get a sensible solution much quicker. Point it at a bad idea, or at no idea at all, and you get a bigger mess, much quicker. It doesn't choose the direction. People do.

And an accelerator on its own is a dangerous thing. Almost every worry about AI turns out to be a question of who is in control. The machine? The handful of very large companies that build it? Or us: local people, and the councils, regulators and governments we elect?

(By 'AI' I mainly mean the 'large language models', or LLMs, such as ChatGPT. AI is a much wider field.)

### Will AI data centres use up all the power and water?

Not all of it, but a lot, and it matters where. Worldwide, data centres used about one and a half per cent of the world's electricity in 2024. The International Energy Agency expects that usage to more than double by 2030, to roughly what the whole of Japan uses today. That is still a smaller share of the growth in world demand than air conditioning or electric cars, but it is growing fast.

Closer to home, the old Redcar steelworks site could become one of Europe's largest data centre sites, with a grid connection bigger than the entire output of the Hartlepool nuclear power station across the Tees. The original blast furnaces used energy on a similar scale, but largely made its own from coal. A data centre plugs into the same grid as your kettle and your storage heaters, and how much water it uses depends on the manner of cooling we insist on (closed loop like a car radiator; open loop like a cooling tower; single pass like cleaning the Augean stables).



So the real question is who gives way when things are tight. On a freezing January evening, it should be the data centre that is turned down, not the pensioner in Hudswell. Trials show it can be done, and Ofgem has said it will consult this autumn on whether to require it. That is a decision for people, not machines.

Jesus put it simply: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether you have enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28, NRSVA). Counting the cost is not anti-progress: it is what grown-ups do before they build.

**Will it take over the world, shoot us all, or blow up a nuclear power station?**

There is no sign today of AI deciding, by itself, to attack Hartlepool. But 'today' is doing a lot of work in that sentence. And AI is already being used by people to attack computer systems. In November last year, the AI company Anthropic reported that a state-backed hacking group had used its system to attack around thirty organisations, with the AI doing most of the hands-on work, while also reporting passwords it had 'found' that did not actually work. Enormous speed, no judgement.

What keeps us safe is old-fashioned. The systems that keep a nuclear reactor safe are deliberately kept off the internet. That is a rule people decided on and must keep enforcing, because isolation can be breached by a careless memory stick as easily as by a hacker. It is the same principle as deciding who gets a key to the church. The same goes for weapons: whether a machine may ever decide, by itself, to take a human life is a moral question, not a technical one, and people must answer it firmly.

So the scary stuff is only prevented by humans being firm about where AI is allowed to go, and what is kept completely out of its reach.

## What it can, and cannot, do.

I use these tools every day, and I find them remarkable. So to be clear about AI:

- It can stitch together a dozen known weaknesses in a computer system faster than any gang of human criminals. ***BUT:*** It cannot stand in the dock and be held to account for what it has done.
- It can read ten thousand sets of company accounts overnight. ***BUT:*** It cannot tell you, on its own, whether a single figure in them is true. That takes people, auditors and rules.
- It can translate the sermon into forty languages before the last hymn has finished. ***BUT:*** It cannot mean a word of it.
- It can draft a eulogy in seconds. ***BUT:*** It cannot sit with the family the night before the funeral.
- It can write a perfectly passable prayer. ***BUT:*** It cannot pray.
- It can copy Granny's voice from a few seconds of a video on Facebook. **BUT:** It cannot know the family's safe word, as long as nobody has ever typed it anywhere.

## Love, not noise.

Many of us will have heard St Paul's great hymn to love read at a wedding. It is startling how well his words fit AI: "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, NRSVA).

Fluency in every language. All knowledge. Confident predictions. Paul was writing about spiritual gifts, not machines, but the list is uncannily close to the sales brochure for Artificial Intelligence. And his verdict is that without love it is noise. Not necessarily evil, just noise, amplified and accelerated. The love has to come from us: in what we point these tools at, in who we refuse to leave behind, and in where we firmly put on the brakes.

This magazine reaches you in Advent, the season of waiting, and also the season when we remember that we will each be called to account. Everything about AI is built for speed, and it is worth noticing how God mostly chose to change the world. Not quickly. Nine months in the womb. Thirty years or so in a small town, most of them, as far as we can tell, at a carpenter's bench. Three years of walking at human pace from village to village. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly," says Paul (1 Corinthians 13.12, NRSVA), and none of us, however clever our machines, can see clearly where this is all heading.

Which is exactly why the steering wheel and the brakes matter more than the accelerator. AI will make whatever we do happen faster. Whether that is a bigger mess, quicker, or a better world, sooner, is still up to us.

*Stuart Rowan*

## THREE SENSIBLE THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Agree a family 'safe phrase' face to face: something only you would know. If a call from a 'grandchild' or 'son' in trouble can't give it, hang up. Never write it on social media or in a message. (In a 2024 Starling Bank survey, more than a quarter of UK adults said they thought they might have been targeted by an AI voice-cloning scam in the previous year.)
2. Treat urgency as a warning sign. Scams, AI-assisted or not, rely on rushing you. Hang up and ring back on a number you already know, for example, the one on the back of your bank card.
3. Try it, carefully. Ask an AI tool to help with a letter or a recipe, and see what it can do. But check anything that matters: it can be confidently, fluently wrong.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### THE 200 CLUB

Congratulations to our latest Winner

November — no: 143 — Pauline Dowse

Don't forget! Next month it's the big Christmas draw.

## NATURE NOTES

Previous Nature Notes have tended to focus on aspects of the plant kingdom so, for a change, **CAROLE McCORMACK** has decided this time to focus on animals and, in particular, her dogs.

My article for this edition deals with an aspect of the natural world very close to home indeed: humankind's relationship with dogs and what I have learned from mine.

We were delighted when we came to Richmond and discovered that instead of the term *pet,* our vet uses the words *companion animals.* This phrase says it all: the best sort of companion in anybody's terms observes you closely in order to understand you better; listens attentively; always supports; always understands; always loves. Whereas the word *pet* summons up a vision of something you can pick up, or put down, as the whim takes you – not a living being with which you develop a lifelong partnership.

No one can possibly know how the symbiotic relationship between dog and human started. Was it when opportunistic and less aggressive wolves ventured near to the camps of nomadic hunters in the Neolithic to benefit from food thrown away and gnaw discarded bones? The careful observation of how humans behaved may well have led to these wolves becoming pliant and only too ready to please, in order to gain food without the high-energy necessity to hunt. And did the nomadic hunters come to appreciate the protection that they received from these quasi-tame wolves against wild boar and bears? It's impossible to be sure, but it seems a workable supposition. The image below shows hunters surrounded by packs of animals on leads. It dates, potentially, as far back as the eighth millennium BC and was discovered in Saudi Arabia's north west.



My dogs recognise the engine note of our cars when we are outside and they are inside, behind closed doors and windows. It is impossible to miss the incredible gift of hearing that dogs have. More than 18 muscles combine to move their ears to catch the exact direction from which a sound is coming – and we mustn't forget that some of the sounds that we just can't pick up, they can. Apparently, a Wi-fi router emits a continuous high-pitched hiss; and a laptop charger produces an ultrasonic screech. If our dogs are unsettled, perhaps we ought to review exactly what sounds they are being subjected to. And, I wonder, do these 'unheard' sounds subliminally affect our own wellbeing?



**There's still a bit in there!**

Human beings interpret the world mainly through sight and sound. But I have long been aware that dogs experience a much richer reality through adding into the mix their extraordinary sense of smell. I have watched them delicately sniff up and down the length of a single, tall grass stem, for far longer than I would have expected. Watching their intense, abstracted look, I am certain that they are forming a 3-dimensional image in their minds of the animal, or human, who previously touched that grass. Their noses have two separate 'pathways': one for breathing and one for sniffing, and the textured tip of a dog's nose is equivalent to their individual fingerprint.

Their super powers have been harnessed by humans to perform the sort of roles that cannot be filled by any other animals – possibly, cannot easily be accomplished in any other way. A sniffer-dog searches for drugs; an assistance dog can predict when certain medical emergencies are going to occur, for example an epileptic seizure.

The reason a sheepdog drives a flock back towards the shepherd is because the animal regards his or her master as pack leader and is delivering the 'prize' back to the dominant member of the pack. And the relationship between a guide dog and their owner is, quite simply, beautiful beyond words.

In *The Problem of Pain,* C.S. Lewis considers whether *companion animals* go to Heaven. The Bible, he says, is not specific on this point, but he suggests that humans give a part of themselves to their companions as they nurture, train, love and generally spend time with them. In this way, he argues, these animals might share in the immortality of their masters and ultimately take their place in Heaven, at their mistress' or master's side.

But, putting aside any deeper questions, what gifts have I received from my dogs? Firstly, that unconditional loving welcome. Whatever time of day or night, however they are feeling, they greet me, wagging and bringing a toy. Even a lovely dog I lost earlier in the year, although very poorly in her final weeks, did this. Whether I feed them or not; whether they miss a second walk because of torrential rain or illness, their loving behaviour towards me is the same. Do I show this unconditional love and consistency of behaviour towards others – or towards God – however gruesome I feel? I don't think so.



**It's time for my walk!**

There is nothing quite like the reassuring, warm proximity of a living being – who doesn't question, who doesn't chatter when I long for silence, maybe to work something out in my own thoughts without interruption. Apparently, stroking a companion animal for 10 to 15 minutes lowers cortisol and increases serotonin – so infinitely preferable to non-natural methods. Blood pressure falls gently too.

As one develops a close relationship with a dog, they learn to decipher moods through the microscopic chemical changes in our bodies. Sensing fear, anxiety, or stress, they provide extraordinary emotional support and their body language changes. Instead of asking to play (hindquarters raised, head dipped between paws, tail wagging) or signalling that they need a walk (alert ears and tail, eyeballing closely!) they lower their heads and approach softly, maybe wagging low and softly.



I have had labradors most of my adult life and would never be without them. They give me the ability to interact more closely (albeit vicariously) with the natural world; they make me laugh; and they give unconditional love. If a doctor offered a medicine which gave all these things, who would say no?

*Carole McCormack*

## CHARITY OF THE MONTH — JANUARY

The RNLI 's core purpose has been Saving Lives at Sea but, as **ANGELA DICKINSON** explains, they are now much more widely involved in life-saving.

Globally, someone is drowned every other minute. Mostly these deaths are preventable, so we are fortunate to have the RNLI, which is almost entirely staffed by volunteers and receives no government funding.

The RNLI was founded in 1824 and, since that time, it is estimated that it has saved 147,000 lives, including during both world wars, when they saved many lives. In 2025 alone, it is believed that its volunteers saved 300 lives. The biggest single rescue was in 1907, when lifeboats from Cadgwick, Coverack, the Lizard and Porthleven rescued 456 people from the stricken liner *Suevic*.




In 2001, RNLI lifeguards began patrols on some of the most popular beaches. Today they cover 245 beaches throughout the United Kingdom. They provide safety advice, first-aid and rescue anyone in trouble, such as someone on a surfboard being swept out to sea by the wind or current. RNLI volunteers also go into schools and give impactful talks on how to keep safe in any body of water, be it sea, river or lake.

From 2000 to 2020, the organisation was involved in flood relief, learning many new techniques. They stopped doing so in 2020, having handed over their knowledge and skills to other flood relief agencies.

RNLI is also concerned about the loss of life globally. In 2000 they helped with flood relief in Madagascar, and are currently helping with swimming lessons in Bangladesh, a country subject to frequent flooding, where these lessons have reduced drownings by 93%.

Today, as well as facing dangers from perilous seas in which some have lost their lives, sadly some RNLI volunteers are now facing abuse, both verbal and occasionally physical, because they have not left migrants to drown. They are subject to 'doxxing', which I understand means all their details are put on social media so that others can send abusive messages. Understandably, some volunteers have left the organisation as a consequence.

They deserve our support.

*Angela Dickinson*

## CHARITABLE GIVING AT ST. MARY'S

In one of his final acts as our Rector, Revd Martin agreed with the PCC the charities we shall be supporting during 2027.

Our Harvest Festivals in October reminded us that we are all called to be good stewards of the gifts we have received, and to give generously. This call applies to individuals, families, communities, nations – and to churches.

At St Mary's, our Charity of the Month Programme enables us to support a range of needs locally, nationally and overseas, including mission support.

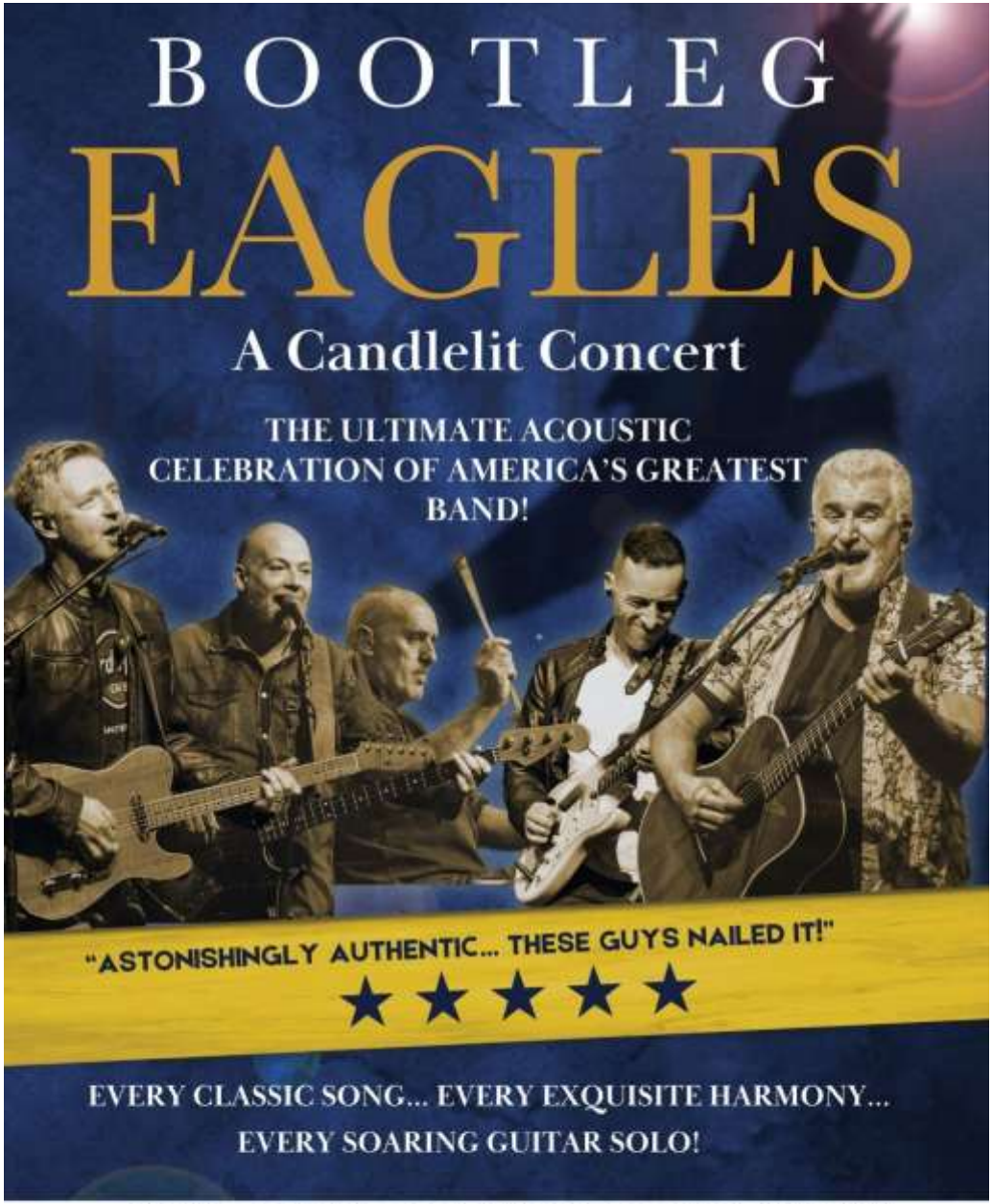
As well as supporting a Charity of the Month, we promote Christian Aid Week along with the work of the Mothers' Union, the Children's Society (through our Christingle Service), the Royal British Legion, and the Mayor's Charities. We also support emergency appeals launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).

In October many of you kindly responded to our Charitable Giving Team's invitation to nominate a charity for 2027. Thank you. Based on your nominations, the Team proposed this Programme to the PCC, who gave their approval:

| Month | Charity | Local, National or Mission |
|---|---|---|
| January | RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) | National |
| February | CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) | National & Mission |
| March | Mothers' Union | Local & Mission |
| April | Compassion UK | National & Mission |
| May | Christian Aid | National & Mission |
| June | USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel) | Mission |
| July | Blue Cross | National |
| August | MSF (Doctors Without Borders) | National |
| September | Prostate Cancer UK | National |
| October | Richmond Open Pantry | Local |
| November | SSAFA (Soldiers,' Sailors,' & Airmens' Families Association) | National |
| December | Darlington Women's Refuge | Local |

Our website offers further information on the Programme and on each charity: St Marys Church Richmond > Giving > Charitable Giving and throughout 2027 both this Magazine and our weekly Pew Sheet will give details of the current Charity of the Month.

*Martin*




**St Mary's Church Richmond DL10 7AQ**

**Saturday 23rd January 7:30pm**

Tickets £29.25

https://buytickets.at/bootlegeagles/2474082

## BE PREPARED

This used to be the motto of the Boy Scouts, but recent government pronouncements prompted **ALÈXE FINLAY** to give some thought to the practical implications for all of us at St Mary's.

### "Put your own oxygen mask on first"

or, "put on the panoply of faith…".

The UK Government is encouraging "resilience", but what does that mean in the context of St. Mary's, which is "a people and a place where love works" and where "all are welcome"?

It pertains to a personal level of preparedness supported by practical measures at St. Mary's. It may be a difficult winter in terms of weather and the ability of the national utility and communications systems to cope. It really does make sense to have extra tinned food which can be eaten hot or cold, the ubiquitous supply of loo rolls, bottled water, and newspapers to insulate fridges and freezers if there is a power outage. Wind up radios and torches – not candles – blankets, and a power bank are also useful in the armoury. A month's worth of medication and a copy of a current prescription with a "grab bag" of essentials will add to personal safety and security, together with a list or your own "emergency contacts". If you have a car, follow the advice of the motoring organisations to keep the vehicle and yourself safe.

Local support comes from the procedures spearheaded by Richmond CIC, with personnel highly qualified in emergency and incident management. Measures for the town feed into the North Yorkshire Major Incident Plan with a dedicated Response Team, backed up by the Ready-for-Anything Volunteers.

St. Mary's has an external defibrillator as part of the town's resilience, supplemented by a second one in the kitchen. The Open Pantry is now accessible 24/7 via its own dedicated shed-in-the-car-park, where all can donate and receive, thanks to the foresight of the churchwardens to make a difference.

If you need assistance or information, clergy or churchwardens can signpost you – confidentially – to be "more prepared".



In times of trouble, you could do a lot worse than read one of Bishop John Pritchard's books, even by the light of that wind up torch!

*Alèxe Finlay*

## WHY 'BANK' HOLIDAYS?

While researching his earlier article about the differences between English and Scottish holidays, **JIM JACK** made some interesting discoveries.

Nowadays, we have a mixture of public holidays, some attached to religious festivals and others purely secular, yet the term 'bank holiday' is commonly used to refer to any public holiday date.

The reason for this goes back to a law of 1871 – the Bank Holidays Act. It was sponsored by Sir John Lubbock (known to employees of banks as St Lubbock) and designed to bring some order to the financial sector, where there was a strong advantage to having predictability for dates of payment of bills and financial settlements which needed to be processed through banks.

Before the act, the Bank of England and many public offices observed up to 40 religious festivals and saint's days, some varying from area to area and each bringing the wheels of commerce to a grinding halt. As these were randomly whittled down over the years, it increasingly meant that staff had less and less holiday entitlement – at its worst 4 days a year.



**The Bank of England**

With the new law, a number of days were designated for a requirement by law for these financial institutions all to close on the same day. Any transactions fixed for those days were automatically moved to the next day without any penalty for late payment of a debt. But as there was nowhere to conduct financial business, many businesses followed suit and, by custom and practice, closed on the same day, thus bringing a system of national holidays into being. These public holiday dates, determined by the UK parliament apply to England and Wales.

The 1871 Act, by law, forced banks and financial institutions to close on Easter Monday, Whit Monday, the first Monday in August and Boxing Day, accepting that closure on Christmas Day and Good Friday would continue by custom and practice. New acts introduced 1 January (from 1974), May Day Bank Holiday (from 1978) and replaced Whit Monday with Spring Bank holiday Holiday and the first Monday in August with the last. Scotland leaves the allocation of a number of the bank holidays to Local Authorities, whilst Northern Ireland has two extra days to allocate.

*Jim Jack*

## POETRY FROM DOWNHOLME

**GEORGE ALDERSON** kindly submitted the poem below just after last month's issue had gone to print. Even though Revd. Martin has recently 'sailed into the sunset', he is still very much in mind.

George writes, *"Until about 10 years ago, the only time we heard Fletcher and Christian in the same sentence was in relation to Mutiny On The Bounty, but then we were blessed with our own, Reverend Martin Fletcher, Christian, who helped us fend off the evils of Satan!"*

### The Reverend Fletcher, Christian

*The enemy still tries to sink our ship hence crew would drown,*
*But yet the captain holds his nerve, deflecting every blow!*
*The Reverend Fletcher, Christian, is God's sailor of renown,*
*Preparing for the battle he must lead against the foe!*

*His ample faith he shares with all, from greatest to the least,*
*Then each and everyone is steeled, and ready for the fight!*
*Their confidence, once jaded, is renewed and is increased!*
*From losing hope that they will win, their meekness turns to might!*

*The Canon, though a quiet soul, brings confidence he calms,*
*He shows no fear, but boldly stands against temptation's trials.*
*He knows the truth will bring reward, defeating Satan's charms,*
*So, disregards false promises, the protests and denials!*

*The battle must continue, therefore onward he must sail.*
*New seas await to be explored, and he can never rest!*
*The Christian sailor charts his course. With God he will prevail!*
*No matter how the waves disturb, he's always on the crest,*

*Regardless where they ebb and flow, their height or depth or length,*
*Whenever he may be required to fight for Christians' cause!*
*May God preserve the captain's skills, his leadership, his strength.*
*He knows His mariner is set, and he will never pause!*

*George Alderson*

Richmond Methodist Church

# An Evening with 'The Dalesfolk'



**Wednesday 2nd December**

**at 7.30pm**

**Donations for church funds**

**(Light Refreshments)**



# Mouse Makes

JESUS, LIGHT OF THE WORLD!
"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world... to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name He gave the right to become children of God."
*from John 1:9-12*
HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

**The Orange**
- the world.
*John 3:16*

**The Fruit**
- God's goodness and provision.
*James 1:17*

**The Candle**
- Christ light, Jesus, light of the world.
*John 8:12*

**The Ribbon**
- the blood of Jesus shed for us.
*Matthew 26:28*

**The Sticks**
- God's love reaches out to the four corners of the world.
*Psalm 139: v7-12*

A D C A N D L E
E R C H R I S T L E
A M S O R A N G E O W I
J E A R I B B O N V G A
K S V O S L I F E E O D
P S I F T I J O Y W O V
E I O R M G I F T O D E
A A U U A H O P E R N N
C H R I S T I N G L E T
E V S T D E B G O D W T
J U S N V J E S U S
O R E J O I C E

CHRISTINGLE
CHRISTMAS
ORANGE
RIBBON
FRUIT
CANDLE
LIGHT
LIFE
GIFT
WORLD
GOOD NEWS





SAVIOUR
CHRIST
JESUS
MESSIAH
GOD
PEACE
LOVE
JOY
HOPE
REJOICE
ADVENT

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## WORD SEARCH

### Silent Night

This much-loved carol comes from Austria, where it was first sung as *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf-bei-Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber, to compose a melody for his carol. Gruber was organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On Christmas Eve they presented the carol to the church during the midnight mass. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the version sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all time.

Silent
Night
Loved
Carol
Austria
First
Sung
Stille
Nacht
Heilige
Christmas
Eve
Father
Joseph
Mohr
Young
Priest
Organist
Midnight
Mass
Melody
Single
Bing
Version
Third



## Sudoku - Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | | 7 | | | | 3 | | 6 |
| | | | 4 | 9 | 6 | | | |
| | | | | | | 2 | 1 | |
| 2 | | 5 | | 8 | 9 | 6 | | |
| 4 | 8 | | 2 | | 7 | | 9 | 5 |
| | | 1 | 3 | 4 | | 7 | | 2 |
| | 2 | 8 | | | | | | |
| | | | 7 | 3 | 8 | | | |
| 3 | | 9 | | | | 8 | | 7 |

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## Sudoku - Medium

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 1 | | | 7 | | | | |
| | | | | | 4 | 5 | | 2 |
| | | | | 8 | | | | 3 |
| | 7 | | 8 | | | 9 | | |
| | | 2 | | | | 6 | | |
| | | 3 | | | 2 | | 8 | |
| 4 | | | | 5 | | | | |
| 1 | | 6 | 3 | | | | | |
| | | | | 4 | | | 9 | 7 |

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"The vicar's still miffed that one of the parents got £250 from You've Been Framed for their video of last year's nativity play."



"It's easy to tell when it's Nativity Play time – I can never find a tea-towel!"

## PASTORAL CARE

The St Mary's Church community wishes to do all we can to support, listen and love all in our parish, whether members of our church or not.

Our trained **Pastoral Assistants** (please see page 2 for their contact details) are ready to listen and offer support. With the clergy, they make up our **Pastoral Care Team** who meet regularly. If you need a listening ear, please contact any member of the Team.

We have two **Prayer Groups** who can offer prayerful support:

## The Prayer Group

This group meets weekly, currently on Tuesdays at 7.30-9.00pm.
All are welcome.
We start with a short, relaxed bible study then move into a time of prayer for individuals, the Benefice, the world and the worldwide Church.
For details, please contact Lorna: lorna.heatley@leeds.anglican.org

## The Prayer Circle

This is an email-based anonymous group of church members who commit to pray when specific prayer requests are made, usually for named people. These can be relatives, friends or acquaintances, who may not even live in the area, but who would appreciate confidential prayer. No prayer request is ever too small or trivial.

Prayer requests can be made via a slip placed in the box near Ruth's Window in the church or by contacting prayer@richmondhudswellparish.org.uk
Whatever you wish to share, in confidence, we will support you in prayer.

If you would like us to add a name to the **Pew Sheet** list of those for whom we pray publicly during the Intercessions in our church services, please contact Colin in the Parish Office: admin@richmondhudswellparish.org.uk



## Puzzle Solutions

### Sudoku — Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| 8 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 5 |
| 9 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 2 |
| 7 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 7 |

### Sudoku — Medium

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| 3 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| 5 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| 8 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| 4 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| 1 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 7 |

### Wordsearch




**Deadline for February '27 edition; Friday 15th Jan. '27**
**To contribute letters, articles, etc. please contact connections.ed24@gmail.com or 07866 033263**

Are you at school? Love Singing? Want to learn to read music?

## Join the St Mary's Song Squad

We meet on **Mondays during term time,** 4-5pm in St Mary's Church, Richmond
As well as having lots of fun singing and learning a wide variety of songs, there will be opportunities to perform at occasional services/events and to participate in the Royal School of Church Music's highly acclaimed 'Voice for Life' Scheme.
Juice & biscuits will also be available & tea / coffee for any parents / carers wishing to stay during the rehearsal time.

**For more information or to sign up for the Song Squad**

**Contact Chris Denton 07817 386070**

Fun-Key CHURCH

Usually last Sunday in every month, but
Next service **— 6th December '26 —** Christingle
For children and the young at heart.
Why not come and join us?
www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

## LOUNGERS!
## (The Ladies' Group)
**Usually, last Friday of each month**

**From 7.30pm in the BLACK LION**
**Finkle Street, Richmond**
**Next meeting:**
**29th January '27**



## THIRST!
## (The Men's Group)

Meets first Thursday of every month from 7.00 p.m.
Next Meeting at

The Town Hall Pub & Dining, Richmond

**3rd December '26 & 7th January '27**



## Reverend Matthew Hutchinson's Charity

Do you live in:
Richmond, Gilling West, Eppleby, Eryholme, Hutton Magna, South Cowton, North Cowton, West Layton, Cliffe or Barton?

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For further information, please contact:
The Secretary, Reverend Matthew Hutchinson Trust, Middlemoor House, Hudswell, Richmond DL11 6DB

## KNIT & NATTER

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***07791 426659***

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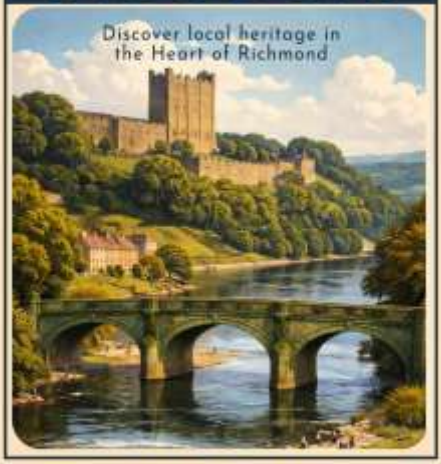
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