

THE BENEFICE OF RICHMOND WITH HUDSWELL, DOWNHOLME AND MARSKE

www.richmondhudswellparish.org.uk

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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

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PCC Secretary Andra Sison-Ham (07753) 842246 <u>andrakrumins@gmail.com</u>

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

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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





As I write, the first snow of the Winter has fallen, which seems particularly appropriate for this bumper seasonal edition.

Once again, the team have been busy with their contributions, so, after the clergy messages and information about what is happening in St Mary's in the lead up to Christmas, John Pritchard reflects upon the recent historic meeting of King and Pope; tackles another Hard Question; and reveals a little-known aspect of the latest Great British Bake-Off winner. Judith MacLeod has visited the last of the 3 Cathedrals in our Diocese – Bradford – and has also provided a review of a fascinating book she read recently. Jim Jack continues his Camino walk through our region; has had a conversation with Roots & Shoots about their business; and brings us up to date with the activities of the Friends. The front cover picture was taken by Carole McCormack, who then tells the story behind this amazing creation. She has also interviewed one of our Pastoral Assistants about what his role involves.

It wouldn't be Christmas without singing carols, so Christine Porter has been looking into the background to a perennial favourite, while Liz Kluz returns with a colourful history of that traditional addition to our festive tables – the Christmas Cracker. And speaking of history, Jane Hatcher has found another Richmond character who, with an unfortunate slip of the pen, almost caused great embarrassment to a local person of some eminence.

December is always a busy month, so, as well as the 'What's On' mentioned above, there is further information about 3 concerts; the Mothers' Union Advent Service; and details of the charities we shall be supporting in December and January. And if you are still looking for something to do, you can always try the puzzles!

Thank you for your support for *Connections* during the past year and your appreciative feedback. On behalf of the team, may I wish you all much joy and peace this Christmas and into the New Year.



John McCormack



Cover photo by Carole McCormack
Neapolitan Nativity at Bishop Auckland Faith Museum



Lorna's Letter December 2025



This letter is a bit of a delayed one, subject wise. The last time I wrote this was actually supposed to be about how it felt to be ordained as priest, but it was quite soon after my actual ordination, and so it still felt a bit fresh and new, not something I was quite used to at the time, so I thought to myself that 6 months later would be the perfect time for it.



Lorna, with Bishop Anna, at her Ordination into Priesthood.

6 months have duly passed, however, and it still seems something quite fresh and new. It doesn't help much that, having talked to several people in my position of priest, it never stops feeling a bit fresh and new, no matter how long it's been since the whole priesting business.

Every day is a school day, so they say, and that's very true. I think we should never stop learning new things about ourselves and the world around us, but, in much the same way that we all assumed that the second our pre-frontal cortexes

developed at the age of 25 we would suddenly have all the answers to all of our childhood questions, I did rather hope that undergoing that great ontological change to priesthood would imbue me with a deeper knowledge of theology that I could impart to the willing and excited congregation. But just as we all are flung into adulthood with the disconcerting realisation that actually there's no big secret, the ontological change did not overwhelm me with knowledge of God that can't be shared with any lay-person.

I now have the distinct privilege of presiding over communions, doing weddings, being able to offer blessings and absolutions, and they're all things I do with a certain air of wonderment and excitement, and I think that's the big ontological secret. That every time I can share it with you all, it should be as fresh and as new as the first time. There should always be that sense of wonder and amazement.

This is so clear now as we approach the Christmas season — a time we approach with wonder and amazement that Jesus came into this world, this cold and harsh world, and spread the love and amazement that we proclaim weekly at the

communion table. It happens every year, and every year it's just as amazing.

So, in case anyone is interested, the answer to the question of "How's priesthood going?" is "Yeah, it's going alright, thanks". But, as always, the journey of priesthood I'm taking wouldn't be as full of happiness without this wonderful community in which I find myself, so I wish you all the joy this Christmas as you have given me so far!

Blessings, Lorna





Martin's Message December '25/January '26



The 40 Days of Christmas

Joyful expectation and hope fill the season of Advent – and positively overflow in the 40 days after Christmas! As we move through the traditional 12-day season of Christmas towards Epiphany on 6^{th} January – and then on to Candlemas on 2^{nd} February – *Journeys* seems to be the theme.

First, we remember Saint Stephen and Saint John. The 'Feast of Stephen' is too easily buried by the clutter of Boxing Day, but Stephen's journey as the first Christian martyr demonstrates a remarkable faith in 'the Word [who] became flesh and dwelt among us.' That expression was coined by St John, whose life we celebrate on 27th December and who gave us the gospel which bears his name. The journey he pioneered in his writing is one which we can all make over and over again: it is not for nothing that his gospel has been described as 'a pool in which children may wade and elephants may swim.'

Then we think of the journey made by Mary, Joseph and Jesus to Egypt, seeking refuge from the atrocities committed by King Herod. Traditionally, these events are commemorated on 28th December, the day with the poignant title *The Holy Innocents*.

Now 1^{st} January is the festival of the Naming of Jesus: if 'Christ' means 'anointed one' (*Messiah* in Hebrew), 'Jesus' is derived from the Hebrew for 'God saves'. Behind his name, then, stands the very purpose for which he 'became flesh'. Jesus, the Light of the World came as Saviour of the World. On 6^{th} January we think of the special journey to Bethlehem made by the Wise Men from the East: in the 'ultimate epiphany' Jesus was revealed – *manifested* – as Saviour of *all* nations, not simply his own.

As our Christmas journey continues for another 28 days, until Candlemas, we explore all that the Incarnation means, seeing afresh that wherever we travel Jesus is manifestly at our side. And when we arrive at Candlemas, we will proclaim with Simeon that Jesus is the 'light to lighten the nations'. We will turn round from looking back towards Christmas and look ahead to Easter, our Candlemas service concluding with these lines:

Father, here we bring to an end our celebration of the Saviour's birth.

Help us, in whom he has been born, to live his life that has no end.

Here we have greeted the light of the world.

Help us, who extinguish these candles, never to forsake the light of Christ.

Here we turn from Christ's birth to his passion.

Help us, for whom Lent is near, to enter deeply into the Easter mystery.

Here we bless one another in your name.

Help us, who now go in peace, to shine with your light in the world.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

God is with us, not simply at Christmas as Emmanuel but *always*. In Romans chapter 8, Saint Paul explores what it means to be filled with life-giving hope. He concludes by declaring that 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Joy to the world indeed!

Christian Unity

A key part of Epiphany-tide is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In the week leading up to the commemoration on 25th January of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the 'Apostle to the Nations', Christians come together to pray for the Mission and the Unity of the Church. In Richmond, Christians of all denominations meet for an **Agape Meal**, a time to break bread together – enjoying fellowship as well as companionship – and to pray together. Do please look out for further details. All are welcome, from Richmond and from further afield.

Charitable Giving at St Mary's

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 2026. Thank you. Based on your nominations, the PCC approved the programme proposed by the Team, shown on page 45.

Our website offers further information on the Programme and on each charity: St Marys Church Richmond > Giving > Charitable Giving and throughout 2026 both this Magazine and our weekly Pew Sheet will give details of the current Charity of the Month.

With every good wish for a peaceful Christmas and a joyful and hopeful 2026,





NEAPOLITAN NATIVITY

The picture on the front cover is of an amazing creation on view to the public from 21st November—31st December at The Faith Museum in Bishop Auckland. CAROLE McCORMACK provides some background.

The Neapolitan nativity scene, or "Presepe," is a rich cultural tradition, deeply rooted in the artistic and social fabric of Naples, that represents the birth of Jesus. According to legend, the tradition of nativity scenes began with Saint Francis of Assisi, who first re-enacted the birth of Christ with live animals and actors for a public audience in the central Italian town of Greccio in 1223. The first mention of a "Presepe" in Naples comes about a hundred years after this, when a nativity with the Virgin and baby Jesus is documented inside a church in the city.

The vast majority of these works, in the tradition of medieval sculpture, were originally formed of wood or terracotta, then covered with brightly coloured pigments and gold leaf. The facial expressions of the figures which make up these flamboyant scenes are fascinating and highly individual: proud, sad, joyful, lewd, angelic, humorous. Neapolitan *presepi* (nativity figures) and *pastori* (pastoral figures) have delighted viewers for several hundred years, and they still draw visitors to the San Gregorio Armeno quarter of the city, where the tradition of making these figures by hand remains vibrant. These Neapolitan nativity figures encapsulate the spirit of the city — dramatic, Baroque and animated.

The Faith Museum is one of the few places outside Italy where a Presepe can be seen. The intricate nativity contains hundreds of components created by a team



of craftspeople during the 18th century and measures 11ft tall and 15ft wide. Complete with all the traditional characters from the Biblical story telling the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, the scene depicts the Holy Family, the three Wise Men, shepherds with their livestock and a host of angels. The

setting for the remarkable nativity also offers a glimpse of the hustle and bustle of 18th-century Naples, with a street market and tavern. It was probably commissioned for a grand private residence in Naples and would have taken a team of technicians several weeks to construct. The large pieces of scenery have to be installed before each of the figures, made from iron wire, hemp, wood and terracotta, can be carefully placed in position. In total, there are 421 individual pieces, including 112 figures, 52 animals and 257 other delicate objects and pieces of furniture.

Carole McCormack

THE KING AND THE POPE

Should one be surprised that, after 500 years, this momentous and historic event should have received so little attention? Perhaps not, but **JOHN PRITCHARD** reflects upon the significance of the occasion and what might come from it.



Who'd have thought it – the King of England and Supreme Governor of the Church of England praying in public with the Pope! In 500 years, such a thing has never happened. Henry VIII would have been shocked. But it's happened and the King and Queen went to Rome and attended a midday ecumenical service of prayer with Pope Leo XIV; various cardinals; the Archbishop of York; and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Even Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper got a look in, reading from Paul's letter to the Romans.

It often comes as a surprise to the English that the King is 'top person' in the Church of England. They always thought it was the Archbishop of Canterbury, who they saw as our equivalent of the Pope. But no, what Henry wanted was to wrest the church in England out of the clutches of a foreign pontiff and to place the church of our land in safe English hands. It would also mean (incidentally!) that he could marry Anne Boleyn, who the Pope wouldn't let him marry, and he could later strip the monasteries of their huge wealth, as he was always desperately short of cash.

Henry was less keen on an English version of the continental Reformation than on an English version of the Church of God. He remained basically Catholic in outlook and in liturgical preference, so his Church of England was moderate if confused. His successors were less restrained. His son, the sickly Edward VI, was a convinced Protestant and for five years took the young CofE in a radical new

11

direction. When he died after only 5 years, however, and still only 16, his sister Mary (Bloody) swung back to return the church to her mother Catherine of Aragon's Catholicism, sacrificing Protestant bishops Latimer and Ridley and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer along the way. It took Elizabeth's moderating influence to settle the Church of England into the shape it has today, both Catholic and Reformed.

That means that we see ourselves as still in the catholic apostolic succession, in that our bishops are consecrated in a continuous line from St Peter onwards, but also as Protestants we have 'protested' against the authority of the Pope and some of the theology of the Catholic church. We have a more dispersed, democratic understanding of authority, with all the strengths and weaknesses of that position. As we claim to be both catholic and reformed, we often have a 'bridging' role to play in ecumenical relations, being trusted (or distrusted!) by both sides.

Unfortunately, we have some other significant differences apart from that of authority. Few Anglicans accept a Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation, whereby the bread and wine of communion are presumed to change into the actual body and blood of Christ. We are saddened that women cannot be priests or bishops. We have a somewhat different understanding of the role of Mary the mother of Jesus. But the basics are the same! – the Trinity; the incarnation; the atonement; the Bible; prayer; service of others.

So, Charles our King and Pope Leo, our much-respected brother in Christ, have prayed together and that has rich significance. It's a warm encounter with each other and with God, and it's one step closer to the unity of all his people that Jesus prayed for 'on the night he was betrayed.'



John Pritchard

BEHIND THE HYMN

A perennial favourite, sung by choirs and congregations in churches large and small throughout the land, is the carol 'While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night'. CHRISTINE PORTER has been looking into the background, and what she has discovered is quite surprising.

The One and Only Christmas Carol

In the approach to Christmas, we hear carols everywhere: as background music in shops and supermarkets, in TV adverts and on the radio, as well as in performances, concerts and carol services. Some of our favourite carols have been sung for centuries. Various hymn books and anthologies also include carols that originated abroad, such as "Silent Night" from Austria or "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" from Poland. Wouldn't it be bizarre, then, if the Church only permitted us to sing just one Christmas carol? But that was indeed the situation throughout the whole of the 18th century.

At that time *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks* was the only Christmas hymn authorised by the Church of England, and as a result it became well known throughout the country. Other Christmas songs existed at that time, but most of them had roots in folk music. These were considered too secular and therefore were not used in church services until the end of the 18th century. Before 1700, psalm singing had been the usual practice of congregational singing. *While Shepherds Watched* marked the



transition between old ways of congregational singing and new trends.

The hymn was unusual for its day because, rather than being based on a psalm, it paraphrases Luke's account of the nativity (Chapter 2, verses 8-14). The author was Nahum Tate, who showed unique genius in writing the lyrics of his Christmas hymn. At a time when the Church was exclusively singing psalms of David, Tate had wisely chosen a passage that drew a connection to David. The lines "born of David's line, the Saviour who is Christ the Lord" highlight the long-awaited descendant of King David, born in David's town of Bethlehem.



Nahum Tate 1652 — 1715

Nahum Tate was born in 1652, the son of an Irish After graduating from Protestant clergyman. Trinity College, Dublin, in 1672, he decided to pursue a literary career. He published his first book of poems in 1677 and moved to London in 1688, where he became known primarily as a poet and playwright. The following year he wrote the libretto for Henry Purcell's successful opera, Dido and Aeneas. He also translated ancient classic works by Ovid and Juvenal. Although not greatly talented, he began to write for the stage. Most of his dramas, however, were not original plays, but adaptations of the works of others. He is perhaps for known his rewriting of several Shakespeare classics, where he added happy

endings. In particular, his version of the ending of King Lear was remarkably successful. For 150 years, audiences preferred Tate's version to the original Shakespeare tragedy. Samuel Johnson approved of this version, and it was played as the normal stage version until Victorian times.

Tate's literary efforts earned him the title of poet laureate in 1692 and the official royal historian in 1702.

By this time, in collaboration with Nicholas Brady (a high-profile clergyman, royal chaplain and a canon at Cork Cathedral in Ireland), Tate had produced *A New Version of the Psalms of David* in 1696. This was followed by a *Supplement* in 1700, in which *While Shepherds Watched* appeared. This new hymn was one of 16 that appeared in the supplement. It was the only Christmas hymn to gain official approval in the Church of England, however, until Charles Wesley's *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* was added in a 1782 edition. The 1700 supplement had been bound in the same volume with the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* and distributed across the country, giving *While Shepherds Watched* an even greater influence for years to come.

The carol is sung to a wide variety of tunes. The editors of the English Hymnal note that "it is impossible to print all the tunes which are traditionally sung to this hymn". In the UK, the standard tune of *While Shepherds Watched* is *Winchester Old*, originally published in The *Whole Book of Psalmes* in 1592. This tune was, in turn, an arrangement of a composition by Christopher Tye in 1553. Another tune is David Weyman's adaptation of *Christmas*, taken from a soprano aria by G. F.

Handel in 1728. Rearranged by Lowell Mason in 1821, this version is now most commonly used in America.

The Methodist hymn tune *Cranbrook* (familiar nowadays as the Ilkla Moor song tune) was composed by a Canterbury shoemaker Thomas Clark in 1805, and later used as a tune for *While Shepherds Watched*. The Ilkla Moor song became so popular, however, that the origin of the music as a hymn tune has been almost forgotten! The tune is still used for *While Shepherds Watched* in some churches including Leeds Parish Church and St Aidan's Church in Manor Parish, Sheffield. Although no longer widely used as a hymn or carol tune in our country, it continues to be used as a hymn tune in America.

In the UK, generations of schoolchildren have traditionally sung parodies of Christmas songs such as *While Shepherds Watched*, with various lyrics depending on the region. A typical version has references to washing socks and watching television.

While shepherds washed their socks by night
All watching ITV
The angel of the Lord came down
And switched to BBC

One such parody was later used to advertise Sunlight soap, and included the verses:

While Shepherds washed their socks by night
All seated round the tub
A bar of Sunlight soap fell down
And they began to scrub

And when their socks were shining white
And sparkling like a gem
They put their socks back on again
And walked to Bethlehem

Even though Nahum Tate rewrote a number of Shakespeare classics where № added happy endings, his own ending was far from happy. Poverty stricken throughout much of his life, he died on 30th July 1715 while living at Suffolk House, a refuge for debtors within the precincts of the Mint in Southwark, where he had taken refuge from his creditors. A sad end for someone who left such a popular carol as his legacy.

Christine Porter



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.

Since 1976, Family Help Darlington has been running this haven, which provides safe, temporary accommodation to women and children fleeing domestic abuse. The 8-unit refuge was able to receive 40 women and 80 children in 2024/2025, all from outside Darlington: families are often accommodated away from their home towns, for safety, but many stay in or close to Darlington when they move on to more permanent accommodation.

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

Last year, a monthly support group was launched, led by experienced domestic abuse support workers, and strengthened by survivors. This peer support group brings together up to 20 women, meeting monthly in a safe space within Darlington town centre's Newcastle Building Society.

For more information, or to offer support, their email is contactus@family.help.org.uk

Mark Beresford-Peirse

THE COLOURFUL HISTORY OF THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER



Somehow, it just wouldn't be Christmas without some Christmas Crackers on the table, paper hats to wear and corny jokes to share. But how did the tradition start? LIZ KLUZ has been investigating.



If you were asked who invented the Christmas cracker, would you say Mr Hovell of Holborn, Gaudent Sparagnapane, or Tom Smith? Well, actually, nobody really knows the answer. But what history does tell us is that a young entrepreneur, Tom Smith, took the concept and developed it into the much-loved addition to our Christmas table.

Tom was born in 1823 in Newington, Surrey to Thomas, a grocer by trade, and his wife Priscilla. When Tom was around 11 years-old, he was apprenticed to a London baker and confectioner where he learned the trade, part of which was to make cake decorations and "fancy goods" probably using paper. He was an enthusiastic learner and by 1847 he felt confident enough to branch out and start his own business in Clerkenwell, East London.



Also living in the same area was an Italian craftsman called Gaudent Sparagnapane, whose parents had emigrated from Switzerland, possibly bringing the idea of the cracker with them. Maybe Tom saw the idea and copied it, but equally Sparagnapane may have copied it from Tom – we will never know. Interestingly, the latter described their company as "Ornamental Confectioners -Established 1846" in their 1910 catalogue, claiming to be "The oldest manufacturers of Christmas Crackers in the United Kingdom", so

maybe there was some plagiarism going on there!

In about 1848, Tom visited Paris for a trade fair, where he was very impressed by a stall selling "bonbons" – sugared almonds wrapped in waxed or tissue paper twisted at each end. Being a very competitive young man, as soon as he got back to London he set about making a range of colourful bonbons for the Christmas market. They were an instant success and sold well, but sales dropped after the festive period so he needed a gimmick to make his product saleable all year



round. He decided to double-wrap his bonbons and put a motto or rhyme between each wrapper, possibly taking the idea from moon cakes, which we call fortune cookies today, given away at the Chinese August Moon Festival. Sales rose again and, with the addition of small trinkets, the product was a real winner.

By 1850 the basic concept of the cracker was in place but, always keen to be ahead of the rest, Tom decided to experiment with the idea of including a snap to give it an added dimension. Not an original idea since snaps had been used in

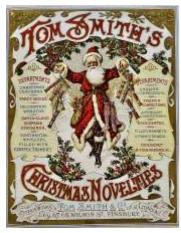
the first quarter of the 19th century and were one of several exploding novelties introduced following the discovery of silver fulminate by English chemist Edward Charles Howard in 1800. Snaps were used for practical jokes long before Tom Smith set up his business, but it took him a few years to perfect a safe snap before he launched his "Bangs of Expectation" in 1861. At the time Tom was recorded in trade directories as a Manufacturing Confectioner employing 7 men and 10 women, but it was the addition of the unpatented snap to his already

popular product which propelled his business into a different league. The early crackers were about 6" long and called "cosaques", maybe because the sound they made when pulled was like a Cossack whip. Initially the company only offered one design but, as part of his expansion plan, Tom decided to explore the export market. Inevitably, once samples had been sent abroad, an eastern manufacturer began to sell large quantities of crackers to the English market, presumably undercutting Smith's in the process. Tom, in his bullish way, took on the challenge and very quickly produced a range of eight different crackers.



All Tom's hard work was finally paying off, but sadly he died at the age of 46 in March 1869, leaving behind his wife Martha and 5 children.

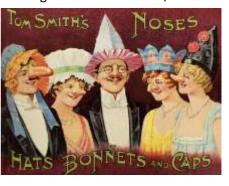
Tom was succeeded by his sons Thomas (20), Henry (18) and 15-year-old Walter who, with guidance from their mother, took over the business, with Walter



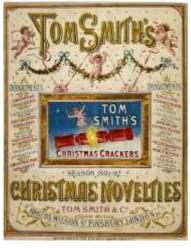
becoming the prominent member in the family firm. As their business increased, new premises had to be found and a five-storey building in Finsbury Square became the new headquarters called Tom Smith & Co. Steamworks. Freelance artists created eyecatching designs for the cracker boxes each year, which must have been eagerly awaited, and armies of pieceworkers assembled crackers at an astonishing rate of two dozen in 15 minutes! By now they were using crepe paper, which was much more robust and less prone to tearing. Printing, cutting and box-making were done on site, but the

snaps were outsourced for safety reasons! There were ranges of crackers for all occasions filled with small novelties, hats, masks and in some cases false noses!

At the turn of the 20th century, Smith's was producing a staggering 30 million crackers a year, most of which were sold in the UK, but by 1909 that number had dropped to 11 million crackers because of an increasing number of competitors in the market.



One of the serious competitors was Alfred Caley of Norwich, who had started out as a chemist in 1857 but soon found that producing and selling mineral water



was a profitable sideline. To that he successfully added ice cream and chocolate, which meant moving to larger premises in 1890. In 1898, 3 years after Alfred's death, his son Edward and nephew Frederick decided to add crackers to their product range with great success. To make their product stand out, they commissioned a young artist called Alfred Munnings, later to become Sir Alfred, to design a set of colourful box labels. They were an instant success and catapulted Caley's crackers into the burgeoning cracker market. By 1904 they were employing 700 people in the Norwich factory, which must have made a

significant dent in Smith's revenue.

In 1921, the Smith family sold their business to Clarke, Nickolls and Coombs, better known as Clarnico, and severed all links with the original Smith's company.



The second world war brought considerable hardship to both Caley's and Smith's, with both of them ceasing production for a time. In 1941, about a third of Smith's factory in Finsbury Square, along with almost all the company archive, was destroyed in the Blitz. The following year, Caley's factory in Norwich was largely destroyed in a German bombing raid. In 1953 the directors of both companies agreed to merge the businesses, with each company holding fifty per cent of the shares, and trading under the name of Tom Smith. Production was moved to a larger factory in Norwich, with a subsidiary factory in Southport, and between

them by 1988 they were making fifty million crackers a year using machines which could turn out forty crackers a minute.

An odd little twist to the story is that in 1985 the Tom Smith's business was acquired by long -time competitors Hovell's of Maidstone for £1.3 million. They still stuck to the story that their founder had started cracker production in a backyard in Holborn in 1854 and, as an acknowledgement of the respect recognition Smith's had acquired over 140 years of trading, they would move their entire operation to Norwich and keep the Tom Smith brand name. The fact that Smith's also held several royal warrants could also have had some bearing on their decision!



Today, Tom Smith's crackers are owned by International Greetings ... well they were in 2016 when Peter Kimpton wrote his fascinating book Christmas Crackers published by ACC Art Books. It has been a wonderful source of information for this article, for which I'm most grateful.

HARD QUESTIONS

For his next Hard Question, **JOHN PRITCHARD** examines the happy reality of there being many vibrant faiths in our world, and asks how it can therefore be said that 'no-one comes to the Father except through me.'

Why Jesus and not Buddha?

Christians often remember – and quote – 'No-one comes to the Father except through me'. And then they feel mildly embarrassed. Isn't that rather aggressive? These are some of the things people say:

- What's so special about Christianity? We're aware now of the wisdom and richness of so many different world religions, all with millions of faithful followers, so how can we prioritise just one of them?
- Aren't all religions, at root, saying the same kind of things about love and mercy and forgiveness and peace? Aren't they all heading in the same direction, to God?
- Isn't it better to take the best features from different faiths and apply them all to your own life, rather than opt in to just one world faith?

If no one comes to the Father except through Jesus (John 14.6), where does that

leave all those billions of good, faithful followers of other faiths through the centuries? Were they all wrong? And what about faithful people before Jesus?

So, what it comes down to is this: Christians want to hold to the distinctiveness of Jesus as God's full and final revelation of himself, but obviously they don't want to believe that



all those of other faiths are outside God's truth and mercy. But if the uniqueness of Christ is conceded, the whole Christian edifice may begin to crumble.

Let's do some ground clearing first. It can't be the case that all religions are more or less the same, saying the same things and heading for the same place. That's an insult to the integrity of each of them and no serious adherent of any great faith believes it. They may all be exploring our relationship with the Divine, but they do so in incredibly different ways. For example, in Hinduism the divine is

impersonal and plural; in Islam the divine is personal and singular; in Buddhism the divine is neither personal nor active; in Christianity it's both. To say all religions are really the same is like saying physics, history and sociology are really the same – they're all concerned with knowledge – and so it doesn't matter which you study, because they all end up saying the same thing. That wouldn't impress the examiners!

Three different approaches:

In the last few decades, a distinction has been drawn between exclusivist, pluralist and inclusivist positions about other faiths. An *exclusivist* would say that unless you could declare that 'Jesus is Lord', you couldn't have a passport to heaven. This view hardly accords with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who would be unlikely to have left the vast majority of human beings without any knowledge of him. A *pluralist* would say that although all faiths are different in form and content, they're all on a similar footing in relation to ultimate truth – none 'better' than another. But this sidesteps the issue of truth and the undoubted incompatibilities of different faiths referred to above.

So how about an *inclusivist* approach? That would say that echoes of Jesus can undoubtedly be found in other faiths and in people of no faith, so followers of



other paths might be faithful to God wherever they demonstrate the characteristics and values of Jesus – the commitment to grace, forgiveness, love, mercy, beauty, justice, peace, compassion etc. Wherever these are found, we can 'come to the Father', because we're faithful to the qualities Jesus espoused.

Perhaps a better starting point, therefore, is to take the Jewish and Greek idea of the 'logos' or 'Word' of God – the creative, ordering principle in the cosmos

– and to work from there. That creative Word is to be found permeating the whole of creation (he 'enlightens everyone' John 1.9), and outcrops of the *logos* will be seen in every culture and faith. Christians believe that the *logos* is seen spectacularly and fully in Jesus Christ, but that doesn't stop them recognising signs of that Presence in other places. The beauty, compassion, grace and truth of God, which Christians delight to see fully focused in Jesus, may be seen and enjoyed throughout God's creation and in its various cultures and faiths. The important point is to maintain a universal understanding of God and his mission of love for all people: we cannot accept less. This love in Jesus went to the cross for us and

that freed us from our past and gives us a new future. We are 'saved.' Christians are those who are privileged to recognise that.

Does that mean people of all faiths and none sitting down in the Kingdom of God – Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists too? Potentially it does – but not automatically. The logos is universal: John says that 'in the Word was life, and the life was the light of *all* people' (John 1.4). Truth, therefore, is indivisible and anyone can encounter it. However – and this is the rub – people's response to the logos and its outworkings in a life of love, mercy, peace, justice and the like, cannot be guaranteed. We are disobedient even to our own faith traditions, and may turn our back on the way of life, the way of salvation. Christians have found their best hold on the truth to be in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and will continue to offer that understanding to the world. They will say that 'God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5.8). As for others – well, that's up to them and God.

The heart of the matter:

At a conference on world religions, the question being discussed was what was unique to the Christian story. Was it God becoming man? Not completely; other religions had a form of incarnation of the divine. Was it resurrection? No — other faiths had stories of a return from death. Healing, perhaps? No — other religions had plenty of that, too. And so the debate went on, until C.S. Lewis said simply: 'The answer is grace. That's the difference.'



Grace is the absolutely unconditional,

inexhaustible, reckless love of God for us and for all people. It's hard to grasp just how radical that is, so religious people often seem to be agreeing that God loves us, but that his acceptance of us still ultimately depends on our own performance, that we have to earn the right to be children of God. But the radicalism of Christian faith is that grace comes first. God has already accepted us as his friends, in spite of everything. He just wants us to accept that acceptance, and let ourselves be loved like that, and so become part of his new creation. Christianity puts grace at the non-negotiable heart of faith. And if that attracts other people to become followers of Jesus – thanks be to God!

John Pritchard



St Mary's Church Richmond



Coffee Morning Richmond Town Hall Saturday 20th December

Coffee, Tea, Cakes, Tombola etc



Seasonal Music



FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

Recent Events

For the first time since we started **Blues in the Pews**, there was a fall in attendance, although the evening itself was another entertaining event offering high quality music. It may be that the foul weather on the evening, plus the school half-term holiday releasing the older generation from child care duties, combined to cause this fall, but we are trusting that this was a blip and that support returns for the 2026 calendar now in preparation. A great night for all those who came!

The Autumn **Quiz Night** at the Town Hall was another sell-out event. Over 100 people from church and the wider community packed the Town Hall for an evening of pie, peas and puzzling. A great night was had by all, and this was repeated with the **Curry Night** with good food prepared once more by the Challis family and David Frankton. Our thanks go to them, Andy Lovell and the rest of the catering and bar staff groups — and also to our wonderful Town Hall staff, who make these evenings a real pleasure — as well as adding to the Friends project funds.

.... and so to December and the New Year

<u>3rd December: Royal Northern Sinfonia</u> has booked the Church to play a concert as part of their annual winter tour. Tickets are only available on-line from the RNS (theglasshouseicm.org/whats-on/royal-northern-sinfonia-winter-tour-2025/) or on the door.

17th December: Army Band Christmas Concert: Another full house is likely for this annual event. There is no entry charge, but there will be a 'bucket' collection on exit. Start time probably 7.00pm — to be confirmed. (The band is also holding individual soloist performance assessments in the Church from 11.00 a.m. on 27th November. People are welcome to drop in and listen, if they wish).

20th December: Town Hall Christmas Coffee Morning: In addition to coffee and biscuits, the Friends are looking to organise a tombola, raffle and sale of craft items, so donations for any of these to help towards paying the Parish Share are most welcome. The Plant & Produce Ad Hoc band will be providing background Christmas music and the Song Squad have also been invited to perform. If you can offer some time to help at this church event, either to prepare and/or serve coffee or wash up, please contact me on 07754 283161.

NB: Quiz Night — February 28th — a date for your diary. Jim Jack

MOTHERS' UNION ADVENT SERVICE



MARGARET CLAYSON warmly invites everyone to join the Mothers' Union for this Advent service to mark the 16 days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

St Mary's Mothers' Union Advent Service will be held at 2.00pm on Tuesday, 9th December in St Mary's Church and will be followed by seasonal refreshments. All are welcome.

9th December is the penultimate day of the Sixteen days of Activism Against Gender based violence, which began on 25th November (The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and ends on 10th December (International Human Rights Day). These days are kept by the organisations which have consultative status at the United Nations, like The Mothers' Union, The Women's Institute and Soroptimist International

Mothers' Union works alongside communities 365 days of the year to help end domestic abuse and gender-based violence and to support those affected by it.

Ripon Cathedral is also marking the 16 days with a Service of Evensong at 5:30pm on 25th November and a silent vigil at 10:00am on 6th December.

Throughout the 16 days, the Mothers' Union Midday Prayers on Facebook will focus on women and girls. The prayer for 9th December — the day of our Advent Service — is as follows:

God of reconciliation and forgiveness, bring healing to relationships broken by violence.

Where possible, bring reconciliation and peace. Where it is not, grant peace and the strength to move forward.

Amen

CELEBRATING CATHEDRALS

Having already written about the other two Cathedrals in our Diocese, **JUDITH MacLEOD** wanted to visit the third one — The Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Paul, Bradford — to complete the set.

What is Bradford known for? It earned global fame as the 'Wool Capital of the World' during the Industrial Revolution. Its textile legacy lives on in grand mill buildings and Saltaire, a Victorian model village. It is associated with cultural and literary icons such as the Brontë sister novelists; the artist David Hockney; the playwright J.B. Priestley; and the composer Frederick Delius. It is the home of the National Science and Media Museum and the Alhambra Theatre. Since the 1950's it has also been home to a growing Asian population. It is currently the youngest city in the UK with nearly a quarter of its citizens under 16.

I had more than one reason for choosing Bradford Cathedral for the December 2025 edition of the magazine. Firstly, it is one of 3 cathedrals in the Leeds diocese, the other 2 being Ripon and Wakefield, about which I have already written this year. Secondly, Bradford is currently the UK City of Culture. Thirdly, I was born in Bradford and was keen to put the few memories of my very early life (the department store Brown Muff's and hospital visits for minor injuries!) into context.



I like to visit the cathedrals before I write about them. I enjoy experiencing the atmosphere, seeing the architecture and artefacts and taking photographs. I must confess, however, that the prospect of driving to Bradford one Saturday in

October was daunting, and I was very glad to have the company of Charlie and Chips. Some of the roads in the city centre have several lanes, so you need to know where you are going and be decisive. The northeast approach past Leeds-Bradford airport is less challenging than some.

You approach the Cathedral from the north side via a gentle, grassy slope. It is not lofty like Ripon Cathedral and it is smaller than Wakefield, with a tower rather than a spire. It looks like a sprawling parish church built of honey-coloured stone.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul became a Cathedral in 1919. Here is a view of the outside from the south side. In the foreground is a piece of street art called 'The Portal' by Polish artist NeSpoon, which takes its title from a lace pattern she discovered in Bradford Museum archives for hand-made lace of the 1900s. It is part of the



2025 Bradford UK City of Culture programme.

The Cathedral stands on Stott Hill on the east side of Bradford. Having no memory of the landscape from early childhood, I was surprised by how hilly the city is. I thought Sheffield was the highest city in England, but, apparently, Bradford has the highest average elevation (1,065 feet). The Cathedral Close provides a fine vantage point to appreciate the townscape. Nearby are vestiges of a post-industrial cityscape including the intriguing, but austere, Little Germany where, in the



nineteenth century, German wool merchants constructed tall buildings to house their businesses. In Norman times the view would have been a thickly-wooded valley with a castle and the church facing each other across a stream with a ford (the derivation of Bradford is 'broad ford'). The stream is Bradford Beck, which now runs under the city. Given the long history of the Cathedral building and the state of its current surroundings, it seems to be a sort of timeless beacon, a haven of calm and comfort.

On entering the building, my immediate impression was one of warmth and light – both

literal and spiritual. Its scale is similar to that of St Mary's in Richmond and therefore seems familiar and homely. We were greeted by a volunteer who was welcoming, informative and keen to share her pride in the building.

The nave is bright and wide. I enjoyed the combination of flooring materials – stone in the nave, marble at the high altar and wooden parquet in the aisles.



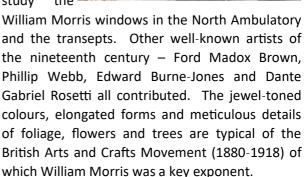


I admired the bosses on the ceiling of the nave and the wooden carvings on the walls.

The chancel and high altar ceilings are also striking with their vivid colours and the keys, the symbol of St Peter to whom Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16-19).



Our friendly volunteer urged us to study the



In the Holy Spirit Chapel at the east end of the building there is a very striking piece of modern ceramic sculpture entitled 'From Rubble Reborn' by the Sheffield artist Mo Schofield. A baby emerges from the rubble. It was created in response to the conflict in Gaza and dedicated to the resilience of the Palestinian people. This exhibit is part of the 2025 City of Culture celebrations.

What does it mean to be Bradford UK City of Culture 2025? The city has received funding from several sources — central government and the National Lottery Fund, among others — to host



exhibitions, drama productions and workshops, poetry readings, musical festivals, light shows, dance performances, film screenings and street-art in and around Bradford. Many events are still taking place in December and some continue until February 2026. I may brave the traffic system again in order to discover more.

Judith MacLeod

FROM THE REGISTERS



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



Margaret Elizabeth White
Edmund Burrell
Robert William Wallis
John Michael Walton

7th September '25
1st October '25
5th October '25
13th October '25

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.

CAMINO INGLES

Last month, we left **JIM** and **JAN JACK** in the impressive village of Tudhoe — a time capsule of the history of Durham over the past thousand years. So attracted were they that, before starting their third leg of the Camino route, an exploration of the village was needed.

So here we go. Chunk three of the elephant. We left off last time enjoying a well-earned drink in the Green Tree in Tudhoe, so it was to there we should repair to start the third leg of our Camino Ingles investigation. Car safely parked in Bishop Auckland, turn left to the bus stop in the centre of the market place and onto the number 6 bus for Durham, stopping at the Victory Club in Tudhoe, bus passes shown and stowed away.

But before we returned to the Green Tree to start this section of the walk, an investigation of the two churches on the beautiful Tudhoe village green. St David's (the Tin Church) built for an influx of Welsh miners in the nineteenth century — locked. Mercifully the attractive Roman Catholic church of St. Charles, on the other side of the green, was open and well worth a visit. An absorbing display in the foyer described how the church had been surrounded by a complex of buildings (no longer in existence) housing a school for girls, mainly from Hartlepool. The church was built by the Catholic Salvin family for the use of all villagers of all denominations. The churchyard was a haven of peace, the grounds being maintained by an excellent team completing community service orders following petty crime. The church groundsman was full of praise for their work and the team members as individuals.

And so to the Green Tree. No stopping this time, but pressing on past the 16th century Tudhoe Hall on our left, a white boarding house (a former Roman Catholic seminary for girls built in 1822) on the right, and onward to a narrow path at the other end of the village green to pick up the by now familiar yellow on blue Camino logo and direction arrow.



Now we were off road once more, across a close-grazed field, the work of local sheep. Down the field and bearing 90 degrees right, we entered our first woodland of the day. The pleasure of woodland walking was becoming a feature of our pilgrimage, probably not something to be found on the Spanish Camino.

We had arrived at Tudhoe Mill Nature Reserve, owned and managed by Durham Wildlife Trust. Site of a former drift coal mine, a return to nature had eradicated all signs of its borrowing from nature for industrial purposes. The tree-lined path meant easy walking on a good surface, with an unheard road running parallel and close by.

Suddenly, we found ourselves walking alongside a sturdy wooden fence, behind which were the gardens of a modern housing estate with glimpses of lamp posts, many of which carried flags of St George, England's Cappadocian-born patron

saint or Union flags, nearly half of which were flying upside down! (Yes, for those who did not know, there is a right and wrong way to fly the flag). This unexpected and unusual display of symbols in centres of population became a striking



and slightly disturbing feature of a day, otherwise mainly blessed with dappled sunlight and woodland calm, as it became clear that this was no local festival but had undertones of a wider movement in support of 'nationalism'.

So plenty to talk about as we moved back into the countryside, the boundary between town and country being marked by our path, which passed through the remains of an old wagon-way linking two collieries — Whitworth Park and Page Bank. Forerunners of the railways, these wooden railed tracks were built to enable horse-drawn wagons to move coal from one centre to another before transport to the wider market. Here, once more, our walk reminded us of the people of the past, whose work had created the foundations of wealth for others, built upon the black gold of coal.

Speaking of which, the waymarked path led us to Whitworth Hall, home of the Shafto family for 330 years, including Robert Shafto, MP for Durham in 1760, who allegedly went to sea wearing silver buckles and jilting his intended — Bridget Balsyse (who found young Bobby Shafto bonnie) to marry the wealthy Anne Dunscombe.

It was here for the first time that the excellent Camino directions didn't work. Access to the promised permissive path through the grounds of Whitworth Hall (now a hotel) did not seem to exist. Luckily, the important aid to all pilgrims of the modern age viz. an interactive Ordnance Survey Map on Jan's iPhone, enabled us to skirt the grounds and pick up the distinctive Camino way-marking on the

other side of the hotel outside Whitworth Unusually, this delightful place of worship was a) open and b) not dedicated to any particular saint. It is the final resting place of some of the Shafto family (including the musically famed Robert) in the family vault. Here also was a place to stamp the Camino passports

Back across the road and across open fields, we felt we'd earned a picnic stop to enjoy open views across the surrounding countryside, before pressing on downwards towards the banks of the



Inside Whitworth Church

River Wear and the return to woodland — and stiles. Here we discovered that the woodland (Nancy's Wood) had been planted when the drift mine — Annie's drift — was closed. Many reminders here of what a good summer it has been for wayside fruits — brambles, sloes, haws and hips, with mountain-ash trees laden with bunches of brightly coloured red rowan berries.



Thomas Wright

And suddenly we were amongst the flags again as we entered Byers Green village, another historic settlement dating back to the 14th century, originally based on agriculture, but finding a new purpose for 90 years when coal mining came to the area in 1841. The village's most famous son was Thomas Wright astronomer, architect, mathematician and the first person to accurately describe the Milky Way, our detailed guide-notes told us. Until we undertook this walk, all we knew was that Thomas Wright's House is an excellent place for Sunday lunch!

After a short stint of walking on tarmac paths alongside the High Street in Byers Green, we left the road to go across a stile and up a hill to join the well-surfaced Auckland Way, a former railway line serving Byers Green station (only the platform remains), with a branch to the former Byers Green Colliery.

For the first time, we were meeting other people on this section of the walk. Joggers and serious runners; families out walking; people being dragged along by their sniffing dogs; prams and back-packed babies, with greetings exchanged as we passed. This part of the Camino follows another spiritual path called the Way of Life. This way of life felt more truly representative of what many desire — a calm and peaceful, anger-free existence with warmth extended to strangers and neighbours alike — rather than what the display of flags permeating the empty streets which we had seen on this part of the route had been interpreted (perhaps wrongly?) to symbolise.

Once more, our pilgrimage had taken us to unknown land. We had trodden paths which mixed quiet and reflective thought with strong reminders of the area's industrial past. We were now at Binchester, near the site of a significant Roman fort. A good point to stop for the day, leave the Auckland Way and walk back to the main Spennymoor — Bishop Auckland Road to find our way back to the car by bus, only to return at a later stage to complete this part of the Camino Ingles with the section between Binchester and Bishop Auckland.

And return we did, for the shorter chunk of this leg of the Camino. Bus to Binchester Road end; a walk back to the Auckland Way of just under a mile; and turn left to rejoin the former railway line. The tarmac walking didn't last long as, just after the second stone bridge, we took steps downward to the right to enter an area of magical woodland.

Here the earth pathway was distinct but not wide, with the feeling of a totally natural way until we came across two small stone arches creating culverts through which small streams gurgled and flowed, and a set of four stone steps, randomly situated. No obvious reason for them being there, except as an aid to travellers who commonly used the path in times gone by. So perhaps we were on some old by-way.



A place of Pilgrimage?

roughly uniform lengths and tied together to form roofing for a couple of shelters, benches created out of tree trunks and, in this space, memorials and tokens on the ground or hanging from trees for departed loved ones. No sound of traffic here, only quiet birdsong and the rustle of leaves moved by the unseen breeze, a haven in a busy world. As we turned away, we discovered we were not

Suddenly, on our left, a clearing emerged which, by common use, seems to have become a place of local pilgrimage. Steps down, branches cut to

quite on our own, as we were being observed by a deer, standing quite still in a clearing behind us. We stood and stared, the deer stared back before steadily and delicately stepping back into the cover of woodland from whence it came — coinciding, as often happens, with the moment when wild life see a camera or iPhone pointing towards them.

All too soon, we reached the boundary of the woodland, marked by a stile and a cottage hidden away on our right. Our way, however, lay leftwards, alongside an open field and up hill to an open plateau.



Tokens left in the clearing

At this point, our guidance notes promised us 'pleasant views of the valley and Bellburn wood on your left, Binchester Roman Fort on your right.' What was not mentioned was the hefty black cloud approaching rapidly from above. It was here I decided that I had learned who put the 'grim' in pilgrim, as a violent downpour left us turning our backs on all of this scenery to don waterproofs and, hoods up, heads down we made for a gateway and the woods beyond. Down hill through the woods, we emerged on a tarmac road beside the River Gaunless.

Thankfully, the rain had slowed to a light shower as we used the road to gain access to the next waymark, which took us away from traffic and up-hill towards a back gateway into the grounds of Auckland Castle. Here indeed were sheep safely grazing alongside footpaths leading to a bridge over the river. Roman remains were found during its construction for Bishop Richard Trevor, indicating that the former Dere Steet Roman road may have crossed the river at or near this point.

Pilgrims walking through history, we found the next evidence at the top of the hill in the form of a Deer House, constructed in the 18th Century for Bishop Richard Trevor and his guests to dine in comfort whilst watching the four-legged inhabitants of the bishop's deer park at close quarters — presumably after having an energetic afternoon hunting the same animals, as was the custom of the time.

On then to Auckland Palace, former seat of the Bishops of Durham, the centre of a concerted effort to revive the fortunes of this once thriving commercial and spiritual centre of Weardale led by the millionaire philanthropist, Jonathan Ruffer. Passports stamped at the Auckland Tower; coffee and cake at the Palace Refectory; and then off home to plan the next stage of this increasingly absorbing experience.

Jim Jack



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK



One of our Pastoral Assistants, GRAHAM PEARSON, recently spoke with Carole McCormack about how he became involved in this aspect of Church life.

Graham has been attending St Mary's in Richmond since 2021, when he was attracted to our church because of the decision to open once again for worship after lockdown and deal with the necessary constraints of Covid-19. He felt that St Mary's was responding to people's need for comfort and support at this time of global crisis. Prior to this, Graham had attended the Baptist Church in Darlington for around 35 years, volunteering at the Soup Kitchen and developing a café where reasonably-priced hot drinks and toasted sandwiches were available. He has continued to attend both churches until recently, when long evening services at Darlington meant a late return home.

The Rector approached Graham to discern whether he would be happy to become further involved in the life of St Mary's. Graham isn't always comfortable being in the spotlight and much prefers working behind the scenes, so he didn't warm to the idea of joining the Reading or Prayer rotas. He did feel, however, that he would like to take on the role of Pastoral Assistant.

Initial training was run by the Diocese of Leeds, online via Zoom, and comprised weekly two-hour sessions with a group of five other people, facilitated by a diocesan trainer, but Graham feels that the pastoral structure at St Mary's continues to deepen and extend his confidence in this important behind-thescenes role. All five of St Mary's pastoral assistants meet every two months with Rev Martin and Rev Lorna at the Rectory to review the pastoral needs of the church family. At these meetings, they discuss which visits need to be planned and where 'watching briefs' should be kept.

Graham generally makes two pastoral visits per month and, although there is a set form of short service which can be followed in people's homes, he offers a bespoke service – providing what people need in terms of support, listening or conversation. Visits include Care Homes such at Nightingale Hall and the Terrace.

It was clear during our conversation how important his role as Pastoral Assistant is to Graham. He undertakes this responsibility thoughtfully and sensitively and the development of opportunities for deeper fellowship with the people he visits is much valued.

Carole McCormack



CHARITY OF THE MONTH - JANUARY

Our charity this month is the SAMARITANS.

Mark Beresford-Peirse provides an example of their work to show how this invaluable service is so worthy of our support.

Without Samaritans, Layla wouldn't be here. "Together they helped bring my future back," she says. Battling depression since early teenage, as the years passed, she found it only got worse and she began to develop suicidal thoughts. Layla felt isolated, worthless, and resigned to the fact that, one day soon, she would take her own life. She struggled to open up about any of this, but after one difficult conversation with her sister, the sister gave her the number for Samaritans. During one really terrible night, she found it on her phone and made a call that would change the course of her future.

Layla was convinced that no one would even answer, because it was so late, but they did. They asked her how she was feeling and she can't remember what she said, but she knows she cried and cried. It was a huge relief. The person at the other end of the line seemed to know just what she needed at that moment, and helped her to see the bigger picture.

Layla went on to make other calls during the following months, but she believes Samaritans has given her back her future and her life is looking up. She now wishes her mother, who had taken her own life, had known that she could phone and talk to someone in this way.

Samaritans can be a lifeline, for they provide a free telephone service for countless other people who may make that call in their darkest moments. It is available 24/7 for 365 days a year, including Christmas Day. Volunteers listen without judgement, and so often help to transform the life of a person in crisis.

Every 90 minutes, someone in the UK dies by suicide. Every 10 seconds, Samaritans answer a call for help, someone to listen to them, and to help them feel tomorrow is possible.

There is also an e-mail service for those who prefer to write rather than talk, but a response may take a few days. There are branches throughout the UK and some are also able to offer a face-to-face meeting.

Call 116 123



jo@samaritans.org

DID YOU WATCH IT?

One of the most popular television programmes in recent months has been the 'Great British Bake Off'. The well-deserved winner is known to **JOHN PRITCHARD**, who reveals an aspect not mentioned during the show itself.





For those who missed it, the winner of The Great British Bake Off this year was 23 -year-old Jasmine Mitchell, a medical student from London but with her roots in Edinburgh. She was the youngest winner ever and had been Star Baker on 5 of the 9 episodes before the final. What didn't emerge in the show, however, but was very important to Jasmine, is that she is a committed Christian.

She said, 'My faith has become stronger and stronger over the last year. Being under the high pressure of TV really made me rely on Jesus, on God, because there were lots of situations where I just felt completely unequipped.'

Along with 12,000 others, she had applied to be on the show 'on a complete whim'. Just 12 were chosen after a rigorous selection process, including a session with a psychiatrist to ensure they could cope with the pressure. Filming is only done at the weekends so they can continue in their employment, but that can be 16 hours of filming a day surrounded by a crew of around 50 people. Some pressure!

Jasmine said the Lord's Prayer was a mantra of peace during stressful times.

'Walking to the tent from the green room, or waiting, I would just pray the Lord's Prayer a lot in my head. It didn't take away the stress, but I felt that God was walking along beside me. I would look back at the end of the week and just feel completely held by God. It was a complete kind of miracle, to be honest, that I had managed to get through it!' That isn't surprising when you know that she was taking medical exams at the same time.

Jasmine is an attractive young woman with total alopecia. She used to wear a wig so she wouldn't stand out, but has stopped doing so. 'Often, I would pray for my hair [to come] back, in a sense of "This is what I want, this is what healing looks like to me." Ironically, healing isn't just what we ask for. God has healed me to make me more whole, and more me. It's a process of learning to see myself the way God sees me.'

Jasmine says her love of baking came from hospitality being at the heart of her Christian upbringing. 'I've grown up in a family that gathers around food.'

I can vouch for that. Wendy and I have been at that family table in Edinburgh many times. Jasmin's father, The Revd Professor Jolyon Mitchell, is now Principal of St John's College, Durham and trained for ordained ministry in my time teaching there. He was at Jasmine's London church on the evening of the Final and said 200 people erupted when she was announced as the winner. You bet!

John Pritchard

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE 200 CLUB

Congratulations to our latest Winner

November — no: 181 — Nicola Scrafton



CONNECTIONS 2026



JUST A REMINDER!

Have you remembered to return the order form for next year's magazines, enclosed with last month's copy? If not, please do so without delay to ensure you get your copy.

MY BUSINESS IS YOUR BUSINESS

Almost every supermarket or garage displays bunches of cellophane-wrapped bunches of flowers at varying prices as we enter the premises. Part reminder, part 'tempting-unplanned-starter-spend', which is designed to get us in the 'mood' for shopping, the position and array of flowers is an indicator of the varied role blooms play in our lives, connecting with the feelings of the recipient and the buyer. On the Gallowfield Trading Estate, however, Roots and Shoots florist has been successfully offering a complete floristry service for over 30 years. JIM JACK went to meet proprietor Will Gardner and long-serving florist Debbie Redfern to find out more.

Entering the premises of Roots and Shoots (Florist), there is an immediate and joyful assault of colour and of smell on the senses, as the perfume from a variety of blooms permeates the air. Debbie Redfern, long-serving florist, and owner Will Gardner are busy completing an order for delivery later that day. Will greets me warmly to talk about this local business and its place in our community, and it very quickly became clear that owning and running his own business,



Front of house team: Debbie, Will and Emma

and that business being floristry, were clearly not in a grand career plan when Will was at school.

'I always wanted to be a teacher or go into theatre,' says Will, as we relax, surrounded by flowers, on garden seats close to the entrance. As with a number of young people not achieving the grades required to move on to the next stage towards these goals, Will had to have a re-think.

'I did some work at Ravensworth Nurseries and enrolled at Darlington College to try some re-sits.' The re-sits didn't work out as he had hoped, but he did pass his English and then later his Maths. 'I found I did enjoy the horticulture and so went to work at Ravensworth whilst following a course in Horticulture.'

The vagaries of trade led to staff cuts at Ravensworth and Will being made redundant. For a period of time, he worked at different jobs which he describes as 'bits and pieces', some with gardening work involved. Attending an Open Day at Houghall College in Durham, however, proved to be a game changer. He

enrolled on a City and Guilds course which was 40% Horticulture and 60% Floristry, which involved work experience at Roots and Shoots in Richmond on the trading estate, then run by Angela and Norman Bell. The Floristry section of the course introduced Will to two new experiences: not only an understanding of flowers and plants and their arrangement and display, but also how to run a floristry business.

Qualification achieved. he started work in a flower shop in Bedale, enjoying the customerservice side of the work as well as the practical aspects of floristry. He left there to enjoy spending time with his new born baby, Matilda, doing a bit of freelance floristry from home. Then, when and Norman Angela



Will — surrounded by flowers

expressed their intention to retire, discussions began about buying the long-standing business.

The handover took place just before Easter 2018. Roots and Shoots, closed on Maundy Thursday, and Roots and Shoots Floristry opened under new management on the following Tuesday. Although taking over a successful business, Will felt that the long weekend would offer an opportunity to redecorate the premises whilst some of the previous fittings etc. were being moved out. In consultation with Debbie and wife, Lizzie, the stall was set out for the next few years trading .

Adding 'Floristry' to the business name was partly required because there were already other businesses called 'Roots and Shoots' with an internet presence, but it also emphasised that flowers were the core business and expertise on offer.

Will looks back on that time as being hectic, but worth it. A glance around the showroom makes it clear that, whilst flowers, floral arrangements, bouquets, wreaths and sprays are the main business, other items and services are on hand to complement the main offering. Cards, ribbons, candles, pots, vases, seasonal

gifts, oasis and flower-food to extend the life of cut flowers, delivery services, advice on, and supply of, flowers for wedding receptions, special meals and events, funerals – the list is almost endless. In addition to 'repeat customers' locally, a move to using social media — Facebook, Instagram etc (but not Twitter — has also helped to keep business buoyant.

One buying habit which has decreased is 'walk in' customers on Saturdays — so much so that the shop is only open Mondays to Fridays. Will gives a lot of credit for the continued strength of the business to Debbie and Emma, whilst his wife, Lizzie, does the accounts and book-keeping whilst having her own business in Travel.

Debbie's background was originally in graphic design, but she has a great eye for design in general. A career break to start a family led to a return to work part-time doing deliveries for Angela and Norman. Debbie also went to Houghall College to train in floristry, bringing her design background to colour mix and layout. Meeting and guiding customer needs transferred readily to floristry and still does today, twenty five years after joining the business. Emma is a more recent appointee, bringing with her the experience of running her own floristry business in Brighton before her move into the area.

Much of the supply comes in from Holland via Leeds and other areas. When Will first took over the business, flowers were delivered direct from Holland, but now he buys from wholesalers in Leeds and Preston. Most of the independent florist trade in the area uses this route. Flowers are quality graded and priced accordingly at the wholesale markets, a grading which Will and his team have learned to trust.

There is a vast wholesale market in Holland with buyers from all over Western Europe bidding as flowers pass on a conveyor belt. Shipped out immediately either by air or by overnight ferry, they arrive in the UK fresh and ready for sale. Because of the nature of the orders they receive, Roots and Shoots has very little wastage, only buying what they

Wholesale market in Holland

know they need to complete orders and maintain an attractive showroom display.

Brexit (rather than COVID) has provided a major challenge. As well as a 20% import tax on flowers adding to costs, there is far more paperwork to complete. In or out of Europe, prices are also influenced by the weather in supplying countries. 'A single lily stem is currently costing £6.00', so pricing can be tricky.



Demonstration at floristry trade fair

Much like the Christmas toy trade, the florist's planning starts a year in advance with trade fairs to attend. becomes clear what the 'colours of the year' are going to be! Trade stands also act as a reminder of the sundries which can be offered by the local florist for a complete service. The garden chairs we are sitting on are examples — but the list can also include events for which people order flowers. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations? Think balloons, bunting, chocolates (bought locally from Mocha), Will has even attended a licensing course at Darlington College, which means the

business can now supply alcohol, particularly prosecco.

The hours are long. Closed doors at the shop at weekends doesn't mean no work. There are orders to fulfil and complete, keeping up with administrative work to ensure that the quarterly tax returns are delivered accurately and on time, orders to place, trade and flower shows to attend — and local charities and voluntary organisations to support.

Will is passionate about supporting such groups in Richmond. Richmond Meet (Will is currently the president), Walking and Book Festival, Swaledale Festival and other Town events — he sees this as 'give back' for the way the community makes it our business to support his business — and other local businesses like it.

But what happened to theatre? Hold on, I suddenly realised I was sitting in the presence of a local 'star' of screens large and small. 'Did I not see you in the film 'Liberty of Conscience', recently released about the Calvert family of Kiplin Hall?' Will laughs: 'Yes — Saw an advert for extras, so I applied. They made me a peasant farmer with a goat to lead, but it had an unfortunate habit of turning with its back end towards the camera and discharging as the cameras rolled — so I got a wobbly-wheeled wheelbarrow instead! Really great experience.'

Will had a stint as a boy tenor in our own church choir, when he 'were nowt but a lad' — persuaded by Margret Emerson — and still loves singing and music when time allows. Most recently, he performed with Richmond Operatic Society, in '9-5' last November and then 'Beauty and the Beast' in May (with his daughter also starring in the show). St Marys Church is very special to Will for lots of reasons and, even though he doesn't attend church on a weekly basis, he does love to watch 'Songs of Praise' on a Sunday.

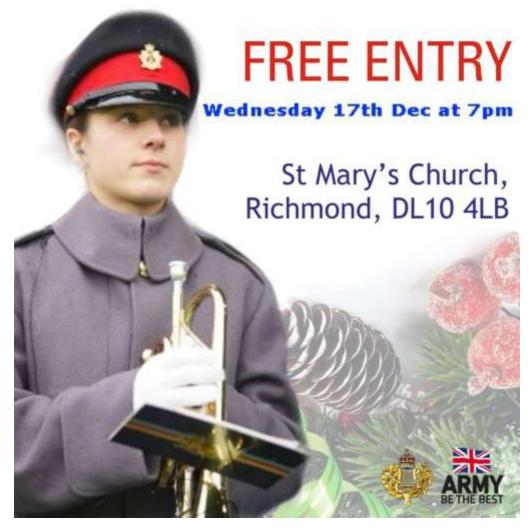


Will loves what he does and frequently expressed his gratitude to Debbie, Emma and Lizzie for their support and work to keep the business thriving. The government, schools and Ofsted, constantly remind us of the value of formal qualifications, but Will, and people like him, are a reminder that whilst there are no qualifications in enterprise, getting on with people and understanding what good service means, are precisely these qualities which we rely upon in our local businesses. His advice to anyone wanting to start a business — 'Research it — then go for it.' Hard work, but satisfying — especially with a great team to work with. Blooming good work!

Jim Jack

CHARITY OF THE MONTH 2026							
<u>Month</u>	<u>Charity</u>	<u>Type</u>					
January	Samaritans	National					
February	Embrace the Middle East	Mission					
March	Mothers' Union	Local & National					
April	Assistance Dogs (Guide or Hearing)	Local & National					
May	Christian Aid	Mission					
June	Brain Tumour Charity	National					
July	USPG	Mission					
August	Big Issue Foundation	National					
September	Friends of Garget Walker House	Local					
October	Open Pantry Richmond	Local					
November	Make-A-Wish Foundation	National					
December	Darlington Women's Refuge	Local					

British Army Band CATTERICK Christmas Concert



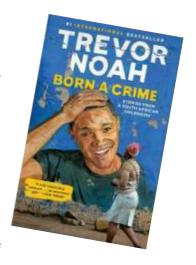
MEMORABLE MANUSCRIPTS

This month's book review is contributed by **JUDITH MacLEOD**, who found this account of life in South Africa during apartheid both moving and shocking, but alleviated by the author's humour.

Book: Born a Crime
Author: Trevor Noah
Publisher: John Murray

In this autobiography, Trevor Noah, a man born in South Africa in 1984 of a black South-African mother and a white Swiss father, relates his extraordinary youth. During apartheid when relations between black and white were prohibited, his very birth was a crime. At that time people were segregated into coloured, black, white and Indian. If an inter-racial couple were caught, the police would break down the door, beat the black person and arrest them. Trevor and his mother, Patricia, did not live with his father and had to visit him in secret.

In the 1980's black South Africans outnumbered white South Africans by nearly five to one. They belonged to over 8 different tribes with different languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Sotho, Venda, Ndebele, Tsonga, Pedi and more. Trevor's mother was Xhosa (as was Nelson Mandela, we are told). Trevor could speak five of the languages, but not all. He recounts 2 incidents from his youth, in which understanding a tribal language that is not one's own was crucial. One involved his first date, when he could not communicate with the girl, and the other when he successfully acted as an interpreter for a Tsonga prisoner during the week he spent in jail. He quotes Nelson Mandela — "If you talk to a man in a language he understands,



that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart".

Trevor was 5 when Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Without understanding what the end of apartheid meant, he remembers the initial euphoria and then the violence that followed. During a proxy war between the

Zulu and Xhosa tribes, thousands of people were killed. Life in parts of Johannesburg was highly dangerous. Noah's mother, Patricia, however, believing that God was always with her, was fearless.



Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah was a devout Christian and ambitious for her son's education. Unlike many black women, she did not work in a factory or as a maid. She took a secretarial course and got a job as a secretary at ICI in Braamfontein, a suburb of Johannesburg. She lived very frugally and bought all the clothes for the family from jumble sales.

Because of his mixed-race background and his education organised by his mother, Trevor was uniquely equipped to thrive in more than one of the Johannesburg districts. He recounts his experiences of early childhood, which involved some form of church four nights a week with 3 church visits on

Trevor — as a boy Sundays — mixed church, white church and black church. Travel was so dangerous in Soweto that Trevor's mother and 2 sons were almost killed in a taxi on their way home from an evening service. His mother hurled him from the moving car.

As an adolescent Trevor was wheeling and dealing in a "hood" – Alexandra, a township in Johannesburg, away from his own neighbourhood. He recounts his successes and setbacks with engaging detail and humour and is a consummate 'raconteur'. His antics must have caused Patricia considerable alarm, but her love and faith created an unshakeable bond between mother and son, which is very movingly demonstrated at the end of book.

If one of your criteria for a good book is that you enter a world to which you do not belong, this one is a fine example. It offers a great deal more than that, however, for it is also sad, shocking, moving and funny. The book concludes after Trevor has left home, but is still a young man. Patricia and his 2 younger brothers are still alive in South Africa, but Trevor is now



And now — as a young man

a comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actor and television host, living in New York.

Judith MacLeod

NOTES FROM THE PAST

This month **JANE HATCHER** attempts to unravel an intriguing tale, having collaborated in her research with Ms L A Hendra, a London-based writer who is descended from the Bowman family of Richmond.

An Unfortunate Case of Mistaken Identity

Just imagine that you are a respected Richmond solicitor, serving also as the Borough's coroner, a man in your early 60s, living in Frenchgate with your wife of well over 30 years and three young adult children. It is the mid-Victorian era, just a few years since the untimely death of Prince Albert, and the Queen is still deeply overwhelmed with grief. Here in Richmond, however, there may be a dubious rumour going round the town's 'chattering classes', which would be very upsetting if it reached you. But I am fairly confident in saying that you would be blissfully unaware of this unfounded calumny.

The gentleman's name might ring a bell with today's Richmond parishioners, as he was James Hunton, who established the legal practice which still survives at Hunton and Garget. There is a plaque on the north wall of St Mary's to his son, Wensley Hunton, who died in 1914 having carried on his father's legal practice. James Hunton's wife Esther, equally as respectable as her husband, was one of the many daughters of Michael Yarker, the landlord of the King's Head Hotel.



Anne Bowman — 1796-1886

The misinformation was all a mistake, due to a slip of the pen, a false accusation hidden in a diary kept by Anne Bowman. Now one of the town's lesser remembered Victorian personages, she was in her day a highly successful author of boys' adventure stories.

Under the date 14th April 1868, Anne Bowman's diary reads, "Miss Robson married to Mr James Hunton, a girl of 19, to a Roué of 50 – very bad." Anne was incorrect on three counts: she got the groom's surname wrong; considerably exaggerated his age; and the wedding was to take place the following day. Was she justified in calling him a roué? I wish I knew!

- though he was certainly almost old enough to be the bride's father. Reading her diary, one might infer, although Anne Bowman doesn't actually say so, that it

was a Richmond wedding, but it was in fact in Marske, and it probably caused the greatest excitement in that village for the whole of 1868.

The Marske parish register is a starting place for clarifying the facts. The wedding was the first to take place in Marske Church that year, and 15th April was a Wednesday. The marriage was between James Henry D'Arcy Hutton, described as a bachelor of full age and a Gentleman by occupation, and Amy Caroline Robson, a spinster, described as a Gentlewoman. Her age is given as 19, so she would have needed her father's consent to marry.

So we know that Anne Bowman was correct about Amy's age. She was the daughter of Revd. Thomas William Robson, who had been Rector of Marske since 1855, and her address is given as Marske Rectory. The Rector and his wife Anne had had five children baptised in Richmond while the family lived in Temple Lodge, on Cravengate. This was when he was the incumbent of Hudswell, where there was no parsonage at the time. Amy's older sister Decima and her younger sister Henrietta were the witnesses to the wedding, the ceremony being performed by Revd. Richard Roberts, the Rector of Richmond, so that Amy's father could 'give her away'.



The Robson family crest in the stained glass window dedicated to the Revd Thomas William Robson on the south wall of St Edmunds Church, Marske

James Henry D'Arcy Hutton, who was actually aged 44, was the younger brother of John Timothy D'Arcy Hutton, who had inherited the Marske estate on the death of their cousin Timothy Hutton in 1863. John seems not to have been very interested in Marske, but James was living at Bushy Park, situated to the east of the road linking the village of Marske to Downholme Bridge on the Richmond-Reeth Turnpike Road of 1836. Timothy Hutton had built Bushy Park in 1855 during his programme of upgrading properties on the Marske estate, and it is now a farmhouse.

No banns had been called, as the marriage was by licence, so had the village heard about the wedding? It would seem so, for according to the *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle* that week, the village of Marske had been "roused from its apathy" [!] by festivities following the ceremony. Provided for all the adults of the parish, presumably by the Robsons, these included "a good tea and supper" laid on in the village school, which was specially decorated for the occasion. After the gathering had toasted the bride and groom's health, the space was cleared for

dancing, which continued into the early hours of the following morning. A good tea was also given to the village schoolchildren.

The newlyweds made their home at Fleetham Lodge, an old residence about one mile west of the village of Kirkby Fleetham near Northallerton. The marriage seems not to have produced any children, but Amy's sisters Decima and Henrietta were visiting on the night of the 1871 Census. It was not to be long, however, before Amy became a young widow, for on 21st November 1874 James died at Scarborough. Had he been in poor health as a result of the lifestyle that Anne Bowman had implied? Had he hoped to be cured by the Spa waters? By a strange coincidence, his elder brother John, the squire of Marske, had died only four weeks earlier.

Amy, now quite a wealthy widow still in her mid-twenties, moved to a smart new terrace house off Fulford Road in York. It was not long before she found another

gentleman, this time of her own age, with whom to make a new life, and she married Wyndham Monson Madden on 16th June 1881 at St James' Church in London's Piccadilly. The ceremony was performed by the groom's father who, like Amy's, was a parson, and Amy's older brother, William Thomas Robson, who had also become a clergyman, was one of the witnesses.



St. James' Church, Piccadilly

The couple lived in London and had a son Wyndham and a daughter Kathleen. A Cambridge graduate, Amy's new husband was a schoolmaster, and then the editor of a legal journal, before dying in a boating accident in Cornwall in 1924. Amy was now even wealthier and, when she died in 1927, she left more than £22,000 between her son and daughter.

And what became of the wrongly accused James Hunton? He continued as a respected Richmond figure, living into a ripe old age without a blemish on his character. After his wife Esther died in 1880, he moved in with his daughter Eleanor, who was married to Dr Thomas Carter, a medical practitioner. James eventually became blind and remained in his daughter's home until his death at the age of 77 in 1882. Anne Bowman often noted that she had met him in the street, and commented on his increasing frailty. I wonder if she ever felt a pang of remorse over how she had once maligned him?

WORD SEARCH

Did the Old Testament expect Jesus to come?

Yes indeed! Here are just some examples of OT prophesies:

- **He would be born of a virgin.** 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son and will call Him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14)
- **He would be born in Bethlehem.** 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel ...' (Micah 5:2)
- **His lineage would be of the line of David.** 'I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.' (Jeremiah 23:5-6).
- **He would bring healing.** 'Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.' (Isaiah 35:5–6)
- He would be crucified. They pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are
 on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among
 them and cast lots for my garment. (Psalm 22)
- **He would rise from the dead.** 'You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay ...' (Psalm 16: 8-11)

Born Virgin **Immanuel** Bethlehem Ruler Israel David King Just Right Healing Blind Deaf Lame Mute Crucified Pierce Hands

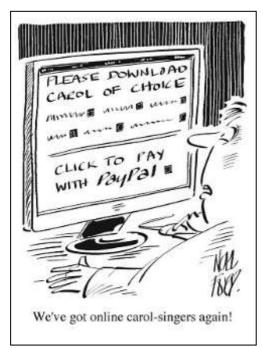


Sudoku - Easy

Sudoku - Medium

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

	5					3	7	
			2	7	6			
7					1			
2		3		1				
		7				6		
				3		4		5
			1					5 9
			5	9	4			
	6	2					1	





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 / guardians wishing to stay during the rehearsal time.

For more information or to sign up for the Song Squad Contact Chris Denton 07817 386070



Usually last Sunday in every month, but Next services — Christingle — 7th December

& 25th January '26

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:
30th January '26



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 '25



Puzzle Solutions

Sudoku — Easy

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

Sudoku — Medium

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

Wordsearch



Deadline for February '26 edition; Monday 12th January. To contribute letters, articles, etc. please contact connections.ed24@gmail.com or 07866 033263

INFORMATION POINT — ALL ARE WELCOME

There are a number of groups working in the church. All are welcome if you fancy contacting the group and being part of what they do.

Keith Robson reminds us that the Happy Bodgers are operating once more for help with odd jobs. Keith's contact number is (07866) 325843

AFTER THE CARDS AND VISITORS

Bereavement is a very difficult time for the spouse/partner left behind.

Starting again on your own is even more difficult.

Carrie and friends would like to help you with the next step.

Our informal meetings are on the first Wednesday of every month at the Morro Lounge, Richmond Market Place starting at 1.30 p.m.

Please phone Carrie Stephenson (01748) 850103 if you would welcome any more information. The approach is very informal and relaxed TELEPHONE SUPPORT IS ALSO AVAILABLE.

Do please get in touch.

PASTORAL CARE — A CONTINUING SERVICE

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.

We are refreshing the **Prayer Circle**, 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. Whatever you wish to share, in confidence, we will support you in prayer.

If you would like prayer (or to be a pray-er), please contact **Anna** via boyceadl11@ gmail.com



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?

You may be eligible for a small grant towards:

Educational courses
Necessary medical equipment
Household appliances
and many other expenses.

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

KNIT & NATTER

A new name — but still a group of people who love to knit, sew, craft and chat.

Every Friday 9.30am to 11.30 am.

We meet in the Cafe at

Greyfriars, Queen's Road Refreshments available

Everyone is welcome

Contact Sharon McCormack

07791 426659

The 'Welcome Hub' has now been running successfully for three years.

If you would like to learn more about joining the volunteering team, please contact:

Dr John Ridley,

Welcome Hub Coordinator on (01748 818653 or

JohnRidley7449@aol.com).



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Join us at Richmondshire Museum to explore local heritage, learn about local charcters and stories of those who walked the streets before us.

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RICHMOND TOWN HALL

Tuesdays, 9.45 - 10.45 am

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 - · improve your flexibility
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Suitable for all fitness levels

Beginners welcome

For more information, contact: Val Worley Dru Yoga teacher Tel: 07791 776438

Email: corevalueyoga@yahoo.co.uk





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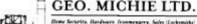
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