

Who's who in the Parish Church . . .

VICAR:	Richard Worssam 01959 523185
READERS:	Dawn Hallam 01959 526865
	Bill Lattimer 01959 522058
	Margaret Lidbetter 01959 524831
	Mags Southgate 01959 524720
READER EMERITUS:	Peter Downing 01959 522327
PASTORAL ASSISTANTS:	Susan Reid 01959 523234
	Margaret Lidbetter 01959 524831
	Donna Worssam 01959 523185
HONORARY MINISTER:	Chris Reed 01959 523439
CHURCHWARDENS	Margaret Lidbetter 01959 524831
	Russell Edwards 07933 352044

Organist and Choirmaster: Kevin Grafton 01732 452117

Sacristan: Tony Grogan 01959 523649

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Vice Chairman: Margaret Lidbetter

Hon Treasurer: Janet Hunt 01959 523820

Freewill Offering Sec: Mervyn Harris 01959 522813

Hon Secretary: Joan Beacom 01959 524304

PARISH OFFICE

Monday to Friday 10.00am-12.00pm:

Susan Reid,

Clive Southgate

01959 523185

Email: st.bartholomews@otford.net

CHURCH HALL

Manager and Booking Sec: Robert Hunt 01959 523820

MAGAZINE

Editorial team: 01959 523185 Vicki Howie,

Christeen Malan, Clive Southgate, Richard Worssam

Advertisements: Deborah Vigis 01959 523331

st.bartholomews@otford.net

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

'First Steps' (for parents and pre-schoolchildren)

Contact: Najen Harris 01959 522813

SUNDAY CLUB (Sundays at 10.00am)

Infants (3-7s)

Juniors (8-11s)

Seniors (12-14)

For all groups contact Donna Worssam 01959 523185

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP

Contact: Dawn Hallam 01959 526865

OUTREACH

Chairman of Mission Links:

Andrew Hill 01732 469538

BELLRINGERS

The Tower Captain: Bobbie Fairclough 01959 522696

Secretary: Janet Whitehead 01959 524088 Practice

night: Thursday 7.45-9.15pm

CHOIR

Choirmaster: Kevin Grafton 01732 452117 Practice

night: Friday 8.00-9.30pm New members always

welcome

CHURCH COUNCIL The Vicar and the Churchwardens Margaret Lidbetter* and Russell Edwards, Samantha Barnett, Joan Beacom, Cindy Davies, Dawn Hallam*, Andrew Hill, Mark Holmes, Vicki Howie, Janet Hunt*, Mike Jones, Bill Lattimer, Nick Page, Derek Shilling#, Mags Southgate, Anne Stevens, Mark Tierney

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St Bartholomew's Church, Otford Parish News



December 2016 www.stbartholomews.co.uk

50p

SERVICES AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

December	8.00am	10.00am	4.00pm	6.30pm
4th Dec	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Christingle	-
11th Dec	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	-	Choir Carol Concert 7.30pm
18th Dec	Holy Communion	Nativity and YPF Presentation	-	Nine Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve 24th Dec	-	-	Crib Service	Midnight Communion 11.30pm
Christmas Day 25th Dec	-	All Together Christmas Communion	-	-
New Year's Day 1st Jan	-	New Year's Day Holy Communion	-	-

SUNDAY CLUB (FOR AGES 0-14) CRÈCHE: 0-2 YEARS INFANT: 3-7 JUNIOR: 8-11 SENIOR: 12-14

These groups meet in the Church Centre during the 10.00 am service, except on the first Sunday when they meet in Church for All Together Worship.

First Steps for toddlers and their carers meets on alternate Wednesdays during term time. For more details please contact Najen Harris, 01959 522813.

EPIC (for school year 5-7) meets on the 2nd Saturday in the month, 6-8pm in the Church Centre.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP meet every Sunday evening during term time in the Church Centre, 6.30 - 8.00 pm.

HOLY COMMUNION Every Wednesday 10.00 am (Book of Common Prayer)

If you would like to book a baptism or wedding, please contact the Church Office 01959 523185.

Vicar's off duty day: Monday

Cover photo by Richard Worssam. Magazine printed by Silver Pines Services

Magazine No. 12 Volume 86



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VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

What do Christmas and anatomy have in common? This may seem an odd question, but read on to find a revealing link!

In terms of anatomy, I want to focus on ligaments. These are short bands of tough and flexible fibrous tissue which bind our bones together (as opposed to tendons which connect muscles to bones). It doesn't take expert medical knowledge to know the vital role that ligaments play.



If you have ever torn or damaged a ligament, you will know the discomfort this can cause and its debilitating effects. It can happen through a sports injury, or even something as simple as twisting an ankle. In such a case, even walking can be painful and difficult.

If we didn't have ligaments then the bones of our skeletons wouldn't hold together and we simply couldn't function. So ligaments are a very important part of our anatomy.

Where, then, is the link with Christmas? The answer to this question lies in the root meaning of the word "religion" which comes from the Latin word "ligare", meaning to join, link or bind. So religion and ligament actually share the same root. I find this connection intriguing.

The role of ligaments is to bind our bones together. So what does religion bind together? I would suggest that religion, at its best, binds God and humanity together. The supreme

example of this is to be found in the Christmas message of the birth of Jesus. In him, divinity and humanity are perfectly bound together.

Just as ligaments are vital to our physical health, so I would argue that religion is vital to our overall well-being. The Christian story tells how our links with God have been damaged. This has seriously affected our ability to flourish as individuals and as communities. Instead of walking or running we are reduced to hobbling along.

However, in Jesus our links with God are restored to health and strength. Our spiritual ligaments are healed and our lives are once more bound together with the life of God.

So at this time of year I wish you a happy and healthy Christmas in its fullest religious sense!

Your friend and Vicar,

Richard



DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2016

Morning Prayer will be said in Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week at 9.00 am and on Fridays in the Cranmer Room at 9.00 am

- 3 9.00 am Christingle-making (in the Church Centre)
- 4 **The Second Sunday in Advent**
 8.00 am Holy Communion
 10.00 am Morning Worship and the baptism of Georgia Hoch
 4.00 pm Christingle
- 5 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 6 8.00 pm Fabric Committee (Church Centre)
- 7 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards
- 8 **Magazine material for the January edition by today, please, to the Church Office, st.bartholomews@otford.net**
 11.00 am Funeral of Celia Down (in Church)
- 9 2.15 pm Magazine Editorial Team meeting (Vicarage)
 7.00 pm Tree of Light service (in Church then on the Village Green)
- 10 6.00 pm EPIC Christmas Party (Church Centre)
- 11 **The Third Sunday in Advent**
 8.00 am Holy Communion
 10.00 am Holy Communion
 7.30 pm Choir Christmas Carol Concert
- 12 7.45 pm Christmas Get-together (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 13 2.00 pm Otford Primary School Carol Service (Years 3 & 4) in Church
 7.45 pm Finance and Standing Committee (Church Centre)
 8.00 pm Homegroup (Park Farm House)
- 14 9.30 am 'First Steps' Christmas Service (Otford Free Church, Pilgrims Way West)
 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) (Rev. Chris Johnson)
 6.30 pm Otford Primary School Carol Service (Years 5 & 6) in Church
- 15 6.30 pm Russell House School Carol Service (in Church)
- 18 **The Fourth Sunday in Advent**
 8.00 am Holy Communion
 10.00 am Sunday Club Nativity Play and YPF Christmas Presentation
 6.30 pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by candlelight
 Followed by refreshments in the Church Centre

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|------|----------------------|--|
| 19 | 7.45 pm | Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue) |
| 21 | 10.00 am | Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards |
|
 | | |
| 24 | Christmas Eve | |
| | 4.00 pm | Crib Service |
| | 11.10 pm | Carols followed by |
| | 11.30 pm | Midnight Choral Christmas Communion |
|
 | | |
| 25 | Christmas Day | |
| | 10.00 am | All Together Christmas Communion |

1st January: The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
10.00 am **New Year's Day Holy Communion service**



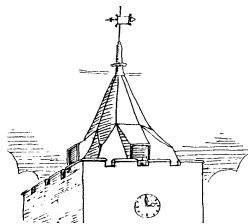
Registers



FUNERAL (Our Sympathy)

20th October	George Batson (aged 96)
6th November	Jack Walter James Berger (aged 21)

FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH



ADVENT TRAVELLERS

During Advent we are running the Advent Travellers scheme, whereby different families play host to the crib figures of Mary and Joseph for one night as they travel around the village before returning to church on Christmas Eve.



CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

This popular service will be held at **4.00 pm on Sunday, 4th December**. Bring your friends, too!

TREE OF LIGHT SERVICE

This will be held on **Friday, 9th December**, starting in St. Bartholomew's Church at **7.00 pm** followed by the switching on of the lights on the tree on The Green. All are welcome and labels to remember those who have died may be obtained from the Parish Office in the High Street, or from the Hospice in the Weald. Donations will support the work of the Hospice.



CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Church Choir will present our annual Christmas Concert in church on **Sunday, 11th December at 7.30 pm**.

There will be a mixture of carols old and new, from England and many other countries, and plenty of carols for you to join in. Refreshments, in the form of wine or fruit juice and mince pies, will be available as always, and our entry price remains at a ridiculously low £5 (children free). Come and get into the Christmas mood with us!

SCHOOL CAROL SERVICES

We look forward to welcoming local schools to church for their carol services: Otford Primary School on Tuesday and Wednesday, 13th & 14th December, and Russell House School on Thursday, 15th December.

YPF CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION AND SUNDAY CLUB NATIVITY PLAY

This will be on **Sunday, 18th December at the 10.00 am service**. The Young People's Fellowship will be contributing to a Christmas presentation and the Sunday Club will be performing a traditional nativity play.

SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

This popular choral service will be held on **Sunday 18th December at 6.30 pm** in Church, followed by refreshments in the Church Centre.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE DATES.

Do make sure you have these dates and times in your diaries!

Christmas Eve: Crib Service, 4.00 pm

Midnight Communion 11.30 pm
(with carols from 11.10 pm)

Christmas Day: All Together Christmas Communion **10.00 am**

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GREECE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL

23rd - 31st October 2017

Together with Revd. Andrew Procter, the Vicar will be leading a nine-day pilgrimage to Greece next October half-term, visiting sites closely connected with the ministry of St. Paul and the growth of the early Church as recorded in his letters and the Book of Acts, including Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth. Information sheets and booking forms are available at the back of church.

REDECORATION AND RE-ORDERING UPDATE

Since the publication of the last magazine there have been further significant developments.

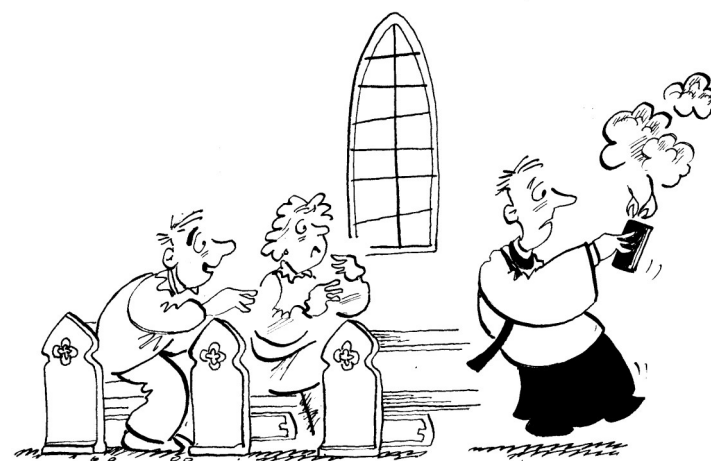
- * At their November meeting, the Diocesan Advisory Committee approved the design for the scheme and issued a supportive "Notification of Advice".
- * National bodies such as Historic England have also indicated their support, and this has been taken into account by the DAC.

* The Fabric Committee and the PCC considered the tenders received from the five firms that were approached and selected the top two. These two firms, Bakers and Celltarga, were interviewed by a small team from the parish with our Architect and asked to supply final figures by 25th November.

* At its meeting on 16th November the PCC looked at the scheme from three key perspectives (the core Statement of Needs, the responses given by the building firms, and the financing of the project) and passed a resolution to apply for a Faculty to allow the works to go ahead.

* Further information is available in a December update sheet at the back of church. There will be more news to share next month.

Thank you for your continuing support.



...relax Miss Pugh... he's not introducing incense - he's just got a new phone with a faulty battery!



DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

Telephone: 01732 227000 www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Cllr.Lowe@sevenoaks.gov.uk <http://michellelowe.yourcldr.com>

On Monday 24th October Sevenoaks District Council won the 'Dementia Friendly Organisation' category at the Dementia Friendly Kent Awards organised by Kent County Council. The award recognises SDC as one of the leading authorities across Kent to support and lead on a whole host of dementia friendly projects.

It is an award that I am particularly proud of as we try to make the District accessible so that people, with a variety of illnesses or conditions, can live in their own homes for as long as possible. This is particularly important for people living with dementia as moving them from their familiar surroundings can be very damaging for them and make the dementia worse.

The things that we have put in place to help make the District more dementia-friendly include training some of our taxi drivers to be dementia-friends. Many people living with dementia often take taxi visits to hospital and other appointments. Knowing that their driver understands their condition is hugely comforting both to the person living with dementia and their friends and family.

We have trained all our front-line staff to be dementia-friends including our reception staff and refuse collectors as we see them very much as our eyes and ears on the ground. They can often pick up very quickly if someone is behaving erratically with their rubbish and that could be an early sign of dementia. Many other staff and councillors, including me, are also trained dementia-friends.

We also have in place the Shop Safe Stay Safe scheme - an ID scheme that works with local

shops and businesses to help older and vulnerable people, including those living with dementia, should they become lost or confused while out and about. When an older or vulnerable person signs up for the scheme they provide the contact details of their next of kin who can be contacted if there is a problem.

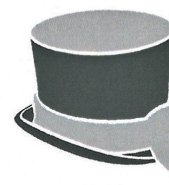
They are given a unique membership number (printed on a key ring) and, if they need help, they can go into any shop, café or restaurant displaying the 'Shop Safe Stay Safe' sticker and get assistance. Please contact SDC on 01732 227000 or email: community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk if you would like to sign up to the scheme either as a shop or business or as someone who would gain peace of mind by being a member of it.

We have also made minor but effective changes to our reception area to make it more dementia-friendly. We have improved the lighting, layout and signage to make it easier for people living with dementia and who may have sight problems. Other dementia-friendly changes will occur as part of our rolling programme of renovations.

As ever please contact me if you have any issues or concerns and I will be happy to help.

With best wishes,

Michelle



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LYRICS AND LIVES: HYMN WRITERS ACROSS THE CENTURIES

Mrs C F Alexander

No year can go by without the singing of at least two of Cecil Frances Alexander's hymns, some of the best known and loved in the English language. The first hymn book I ever owned, The Little Picture Hymn Book, is a collection of thirty six hymns with only two by Charles Wesley but six by Mrs Alexander. I expect many of you remember it.

Born in Dublin into a military family in 1818, she married Dr William Alexander who became Bishop of Derry and later Archbishop of Armagh. They had four children. Cecil was thus well placed to follow her joint interest of charitable work and hymn writing.

Her first poetry was composed in childhood when she was influenced by the then Dean of Chichester. Hymns soon followed, written clearly and simply but with wonderful imagery. She was inspired by the areas and circumstances in which she lived, thus 'There is a green hill', written when sitting up with her sick daughter, was inspired by a hillside outside Derry, and 'All things bright and beautiful' by the Somerset countryside around Minehead. She was also influenced by the Oxford Movement, in particular John Keble, who edited one of her anthologies.

Although she and her husband and family lived in London for a while, she was very much attached to Ireland where her charitable works were concerned. She founded the Derry and Raphoe Diocesan Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Straban and the profits from her books went to that charity school. She was involved with the Derry Home for Fallen Women and worked to develop a district nurse service, tirelessly visiting the sick herself.

Perhaps it was this strong feeling for her homeland that brought about her translation of the wonderful St Patrick's Breastplate from the Gaelic which uses the repetitive Celtic style of verse to convey its passion.

Her first collection of hymns was published in 1848 and was for little children. She published several other collections and contributed to Hymns Ancient and Modern. However her best known and most sung hymn is the one that gives us an insight into the heart of Cecil, someone who cared for the helpless and weak. Its words immediately remind us of candles and carol services and transport us to the heart of Christmas, 'Once in Royal David's City'.

Mrs Alexander died in 1895. She is remembered not just for her hymns but for her self-effacing, modest and humble disposition, especially greatly beloved by the poor who had benefitted from her work and kindness.

Gillian Shilling



FAITH IN THE FAMILY...

December

Giving and receiving

Pause for thought: Take time to read the Bible story on page 14. I wonder how each of us is feeling about Christmas this year? Our answers may depend upon the number of times we have experienced it, the demands placed upon us, and our present circumstances. Children may be excited and impatient for the big day to arrive – it is often said that Christmas is a time for children. But the gift of Christmas is for everyone, young and old – and the gift is Jesus! God sent us his own son to bring us back into a closer relationship with our Father. Jesus eventually gave his life for us on the cross and made us a pathway to heaven – something really special that the characters in the nativity story could not know.

Perhaps if we are to fully engage with Christmas, we need to think what we usually do with a wonderful gift: we receive it, unwrap it, say 'thank you' for it, enjoy and share it. How can we do this with the gift of Jesus? Perhaps the following family activities can help us to explore this idea and catch once more the wonder and joy experienced by children.

We shall have to wait and see: Read the Bible story on page 14 together. Wonder about the story, as follows:



I wonder who the young couple was who arrived in Bethlehem for the census. How do you think each of them felt when they couldn't find anywhere to stay?

I wonder what the heavenly being looked like to the shepherds on the hillside. How do you think the shepherds felt?

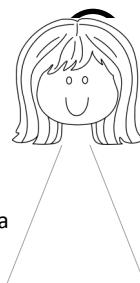
I wonder who the important people were in the grand procession. Do you remember how they found the baby Jesus?

I wonder who or what was the most precious gift in this story?

Can you think of five things that we do with a wonderful gift?

Joyful Mary: Mary was overjoyed to **receive** the gift of Jesus into her life and her home.

Make some "Joyful Mary" gift tags by cutting triangle shapes (with rounded tops) from blue card. Glue on round white circles with smiling faces drawn on them, decorate with some glitter and thread some ribbon through a punched hole for attaching to a present.



Chat about how we can receive the gift of Jesus by being willing to do things that would please him (including welcoming visitors into our homes at Christmas).

While shepherds watched their flocks by night:

The watchful shepherds said "thank you" to God by praising him for all the things they had seen and heard on the hillside and in the stable.

Why not go to a Carol service or join with friends to do some carol singing? Chat about how we thank God for the gift of Jesus when we sing carols and really think about the words we are singing.



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Look up the words to this famous carol!

Star of wonder: The Wise Men or Kings wondered about the new star they saw in the sky and wanted to 'unwrap' its meaning.

Make some star-shaped biscuits to hang on a tree or to give as a present wrapped in tissue and packed in a festive tin. Make a hole with a skewer half way through baking, then dust with icing sugar or edible glitter and add some ribbon afterwards.



Chat about how we unwrap the gift of Jesus whenever we wonder about him and make an effort to find out more about him – for instance, by reading Bible stories or listening to a talk about him at church. However well we know the Christmas story, we can gain new insights and see it from a new angle each year.

Jesus, God's gift to us: We have our own part to play in the Christmas story as we **share** the good news of Jesus' birth with others.

Make a "Jesus is born" Christmas card by folding white card in half and gluing a slightly smaller rectangle of blue paper to the front. Glue short strips of yellow raffia in a V shape for the hay in the manger. Glue a white circle

with a smiling/sleeping face at the top of the raffia to look as if baby Jesus is lying in the hay. Stick some silver stars above his head. Write "Jesus is born" or "God with us" inside the card and send it to a relative or friend.

Chat about how we share the gift of Jesus by telling others about him and explaining that he is God's gift offered to each and every one of us. We can tell friends about a Christmas activity at church and invite them to come along.

Christmas prayer: We **enjoy** the gift of our friendship with Jesus whenever we spend time getting to know him by talking to him in prayer at bedtime – or at any time.

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Please help me to receive him joyfully into my heart this Christmas. Help me to get to know him better each day and to share the Good News of his birth with others.

Amen

Vicki Howie

What can I give him? by Christina Rossetti



What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb,

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part.

Yet what can I give him?

Give my heart.



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

...Dawn and Russell, who went fire walking to raise money for the charity, Marie Curie

On a still October evening families and friends of those about to fire walk arrived at The Chaser Inn in Shipbourne to be greeted by the sight of an extensive bed of burning wood. Meanwhile, somewhere inside, Dawn Hallam (Reader) and Russell Edwards (Churchwarden), along with thirty five others, were listening to the conclusion of a motivational talk that had lasted for the best part of two hours. 'Mind over matter' was an important element of the talk ... although nothing could detract from the fact that they were about to walk barefoot over burning embers. Reassurance supposedly lay in knowing that your feet would not be in contact with the glowing wood for long and that, should you fall, you would get up quickly! It was also pointed out that you were less likely to be clumsy when walking over burning wood...

Once the participants were ready to begin, the wood was raked so that the high red flames died back, although there were still flames licking up at the edges of the pit and occasionally between the glowing embers - all vividly visible in the dark evening. The heat coming off the wood was also evident to all. The fund raisers lined up and the organiser went first. When it came to her turn, Dawn tells me that she did it 'nonchalantly' but felt a big burst of adrenalin at the end. Russell was a 'fast walker' and suffered a small burn between his toes.

I asked Dawn why the glowing wood does not burn the skin instantly and she explained that it is because whilst, wood is a good radiator of

heat, it is not a good conductor, but it is also because your feet are in contact with the surface for so little time.

I was also curious to know what had brought about their involvement in such an unusual activity. Dawn told me it began when she and Russell went out for supper with some friends from the parish pilgrimage to Turkey. One of those friends is the Marie Curie fundraiser for this area and she suggested the challenge which seemed like a good idea at the time. Although Dawn and Russell may have had second thoughts as the event approached, the fact that it was for such a worthy cause kept them both motivated.

So far all those who took part have raised over £11,000. Dawn and Russell's Just Giving page is still open should you wish to donate:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sevenoaks-Fundraising-Group>

Dawn tells me that she is now ready for a new adventure – maybe parachuting...

Christeen Malan



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...Maureen and Betty, who swam the Serpentine

The August edition of the Parish Newsletter dropped into our letterbox and an article from the Hospices of Hope caught my eye. "We are pleased to be able to offer two more places for Swim Serpentine on September 24th. You will need to be able to swim one mile comfortably!" This was the start of our great adventure.

Meeting Amy at the hospice office I said that I was interested and she submitted my name immediately as the closing date for swimmers was imminent. On arriving home, the enormity of my action dawned on me and I realized that swimming by myself would not be much fun and that it would be preferable to have company. Whom should I ask? Betty, of course, who had been a PE teacher and kept herself fit with regular exercise classes.

I asked Betty if she was free on that date and if she would join me on this venture. The next day she told me that her husband approved and that she would join me. I have to say that my husband was not so enthusiastic and worried about this open water swim of one mile!!

We started training immediately and spent as much time as we could at the pool. We completed several one mile swims which gave us great encouragement.

Our friends and family were very generous in supporting us as we had had to agree to raise a

minimum of £250 each.

September 24th dawned and Betty, Chris, Patrick and I nervously set off for London from Otford Station in sunshine. We arrived at Hyde Park and had time for coffee and Coke caught up in the buzz of the day.

Four and a half thousand were to swim during the day and the atmosphere was electric.

We were to swim in "waves" of three hundred and decided to go in at the back of our group. The "dunk area" was freezing and took our breath away before we started our swim. The Pink Wave in our pink hats disappeared into the distance and Betty had also gone ahead. Before I knew it, I heard a voice saying "I'm going to go on your journey with you" and there was a lovely man in a kayak. He was my Guardian Angel and accompanied me throughout the course. Betty meanwhile had completed the swim and was anxiously watching for me. Thankfully the helpers pulled me up the ramp to be greeted by my relieved family who had followed me round the course. Betty and I relaxed in a hot tub and after changing, collected our very impressive medals.

This was the culmination of the most adventurous and challenging day of our lives raising over £1800 for the Hospice. Not a bad effort for us, born in 1938 and 1944!

Betty Bishop and Maureen Reynolds



ANCIENT WISDOM - MODERN LIVES

The Christmas story: We shall have to wait and see

"You've only just moved in, so maybe you haven't heard tell of what happened here a few, well, months ago now. It was the time of the Great Census. Everyone had to go to the place where they were born so as to be counted. As you can imagine, the place was packed. They came from up and down the country, high and low, from politicians and synagogue leaders to ordinary folk like you or me.

One young couple had come from the North and it happened that the lady gave birth right here in Bethlehem, and because of the overcrowding they couldn't find a place to stay. So where do you think the baby was born? In the animal quarters behind the Inn! But that's not the amazing part. A group of our shepherds came hurrying down from the hillside. They said they had seen a heavenly being who told them to go and worship a young child who had just been born! Bless me if they didn't go and do just that. Went in and knelt before the child in the manger, they did. Would you credit it? If anyone had told them the day before that they were going to do this, they would have laughed.

Now that wasn't the end of it. Oh no. Oh deary me, no. When the Census was over and things had got back to normal, a grand procession was seen coming up the main street. You could tell they were important. Even royalty, maybe. They rode on beautiful animals, they wore the finest clothes and they had servants. They were from out East, Persia or somewhere, so it was said. Then what do you think? They went to find the baby and did just what the shepherds had done! They bowed down before the child! They

brought gifts. Expensive gifts. Gifts the like of which no one here could afford.

Well, they have long gone, back East I suppose.

The family? Gone down to Egypt, the word was. The child, you say? Jesus, I think, was the name they gave him.

Oh I nearly forgot. There was another strange thing even before all this. A rumour went around that someone heard the child's parents talking to each other. It was something about an angel appearing to the mother even before she was expecting. The message was that the child would be something special.

So there it is. What do you make of it? What will become of this child?

We shall just have to wait and see.

Won't we?"

Rev'd Chris Reed



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THE NIGHT SKY IN OTFORD DECEMBER 2016



As dusk falls in early December, look just a little to the west of due south and see if you can spot the brilliant planet Venus low down in the evening twilight. On the third of the month, a slim crescent

Moon will be a few degrees above it. As the month progresses, Venus will become higher in the sky and therefore much easier to find due to the planet, in its orbit, apparently moving away from the Sun. Of course, the further that it appears to be from the Sun, the easier it is to locate as it will be seen in a dark sky with the Sun having set. Mercury, which is also classed as an evening object this month, lies much closer to the Sun and can be a difficult object to find, even when conditions are ideal. **Please remember that you must never scan the skies for the inner planets before the Sun has set. You are risking your eyesight if you accidentally look at the Sun even briefly.**

At one time it was suggested that Venus may have been the celestial object that was later to become known as the "Star of Bethlehem". Having studied and lectured on this subject for some years, I can say it is unlikely in the extreme as Venus had been recognised as a planet (initially known as a "wandering star") since at least 1700 BC. As the late Sir Patrick Moore once said "If the wise men were fooled by Venus, they weren't very wise!"

Other suggestions have been made, but one difficulty is that evidence is especially thin on the ground. There are no contemporaneous accounts because those that we do have are all (according to theological scholars) written

some decades after the event and even then not by people who themselves witnessed it. Other candidates that have been put forward are a comet, meteors, planetary conjunctions and a supernova.

Whatever it was, it had to be something far out of the ordinary. Bright comets appear on average every 25 years which, if we agreed one of them was the culprit, would have sent the Magi to Jerusalem four times each century. Meteors are surely far too transient, although they were the object of choice for Patrick Moore. Planetary conjunctions were certainly important in foretelling the future but the movements of planets had been studied for centuries. No, none of these fits the bill like a supernova does! These occur at the end of the life of a giant star when it jettisons all its material into space in what can be an extremely bright event.

It had to be an iconic event for the Magi to prepare a trek of possibly months from Babylonia, which is where it is believed they came from, to Jerusalem. The "Star of Bethlehem" is a complex mystery and one that may never be solved. It is however ironic that a supernova has just been reported in the constellation of Sagittarius in late October.

Brian Mills FRAS



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MISSION MATTERS: THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

The Children's Society has helped change children's stories for over a century

It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect. Too often their problems are ignored and their voices unheard. The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local projects, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable, and have nowhere left to turn.

The Society also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future.

Supporters around the country, including 7600 churches, fund services and join campaigns to show children and young people that the Society is on their side.

'When children face a crisis we are with them every step of the way.'

Jenny's story

Jenny was physically and emotionally abused by her step mum for over five years – she was regularly physically beaten, had cigarettes thrown in her face and bleach flung in her eyes. Eventually Jenny was put under a Child Protection Plan, and she was referred to The Children's Society because she was feeling very angry, misusing drink and drugs and arguing with her dad and new step mum. Our staff supported Jenny to reduce her drug taking and drinking. She also saw a counsellor who helped her cope with her emotions. The Children's Society helped Jenny find emergency accommodation, and she is now at college studying to be a hairdresser.

What Jenny thinks now:

'My friends see a difference in me since I started coming to The Children's Society and I know my dad's proud of me. I'm not the same Jenny I was a year ago.'

Sophie's story

Just after her 16th birthday and with difficulties at home, Sophie started going missing and rarely went to school. She met a gang who got her to steal for them, and after police found Sophie with a man they were arresting on suspicion of sexually assaulting women, she was referred to The Children's Society. Sophie worked with a project worker who helped her to understand the risks and dangers of going missing. Soon Sophie started going back to school and achieved good grades in her GCSEs. She is now attending sixth-form college and has stopped going missing from home. Sophie's project worker remains in contact with her in case she ever needs further support.

Sophie's view:

'I was extremely lucky to find The Children's Society at the time I did. I hate to think of it, but I'd be dead. I was just on the brink of becoming someone who no one could have saved me from.'

You can help support the work of the Children's Society. St Bartholomew's Church hold a Christingle service before Christmas. Prior to this families can collect spare change in a Christingle Children's Society candle and bring their collection to the service. Collectively with churches around the country this helps fund many local and national projects. Not all young people will be able to enjoy Christmas. Help the Children's Society to change the lives of these young people for a brighter future.

More information : www.childrenssociety.org.uk

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IN MEMORIAM



GEORGE BATSON, 1919-2016

George was born above Batson's Florists in Woolwich on 11th December 1919. He was the youngest of four brothers. Many was the time he would recount having to deliver wreaths, by bus, balancing one on each hand and the bus conductor taking the penny fare from his mouth! He would then have to go onto school.

As a boy he boxed in the London Schoolboy Championships and he went on to box for the Army and the Stock Exchange in the Flyweight division.

He left school at fourteen and went to work as an office boy for Blackwell & Co., a stockjobbers firm on the London Stock Exchange. He worked there until the outbreak of the war.

George went into the Army as a Physical Training Instructor in the Royal Leicestershire Regiment which was stationed at Crownhill in Plymouth. Here, in May 1940, he met the love of his life, Betty, on the putting green. George was then posted to Scotland, but he and Betty stayed in touch and they made plans to get married. Just before the wedding date, George was posted to Norwich, so in 1941, just 8 months after they had met, they got married in a church in Norwich. In the last two years of the war, George was posted to Wrotham.

George and Betty had a long and happy marriage which lasted for sixty-four years until Betty died in 2005.

After the war George returned to Blackwells where he continued to progress, finally becoming a full partner in the late 1950s. During this time George and Betty had 4 daughters. The family grew to include 8 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

In 1960 the family moved from Eltham to Otford, to the house known as Summerhayes in Bubblestone Road. Ten years later, in 1970, the family moved to Chancewood in Hillydeal Road

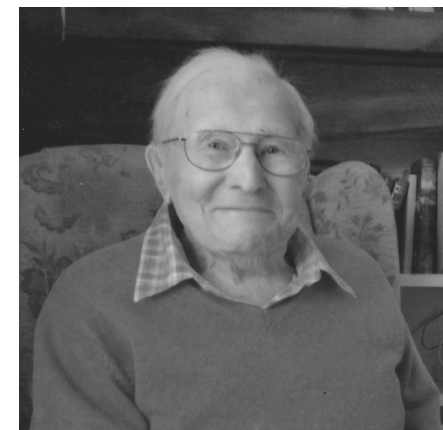
where George lived for the rest of his life. His gardens both at Summerhayes and Chancewood were his pride and joy and both he and Betty spent many happy hours gardening.

George quickly became involved in Church and village life. He was Churchwarden for many years when Christopher Bunch was the Vicar. George was very involved in the churchyard working party and Church maintenance in general. Imagine George painting high up on ladders above the chancel - no such thing as health and safety then!

George was always active in sport and he played for the Otford Cricket team and latterly for the Otford Casuals until his early sixties.

Life became more troubled after Betty's death, which George never really got over. His health started to deteriorate in the last six years, particularly with regard to his eyesight and hearing. This made life difficult for him but he continued to be involved in the life of St. Bart's and received much help and support at home.

We are very thankful for George's contribution to the life of the church and the village, and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.



OUT AND ABOUT...



GUIDE CHRISTMAS POST

BOX The Guide Christmas Post Box will be in Otford Library between Tuesday

29th November and Tuesday 20th December inclusive during opening hours. A second Box will also be available in the Parish Council Office on Monday to Friday between the same dates. All cards will be delivered by Brownies and Guides before Christmas in Otford village.

Stamps will be **25p** per card and all money will go to the girls' chosen charities, "Kent Friendz" supporting children and adults with learning disabilities, and "Smokey Paws" dogs and cats oxygen masks for Sevenoaks Firemen.

This will be the 34th year that Otford Guides have been delivering Christmas cards in the village and we would like our Christmas Post Service for the village to continue and be really successful, so please give generously and support us by posting early.



LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

A programme of Christmas music and familiar carols by The Kemsing Singers, directed by Sara Kemsley and accompanied by Peter Young, in aid of The Orpheus Centre on 16th/17th December at 7.30pm. The concert is at St Edith's Hall, Kemsing. Featured in the programme is the concert harpist Keziah Thomas. Tickets £8 from 01959 523752



OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL'S PTFA CHRISTMAS BAZAAR will take place on Saturday 3rd December 2016 from 12pm to 3pm.

There will be lots of fun things to enjoy including a Christmas market, Christmas ponies, Father Christmas, face painting, silent auction, a raffle and lots of fun games for the children to play.



At our December meeting we will welcome Paul Harris who will talk about The History of Pantomime.

Our meeting is on the 8th of December in the Club Room of the Otford Memorial Hall. Please note, we will meet at 7pm for 7.30pm. for this meeting.

Visitors are very welcome to join us, please contact our President on 01959 524831 if you would like any more information.



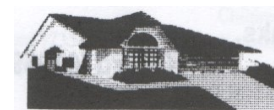
The Otford/Neufchatel - Hardelot Twinning Association AGM will be held on Monday 16 January 2017

at 7.30pm at the Woodman, Otford.

Do join us and share your ideas for future plans with us.

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Meetings: Mondays 6.30 - 8.00 p.m. or Thursdays 6.45 - 8.15 p.m.

Scouts (Age 10½ - 14) Meetings: Fridays 8.00 - 9.30 p.m.

All enquiries and hall bookings to Garry Norris 01732 455854 or gjnorris@btinternet.com

OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our Greek Day

Since returning to school in September we have been learning all about ancient Greece. We called the topic 'Greece is the word'. Fortunately in October we had a Greek day and some mums came in to help. In the morning we were split into two groups, and I was in the one that did food tasting. We tried pitta with houmous and taramasalata, we also tried Greek yoghurt with honey, which was delicious. Then we tried some fruit such as watermelon and grapes. Meanwhile the other group were making a

Greek salad with feta cheese, cherry tomatoes, some red onion, olives, celery, a drizzle of olive oil and a squeeze of lemon over the top. My favourite part of the morning was trying all the Greek food.

In the afternoon we decorated a Greek pot we had already made out of clay. We painted the pots in a terracotta colour and I decorated mine with an ancient Greek pattern! At the end of the day one of the mums took a photo of us with our finished vases. I have found the whole topic fun and have learnt loads.

By Abi M, Year 5, Otford Primary

RUSSELL HOUSE SCHOOL

Schools join together to perform Requiem at Otford Church

Russell House Chamber Choir joined with the senior choir and orchestra from Kent College Pembury in a stunning concert held at St Bartholomew's Church in October.

The concert, which was the first of such collaborations between the schools, was more remarkable since the performers from Russell House were part of a new Chamber Choir, formed just over a month before. Aged between 8 and 11 years, the children joined with the senior choir from Kent College to perform Fauré's *Requiem*, accompanied by Kent College's Senior orchestra.

The concert started with the serenely beautiful *Panis Angelicus* by César Franck, followed by *The Rhythm of Life* from the 1966 musical *Sweet Charity*, ably demonstrating the

new Chamber Choir's confidence in handling complex harmonies. These were followed by performances from Russell House instrumentalists, before Kent College pupils provided excerpts from their upcoming opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The evening ended with the Requiem when the two choirs came together to bring depth and sensitivity to the beautiful music. It was an awe-inspiring concert.



BEACOM FAMILY FAVOURITES

Venison and Chestnut Casserole

2 tablespoons redcurrant jelly

Chopped parsley - optional

Enjoy the rich winter flavours of red wine, chestnuts and tender venison in this hearty casserole. Make it a day ahead to improve the flavour and you can also freeze it.

We like it with either creamy mash or rice and fresh vegetables.

Venison nowadays does not have the very strong gamey taste that it used to have.

Serves 6

700g venison - ready diced if you can find it or cut into small pieces

2 teaspoons plain flour seasoned with salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 red onions thinly sliced

300ml red wine

300ml chicken stock (2 oxo cubes or similar with water)

2 bay leaves

Packet or jar whole cooked chestnuts, approx 200g

Cook the onions with 1 tablespoon of oil over a med heat until softened, remove and place in a casserole dish.

Pat the venison dry with kitchen paper and dice if necessary. Toss meat in the seasoned flour and add to the pan with the remaining oil, cook for about 4 mins over a high heat, stirring until the meat is sealed. Remove from pan and add to onions.

Place red wine, stock and bay leaves into pan and heat until almost boiling. Pour hot liquid over onions and meat in casserole and stir gently.

Place casserole with lid in a preheated oven (160 deg fan or reg 5) for one and a half hours or until the meat is tender.

Remove from oven and stir in the chestnuts and redcurrant jelly. Season to taste and return to oven for 5 mins to ensure the jelly has melted.

Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

Enjoy!



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