

St Bartholomew's Church

Otford Parish News

December 2020 & January 2021



SERVICES AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

During Lockdown we are live-streaming a service at 10am on a Sunday and providing a streamed Spiritual Communion (using traditional language) on Wednesdays at 10am. Both of these services may be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/StBartsOtford>

Please see our website (www.stbartholomews.co.uk) and notice sheet for further information regarding our Christmas services as the Covid-19 restrictions for that period become clearer.

Youth Message - We are providing a youth message every week (except the first Sunday in the month) for all our young people. This may be found at (www.stbartholomews.co.uk)

Revd David's day off: Tuesday

A message from the editors – final call for volunteers

Unless one or two more volunteers step forward immediately to help form a new editorial team, we are sorry to say that this will be the last edition of St Bartholomew's Church Parish News at least for the time being.

Please contact the church office if you would like to receive a paper copy of the St Bart's newsletter published online.

As retiring editors we would like to thank all our wonderful contributors over the years, and particularly Clive Southgate for his hard work, patience and technical expertise. We would also like to thank Ros Cooke who so efficiently liaises with the advertisers.

A big THANKYOU to all our readers for your support.

We wish everyone peace and joy this Christmas.

Vicki and Christeen

COVER PHOTO: Otford High Street in the Snow

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VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Cradle, Cross and Crown

I saw a list of the top Christmas songs the other day: The Christmas Song, White Christmas, Winter Wonderland and Jingle Bells. Lovely songs all of them, but not one of them a carol or containing any reference to the Christmas story.

Jesus seems to be given increasingly short shrift at Christmas, in songs, stories, and on TV. It's disturbing that so few people know or understand the heart of the Christmas message: "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21).

If we cram Jesus into the tinselly side of the Christmas story then we miss the true reason for the season. We miss out if we fail to grasp that the true Christmas story commences with a cradle, but it continues to a cross, and it concludes with a crown.

You should not leave Jesus on a cross, because he is a risen Lord; but you should not leave Jesus in a cradle, because he's no longer a baby lying in a manger; He is a King on the throne of the universe.

The Nativity scene is a reminder of what Christmas is supposed to be all about (which is why we have an external crib scene being built up over Advent this year, so everyone can see and enjoy it). In that cradle was the heart of God wrapped in human flesh.

Even over the cradle was the shadow of the cross, sometimes portrayed in dramatic

paintings. God is telling us, "I love you enough to send my only son to earth to live and die for you." Mary and Joseph were told before Jesus was born that He was to be the Saviour of the world.



As we reflect on the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the line of the great King David, and that the wise men came to look for the one born King of the Jews, we are reminded too that even as Jesus was cradled in the manger, realising that a cross lay before Him, He was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

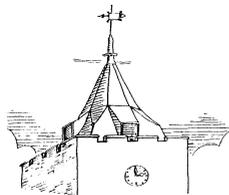
So as we celebrate Christmas, especially at the end of a year which has been so difficult for many, and as we move into another New Year, we must ask ourselves if the full extent of the Christmas story is a reality to us. The cradle, the cross, the crown are all tremendous symbols of our Christian faith.

A "cradle faith" is not enough. Do you also have a "cross faith" accepting Christ as your Saviour and a "crown faith" submitting to Christ's Lordship as the king, the ruler, in your life?

Let us look beyond the joy of the Christmas season to get the whole picture. In the words of the chorus: *You came from Heaven to earth, to show the way. From the earth to the cross my debt to pay. From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, Lord I lift Your name on high.*

Revd David

FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH



CHURCH OPENING FOR PRAYER

The church is open Monday-Friday from 9.00am—12noon for private prayer. Please follow the directions given in the entrance lobby and use the red chairs in the side chapel.

SERVICES FROM ST BART'S

At time of writing we are in lockdown 2. We are live streaming our Sunday service at 10am at <https://www.facebook.com/StBartsOtford> you do not need a Facebook account to watch these services. You can also find the services on the church website at www.stbartholomew.co.uk

On a Wednesday at 10am we offer a service of Spiritual Communion using traditional language. Again, this service can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/StBartsOtford> . This service is followed by Zoom coffee at which you would be most welcome even if you haven't been able to join us at the service

TREE OF LIGHT SERVICE

This will be held on Friday, 11th December at 7pm on The Green. All are welcome and labels to remember those who have died may be obtained from the Parish Council Office in the High Street. Donations will support the work of Hospice in the Weald

CHRISTMAS MARKET

Sadly we are unable to hold any form of Christmas Market this year due to the current restrictions. However, many of the products which you might have bought at the market, including Crafts and Christmas Puddings, will

now be made available through our Christmas Shop, which will be available both online at www.madeinotford.org , and in a folder within the church lobby, from 16th November onwards. We are offering free delivery to anyone within a 5 mile radius of the church.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Many of us this year will be doing more shopping online for Christmas presents.

This being the case, perhaps we could encourage you to have St Bart's as your AmazonSmile nominated charity. If you do this Amazon will give us 0.5% of the net purchase price (excl.VAT, returns and shipping fees)

You just need to:

- go to www.smile.amazon.co.uk
- sign in with your usual amazon details
- search for the charity you want (in our case type into the search box *The Parochial Church Council Of The Ecclesiastical Parish Of St. Bartholomew, Otford*)
- click select

In order for St Barts to benefit from this the user must always start shopping from the Amazon Smile page www.smile.amazon.co.uk

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

We will be running a Bible study for Advent on Zoom, on four Thursday evenings from November 26th. Each session will start at 8pm and last around an hour. The theme for the course is "Advent Through the Seasons." Please register by emailing the church office or Revd David so you can be sent Zoom details and resources by email each week, or we can deliver course sheets to you even if you are not able to attend but are interested in working through the course by yourself.

MONTHLY MEDITATION - DECEMBER

The Light of the World

Midwinter, the months of December and January, are when the nights are longest and we value sunny days. Many cultures have a festival of light at this time. The Hindu festival of Diwali celebrates the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance, with bright colours, lamps and fireworks. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt and celebrates with the lighting of candles. In Shetland, Up Helly Aa is a midwinter event with wild processions of flaming torches and huge bonfires.

Our Christmas season is full of light as well just at the time we need it most. We put lights on our Christmas trees and in our windows, have open fires in our hearths and light candles to mark the passing of Advent. Nativity scenes painted by great artists are illuminated by the miraculous glow from the manger, the light of Christ coming into our world. We are lucky at St Bart's to have our beautiful candelabra and so can have candlelit services right through the Christmas season.

Of course many of these seasonal traditions have their origins in ancient times when people needed reassurance that the seasons would turn, the sun would return and eventually there would be another harvest and all would be well. But we have another way of looking at this light as throughout scripture light is used to symbolize God, faith, and holiness. As Christians, we are called not only to walk in the light but to be the light for others. We know that the Light will guide and

support us - *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12. We know that this light can overcome fear and doubt - *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* John 1:5

John Rutter's Candlelight Carol uses these beautiful images for the light that was in the stable all those years ago:

*Candlelight, angel light
Firelight and star glow
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn
Gloria, Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Angels are singing
The Christ child is born*

Let the lights of Christmas comfort your mind and gladden your heart not just for a few days but for the coming months.

As we face dark winter days and uncertain times may the light of Christ illumine and guide us and may the blessing of the light of the Christ Child be upon us. Amen.



Susanne Beard

MISSION MATTERS - SEVENOAKS COUNSELLING SERVICE

When celebrating the New Year who could have predicted what an unusual year 2020 would be? By March as newspapers ran headline stories of Covid-19 spreading through Europe at Sevenoaks Counselling we began planning for the anticipated lockdown. Planning which enabled Sevenoaks Counselling to almost seamlessly continue offering services to the whole community throughout the first lockdown.

Face-to-face work was paused as the lockdown began and while some clients chose to pause their counselling the majority of clients continued counselling by phone or online. The counselling team rose to the challenge of up-skilling and spent significant amounts of time training to provide remote counselling by phone and video call.

In August, following an in-depth risk assessment, we made The Bridge a "Covid-19 Secure" environment and we were able to reopen the premises to deliver face-to-face sessions for clients who due to their personal circumstances could not receive remote counselling. Sadly, in early November face-to-face sessions were once more paused, although we hope to restart these once the second lockdown ends as soon as the local infection rate allows.

The future remains very uncertain and we expect the pattern of restart/pause/restart of face-to-face work will be repeated several times in the coming months.

Looking to the future we hope to continue offering remote counselling as part of our service as it offers the exciting scope to expand our services without the limitation of physical space.

The number of clients has returned to pre-lockdown levels, however, understandably given the increasingly difficult financial situation so many of our clients find themselves in, the amount paid per session has reduced which is impacting our financial planning and we anticipate a deficit for this financial year. We are grateful to individuals, churches, Sevenoaks District Council and Sevenoaks Town Council for their continued financial support without which we could not offer counselling to those who are unable to pay the full costs of their counselling. While we have been blessed with sufficient reserves to weather the storm for the time being the financial gifts of our supporters are even more needed now than in normal times.

We would value your thoughts and prayers in the weeks and months ahead as we navigate these tumultuous times.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours,

Sue Surgenor

Head of Counselling



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? ... SAL HAMLYN (NEE TOWNE)

My family moved to Otford when I was in my teens, and Dad took up the position of Vicar of Otford (David Towne). It was not an easy time to move – I was an insecure (and overweight!) teenager with a tendency to cut and colour my own hair (hence my school nickname of “Spike”), but my sister Ali and I were quickly scooped up by Otford Young People’s Fellowship (YPF) and made to feel hugely welcome.

YPF became my friendship group and on a Sunday night we would cram into homes for times of fellowship, ridiculous games, love, laughter – and, of course, homemade FLAP-JACK! These were precious times when my faith become real, and an older generation of leaders really invested in all our lives. I am so grateful to them. I have many happy memories of Spring Harvest, YPF weekends away, parties, holidays, laughing, New Year’s Eve, dressing up, dressing down, and just plain dressing ridiculously (Jason in a rabbit suit springs to mind!) - I could go on!

Fast forward 30 plus years - I live in Weald village with my farmer husband, Richard, two sons, and our future daughter-in-law. It’s a delight to regularly see friends from Otford YPF – Clive and Dawn, Penny . . . Friendships born in that time are lifelong!

Amongst my closest friends now are three I made through YPF (Margie Torry, Anna (nee Scoble) and Jason Collins); friendships built on firm foundations with God in their centre, friends with whom I am grateful to share fun, laughter and many times of happiness, as well as tears and times of sadness. I owe so much to YPF.

I now work as Office Administrator at St John’s Church, Hildenborough – a job I love with stacks of variety and people contact. It is an honour to journey with people through their times of

happiness (baptisms, weddings) and through some of the most difficult times in their lives with funerals of loved ones.

Three years ago I was hugely impacted by *The Recovery Course* hosted by Tonbridge Baptist Church, a course for “*any habit that causes you pain*”. I had so many habits that caused me pain that I am not sure which one I joined for! Anyway, as a result I lost around 8 stone in weight and am now in a different place in my (often complex!) relationship with food. I have even discovered I quite enjoy exercise - okay, not as much as I enjoy biscuits dipped in a cup of tea, but there’s space for both!

I send love to all at St Bart’s, Otford, as does my Mum, Jenny; we enjoy watching your online services and it’s great to see familiar faces in them.

God bless, Sal Hamlyn
salhamlyn@outlook.com



SUPPORT OUR LOCAL SHOPS THIS CHRISTMAS

At the time of writing this article we are in the second lockdown but this was written with the hope we still will be able to do some shopping in the village. This Christmas time, as we all know, will be very different to previous years. We will need to think about how we can do things differently yet still have a good Christmas. Studies and research have shown that the more we do for others the better we feel, our mental and emotional well-being is improved. Isn't that a lovely bi-product of being altruistic! One way we can do this is to **make an extra effort** to support our local shops and businesses. By doing this we will also see more of the outcome of our giving or presents. Below are some ideas for you.

We have three barber shops (The **Otford Village Barber**, **Barber Jack's** and **AJ Milo's Barber**) and a hair salon (**Hair**). You could buy a voucher for a 'special' haircut, shave or a hair-do for a special occasion.

Why not browse around both our 'treasure-trove' antique shops (**Otford Interiors** and **Otford Antique Centre**) and buy something a little different this year for that special someone. A beautiful chair, footstool, piece of jewellery or some memorabilia, for example.

A present which could be shared is also a great idea. You could buy a voucher from **Sally's Emporium**, the **Pondview Cafe** or from **Hilal** (wonderful Turkish food, including takeaways and sublime Baclava) for a morning coffee for 2 or more, afternoon tea for 2 or more or even a meal

out. You could even make your own 'promise' voucher for a coffee, tea or meal for the above places, or an evening drink and/or meal at one of the pubs in the village – just make sure you are one of the two! Or even better, whilst you are out doing some shopping make sure you stop at one of these lovely places for a coffee, tea or lunch, or an evening meal at **Hilal** or one of the pubs so that you do not need to cook after a busy day's shopping!

We are also so lucky to have some lovely shops where you could buy a wonderful gift for that special someone. What about a beautiful piece of jewellery from the **Bill Skinner Studio** (<https://billskinnerstudio.com/>), or a lovely scarf, hat and/or gloves from **Mille Fleurs** (www.millefleurs.uk) for him or her, or what about a seasonal face mask for the stocking. Why not allow that special lady to browse in **Hall and Co.** (www.halland.co) either for something new to wear or some fragrant body or home item. All three shops also do gift vouchers – please do look at their websites. Another shop with some lovely pieces of jewellery, pictures, paintings and other interesting wall hangings, as well as some scarves, is **The Studio**. Not forgetting, of course, that you could buy something with which your special someone could pamper themselves from the **Chemist** or pick up something to go in a stocking such as some pretty hair clips, nail varnish or a new hair brush!

As a wonderful way to show your love for someone you could order and collect a beautiful, and often exotic, floral display from **Denise**



Thompson, Designer Florist, or a plant to go on the patio, in the conservatory or something else for the garden such as a bee or bird house.

Another favourite of mine is the **Hospices of Hope** shop. I buy most of my clothes there these days and you could buy a shirt, top, skirt, or whatever to go in a stocking – I’ve done this for several years now – or buy something such as a picture frame and put a lovely photo in it as a great reminder of a special day out, or a family group photo for that relative who can’t be with you this year. There is a selection of books available too – again for the stocking! Of course, the **Post Office** also often has some lovely bits and

pieces for a gift or for stockings too.

For that sporty someone – maybe they need a new racquet, have a racquet restrung, a new sports bag or some new sports clothing – visit the **Racquet Academy** (<https://www.racquetacademy.co.uk/>).

When you stop to think about it, we really do have a vast choice just in the few shops we have in our village. Please do support them this Christmas time as they have continued to support, and offer, us so much in a very difficult year. We wish them all a successful and good Christmas and New Year.

Mags Southgate



FAITH IN THE FAMILY...

December: A no - frills Christmas?



It's been a real privilege to write these *Faith in the Family* articles over the years. To begin with, I was no expert and hurriedly read books (such as *Parenting Children for a life of faith* by Rachel Turner) and thought a lot about the subject in an attempt to be one step ahead!

Recently, I heard a talk by Rachel (who now works for the Bible Reading Fellowship – parentingforfaith.org) in which she said that her goal was to help parents feel confident in helping their children to take the next step (whether big or small) in their spiritual lives. We sometimes forget that children are spiritual beings, just like we adults, and that we are here to help that part of them grow – along with their academic or sporting skills, their personalities, etc. Arguably, it's the most important aspect – and yet we can feel hesitant about sharing our faith, perhaps thinking that we don't know enough, we don't have time or that it is the job of teachers at school or church.

It's important to remember that God listens to us as parents. We are enough. God believes in us and understands what being a parent is like. He loves and listens to our children's prayers. It's important to read the Bible together as a family because it tells us stories of the God who knows us and loves us.

The word 'sharing' – sharing our faith with our children – is important, because it allows our

children to see our faith, to the extent that we have it.

Rachel calls this 'creating a window' for our children to see how our faith is affecting what we think and do. For instance, "I think I'm going to put a letter in with Auntie Gill's Christmas card. It might cheer her up and I'm sure that's what God would want me to do." By being open in this way, we then equip our children to do this for themselves.

These 'side-by-side experiences' work well and it's particularly good to start when children are very small. Church toddler groups, such as *First Steps* in Otford, are ideal because parents and children listen to Bible stories, have fun doing related crafts and pray together all the time. *Messy Church* for families works well, too. So do come along once things get back to some sort of normality!

It's not necessary to put time aside for an 'RE' lesson, either. The best way to help our children is by using the things that we see or do in everyday life to prompt discussion about God and his love for us. A snowflake can prompt us to talk about our own uniqueness, wrapping a Christmas present can lead to a chat about Jesus being God's gift to us, etc.

In fact, the story of Christmas, is very much God, our loving parent, wanting to *share* with us, his children, what he is like and how he wants us to live, by sending his own son, Jesus, into the world. He became human for that 'side-by-side' experience in which he spoke of God's love, his healing, his forgiveness and his good plans for each of us. He has good plans to prosper and not to harm us.

This year, Christmas may well be a pared down affair – perhaps a no-frills Christmas compared to usual. And yet, that very first Christmas was

not what anyone expected – and certainly nothing splendid. A baby king born far from home, laid in a borrowed manger, perhaps in a bare and chilly place. But it was the real thing and all part of God’s plan! Perhaps this year, without all the fancy trimmings, we can rediscover the true meaning of Christmas as love and kindness have a chance to shine.



The Christmas story: Can you all piece together the Christmas story from memory? Now read it together in the Bible, (Luke 1:26-45, 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12). Notice how simply it is told. Is that what you would expect for a baby king? Were you surprised that things you had thought of are not mentioned (for example, a donkey)?



The wonder of Christmas:

During December, leave out a big sheet of blank paper and some pencils and crayons. Everyone writes or draws a picture of different memories of Christmas. When the paper

is getting full, have a storytelling session prompted by the various memories.

Sharing the good news: What did the shepherds do as they returned from seeing the baby in the manger? How could your family share the joy of Christmas with neighbours and passers-by? Could you make a nativity scene in a lighted window? How about painting four posters of a lit candle and putting one up in a

window each week as we approach Christmas? How about a set of painted stones along a wall showing things from the nativity story? Post ideas and photos of your work on WhatsApp!

A family quiz: Work together on a funny game that you could play with relatives or friends over Christmas. In teams, you could do charades, ask people to act a given scenario in slow motion, race to find three stated objects, as well as a Christmas-themed quiz!



Love came down at Christmas – a seasonal prayer by Grace Noll Crowell:

Whatever else be lost among the years,
Let us keep Christmas still a shining thing:
Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears,



Let us hold close one day, remembering
Its poignant meaning for the hearts of men,
Let us get back our childhood faith again. Amen

Vicki Howie



EVENTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES FROM OTFORD'S PAST

Otford School 1900-c1950

In this article we return, after a short break in the last edition, to recounting the story of the village school. As part of the expansion of what we now call local authority services in the last quarter of the 19th century, it was increasingly recognised that the School Boards which had been created after the 1870 Education Act should become part of this wider local administrative structure. There were also mounting anxieties about the relationship between education and British international economic and military competitiveness. Concern about the poor physical condition of British children in the late 19th century also fed into these anxieties. Free school meals for some and school medical inspections were introduced in the early 20th century. As one example of these concerns about children's health after 1902 all midwives had to be state registered after having completed a nationally recognised training. To this day midwives remain proud that state registration for their profession was achieved before state registration of nurses (this developed after 1916). Church schools, such as Otford's village school were not always involved in all these developments, although the increasing involvement of the state in education provision became increasingly evident.

The small village school faced other problems. It could not easily cope with education developments and the population increase in the twentieth century. Otford's population grew from under 1,000 in 1911 to over 2,500 by 1951 placing new stresses on the demand for school places. State supervision of schools (in exchange for increased funding) increased after the 1902 Education Act. This created *Local Education*

Authorities (or *LEAs*) to manage school provision, in this area the LEA became the county council. The Act also permitted schools to provide post-elementary schooling, that is to say beyond the age 11. Otford's school could not easily accommodate these changes and control of Otford's school passed to Kent County Council in the interwar years. The school leaving age, which was usually 12 years by 1900 gradually increased as pressure to provide 12+ provision increased and by 1939 age 14 was the usual minimum leaving age and had probably become the norm in Otford. There were also many curriculum developments. A village school found it extremely difficult to cope with such changes. If children progressed to what was increasingly called 'secondary' education, they had to travel outside the village. The war years of 1939-1945 were a further disruption to school provision. Given that Otford was in many ways 'on the front line' of the Home Front, evacuation and bombing had adverse effects. In 1944 at the time of the 'V1' flying bomb attacks several dozen school children were evacuated, temporarily, to Devon.

The overdue reform of education provision, a political 'hot potato', became one of the consequences of the war and from 1941 several proposals for reform began to be discussed. These culminated in the 1944 Education Act, (frequently called the 'Butler Education Act' after one of its principal designers, R.A.B. Butler), by the coalition government. This specified a separation of (the now named) *primary* (to age 11) education from *secondary* (post-age 11) provision and by 1949 age 11 had become the time to transfer from Otford Primary School to one of the new secondary schools planned for the Sevenoaks district. Two state secondary school were built in the Sevenoaks district in the

post-war years. Nonetheless the population growth of Otford from the 1930s required that Otford Primary school continued to grow in the post-war years and several new buildings were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. But that of course is another story!

If you, your children or perhaps grandchildren have any stories or photos or information about the School, including its history after 1950 and the building developments of the 1960s we would love to hear from you. Please do let us know. You can contact us by email at info@otfordhistoricalsociety.co.uk.



Alan Williams

It is summer 1938 and in there is plenty of action in the original school playground. In the photograph (above) the Lutyens church hall can be seen (the front porch has yet to be built).



In the photograph (left) beyond the playground railings and across the road can be seen, on the left, the shop owned by Thomas 'Grandpa' Groves, 'Purveyors of Meat and Poultry'. The shop had been built in 1935 to replace the shop immediately next door which by 1938 had become a different business. From 1959 until 2018 the shop was known by generations of residents as 'Stan the barbers' and was owned by Stan Miles.



In the photograph (left) from c.1960 the postwar classrooms can be seen in the centre of the photograph and the main hall has been built. Other building developments followed in the 1970s.

Photographs from the Ed Thompson collection

DECEMBER WALK

A challenging but rewarding six mile walk to conclude the year. The route goes up Otford Mount, then through the quiet hills to the north east of the village and over towards Shoreham, with an impressive view of the London skyline along the way.

There are a number of steep climbs and descents and some muddy stretches. Sturdy footwear is essential.

The starting point is the village car park.

Turn left out of the car park onto the High Street and walk towards the pond. Cross towards the church and pick up the footpath running to the right of the church, going through the graveyard and on towards the station. At the station car park, turn left to go past the ticket office on your right and up the steps to the road. Turn right, following the North Downs Way (NDW) sign, to go uphill. At the junction with Pilgrims Way East, turn right and continue on to reach a NDW noticeboard, then cross the road to follow the NDW uphill on Otford Mount. The well-trodden path ascends steeply before finally flattening out in the woods where, at this time of year, ivy, brambles and moss prosper.

On reaching the meadow at the top, bear left, then follow the line of trees to the left of the field to reach the road. Turn left on the road (Rowdown Lane) and continue past three houses then, on the bend, opposite the entrance to Mount Farm, take the footpath to the right marked SR 30.

Continue between fences and through a field to enter a wooded area ahead (Great Wood). Proceed downhill on the well-walked path enjoying the quiet of your surroundings. Eventually you will reach a wooden gate into a green valley. Walk straight on and climb the steep hill opposite, pausing at the top to turn

and admire the wonderful view of Magpie Bottom.



Carry on uphill through the woody area and then through a wooden gate into a field. Take the footpath which bears diagonally left to go alongside a fence and some tall conifers bordering a property. Once past the trees turn left on the footpath towards a wooden stile and the road. Turn left on the quiet road, then immediately right following the footpath sign, marked SR 29. Go slightly uphill then, keeping to the left hand edge of the field, continue ahead and over a stile to follow the Explore Kent (EK) yellow arrow straight ahead. The path goes along the churned up right hand side of a grassy field.

At the end of the field climb a wooden stile and follow the blue EK signs, taking the footpath to the right of the five bar gate. An extensive view of London will soon appear to your left as you proceed towards a mock Elizabethan-style house. When the footpath comes to a T junction, turn left to walk in front of the house and, at the end of its fence/wall, cross a stile to access an open area where birds of prey like to hover.

Continue downhill, then slightly uphill to cross a farm track (follow yellow arrows), then out into

the area where Austin Lodge golf course used to be. Clearly visible ahead of you lies the path to follow, initially going steeply downhill then, after passing through a tree tunnel, equally steeply uphill.



Having crossed this valley (and stopped to admire the view), climb the wooden stile and take the path (veers left) up through the woods to reach a field. Follow the path in the direction of the yellow arrow - on a diagonal to the left towards a line of trees. Beside the tallest tree (post with yellow arrow) bear left to follow the well-walked path across a flinty field.

On reaching the farm track, turn right and continue into the farmyard. At its heart, turn right towards the circular cattle shed, then immediately left (yellow signs) to join the footpath going across the field and on into the woods.

Now begins the great descent to Shoreham! After going downhill in the woods for a short distance (ignoring the cross path) you will come to a series of steps. I counted 143 but you might beg to differ! Follow the path all the way down

and round a bend to the right (ignoring the bridleway to the left) to descend to the Shoreham Road.



Cross the busy road to enter Station Road. Walk downhill past The Darent (golf clubhouse) on your left, before turning left on the footpath marked SR 32, Darent Valley Path. From here it is a straight walk back to Otford – initially crossing the golf course, Shoreham cricket ground, and then a tarmac lane. Continue ahead on the enclosed footpath and before long Otford will be visible. Once you reach Park Farm Stables on the left, turn right onto the recreation ground to return to your starting point.

Christeen Malan



RECIPES OF THE MONTH FROM HILARY FOTHERGILL

TURKEY, HAM AND LEEK VOL AU VENTS

Hopefully this can provide a suggestion for the perennial issue of dealing with leftovers!

1 block puff pastry
Around 1lb cold turkey and ham
2oz butter
2 leeks
1 ½ oz flour
1 tablespoon wholegrain mustard
½ pint turkey stock
Salt and pepper

First make some stock by boiling up the turkey carcass for around an hour, onions, bay leaves, peppercorns can be added if preferred.

Roll the pastry thin and cut into 4-6 pieces. Score each one about ½ inch from the edge, until near the base but not right through. Cook at 180° for about 25 minutes, until golden brown.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Finely slice the leeks and cook in the melted butter until soft but not brown. Stir in the flour and mix well, using a whisk, then add the stock slowly to make a very thick sauce. Add salt, pepper and mustard, then mix in the turkey and ham.

Once the puff pastry cases are cooked, lift off the top, fill with the mixture and replace the top.



FROZEN CHRISTMASPUDDING

Not everyone is a fan of Christmas pudding, and this recipe incorporates some of the traditional ingredients while being a delicious alternative.

4 oz marshmallows
2 oz blanched chopped almonds (or almond flakes)
1 tablespoon cocoa powder
2 tablespoons brandy
1 tablespoon instant coffee
2 oz sultanas
¼ pint milk
1 oz icing sugar
2 oz chopped glace cherries
½ pint double cream (whipped)

Soak the sultanas, cherries and almonds in the brandy overnight.

Put the milk, marshmallows, cocoa and coffee in a saucepan and heat until dissolved. Add to the fruit and nuts. This should be quite a thick mixture, if not just freeze until slightly thickened. Fold in the whipped cream and icing sugar and freeze.



OTFORD SOCIETY

The Otford Society has recently been re-launched under a new team of trustees. Its objective is both to protect the fabric of where we live as well as to help improve the lives of all the residents of Otford.

The Society was formed in 1973 to represent the village against a planned spur road off the M26. It went on to support a great many village projects. These include the restoration of the village pond; repair to our church tower; refurbishing our two children's playgrounds; providing First Aid defibrillators in the village; installing the village millennium mosaic; and of course, along with the Heritage Lottery Fund, supporting the whole Otford Heritage Trail throughout the village.

As the Society is beginning again from scratch as it were, it is felt we have to prove our worth before we start asking for membership fees. So for the next year, all households in Otford will automatically be members of the Society, free of charge. The *Otford Road Friends* who play such a key part at this time in supporting neighbours during the coronavirus pandemic, will also step under our umbrella. We are building strong links with the Village Fete Committee and intend a close liaison with the churches, and our many clubs and societies. We believe working together, we can achieve much. At this difficult time, we are particularly keen to publicise and provide practical support to local businesses and shops. All ideas welcome.

So that everyone is involved, it is our intention to print a quarterly newsletter which will be distributed to every household. We are currently working on updating our website (www.otfordsociety.org.uk) and our profiles on

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Already, we are posting news on the Otford Village Hub Facebook page. What we are looking for though, are fresh ideas and feedback from the community; if there are things you'd like to see in Otford, or issues you are particularly concerned about, please email us at enquiries@otfordsociety.org.uk. We have already received some great suggestions. Our job now is to see how these might be implemented. We certainly hope that others will feel able to join our start-out group so that we can draw on a wide pool of talent to carry forward new projects. The pandemic is creating challenges for many in our village, and the Society is already standing behind local initiatives to support children on free school meals. We are also working on a special Christmas look to the village which we hope will attract visitors to our local businesses, coronavirus permitting.

The Otford Society simply believe that we can help make a real difference to people's lives.

Rod Shelton

Chairman Otford Society



WELCOME WILDLIFE INTO YOUR GARDEN



Wildlife in the Garden – December

In December we tend to observe the garden by looking out of a window while enjoying the warmth of a log fire or pausing from writing Christmas cards, planning menus and decorations. The garden is not asleep. The berry bearing trees and shrubs, yew, holly, ivy, hawthorn, juniper, mistletoe, berberis, and cotoneaster are a blessing to wildlife. Pinecones, hazelnuts and beech mast are tackled by many birds, especially great tits and blue tits. Rabbits and rodents often peel some bark off a tree, particularly if it is a hard winter with heavy snow. Many trees have rough bark which birds probe for insects. The grey squirrel also nibbles young hawthorn. There is one wild evergreen which earns a special place in December, and that is gorse, that usually blooms from April to June but as long as it doesn't freeze a few flowers brave the winter.

The wonderful coloured leaves of autumn have now been gathered up to add to compost heaps or collected to form a special heap to decay and form leaf mould, which in time will be used to enrich soil in pots and gardens. Both heaps are also homes or shelters for worms, slow worms, and many insects that help to break down the leaves. Many people now have bug/insect hotels in their gardens, and if you are out in your garden at night you may even see a moth flying, or see or hear an owl.

It is amazing that so many insects 'over-winter', they become 'cold hardy' and don't freeze, partly due to the conversion of blood sugar to glycerol, which acts as a dilute anti-freeze. On a calm sunlit day you may see Spartan winter gnats.

These small insects, close relatives of crane flies, form dancing swarms throughout the year, but especially in the winter months, jiggling up and down, like running on the spot to keep warm! But these dancers have a deeper purpose, all of them are males, they are displaying themselves to attract a lone female.

Winter is the time when animals save energy and, like humans, are less outgoing in their habits. But if we do have snow we can become detectives and interpret footprints, tooth marks, food pellets and droppings. We can discover their favourite haunts. Many gardens have shrubs that have colourful branches, December is not colourless. We have our Christmas lights and the winter sun.

Whilst writing this I began to think of the songs and carols that we sing at this time of year, for example *The holly and the ivy*, so my drawing ends the series. I should like to wish you all a very special Christmas, despite the present situation.

Elizabeth Ward



DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

Christmas Planning and Coronavirus Restrictions

Making plans for Christmas this year with the country in a second national lockdown is going to be particularly challenging. As it stands, no one really knows how Christmas will look with some restrictions set to continue when we come out of lockdown for a second time at the beginning of December.

On top of all the extra pressures a second lockdown brings, Sevenoaks District Council is committed to trying to make this Christmas as normal as possible by providing all the usual additional services over the Christmas and New Year period.

Whilst only essential shops can stay open during lockdown, many non-essential retailers will still be allowed to offer click and collect services, if they can be Covid-secure, as well as being able to trade online. Many of our local shops have adapted to offer this service and would welcome your custom throughout this difficult time.

Local markets are open during lockdown for essential items and the Christmas market is set to open in December as usual. To help you plan your Christmas and New Year, keep reading for key dates on Council services and other useful information to help you through the festive season.

Christmas Markets Did you know we have three local markets in Sevenoaks offering excellent value and local produce as well as festive gifts for friends and family.

Blighs Christmas market: Every day from 16th December to Christmas Eve from 9am to 4pm.

High Street Saturday market: Open as usual every Saturday from 9am to 4pm during lockdown for essential items only. Normal trading will resume after lockdown.

Buckhurst Wednesday market: Open as usual every Wednesday before Christmas for essential items only. Normal trading will resume after lockdown.

Recycling and Refuse Collection Collections which fall on Monday 21st December will take place on Saturday 19th December and from 22nd December, most collections will take place a day earlier or on the same day as your regular collection day and one day later for collections which fall on 1st January 2021.

Tree-cycle The Council will collect and recycle your 'real' Christmas trees (diameter no bigger than 90mm/3.5") for free from Monday 4 January until Friday 29 January 2021 on the day of the fortnightly Garden Waste Collection. All you need to do is put your tree on the boundary of your property, so it is visible from the road, by 6.30am. All trees collected are turned into environmentally friendly compost, and for this reason, the Council cannot take trees which are decorated or in pots or stands.

Many of the District Council's services are available 24/7 on their website at: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk. In an emergency, you can still call the offices when closed on 01732 227000.

My best wishes to you all this Christmas and a brighter 2021.

Cllr Irene Roy
cllr.roy@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Tel: 01959 525610



Silent Auction – Time, Talents, Gifts!

A big thank you to everyone who donated items for our Silent Auction and to everyone who placed bids. We had an array of over 90 items in the catalogue varying from gardening, baking, gift vouchers to actual items to bid on, and we have received lots of bids from all of you - thank you!

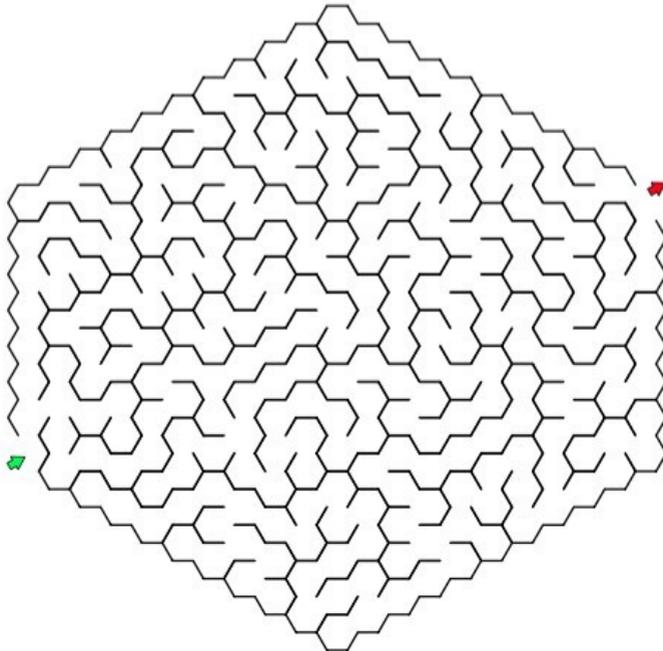
The last bids had to be in by 24th November 2020 and the Auction is now closed. We are currently working through the bids to award the item to the highest bidder and will be in touch shortly.

1-8th December – if you are one of the lucky winners, you will be notified with details of how to pay via the church office and who to contact to claim your item. The giver of the item will also be advised how much their item went for and who will be in contact with them to claim it. Please note that you have 6 months to claim your item.

Thank you to everyone for your support for this fund-raising opportunity for church – details of how much we raised will be out soon. In the meantime, if you would like further information or have any questions, please contact Jo Chandler on 07703 797 039. Thank you for your support.

Jo Chandler

PUZZLE FOR DECEMBER



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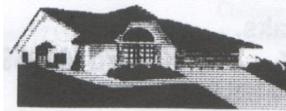
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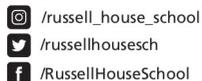
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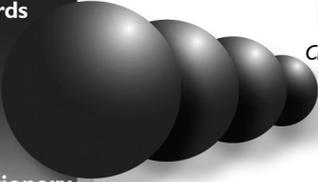


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