



THE WORD

Editor: Stuart Baker: stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com



THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
ST. JOHN'S ROAD, BIRKDALE. PR8 4JP
Charity Number 1128171
Vicar: Rev. Jennie Hardy

St. John, Chapter 1, verses 1 and 14:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."*

ISSUE No. 265

JANUARY 2025

ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH

God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming



The season of Christmas will end soon, and on 6th January we shall enter the season of Epiphany which lasts until Candlemas on 2nd February.

Epiphany is a traditional Christian feast day commemorating the visit by the wise men (Magi) to Jesus. An epiphany is a moment of sudden and great revelation or realisation, and the Magi represented the non-Jewish peoples of the world, so their visit to Jesus was considered a "revelation to the gentiles": an epiphany. Rev. Roy will preach on the topic of Epiphany on 5th January, and in the weeks afterwards until 16th March we shall have a new series of Sunday sermons under the title of "Being the Church."



By tradition the start of Epiphany marks the time when we take down our Christmas decorations but at St John's this will be done on **Saturday 4th January at 9.00am**. If our readers will be available please make a note in your diaries to be there to assist in any of the many ways which are needed.

We take the opportunity to wish all of our readers a very Happy and (we hope) Healthy New Year

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES TO OR ABOUT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PLEASE CONTACT US
BY EMAIL info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk OR PHONE THE VICAR: 07872 400718

Happy New Year to all of you who faithfully read **THE WORD** and continue to support our church and community! While I'm at it may I also wish you a happy Christmas and a blessed Epiphany too as we remain in and enter these seasons!



The litany of the church of England is full of calendar dates and festivals that largely, only the higher Churches remember and celebrate. In churchmanship, St John's would be described as a 'low' church in our ecclesiology. However, in my message to you this time, I want to highlight that God can be found in all, within the church and with-out. Within challenging moments as well as joyous ones. As we enter a new year, a new season, where will you discover God throughout the year, how will you recognise and reflect on that which God is daily doing in your life, how has He answered your prayers? How has He moved in your life? How have you encountered Him?

As we are entering this new year I've been reflecting on God's goodness and on all those things over the last twelve months that He has done in my life. The only problem I have, is that I cannot remember them all! God is always working for our good, answering our prayers and blessing us. So that next year I don't have the same problem, I've ordered a new book, it's called, *One Line a Day*. It's a memory journal book that will last me for five years, in it, each day I will write one line of a blessing I've received, how the Lord has spoken to me or answered prayers received. Next year, on the last day of the year I will be able to look back over a whole year full of blessings! I've ordered this journal to help me to do this, but all you need is some paper, a computer or even a smart phone to record something from each day, if you'd like to join me.

Like most of us my last year has been a mixed bag, consisting of highs, lows and much of the mundane and though I look forward optimistically to all that 2025 will bring, I recognise that realistically in general, it will be much of the same. I look forward to the good times, though turning 40 is terrifying, I'm looking forward to the celebrations! We don't generally enter the new year preparing for the lows or the difficult times but I think we should

consider them. We should look back, see what God has done even in the midst of the despair and pain of the past, we should consider, how we have grown through those more challenging experiences. Then, we can truly look forward in hope, knowing that though hard times may come, we know we will overcome, we know God will be with us and we know that we are capable of not just surviving but growing throughout every experience we may have.

The first day of the year is the festival commemorated to the naming and circumcision of Jesus. In Luke 2 we see two interesting phrases about Mary. In Luke 19 we're told that Mary 'treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart' then in verse 35 Simeon prophesies that a sword will pierce Mary's very soul.

It's implied throughout the nativity story and in these verses that Mary was under no illusion about the pain that she would personally endure through being obedient to God's call on her life. I wonder, did this knowledge prevent Mary from the great joy of hearing her baby 'coo', or take His first step, say His first words and all the other joyful moments that a child brings. I would think not, who could help but feel joy and happiness in those moments. I believe that is the attitude that we should carry into the new year, we do not know what it will bring, we hope and pray for happiness as we wish each other, a happy new year, but my wish to you is that you can experience the joy of Jesus even in those moments that aren't so happy. That you can remember the hope that Jesus has brought even in any moment that brings despair and that you can turn to Jesus in every moment.

Mary bore the Christchild for us, for you and me. For you and me, Christ went to the cross, so that you can know Him, be known by Him, be set free from the power of sin that causes destruction in our lives and know eternal salvation. Mary and Jesus held on to that hope throughout their lives, especially in the painful moments. 'And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

I pray that joy and endurance for you this year.
Love, Jennie xx

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

Vicar:	Rev. Jennie Hardy (07872 400718)
Priest (retired):	Rev. Roy Doran (572387)
Reader:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
Churchwarden:	Clive Morris (564206)
PCC Treasurer:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)
PCC Secretary:	Vacant
Parish Hall Secretary:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)
Electoral Roll Officer:	Stuart Harris (563789)
Deanery Synod Reps:	Clive Morris (564206) Stuart Baker (560518)
Safeguarding and Recruitment Officer	Stuart Baker (560518)

Transport Officer:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)
Church of England Children's Society:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)
Mothers' Union:	Mrs. Linda Caton (564737)
Girl Guides	Mrs. Janette Law (565951)
St. John's Brownies:	Mrs. Helen Jones and
Brownie Guiders:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
St. John's Rainbows:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
Church Flowers:	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (07732 993025)
Magazine Editor:	Stuart Baker (560518)
Magazine Printer:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
Buildings Inspector:	David Halsall (07790 822343)
Eco Champions:	Mrs. Elizabeth Rothwell and Duncan Rothwell (564192)



St John's Birkdale

Home About St John's, Birkdale New To Church? Church Life What's On Resources Q

WELCOME
We're glad you're here

ABOUT US

Look at our upcoming events - click here for details!

Visit our website
stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

- Find out about what's going on at St John's
- Check out the calendar for upcoming events
- Listen to the weekly talks
- Find out about booking the hall
- Free on-line bible
- Show it to your friends and family

**God centred, Relationship driven,
Life transforming**



A message of thanks from Tina Kent

Dear All,

A huge thank you to everybody for all your prayers, good thoughts, kind words, cards and gifts over the many months of my treatment in the run-up to my surgery.

The love and support shown to mum and I are appreciated far more than these few words can say, and I know that this will continue as my recovery progresses. I hope to see you all soon.

With a thankful heart.

Tina

WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S



Pray Together

**Thursday @ 7.30pm
on Zoom
Meeting ID: 83550743780
Passcode:
7ehHEK**

The prayer meetings are on the **1st and 3rd Thursdays each month** and last half an hour.

This month they will be on **2nd and 16th January**.

If there is anything which readers would like to be included in the prayers please contact Jennie Hardy, Roy Doran, Christine Baker or Clive Morris.

Do join us if you can. See page 27 for details about logging in on zoom by computer or by telephone.

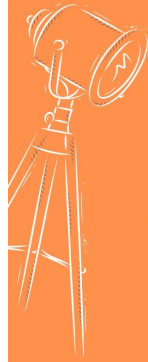
Coming soon... ALPHA COURSE

Alpha is an opportunity to explore life and the Christian faith in a friendly, open and informal environment.

It's beginning on Ash Wednesday (5th March) in the evening and we will be running it together with St James' and St Peter's. There will be a meal included each night and a Holy Spirit Day.

Each session includes food, a short talk and a discussion where you can share your thoughts.

Watch this space for further details!



FILM NIGHTS



January 10th

February 14th

March 14th

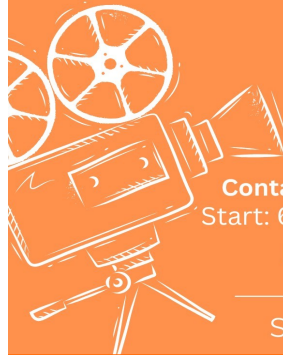
April 18th - Good Friday special with Fish Supper

£15 please book

May 9th

June 20th

July 4th



Contact Christine: 01704 560518
Start: 6.30pm with hot drinks & Cake
For which we charge £5

St John's Hall, PR8 4JP

Our copyright licence does not permit us to advertise the titles of the films outside our church or by publications. A list of films will be displayed on the noticeboards in the church, and details can be requested from Christine.



FRIDAY

Coffee, Cake & Chat

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, ST JOHN'S RD, BIRKDALE PR8 4JP

ST JOHN'S CHURCH BIRKDALE

MONTHLY

2ND FRIDAYS

10.30AM

**NEXT MEETING:
10th JANUARY**

WHAT'S ON WEDNESDAYS AT ST JOHN'S

WEDNESDAY 15TH OF JANUARY

MIDWEEK COMMUNION SERVICE

There will be a Midweek traditional Communion service at 10.30am in church on [Wednesday 15th January](#).

NOTE: THERE WILL **NOT** BE A MIDWEEK COMMUNION SERVICE ON WEDNESDAY 1ST JANUARY



WEDNESDAYS 8TH & 22ND OF JANUARY

**BIBLE STUDY LED BY
REV. ROY AT 2.00PM**

**GROWTH GROUP LED BY
REV. JENNIE AT 7.30PM**

STJohn's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SPIRIT

2nd & 4th Wednesdays
2pm

God's
Word

STUDY
GROUP

@ the small hall, St John's
Church PR8 4JP
revroydoran@btinternet.com

STJohn's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SPIRIT

2nd & 4th Wednesdays
7.30pm

Growth

HOME
GROUP

@ the vicarage - 17 Kirkstall
Road PR8 4RA
food. fellowship. fun.
revjenniferhardy@gmail.com

WHAT'S ON AT ST JOHN'S DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2025



Upcoming Events

JAN
24
7PM
"Cheese, Wine & Quizzes"

FEB
22
7PM
*"Greek Night"
with Abba & Dancing*

MAR
15
7PM
*"Games Night"
classics with snacks*

APR
18
7PM
"Good Friday Film & Fish Supper"

MAY
24
7PM
*"Indian Night"
Food & Activities*

JUNE
13-15
10AM - 3PM
"Summer Fair & Flower Festival"



Worship on the
Second Sunday of
Christmas

SUNDAY 5th JANUARY
HOLY COMMUNION
10.30am service **IN CHURCH** and via zoom &
phone

Collect for the Second Sunday of Christmas

God our Father, in love you sent your Son that the world may have life: lead us to seek him among the outcast and to find him in those in need, for Jesus Christ's sake.

**The subject of
Roy's talk:**

Epiphany

The Text: John 1: 10-18

10 He came into the very world He created, but the world didn't recognize Him.

11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

12 But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

15 John testified about Him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

16 From His abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

Worship on the First Sunday **SUNDAY 12th JANUARY**
of Epiphany: 10.30am service **IN CHURCH** and via
zoom & phone

The Baptism of Christ

Collect for the First Sunday of Epiphany:

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**The subject of
Jennie's Talk:**

**Being the Church:
What is Our Purpose as a Church?**

The Text: Acts 2: 42-47

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.

45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity

47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.



MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL COMMUNION SERVICE

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served after the service

WEDNESDAY
15TH JANUARY
10.30am
IN CHURCH

Worship on the Second Sunday
of Epiphany

SUNDAY 19th JANUARY

10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone

Collect for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The subject of
Clive's talk:

Being the Church:
Fulfilling the Great Commission

The Text: Matthew 28: 19-20

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Worship on the Third Sunday
of Epiphany

SUNDAY 26th JANUARY

10.30am service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone

Collect for the Third Sunday of Epiphany

God of all mercy, your Son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed: anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord.

The subject of
Christine's talk:

Being the Church:
Getting Outside the Four Walls
of the Church Building

The Text: Matthew 25: 35-40

35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.

36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

37 "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink?'

38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing?'

39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

40 "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

After a hectic December full of Christmas events at the church, the vicar went wearily into the chemist's shop. He asked: "Have you got anything for laryngitis?"
The chemist replied: "Good morning, sir. What can I do for you?"



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS FAIR POSTSCRIPT

Well, I think God must have been watching over us! Despite the very windy weather we raised over £2,000, which was a fantastic sum. We had a great selection of stalls and everyone enjoyed a very festive atmosphere, so I think we were extremely blessed. But of course, none of this would have been possible without the help and support of so many people.

At this point my thanks, as always, go to the Committee, who, regardless of unexpected challenges rode the storm and provided us with a very successful Christmas Fair, but not forgetting the stallholders and cafe helpers/assistants who also gave of their time throughout, as well as for the generosity of all your donations for the various stalls.

To all who either helped to decorate the halls, assisted with putting the boards ready in church for the arrival of the trees or helped to decorate the trees, you all did a wonderful job, for which we are very grateful.

Finally, to everyone who braved the weather and came along to support our event, my thanks to you all. Hopefully, you were able to sample and enjoy some purchases, even possibly buying those last minute Christmas presents.

However, I could not close without a final “thank you” to my Christingle Team, namely Genevieve, Joe and Mavis who may have started as novices but are definitely now fully qualified in the art of Christingle Assembly! Without their help I could not have achieved the 100 Christingles that we made! Well done and many thanks Team!

It only remains for me to wish everyone a happy and peaceful 2025.

Many thanks, Sylvia Kent

Editor’s Note: the Christmas Trees will be taken down on SATURDAY 4TH JANUARY, starting at 9.00am.

After removing the trees there will be 4 important jobs to be done:

- 1. lifting the boards which cover the pew tops in the side aisles, and storing them at the rear of the church. (Please bring gloves if you will help to move the boards).**
- 2. Sweeping up and hoovering pine needles.**
- 3. Replacing some items of church furniture which have been temporarily moved to make space for the trees.**
- 4. Tidying the church.**

These jobs will need willing and able hands but some of this is light work.

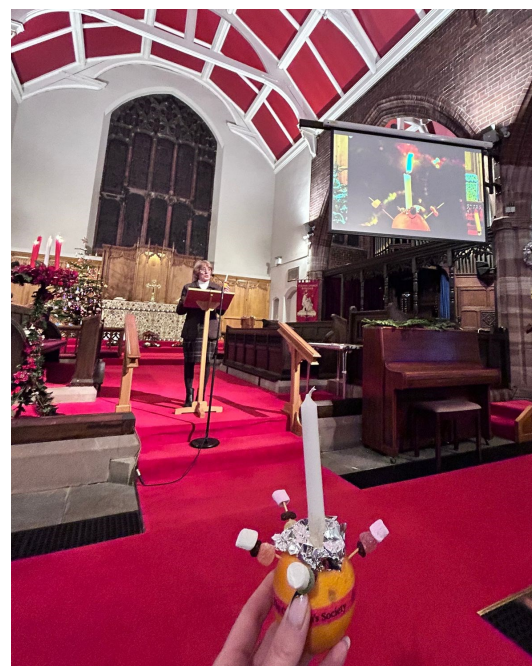
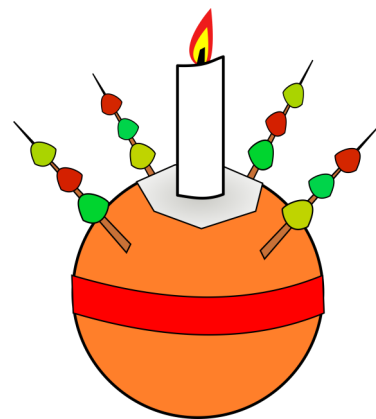
PLEASE make a note in your diary to come and help if you can. Nobody will be expected or asked to do any heavy lifting which is beyond their ability.

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

What a wonderful Christingle service we had on Sunday 15th December and to be able to welcome 120 people and children! The church was filled with light and the singing of Christmas carols, and everyone had fun assembling (some better than others!) a christingle before lighting their candles while standing around the church. It was really atmospheric. The service ended with mince pies, stollen and Mulled Wine.

All the collection made at that service has been sent to the Children's Society, who support young people across the country when they are struggling with abuse and harm, and I am pleased to let you know that we raised £104.15. On behalf of the Children's Society, thank you so much.

Sylvia Kent



What's the Big Idea? – An Introduction to the New Testament: Acts

By Canon Paul Hardingham

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, a physician-friend and fellow-traveller of Paul. It complements his gospel, both being written for Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), in around AD 63, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

While Luke's gospel records what Jesus *began* to do and teach, Acts tells us about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1:1-3).

Luke's aim is:

To present a history. Christianity has a firm historical foundation. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Gospels; Acts provides an account of the spread of the Church, as the result of the work of the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

To give a defence. We read speeches to both

Jews (eg 4:8–12) and Gentiles (eg 25:8–11), showing us how the Early Church challenged pagan and Jewish thought, the Roman government and Hellenistic culture.

To provide a guide. We see basic gospel principles being applied to specific situations in the context of problems and persecution. These same principles are applicable for us today.

To depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution. The success of the Church carrying the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and planting local churches demonstrates that it operates under the rule of the exalted Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (1:8).

Just as the Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians in their witness, so He will do the same for us today!

December Photo Round -Up



National Elf Service worker (the one on the right!) for Churches Together in Birkdale at the Birkdale Village Christmas Fair



Just a Song at Twilight... The Twelve Days of Christmas, before the lights were switched on at the Christmas Tree Festival



Some of the beautiful trees in our Tree Festival, sponsored in support of charities



Father Christmas in his grotto



Ainsdale Village Choir performing on Saturday



All very puzzling...



Father Christmas with an Elf and a Reindeer



Where did you get that hat.?



"We don't sell fork 'andles"



Another elf!



The Kings were in the Counting House, counting all the money...



“They also serve who only stand and wait ... “ (with acknowledgment to John Milton)
 ... and in the background, our team of chefs taking a well-deserved pause



Let them eat cake!



Gosh! That radiator's hot!



Bottled happiness



Lots of crafts and fun in the small hall.



With thanks to all who helped to make the Christmas Tree Festival and the Christmas Fair enjoyable and successful.

St John's Prayers for those in need

St John's is a church that believes in the power of prayer and we are eager to include as many people who currently need prayer in our twice monthly prayer meetings and on the screen on a Sunday.

We aim to keep the prayer list current and to receive regular updates on people who need longer term prayer so that we can pray meaningfully at the zoom prayer meeting.

Names will be on the list for a month at a time, so the lists will be refreshed at the beginning of each calendar month.

If you would like to be on the list for January **please let Rev. Jennie know** with a current update of why you would like prayer so that we can use that information on a Thursday. If you would like to put someone else on the list, provided you have asked their permission, then pass their name, and any other information on why they would like prayer, to Jennie.

There are many ways to get this information to her: see page 3 for her telephone number or through the church WhatsApp group.



If at the end of the month, you, or the person you have put on the list, wish to remain on the list just let Jennie know. If there is need then names can remain on the list for as long as necessary, we just want to keep it current and meaningful. People with long term conditions may feel that their conditions are being managed, treatments have been successful, or pain controlled but then may have a change later on and need to come back onto the list.

Names will no longer be automatically carried forward into the next calendar month.

If you want to discuss anything about this change please contact Jennie.

THE CHRISTMAS FETE

DESIGNING THE POSTER



LET'S MAKE IT SOUND REALLY REALLY GOOD

THE IDEA SEEMED FUNNIER IN THE PLANNING MEETING

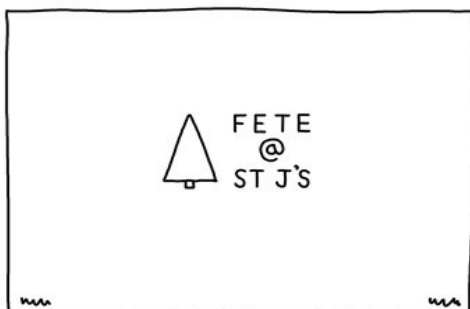


SOMEONE KNOWS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER

PERHAPS WE NEED TO BE HONEST



ACTUALLY - MAYBE NOT QUITE THAT HONEST





The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'

On the Importance of Not Keeping Accurate Minutes

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

Since you were the one to ask this parishioner of yours to act as PCC secretary, you have no reason to complain about the minutes of meetings she produces. You should never let anyone act as a secretary unless they cannot speak English or are hard of hearing, and preferably, both. The more significant the committee and the more contentious the issues being debated, the more you should nobly put yourself forward both to chair the meeting and take the minutes. In the majority of cases, that will spare the other members that awkward moment when you ask for a volunteer, and they all feel the sudden need to stare at their feet.

If you act as secretary, then you can be certain that accounts of what took place will only be what you had wanted to happen and that the decisions taken will be what you had already decided before discussions started. Any inconvenient observations from other committee members can be omitted entirely.

Admittedly, the more observant may notice that your accounts of the meeting may not wholly agree with their recollections, but the skill of being a secretary is not to produce the minutes of the previous meeting until the day before the next one. This will mean that the great majority will have long forgotten what actually *did* happen two months previously, and that many will not have had the time to read them anyway and will avoid having to admit that fact by passing them.

Only the deeply committed will want to pursue apparent discrepancies. In that case, confess to the meeting that your hand-written notes were accidentally left on a bus and so you can no longer check the accuracy of what you have written. As a way of appearing helpful, you could even give the person challenging you the bus route number and time of day you travelled. Further challenges will rally the rest of the committee to your side, and soon someone will suggest you proceed to the next item on the agenda. Since you are also the chairman, you naturally bow to their request.

Just in the way that church rotas bear no resemblance to the people who actually turn up to do the jobs, minutes of meetings need not bear too much resemblance to what actually happened, especially if what did happen is inconvenient for you.

After all, democracy is all very well - provided a benign dictator is in overall control.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Good idea

A young theologian, fresh out of university, thought it would help him better understand the world if he served as a policeman before going on for ordination. At the police interview he was asked: "What would you do to disperse a frenzied crowd?"

He promptly responded, "I would pass around an offering plate." He got the job.

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Record your personal wishes and pay for professional Funeral Director Services in advance, which could otherwise change in the future.

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A life well remembered lives on

Southport

☎ 01704 500 086

Ainsdale

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Do you want to rent a space?

CHURCH & HALL AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR CONCERTS, PARTIES, MEETINGS...

ST JOHN'S CHURCH BIRKDALE



Large Hall

Are you looking to hire a space for a regular group activity or for a family celebration such as a children's birthday party? Our halls are ideal.

We have both a large hall and a small meeting room available for hire for an hourly charge. A professional standard kitchen is also available.

If you would like to make a booking for any of our rooms in the church hall please contact Jean Morris - phone 01704 564206.

Small Meeting Room

- Dimensions - 30ft x 15ft (9.1m x 4.57m)
- Equipped with chairs and tables
- TV monitor screen

Ideal for meetings and small gatherings

- Dimensions - 55ft x 33ft (16.76m x 10m)
 - Equipped with chairs and tables
 - Theatre style capacity for up to 100
 - Ideal for parties, concerts, clubs, meetings
- Regular or one-off events

Kitchen

- Fully equipped, professional kitchen including cooker, heated cupboard and dishwasher.

Church

The church can accommodate 250 and can be available by arrangement for concerts by musical and choral groups. If you would like to enquire about using the church please contact Clive Morris - phone 01704 564206.

Local History

Southport Little Theatre

By Henry James

The Southport Little Theatre, home of the Southport Dramatic Club (SDC), has a proud history and celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2017. The theatre auditorium and foyer were built in an art-deco style and from the outset provided a magnificent venue for amateur theatrics in Southport. The first play to be performed at the Little Theatre in September of 1937 was 'Dear Brutus' by James Barrie and a further 18 plays were presented up to the start of the Second World War in 1939.

At that point many of the SDC members became engaged in war work, and to keep performances going the theatre was sublet to the Sheffield Repertory Company who stayed for the duration of the war and presented 240 plays. The club was able to take over the theatre again for the 1946/47 season and productions came thick and fast, with good audiences until the arrival of television.



A subscribers system was introduced in 1950 to combat the impact of television, which proved to be very popular, and a similar scheme is still in operation today. In 1999 the SDC was able to purchase the theatre outright, thanks to a massive fundraising campaign from its members.

Some famous people have played at the Little Theatre. Southport-born Miranda Richardson, who played Queen Elizabeth I in 'Blackadder II', and was nominated for an Oscar for her role in the film 'Damage', first appeared on the Little Theatre stage.

The late Jean Alexander, known for playing Hilda Ogden in Coronation Street, also appeared at the 'Little' in the 1940s.

Perhaps the most famous appearance at the Little Theatre was in August 1963 when the Beatles spent a morning filming for a documentary. They played several of their early numbers with no audience so that the music was not drowned out by screaming fans. Final footage was intercut with hysterical fans from the Beatles concert the previous night at the Odeon in Southport.

Looking to the future, members of the SDC are pulling out all the stops for their annual pantomime, which this year will be "Snow White". The pantomime is the biggest show of SDC's season and there are months of preparation and rehearsals before the opening night. Audiences are being promised fun, laughter and entertainment for both young and old. After the pantomime, the SDC's season continues at the end of January with the thriller "Strictly Murder", which opens on 24th January.

*We are very grateful to local historian Henry James for kindly permitting us to reproduce this article which first appeared in the December 2024 issue of **Birkdale Buzz**.*



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LIFE

A poem by Penny Candlin

Life is precious, given by God
Life is sacred, divine and holy
Life is a spark that shines in the darkness
Life that affects other lives
Life a beating heart that pumps strength
Life, who can create it but God
Life, who was there at its very beginning
Life is beautiful in its many colours shapes and forms
Life that stretches out and touches the holiness
Life that gives life
Life eternal.

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Sort Code: 60-20-11

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...Joshua says he's very sorry - but it's something to do with the recent weapons procurement review...

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Waiting.... After 40 years of living in various damp and cold vicarages, we retired and were finally able to move into our own home. It took several weeks to settle in, but then we were nearly done – just waiting for the arrival of the new couch and chairs. As the delivery truck pulled into the driveway, I hastened to welcome it. "Finally!" I exclaimed, flinging open the front door. "I've been waiting for years for this!" "Don't blame me, lady," he retorted. "I only got the order this morning."

W CROSS R D

Solution below

The Bible version used in our crosswords is the NIV.

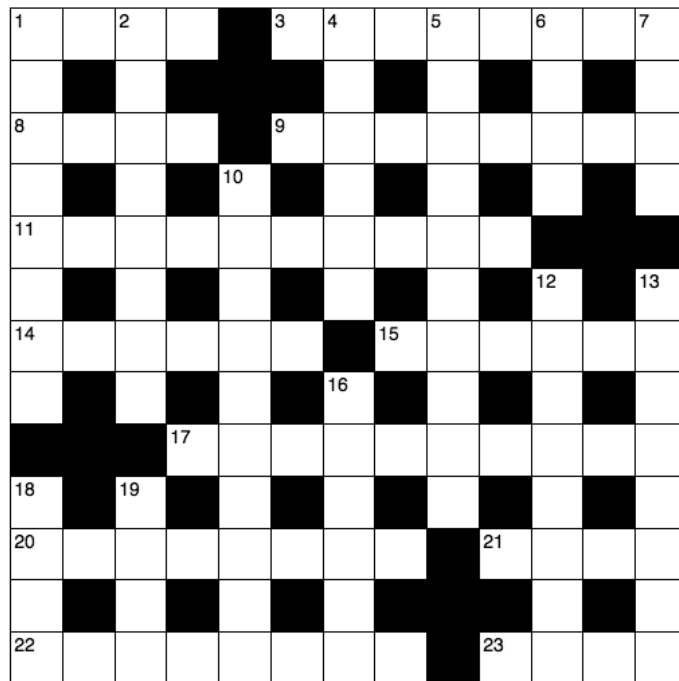
Crosswords reproduced by kind permission of BRF and John Capon, originally published in Three Down, Nine Across, by John Capon (£6.99 BRF).

Across

- 1 'Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a — began to crow' (John 18:27) (4)
- 3 Fetters (Job 33:11) (8)
- 8 Perform on a musical instrument (1 Samuel 16:23) (4)
- 9 Paul describes it as 'the third heaven' (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) (8)
- 11 Loyally (Deuteronomy 11:13) (10)
- 14 Hens? Me? (anag.) (6)
- 15 Not visible (Matthew 6:6) (6)
- 17 Predicted site of the final great battle (Revelation 16:16) (10)
- 20 Jacob's youngest son (Genesis 35:18) (8)
- 21 One of Zophar's eleven sons (1 Chronicles 7:36) (4)
- 22 For example, London, Paris, Rome (8)
- 23 United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1,1,1,1)

Down

- 1 Favourite church activity: Fellowship round a — — — (3,2,3)
- 2 Divinely bestowed powers or talents (8)
- 4 Pile together (1 Thessalonians 2:16) (4,2)



- 5 Commanded to justify (John 8:13) (10)
- 6 Timothy's grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) (4)
- 7 Killed (Psalm 78:34) (4)
- 10 One of Graham Kendrick's best-known songs, — — King (3,7)
- 12 Indecency (Mark 7:22) (8)
- 13 Unceasing (Jeremiah 15:18) (8)
- 16 He prophesied 'the abomination that causes desolation' (Matthew 24:15) (6)
- 18 British Board of Film Classification (1,1,1,1)
- 19 Pans (anag.) (4)

In our Book of Remembrance In January

- 1st John Smith, 1964
- 5th Lilian Burdon, 2010
- 8th George Yarwood, 1985
- 10th John Higgins, 1983
- 11th Peter Arnold, 2017
- 13th Eliza Hind, 1970
- 14th Edward Livesley, 1984
- 16th Harold Hamer, 2009
- 21st Henry McCann, 1959
- Susan Hellewell, 1977
- 24th Mary Gee, 2000
- 25th Craig Smith, 2015
- 27th Laura Marsh, 1994
- Betty Gordon, 2009
- 28th Audrey Draper, 2002
- Jean Jones, 2018

If any of our readers wish to have the name of a deceased relative inscribed in the Book of Remembrance please contact Stuart Baker



"It's worth getting to church an hour early to grab a pew by the electric socket."

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Cook, 3, Shackles, 8, Play, 9, Paradise, 11, Faithfully, 14, Emmesh, 15, Unseen, 17, Armageddon, 20, Benjamin, 21, Bert, 22, Capitals, 23, USPG, DOWN: 1, Cup of tea, 2, Charisma, 4, Heap up, 5, Challenged, 6, Lois, 7, Slew, 10, The Servant, 12, Lewdness, 13, Unending, 16, Daniel, 18, BBFC, 19, Snap.

God in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess considers the sacred in Art.

'The Annunciation' - by Domenico Veneziano



During this year, we shall be 'visiting' different art galleries and museums in England to explore their treasures. Our first visit is to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Founded in 1816, it is a wonderful building in Trumpington Street that houses a wealth of art and antiquities.

Our painting this month is *The Annunciation* by Domenico Veneziano, who died in Florence in 1461. It is part of the Magnoli altarpiece, and other panels are on display in Washington and Berlin.

The scene has been much loved of artists throughout the ages. We can read the account of Gabriel announcing the good news of motherhood to Mary in chapter two of St Luke's Gospel.

In the simplicity and beauty of Veneziano's work, we see Gabriel kneeling with lilies, the traditional symbol of our Lady, who is standing on the far side of the canvas. It is early morning, but the two squares on the wall show the blackness of night. They stand either side of a garden where the door is closed.

An enclosed garden, like the lilies, is a medieval symbol of Mary. 'A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed' we read in the Song of Songs. We might think of the Garden of the Hesperides or the apple orchard of Avalon, or perhaps a monastic herbal garden. They are all images of fruitfulness and new life enclosed by walls. Mary receives the good news of Gabriel and responds with the words, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord.' Her words will open the garden door and lead her out into the new world of redemption, just as Genesis tells us how turning against God closed the garden door of Eden to Adam and Eve.

The pathway from the portico and garden in Veneziano's painting will take Mary into a world where she will give birth to a son, Emmanuel. But that joy of motherhood will be coloured by a flight to Egypt and eventually the death of her Son. Then another garden will announce new and eternal life in the joy of the Resurrection. Here Mary's words will open that door in the garden. She will walk through, trusting in God and letting love guide her steps.

WORD SEARCH *Solution on page 23*

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? One Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote the much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king.

Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people. The Wise Men were the very first Gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had!

GIFTS
GOLD
FRANKINCENSE
MYRRH
HENRY

HOPKINS
CAROL
THREE
KINGS
ORIENT

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

WORSHIP
TEMPLE
SPICE
ANCIENTS
BODIES

BURIAL
HONOURED
DIVINE
SACRIFICE
DIE

The story behind "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

This popular hymn which is sung at most carol services each year was written by an American, Phillips Brooks, the son of a prosperous Bostonian merchant and the nephew of the most prominent layman in the Boston Unitarian Church.

Brooks was remarkable for his fast rate of speaking. Unfortunate journalists who were sent to report his sermons after he was ordained in 1859 gave up in despair after the text had been announced because Brooks was said to deliver 213 words per minute. He wrote "O little Town of Bethlehem" for his church's Sunday School in 1867, having visited the old church in Bethlehem in 1867 where he found that almost two thousand years had not dissipated the holy atmosphere of the sacred place.

It is said that Brooks was always cheerful and that people claimed to feel better after casually talking to him for a few minutes. He appealed to all age groups for he seldom belaboured his congregations with homilies on sin or guilt.

The hymn was first set to music by Lewis Redner who later wrote: "As Christmas approached, Mr. Brooks told me that he had written a simple little carol for the Christmas Sunday-school service, and he asked me to write the tune to it. The simple music was written in great haste and under great

pressure. We were to practice it on the following Sunday. Mr. Brooks came to me on Friday, and said, "Redner, have you ground out that music yet to 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'?" I replied, "No", but that he should have it by Sunday. On the Saturday night previous my brain was all confused about the tune. I thought more about my Sunday-school lesson than I did about the music. But I was roused from sleep late in the night hearing an angel-strain whispering in my ear, and seizing a piece of music paper I jotted down the treble of the tune as we now have it, and on Sunday morning before going to church I filled in the harmony. Neither Mr. Brooks nor I ever thought the carol or the music to it would live beyond that Christmas."

Redner's tune was entitled "St Louis", to which the carol is sung in the USA and Canada, but in England the carol is sung to the tune of "Forest Green" which was adapted by Ralph Vaughan Williams from an English folk ballad called "The Ploughboy's Dream" which he had collected from a Mr. Garman of Forest Green, Surrey.

Phillips Brooks had a revulsion of slavery and preached a memorable sermon mourning the death of the murdered President Abraham Lincoln. Brooks died in 1883 aged 58. He left behind various books of sermons, poems and carols of which "O Little Town of Bethlehem" will be his lasting memorial. *Source: "Every Hymn Has a Story", John Large*

God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Just breathe

*You show your majesty
In every star that shines,
And every time we breathe.
Your glory, God revealed
From distant galaxies
To here, beneath our skin.*

These words from the song *Magnificent* by Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin speak volumes to me as a scientist. Redman is an astronomy geek who has 'an appreciation for the universe that surrounds us, particularly its unique ability to lift our hearts to see how massive and mysterious God truly is'.*

The microscopic level on the other hand – what goes on 'beneath our skin' – is less available to ordinary people. I have had the privilege of exploring this world to my heart's content, and what I've seen has given me such a sense of awe that I want to share with others.

Every time you breathe, a series of air pockets with a combined surface area the size of a tennis court is bathed with oxygen. These minute air pockets are covered with blood vessels. The boundary between air and blood is so thin that oxygen and carbon dioxide can diffuse freely from one to the other.

When your heart beats at a normal rate, a single red blood cell takes about three quarters of a second to travel through the small blood vessels in your lungs. But in just one third of that time, a quarter of a second, that cell has already received all the oxygen it needs from the air. So, when you exercise, causing your heart rate to increase and the blood to flow faster, you're still getting plenty of oxygen, as long as you keep breathing!

Redman and Myrin wrote in their song, "*You are higher than we ever could imagine, And closer than our eyes could ever see.*" The universe demonstrates God's awesome power. This is a place made by a Being whose imagination is not limited by time and space.

Biology, on the other hand, helps to remind me of God's creativity and closeness. I am a product of a long and painstaking process of continued development over aeons of time. Beneath my skin are incredibly detailed, beautifully regulated processes that give me life. Jesus said that 'even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' The knowledge that God intentionally made me and knows every detail of my physiology is both amazing and humbling.

**Indescribable: Encountering the Glory of God in the Beauty of the Universe, Matt Redman & Louis Giglio (David C. Cook, 2011)*

Thoughts on the New Year

Why are people constantly searching for lasting peace and contentment yet never fully satisfied? Many people express this particularly when a New Year approaches. The Bible says this happens for a very good reason: We are incomplete without God. If we leave Him out of our lives, we have an empty place in our souls, a yearning deep inside us that only God can satisfy. So, start the New Year off with a sure thing – God's promise to give you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). – *Billy Graham*

The most important resolution you can make as another year begins is this: to open your heart and life to Jesus Christ, and commit your life to

Him. Don't waste your time on resolutions that don't ultimately matter; resolve instead to live for Christ. – *Billy Graham*

May we meet this new year bravely, sure in the faith that while men come and go, and life changes around us, God is ever the same, guiding us with His wisdom and protecting us with His love. – *William Temple*

Let us thank God for all the blessing of the year that is past, and let us ask Him to take our lives afresh into His keeping as we face the unknown future. Let us ask Him for His grace for whatever lies before us in the days to come. – *Frank Colquhoun*

How the New Year and Resolutions began

1st January was not always the start of a New Year. The Babylonians began their New Year on 23rd March. For them, it was a logical choice, as with the arrival of Spring, crops were being planted, and a new cycle of life was beginning.

For centuries the Romans agreed with them, but they chose 1st March for New Year. It was the Romans who brought in the idea of making resolutions at New

Year, mostly along the lines of acting more nobly, and doing good to others.

Then in 46BC Julius Caesar changed the Roman Empire's calendar. His new Julian calendar realigned the year to the sun, and also began on 1st January. Caesar wanted to honour Janus, the two-faced god who looks backwards into the old year and forward into the new. January 1st didn't have any astronomical or agricultural significance, it was just a random date selected by Caesar.

the elderberries gardening club

The group meet from 10.30am-noon on **the second Wednesday of every month** at **St. John's Church** on St. John's Road in Birkdale.



The club offers talks from guest speakers, trips to historical houses and gardens, and social events.

To find out more, email elderberriesgardening@gmail.com or call Shelley Lewis-Lavender on [01704 560690](tel:01704560690).

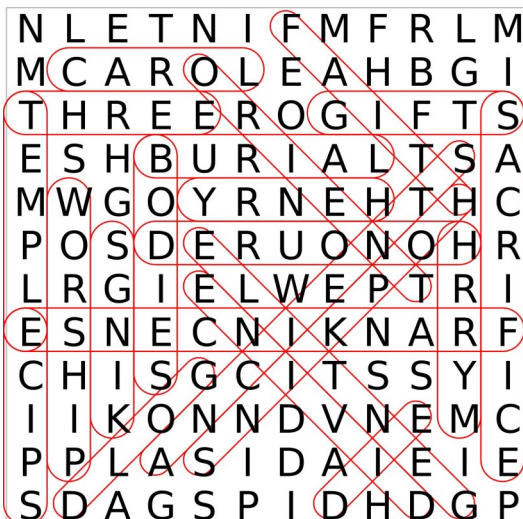


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THE GOOD and BAD KINGS of ENGLAND

By Dennis Davis

For this episode I have chosen the King once described as the wisest fool in Christendom; who united Scotland and England to form the United Kingdom; revised the Book of Common Prayer; a prolific writer and scholar in French, Latin and Greek, which was to arouse his literary ambitions; he convened some of the most learned scholars to study the ancient manuscripts relating to the scriptures and gave us the King James Bible which is still in use today, albeit much less than it once was. "King James the 6th of Scotland and the 1st of England".

James Charles Stuart was born on 19th of June 1566 at Edinburgh Castle, the only son of Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley; he was the Great Great Grandson of King Henry the 7th of England making James a future contender for the English throne.

He came to the Scottish throne at 13 months of age when his mother's army was defeated by the Presbyterian Lords who had rebelled, forcing Mary to abdicate. James was brought up an ardent Presbyterian by a succession of 4 regents and was under their influence becoming very much a political football and subservient to the Scottish factions.

In 1556 he concluded an alliance with his cousin Queen Elizabeth the 1st to help his claim to the English throne.

James' minority ended in 1583 but he did not get full control immediately. In 1589 he married Anne of Denmark. He came to the English throne on the death of Elizabeth on 24th March 1603 and immediately made himself unpopular by declaring that he was an old experienced King. Not knowing the English Parliament he quickly came into conflict with them. He never mastered the art of managing but gave lectures to both Houses on the Royal Prerogatives which caused further offence. He gave his Scottish favourites titles and preference, He is said to have spoken to the Haughty English peers in as broad a Scots



dialect as possible to irritate them. Parliament accused him of extravagance and refusing to grant funds for his plans; he reacted by dissolving Parliament in 1611.

Always short of money He came up with a plan to appoint a new level of peers below Barons. He called them Baronets They had to pay him a sum of money for the title and to be given land in Ireland and take their own servants with them, this became known as the Irish Plantation.

James only went back to Scotland once in his 22 years reign. James was said to be superstitious and believed that witches had tried to kill him and Anne, this led to witches in Scotland being persecuted.

In later years as his judgment faded he showed a greater disregard to public opinion, his refusal to grant greater religious tolerance to Catholics led to anger and a group of zealous Catholics plotted to blow up James and the Houses of Parliament leading to four of their leaders being executed.

James died on 27th March 1625 at Theobalds, Hertfordshire. There had been many attempts on his life and abductions, but he had several ailments that were age-related. It was suggested that he had had a stroke, or that he took some unprescribed medicine, but murder or assassination was ruled out.

I wonder where you would place James on the scale of Good or Bad?

Sermon

The church warden asked the curate how she thought the church service had gone. The curate shrugged. "The music was excellent, and the prayers were relevant, but I wonder if my sermon ever really got off the ground."

The church warden was sympathetic. "Never mind, it certainly taxied a long way."

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The Debatable Land

by John M. Shakespeare

The borders of all the countries around the world, foster an air of the "mystique". This article explores the areas of Britain known as the "Debatable Lands", that is the Scottish/English border. The rivalries between the principal families in this area go to make up what is, to me, a romantic if sometimes brutal picture of the life of these people.

The frontier area was divided up into three Marches, namely East, West and Middle, and were administered by the Wardens of the Marches. All the families who lived in and around the Cheviots spent their time in raiding forays, cattle rustling and blood feuds across the River Tweed.

I believe one of the many battles of significance, fought in the Borderlands was the Battle of Otterburn in 1388 between the Scots and the English. The Percy family, the Lords of Northumberland, and the Black Douglas of Scotland who were traditional enemies led the warring sides. Earl Douglas was killed in the battle and Henry Percy (Hotspur), was taken prisoner. It was only after heavy fighting that the English were defeated. The story of this battle is told in "The Ballad of Otterburn", from the Scottish point of view and "The Ballad of Chevy Chase", from the English viewpoint.

The Family name, be it Armstrong, Hall or Percy meant so much in the borders, that it is well to recall the message contained in Proverbs (Ch 22 verses 1-2), "A good name is to be chosen rather than Great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is maker of them all".

The 15th century saw a mass of Border ballads, frequently not written down but learnt by heart and sung round campfires on Winter evenings, with the singers adding or changing words to show their families in the best light. Political satire, carols and ballads were innumerable. The finest poetry often



to be found from the Scottish side of the border. Discovered in these pages of poetry were stories of the Cheviots, about the exploits of the Kerrs, Elliots, Armstrongs, Scots and Graemes and their English enemies such as the Forsters, Halls and Reeds along with many others.

In later years the romance of the Borderlands was captured by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), in his epic poem, "Young Lochinvar". I quote the final verse when young Lochinvar took his fair lady to horse and rode off with the bride to be, for his own.

**"There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks and Musgraves, they rode and they ran.
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have you e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?"**

The Treaty of Union in 1706 ratified by the Act of Union in 1707, united Scotland with England and Wales to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain. So ended the Border fights, the boundaries of the two legal systems guaranteeing the continued separation of English and Scottish law.

Perhaps one of the best known outcomes of this treaty, was that the town of Gretna Green could perform marriages for young English elopers. The feuding border families of both the Scottish and English Nations placed great measure on family honour. The greater the danger, the greater the honour, for as in the case of young Lochinvar "None but the brave deserve the fair". A code of honour that I believe is sacrosanct throughout all times.

Joining the Sunday morning services and Thursday evening prayers by zoom or by telephone

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services** by **ZOOM**:

The Identification Number every Sunday will be: 812 3403 0688

The Password every Sunday will be: 201823

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services** by **TELEPHONE**:

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Sunday will be: 812 3403 0688

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

The Password every Sunday will be: 201823.

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **ZOOM**:

The Identification Number every Thursday will be: 835 5074 3780

The Password every Thursday will be: 7ehHEK

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **TELEPHONE**:

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Thursday will be: 835 5074 3780.

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

The Password every Thursday will be 7ehHEK. **SUBJECT TO BEING CHANGED.**

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

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IF YOU NEED ANY HELP: Please contact Clive (564206) or Rev. Jennie for any further details you require.

Was it really that long ago?...

60 years ago, on 24th Jan 1965 Winston Churchill died. He was Prime Minister 1940-45 and again in 1955, and one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century. He was named as 'the greatest Briton of all time.' He won the 1953 Nobel Prize for Literature "for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values."

40 years ago, on 1st Jan 1985 the first mobile phone call in the UK was made by comedian Ernie Wise. He rang Vodafone's head office in Newbury from St Katherine's Docks in London.

Also 40 years ago, on 23rd Jan 1985 a debate from the House of Lords was televised live for the first time.

30 years ago, on 1st Jan 1995 the World Trade Organisation was established.

Also 30 years ago, on 3rd Jan 1995 the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that the cumulative total reported AIDS cases had passed the one million mark, with cases in 192 countries. (Including unreported cases, the total was estimated to be about 4.5 million.)

25 years ago, on 1st Jan 2000 the calendar switched over to the year 2000, with no major computer problems from the Y2K 'Millennium Bug'.

15 years ago, on 4th Jan 2010 the Burj Khalifa in Dubai opened. It is the world's tallest structure, standing 2,722 feet (829.8 metres.)

Also 15 years ago, on 12th Jan 2010 the Haiti earthquake took place. The capital, Port-au-Prince, was devastated and at least 100,000 people were killed and buried in mass graves.

10 years ago, on 7th Jan 2015 the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris took place. Two Muslim brothers forced their way into the offices of the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine and opened fire. 12 people were killed and 11 injured. The brothers were shot dead on 9th Jan. The magazine had published images of the Islamic prophet Muhammad in 2011 and 2012, and its offices had been firebombed in Nov 2011.

Church Hall Users (Note: with the exception of the Friday Film Nights the activities listed below are NOT run by St John's Church. They are run by independent groups who use our hall). Contact details are provided in case readers wish to enquire about or join these groups.

Tuesday

4.30pm – 5.30pm **Kiwi Sports Coaching**

Tag Rugby class for boys and girls aged 5-7

School holiday classes sometimes available

Contact: shanehuttonnz@gmail.com

Wednesday

10.30 – 12 noon

2nd Wednesday of the month only. **Elderberries Gardening Club**

A social gardening club, where speakers are invited to talk on various topics, and visits and social events throughout the year.

Contact: Shelley Lewis Lavender on 01704 560690 or via email:

elderberriesgardening@gmail.com

Thursday

1.00pm to 2.00pm: **Balance Classes for the Elderly.**

Contact: ageingwellmerseyside@outlook.com.

6.00-9.00pm: **St John's Rainbows (6.00-7.00pm) St John's Brownies (6.00-7.15pm) and Girl Guides (7.15-9.00pm).**

Contact: Janette Law 01704 565951

Friday

6.30-9.30pm Once per month **St John's Film Nights**

A chance to see some great modern films. Tea, coffee and homemade cake available.

Contact: Christine Baker 01704 560518.

Poem for January 2025

Prayer of the Master (John 17:13-26)

Spirit of joy
Oh, protect us,
As we work hand in hand
Through the world.
Sent by the Son
And the Father.
Fruit-bearers,
Called and commissioned.
Witnesses to the world
Of the Word that speaks
Hope into despair,
Wholeness into disintegration,
Forgiveness into fault.
Spirit of love
Overwhelm us,
That the world might believe
And be changed.
Activate the prayer of the Master,
Make us one.
By Daphne Kitching

Prayer for January 2025

Dear Lord,
We begin a New Year! We all have hopes, expectations, fears and uncertainties, as we move into 2025 – already a quarter of the way through this new century!
We can't know what will happen in the world, in our country, in our lives during this year, but we come before You, thankful that if we put our trust in Jesus and what He achieved on the cross, we need not be afraid; we are safe and secure.
He takes all our hopes and fears and gives us His Peace and His Spirit in return, to sustain and equip us this New Year and always. Thank you, gracious Father.
Thank you, Lord of all the years. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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To: Carl Davey on 2nd January
Tony Humphries on 7th January
Sue Madani on 15th January
Eileen Harrison on 19th January
Tina Kent on 20th January
Sue Doran on 29th January

If there are any birthdays, anniversaries or other reasons to celebrate which our readers would like to share with others **DURING FEBRUARY** please let the Editor know by email to stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com

The Last Laughs

SIGN LANGUAGE

Gloucestershire is up in arms after repainted road markings near a school ended up spelling "Ceep klear".

This is far from Britain's worst signage mistake. Top of the pile is 2008's entry from Swansea, where a sign saying "No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only" was sent to a Welsh translator. He replied immediately but, alas, the signmakers didn't speak Welsh. Their finished work meant: "I'm not in the office at the moment. Send any work to be translated."

The favourite incorrect road sign of Stephen Knight of Barnet, Herts was one by roadworks in Cardiff city centre saying "look left" for English-speaking pedestrians and "look right" in Welsh. Mr Knight always wondered against whom the contractors had a murderous grudge.

The Knowledge Book of Insults, provides bon mots for your special enemies such as: "The covers of this book are too far apart." There's also the artist Walter Sickert's comment to a guest: "You must come again when you have less time."

Hand of destiny

Dr Peter Moore of Marldon, Devon wrote to The Times newspaper thus:

Sir, I was interested to read your story "Authors put pen to paper amid the demise of handwriting." The problem of legibility is not new. The headmaster's comments in my school report from 1965 read: "Peter must understand that his handwriting is his only link to the examiner." Perhaps I was always destined to become a doctor.

Sue Abrahams of Bridgnorth, Shropshire reported that in her husband's school report from 1963 his English master wrote: "Roger should try writing with the other foot." It didn't improve things at all.

THE VATICAN GAG

"Irony is a medicine," says Pope Francis in his autobiography "Hope", in which he extols the power of humour. He shares favourite jokes, such as one about a vain Jesuit. Struck down with a heart problem, the Jesuit asks the Lord if his time has come but God says he still has 40 years. Sure enough, he recovers but decides to seize the day by getting all his desired procedures: hair transplant, face-lift, etc. When these are done, he is killed by a car. "Lord," he says in heaven, "you told me I had another 40 years!" "Oops," replies the Almighty. "I didn't recognise you."

When Hell froze over

In Edward Brooke-Hitching's excellently dip-in-able *The Most Interesting Book in the World* we read that Hell froze over. This was not the underworld but the small town of Hell, Michigan, where temperatures in 2019 fell to minus 26C. While the town trades on the slogan "Go to Hell", the origins of its name date back to a German traveller in the 1830s who arrived, squinted in the sunshine and said: "So schön hell." Or "How beautifully bright" Brooke-Hitching then moves from Hell to a place in New South Wales called Bland, which in 2013 joined Boring, Oregon, and the village of Dull in Scotland to form the League of Extraordinary Communities.

The Lighter Side of Life in Court

At Chelmsford Crown Court on Christmas Eve some time ago, of the three cases that day, the only successful defendant was a Mr Christmas. He had an advantage at that time of year, but Mr Christmas made doubly sure of his acquittal by securing representation from a Mr Carol!

The Editor once had a court list in which an accused person, whose surname was Pipe, had been give by his parents the first name of Dwayne. And in the same list of cases was a defendant whose name was Shaun Lamb! What were their parents thinking of?



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