

Deane St Mary's

November/December 2010

This month we've taken a long, hard look at various aspects of the Christmas event. Myths are exploded, customs explored and truth looked into. Means of (spiritual) preparation for Christmas are included or recommended.

There's news from the Huckers in Chile and articles about two mining disasters—the one at local Pretoria Pit 100 years ago and the more recent one in Chile.

This month's profile subject is Ken Tidmarsh and we've a testimony from two children to be baptised at St Mary's soon.

One light(ish) read is recommended and another book recommendation complements an item on money saving.

The next magazine will be out on January 8th or 15th January (tbd). Material for inclusion should be with the editor by January 5th 01204 849468 / 9 Sherbourne Road BL1 5NN / anne-roberts@talktalk.net



St Mary's Info: November/December 2010

	9.00	10.30	6.00
28 Nov	Holy Communion	Morning Service	Turning back the clocks? Gal 3:18 — 4:11
	1 Thes 4:13 — 18; Jn 11:17 — 44		
05 Dec	Holy Communion	All Age with Baptism	Christians: slaves or free? Gal 4:12 — 5:12
	Is 7:1- — 25; Lk 1:26 — 38		
12 Dec	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Unnatural acts Gal 5:13 — 26
	Is 11:1 — 15; Mat 1:1 — 17		
19 Dec	Holy Communion	Family Nativity	Carols by Candlelight
	Jer 23:5 — 6; Lk 2:8 — 20		
25 Dec	Holy Communion	All Age Communion	
	Matthew 1:18 — 25		
26 Dec	9.00 Holy Communion		
	Mic 5:2 — 5; Jn 1:1 — 14		

Christmas Extras

*4th December Church Family Christmas Party
6.00—9.00 Memorial Hall
Tickets £2.50/£1 from church or office*

*18th December 'Come and Sing concert'
with Bolton Music service
Details in church or office*

Prepare the way for the Lord!

Prepare the children's costumes for the school nativity play. Prepare the turkey (or vegetarian alternative!) for Christmas dinner. Prepare the car for the Boxing Day trip to the in-laws. Prepare the drinks cabinet for the Christmas onslaught. Prepare to get the Christmas decorations out of the attic. Prepare to buy auntie Joan's Christmas present... or did you do that in last January's sales? Christmas *can* be like D-Day can't it? Remember Margot in 'The Good Life' who cancelled Christmas because it hadn't been delivered properly? But suppose you had 600 years to prepare for just one Christmas, would it make things easier?

Each Monday morning the clergy from St Mary Deane, St Andrew Over Hulton, St Bede Morris Green and St Thomas & St John Lostock meet to read the Bible and to pray for each other and for the life and witness of our four churches. At our meeting this week, our Old Testament reading was from Isaiah chapter 40. Traditionally in the church's calendar, the Old Testament readings during Advent and Christmas are from Isaiah.

Isaiah was written between 500 and 700BC and yet speaks in some detail of events that will unfold five to seven centuries later! Isaiah 7 speaks of a sign of something new that God is going to do in the world: that *'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel'*, this name meaning God with us. Chapter 9 speaks of the coming *'Prince of Peace'* from Galilee who will bring light to people walking in spiritual darkness and who is *'Mighty God'* who will reign for ever. Chapter 11 speaks of the coming Messiah (God's anointed King) and saviour who will be descended from King David (*'the stump of Jesse'*)... which Jesus was. Chapter 40 is about the coming King and of the sin of God's people being atoned for. And God, speaking through Isaiah goes on (v 10-11):

*See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm.*

*See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.*

He tends his flock like a shepherd:

*He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.*

This King of kings through whom all things were created (Colossians 1:16) is also the gentle shepherd who cares for the flock. And we are to prepare to receive him (verses 3-5):

*A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare*

*the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

In those days, when a king was coming to town, whole roads would be made straight and level. But John the Baptist and the Apostles apply these verses to Jesus (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23), calling us to get ready for the arrival of the King.

For so many people the birth of Jesus Christ is an event in history which is largely isolated from and irrelevant to anything else. It's a crib scene, a nativity play or Ben Hur on the telly (or is that Easter!?) but most folk seem to be unaware of the bigger picture. The link back to the promises of the Old Testament or the link forward to the first Easter... read Isaiah 53 alongside the Gospel accounts and tell me that God is not there telling us about the events of the first Good Friday six centuries before they occurred! And we can lose the relevance to our lives today or the continuity with that day in the future when Jesus will come again... not as Saviour this time but as Judge.

When Jesus Christ came to be 'God with us' that first time, some understood and believed but most didn't. God's chosen people had been waiting for centuries for the Messiah but didn't recognise him even when he was standing in front of them! So wrapped up were they in their own ideas of religion. But any of us can manufacture a version of Christmas, of Christianity, even of Christ, as we want them to be, which may be a million miles away from what God in his Bible says they are. Let's be authentic this Advent and Christmas and get back to who Jesus really is and why he is crucially relevant to our lives.

Whatever your hopes (and fears?) for Christmas 2010 and for the new year, can I encourage you to prepare the way for the Lord in your life, and know the Good Shepherd holding you in His arms and carrying you close to His heart?

Peace be with you.

Terry Clark



Advent

As November closes, Advent begins. The exact birth-date of Jesus is not known, but during the 5th century the date of 25 December was chosen to become the Feast of the Nativity, or Christmas. By the sixth century, the Christian Church was in the habit of spending several weeks leading up to Christmas in prayerful expectant preparation. The fourth Sunday before Christmas Day became Advent Sunday. 'Advent', of course, means 'coming', or 'coming in', and traditionally special candles have been lit, and more recently, advent calendars used, as the Church prepares itself for the coming of the Holy Child, the long-awaited Messiah.

Prayers for Advent

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Almighty God,
as your kingdom dawns,
turn us from the darkness of sin to the
light of holiness,
that we may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Christmas

It is to St Luke's wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel's visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon's hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimmittis.

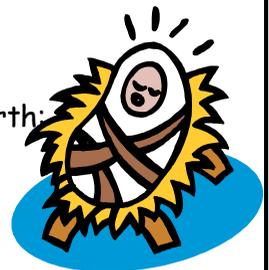
Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So - imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So - thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not a Jew! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story, and indeed more of the New Testament than any other single person, was a Gentile!

Prayers for Christmas

Almighty God,
as we prepare with joy
to celebrate the gift of the Christ-child,
embrace the earth with your glory
and be for us a living hope
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth;
accept our heartfelt praise
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.



The Nativity on BBC 1 this Christmas



Look out for The Nativity on the BBC this autumn. The script has been written by Tony Jordan, hailed as one of the top television scriptwriters in Britain. His work includes Boon, Minder, Eldorado, Holby Blue, and Hustle, not to mention 250 episodes of EastEnders.

This time he is telling the story of the Nativity, over four half-hour episodes on BBC1 on the run-up to Christmas. Jordan says: "I want this film of the nativity to be accessible, all right? I want it to be watched by the people who watch EastEnders, Hustle, everything I do. I want them to watch it, believe it and sob like a child.

"I do have a faith....I believe Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that he came to take away our sins. So, I have written a version of the nativity that I can believe. The people who watch it who aren't already sold, they can watch it and see that it's truthful and they can say, 'That's really cool.' It's really helped me, writing it. It's helped me to make sense of the story. It's made sense of the birth of somebody that I believed in. Before, I had nagging doubts. Now, I don't have any doubts."

A different way of looking at Christmas



Are you looking for a different, more contemporary take on the familiar Christmas story? Have a look at this:

www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk. It tells the Christmas story through short (90 seconds) film clips in a way you've never seen it before. There's a link to download the videos and one to send the link to a friend. (It really is good! Children, teens, adults can enjoy. Quirky but not irreverent. Ed)

Preparing for Christmas

In preparation for Christmas many Christians find it helpful to set aside time each day in the lead up to Christmas and **DO** what Advent **IS**. These suggestions of books that might help you in that are all published by brf. The Christian bookshop on Deansgate will have or order these for you and have others as well.

Don't forget the bookshop for your Christmas cards and presents of different kinds. Don't forget to make sure any children in your life have copies of a good book of the Christmas story—brf are good at these too.

Go to www.brf.org.uk for ideas.

Pilgrims to the Manger

Naomi Starkey 7.99

This book is an invitation to a pilgrimage through Advent, to Christmas itself and on to Epiphany. As the days and weeks pass, we will reflect on a range of issues - the significance of the festivities, the values that underpin our lives, some of the other special days in the Church calendar at this time, and how we can begin to deepen our understanding of God's perspective on our world, our church and ourselves.

Shock and Awe

Ian Coffey

Tasting God's outrageous grace - the BRF Advent Book for 2009 - written by popular Bible teacher Ian Coffey.

£6.99

Five Impossible things to believe before Christmas

From the angel appearing to a teenage girl to give her the shocking news of an unexpected pregnancy, to the sudden appearance of mysterious 'wise men' following a star in search of a king, the Christmas story can feel so familiar that we can forget just how outrageous - and, humanly speaking, impossible - its many twists and turns really are.

Kevin Sculley 4.99

December 21 Winter Solstice

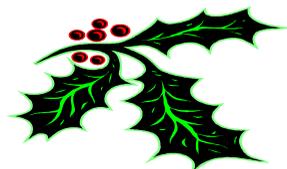
A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green..." But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: "Against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare



Guides, Brownies and Rainbows would like to thank everyone who saved Sainsbury's Active Kids vouchers once again. The vouchers have been used to obtain large floor games for the girls to use at their meetings. Please note that all sections Rainbows aged 5 to 7, Brownies aged 7 to 10 and Guides 10 upwards wish to invite new members to their meetings. Please contact Carole Baxendale Tel 01204 419167 for information. Girls are welcome to visit meetings first, with Parents if they wish to see what we do.

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS and LORDS OF MISRULE

The 12 days of Christmas begin on the 25th December and end on 5th January. In the Western Christian tradition 6th January marks the Feast of the Epiphany or the visit of the wise men, although in the Eastern tradition it is linked to Christ's baptism.



In the Middle Ages, the 12 days were linked to constant feasting and merrymaking culminating with a huge feast on 12th Night. Nowadays the 12th day is seen as the last day for decorations to be taken down and some even see it as 'bad luck' not to do so, but in many continental countries, particularly Germany and in Elizabethan England, decorations were frequently kept up until Candlemas on February 2nd.

In medieval England the 12 days were often celebrated by a so called Feast of Fools in which a Lord of Misrule (in Scotland known as the Abbot of Unreason) was chosen by lot from the servants and peasantry to preside over a brief social revolution in which they could command anyone to do anything, and the ordinary feudal rules were turned upside down with masters serving peasants. Although the feast was probably Roman in origin and linked to the Saturnalia, it remained a feature of Christian Christmas celebrations for many centuries, and is the background to Shakespeare's comedy `Twelfth Night`, written for a similar court celebration.

Barbara Winder

Our Special Day

My name is Sophie Crooks and I am 7 years old. I first came to Deane Church on Palm Sunday 2 years ago with Rainbows, I liked it so much that I joined Sunday School and now come to church most Sundays. In September this year my little brother Oliver started Sunday School too, he is 3 and full of mischief.



Sunday the 5th December will be a very special day for us as we are going to be baptised at Deane Church. We are very excited and looking forward to our big day.

Sophie Crooks.

Walking to Church (2)

I read with interest the article about walking to church in the last magazine. When I was 17 years of age I walked from the bottom of Deane Road to church every Sunday. No buses or trams ran until 12 o'clock. I went to church whatever the weather on my own and as it was Communion every week I only had a drink before I set off. Breakfast was when I got back around 10. Communion was at 8. I loved it, the walk, the service, the friendship. I made lots of friends. But as I now live nearer to my church and I can drive it is a lot easier, being much older. I look back sometimes at the happy memories and treasure them.

Emily Margaret Keating (Madge)

P.S. After having my breakfast, weather permitting, I would cycle to Southport with six friends!

This month's profile

Ken Tidmarsh

I was born in Windsor in Berkshire in 1947 with a family comprising of my parents, older sister, a half brother and two half sisters. Sadly, all except my sister have now died. A few months after I was born, my family went to live in Slough where I went to primary school and then to Marlow Grammar School, where I studied French, German and Latin to A Level

From there I went to Leeds University where I studied Law and in July 1969, armed with a Law Degree, my working career began and took the following path.

Initially I worked for Leeds City Council in the Town Clerk's office providing legal advice and support to the Housing, Education and Social Services Committees.

In 1974 I joined the Council's Leisure Services department and was involved with legal and insurance work relating to the Council's provision of sports facilities.

In 1981 I changed direction and worked for Barnardo's as a fundraiser in the North East of England. In 1985 I transferred to the Royal National Institute for the Blind where, based in Cambridge, I was responsible for all fundraising activities in ten counties in eastern England.

From 1987 - 1988 I was Manager of High Leigh Conference Centre in Hoddeston Hertfordshire before training and then becoming a counsellor back in Cambridge where I worked until 1997. I then joined the National Blood Service and worked in the Issue Department at the Cambridge Blood Centre until July 2002 when I transferred to the Manchester Blood Centre where I remained until I retired at the end of 2009.

Even these stark facts reveal quite a chequered career with apparently no common thread. The two constants, however, through-

out these past forty years have been God and my wife, Elizabeth. When I was 14 I became a Christian, while I was attending the Brethren Church and at the age of 21, in September 1969, I married Elizabeth. I am sure that for all of us the journey through life is full of ups and downs and highs and lows. My life has certainly been like this but with God and Elizabeth by my side I feel that I have been blessed. I like to think that I have kept sane as well, although some may dispute that!



My church life has also been quite chequered in that from my Brethren background I went via an Anglican church and a Baptist church to a Methodist church where I became a chief elder and was baptised in 1972. I joined a United Reformed Church/Methodist Free Church where I became an elder and church secretary.

Our return here to Elizabeth's roots at the end of 2002 has enabled me to "see the light" and join St Mary's Church Deane, where among other things I look after the Bereavement Support Group and do a bit of "wardening" now and again.

Just to complete the picture, I have a son, Jamie who is 32 and a daughter Sarah who is 28 and who got married last month. I am an avid sports fan having played many sports during my life and between 1993 and 1996 I ran three marathons. I am a keen walker (when I get the chance) and I am a lover of a wide variety of music.

As Terry Oakes said in his profile two months ago, I also look forward to full retirement (whatever that means!) In the meantime, however, my hope is that all of us, as we continue our journey through this life with God, will be drawn ever closer to Him and to each other in love and fellowship, so that as our relationship with Him and our faith in Him grows, His love will shine out from us into the local community and neighbourhood.

Do you know that you don't know?

Do you realise that most of us do not know the account of the birth of Jesus as accurately as we think we do? Many 'facts' which we have think are true come to us not from the Bible, but from nativity plays, carols, songs, and Christmas cards!

Mary and Joseph may have taken a donkey with them on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but it is certainly not mentioned in the Bible. And they did not go from inn to inn in Bethlehem until some innkeeper took pity on them. Innkeepers are never mentioned. St Luke simply says there was no room for them

to stay in the (one) inn. Bethlehem like most towns would only have one hostelry where travellers could hope to get food and accommodation for the night. What is more there is no mention of a stable. That is assumed from the fact that Luke says Mary placed Jesus in a manger (a feeding trough for animals). But the manger could have been in any place where animals sheltered, a cave for example. The church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over a cave and the manger is a recess in the cave-wall.

Luke does say that the visit of the shepherds was soon after Jesus was born. But the Kings/Wise Men might not have arrived until up to two years later. (Christmas cards, cribs and nativity plays which have everyone clustered around the manger are inaccurate). Matthew is the gospel-writer who describes their visit. But he does not say they were Kings or Wise. He describes them as Magi. Magi were Persian astrologers and astronomers. And the tradition that there were three of them comes from the number of their gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew writes of them going into the



'house' where Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus were. This and the fact that later Herod had all the boys of two and under in Bethlehem killed would suggest that Jesus was not a tiny baby when they came.

Now of course, when long-held beliefs are challenged, people can feel threatened and start to wonder how much more of the Christmas story is based on the truth.

But we need not worry. All the points mentioned here are unimportant. It does not matter one bit whether Mary rode a donkey or not, whether Jesus was born in a stable or a cave, whether there were six Kings or only two or none!

What does matter is that we understand fully what happened that first Christmas. God the Son, through whom all things were created in the beginning, took upon himself human form. He was born as a human baby and for 30 years or so lived on this earth. He died on the cross and rose again so that all who believe in him may have eternal life. Jesus is now at God the Father's right hand in Heaven.

Now that is a fact which we all need to accept for ourselves.

*Man's maker was made man that he,
Ruler of the stars,
might nurse at his mother's breast;
that the Bread of Life might hunger.
the Fountain thirst,
the Light sleep,
the Way be tired on its journey;
that Truth might be accused of false witnesses,
the Teacher be beaten with whips,
the Foundation be suspended on wood;
that Strength might grow weak;
that the Healer might be wounded;
that Life might die. Augustine*

Prayer Letter from David and Gina Hucker, with CMS in Arica, N. Chile.

October 2010

The past couple of months have seen a lot accomplished on the church building. During this time we managed to build walls, construct a façade - entrance to the church, install the electrics and paint walls. We still have a way to go, but looking from where I am writing this letter, we have achieved a lot over the seven years that we have been here on this property. During the construction Gerardo was responsible for hiring the tradesmen for the job and even though they were well paid for Arican standards, it was sometimes difficult to actually get men for the work that had to be carried out.

One of the workman, Rodolfo, had an accident and fell of the first tier of the scaffolding. He suffered serious head injuries and was flown to a hospital in the south of Chile after nothing was done for him here in a clinic in Arica. We prayed for him, but never really knew what had happened to him. Two Sundays ago he came to church and told us the whole story. He is much better now, however he needs an operation to join a crack that he has in his skull. He is looking towards the Lord after his ordeal and plans to leave Arica, move south and begin his life again.



Every year we seem to go through a phase of growth and this year is no different. However, it is harder for people to be committed to God and His church, so we have a number of folk that come and go. Some leave the city, some may go to another church and some may just stop attending. These past few months have seen quite a number of folk coming to attend with us. So we are looking in good standing for next year. Hebrews 10.25 says, *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* Therefore going to church can be a good habit for us, if we are not doing it from a sense of obligation. The hope is that the diocese will send a pastor to help take the church to the next level. We will not know for sure what our situation will be until we speak with the Bishop when he visits and see what his intentions are for Arica. We feel that we should

stay here for a year or two more as we would like to see the church here have all the possibility of further establishing itself and to become a prophetic voice in the city and a vibrant, growing church. We have learned that the pastor slated to come here, Arica, for the past two years is now headed to another congregation. The Bishop had informed us that the Chilean pastor was originally



coming here and this was said on various occasions and so naturally, we started making plans towards leaving Arica. This will not be the case now as there is no one available to come to Arica. As far as we know, no other pastor is in line to take over San Andres. Surprisingly, this is not inconsistent with the lack of communication over the years and adds to the frustration of not being able to celebrate communion on a consistent basis. If no one comes from Santiago to visit us this year, and this seems highly likely, it will be two years since we celebrated communion as a congregation. Jean and I recently celebrated communion when we went to Iquique during the national holidays, where we attended another denomination.

It is a sad indictment of the situation here that we have to celebrate communion outside our Anglican church.



This November we hope to travel to Santiago for a diocesan retreat. At this we will be sitting down with the Archdeacon, who is head over the north of Chile, and the Bishop and discussing the future of Arica. This will be a key meeting and one where the Chilean diocese needs to develop a plan for the long term pastoring of this church.

In July, I was asked participate in an ecumenical service for the anniversary of a school. The Chilean culture is one where every school celebrates their anniversary annually and usually for a week with all sorts of activities for students. The priest in charge of this event went to great lengths to contact me, phoning the diocesan office in Santiago. I am always amused to see what an ecumenical service in Arica means. On the two occasions that I have attended, it has been just the Anglicans and the Catholics. My part in this celebration was to give a short, encouraging talk and pray for the students and school. After the service, I was given the tour of the school, which is a municipal school and in poor condition as most municipal schools are, here in Arica.

Recently I was asked to do a small funeral service for an Englishman who had lived here for many years. He was known as the Spaniard. Apparently, it seems that he tried to hide his nationality and whereabouts. No one knew he was English until he took his passport to hospital. Sadly his son, who had been looking for him for many years, was contacted while his father was still in hospital and came to Arica a few months later for the funeral. Not having confessed a faith during his life, it was pleasing to hear some sisters-in-the-Lord give testimony during the service of how in the final days of his life, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

Transitions are never easy and this has been the case for us with the SAMS / CMS marriage. When we returned from England, we were delighted to see that we were receiving a higher wage. Our instincts were to be thankful and naively think that we had been given a raise. After two months had past, we were advised that the increase was a mistake and that at the beginning of next year we are obliged to pay back the money that was wrongly sent our way. So our emotional balloon was soon very much deflated. However, we depend on the Lord for our provision and believe that He will somehow cover the deficit.

Our children are doing well in their perspective studies. Wesley is in the first year of studying to be an electronic engineer. He is finding calculus to be quite challenging, although he seems to be managing. Caleb is in the second last year of his schooling, but at this stage he is unsure as to what he wants to study.



We are still trying to know to what level we have been exposed to heavy metals here in Arica. We hope to do some tests soon to determine the extent of the contamination and if the tests indicate problems then we will take steps to rid our bodies of these dangerous elements. One such step may be actually leaving Arica and heading to Iquique, which is the town four hours drive south of here. This would involve many changes, but we cannot risk our health any further if this is indeed the case.

God bless you all and thank you for all your emails, letters / postcards, birthday cards, financial support and most importantly prayers.

David and Gina Hucker, Wesley and Caleb.

Books4u

`LAST TRAIN FROM LIGURIA`

CHRISTINE DWYER HICKEY

The above book was chosen for the church book club to read in October. It deals with a time and place unfamiliar to the majority of us; the rise of Fascism in the Italy of the 1930s.

The book has three narrators; the most difficult and least sympathetic is Edward, a young Irish musician from the 1930s who leaves Ireland in terrible circumstances to lead an itinerant life on the continent. The most prolific narrator is Bella, who describes her childhood in London with her doctor father, a widower, and then her decision to take a post as a governess in Italy in the 1930s, despite her father's opposition. The long journey she takes to her eventual destination, a seaside resort on the Italian-French border, is very vividly written, as is her experience of all the personalities at the resort, and her growing affection for her charge, Alex, a difficult and rather isolated boy, with a dying father and an absentee mother. Edward is also part of the household, and the two begin a friendship. The final narrator is Anna, a young artist writing in the Dublin of the 1990s, her link with Bella only made clear towards the end.

As Hitler rises to power and begins a pact with Italy, Europe changes. Hickey is excellent on the way everyday freedoms are suddenly eroded, even for schoolchildren, and ordinary healthy clubs such as the Scouts are used for more sinister ends. Gradually it becomes clear that Bella must return home, but her problem is that her charge's mother is Jewish and has disappeared and he is in grave peril, as is his baby sister. Eventually Bella and Edward are persuaded to take the children on false papers provided by sympathetic nuns, across the Italian border on one of the last trains. Anna's story brings the events up to date, and gives further information.

This is an absorbing book it does beautifully suggest the day to day moral bravery of ordinary people in that time, and the difficult choices they all had to make.

Barbara Winder

PRETORIA PIT DISASTER

DECEMBER 21ST 1910

The Pretoria Pit Disaster is the worst coal mining accident to have occurred in Lancashire, and the third worst mining disaster in British history. The Pretoria Pit was a complex of coal mines owned by



the Hulton Colliery Company, and situated on the border of Westhoughton and Atherton. It was the largest coal mine in the Westhoughton area, working five coal seams in the region. Each seam had its own mine: Trencherbone, Plodder, Yard, Three-Quarter, and Arley mine.

The Hulton Colliery Co. employed approximately 2,500 people. On December 21, 1910, a total of 898 men and boys clocked in for the day shift at the Hulton Colliery, and most had descended the shafts below ground before 8am. One was a 16 year old boy, Joseph Staveley on his very first day of employment in the Yard mine workshops. A total of 347 men, including Joseph, had descended down the No. 3 pit shaft to work in the Yard mine that morning, when suddenly, at 7:50am there was a tremendous underground explosion, about 300 yards below ground level.

Mr Alfred Tonge was the General Manager of Hulton Colliery at the time, and he lived almost two miles away from the pit head, from where he heard the explosion. He was at the mine within twenty minutes, leading a team of rescuers into the mine. He wrote an account of the disaster which we may include in a later magazine. Only 4 men working the Yard mine that morning survived the initial blast. They were **Fountain Byers, John Sharples, Joseph Staveley, and William Davenport**. But Fountain died within than 24 hours. He

left behind a wife, and child, and was laid to rest at Wingates Parish Church on Christmas Day. John Sharples died a few weeks later of pneumonia brought on by the disaster.



The three survivors of the accident were pictured on postcards produced locally for sale to raise money for the Mayor's Relief Fund in an effort to aid the widows, orphans and children of the deceased. Joseph Staveley is shown in the centre of this postcard.

The Mayor's Relief Fund ultimately succeeded in raising £145,000 (the equivalent value of £9,046,485.61 in 2002) to help support the widows and children of those that died.

Many commemorative serviettes were produced locally as a tribute to those that had died, and listed the names of all 344 deceased men and boys. The serviettes varied on border designs, but the center panels were typically the same, and a number of these are currently preserved on display at the Westhoughton Library. Local families would traditionally display these serviettes each year around the time of the anniversary of the disaster in remembrance of those they had lost.

Every December from that day to this a memorial service has been held at Westhoughton Parish Church.

Chile miners: the 34th man

The Chilean miners have emerged from their ordeal testifying to the presence of Jesus with them, according to a CMS mission partner on the scene. The Rev Alfredo Cooper, chaplain to President Sebastian Pinera, told BBC Radio Five Live that the miners had a sense of Jesus being the 34th man in the collapsed mine.



"Many of the miners went down as atheists, unbelievers or semi-believers and they have come up to a man testifying that they were not 33 but that there were 34 down there - that Jesus was there with them and that they had a constant sense of his presence and guidance," he told Five Live's Peter Allen.

Challenged by Allen that if divine intervention had saved the miners, divine intervention must have put them down there in the first place, Alf gave a careful, clear response.

"Man is subject to accidents and all sorts of problems thanks often to his wilful negligence, as was the case in this mine. There are consequences when you don't care enough for people. And of course in those situations people tend to cry out to God... And the interesting thing is God has answered."

Alfredo Cooper paid tribute to the work of all the scientists, engineers, politicians and press, who had contributed to the successful rescue of the miners. "We see the hands of all these magnificent experts all around, the good will of so many people internationally and the brilliant coverage of the press. We would suggest that all this works together for good, that certainly as we prayed God has guided in remarkable ways - even the scientists."

Alf helped to lead the country's prayers for the trapped miners since the beginning. He described how he had convened an emergency prayer meeting at the presidential palace, and how the president had asked for a service of thanksgiving when it was discovered that the miners were still alive.

Austerity Britain

By David Kynaston

Bloomsbury Paperback £9.99

Rationing; food and clothing scarce; long queues, especially when rumour said that a scarce item had arrived; shortage of fuel for warmth, cooking, industry and transport; spivs; the temptations of the black market. After the 2nd world war Britain was exhausted—it seemed we would never emerge from the darkness and cold. The winter of 1947 was particularly savage; indeed an Age of Austerity.

Yet the spirit of the people was resilient. The author quotes from the diaries of ordinary citizens to give the flavour of daily experience and daily frustration. There was solace in the cinema and in popular comedy shows on the wireless. No TV for most, few washing machines or dishwashers, few telephones, little central heating, family cars a rarity...

People believed in the future. The Attlee government was enterprising and had to look ahead. It founded the Welfare State - a phrase first used, the author says, by William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury; it established the National Health Service, driven by Aneurin Bevan; it developed plans for housing, to rebuild areas demolished by bombing, to replace prefabs and old terraces without hot water or sanitary arrangements. Walter Greenwood, author of *Love on the Dole*, recently revived at the Octagon, spoke of Hanky Park, Salford, as "blackened, crumbling brick, looking as if only the coating of grime held it together."

Wealth creation was always under threat; there were strikes in the docks, conflict in the mines and motor industry. Yet it was a time of renewal and people who were born in this period have benefited throughout their lives from the aspirations and achievements of Attlee's government and the foundations it laid. The book is fascinating, especially for children and young adults of the time, who shared the spirit of youth, despite the economic conditions. It is full of detail and very long. It may be best to use the excellent index to look up particular topics. Think of asking the library for a copy.

MONEY SAVING TIPS

In these times of economic difficulty, it was felt that we could perhaps all value some suggestions on economy. I know that many church members may have other tips, and if they let me know about them or write them down, they can appear in later magazines. To start us off, here are a few I've found useful.

Do I need it?

The August Which magazine had an article on household products we don't need to buy. They suggested that a multipurpose surface cleaner was just as good as buying special ones for different areas of the house. They said Tumble Dryer Balls failed to reduce drying times in their tests. Smoothie Makers were difficult to clean and no better than a good blender. Anti-wrinkle creams were no better than a good cheap moisturiser and petrol fuel additives didn't give you more miles to the gallon.

Think of bundles!

Many household staples are cheaper to buy in bulk, and many products such as energy (gas and electric), telecoms (phones, internet, cable) are much cheaper from a single supplier. If you have stuck with your old one for years, try ringing them with the cheapest quote you can find and bargain. The same very much applies to insurances, especially car insurance.

Go on line!

I know a surprising number of the over 60s (about 60%) have never touched a computer, but it's easy to do, fun once you learn and there are lots of free classes. You don't even have to own a computer as most local libraries will let you use them. In a recent study of travel insurance, Which found that all the best deals for the over 60s were available only on line, and the same is true of many other products, especially financial ones. If you are over 50 you may be interested in the website www.oscaruk.co.uk which gives details such as concessions, discounts and savings. Keen gardeners can swop seeds and plants for free using www.gardenswopshop.co.uk. If you are a classical music fan www.classical.com offers a free album to download

every week.

Free Days Out.

A number of English Heritage sites are free to enter, and others often have vouchers allowing children or another adult free entry. Remember most museums and art galleries are now free, and many have special events for children in school holidays. You can also contact the main television studios to get tickets to be in the audience for a local recording. Look for free maps from Ordnance Survey on line, and free walking guides with suggested walks from organisations such as the National Trust and local authorities. I always collect my seasonal guide to the Bolton Area, available free from the Town Hall or libraries which gives lots of free and cheap ideas for activities run in the area. There are four in the year.

Gift Ideas.

It is silly to spend a fortune we do not have on gifts; instead we could be more creative. What skills or crafts do you have? Could you make a gift? What about offering your services to someone who isn't handy to do a DIY job that needs doing? A lovely cake home baked or preserves in a jar, a carefully worked family history with photos, a nice meal, making a DVD of favourite music or holiday photos, may mean far more. And of course don't forget rooting in charity shops like our own, or going to local church craft fairs may well solve a problem. Finally always factor in postage costs if they live far away; it may genuinely be cheaper and easier to choose a site like Amazon where the postage is free.

All for now but I hope to return with more ideas in future.

Barbara

Ladies' Guild
December 7th
Carols and readings for Christmas
7.30 p.m. Memorial Hall

Bits and Pieces about...

Christmas Eve

Traditionally, the celebrations of Christmas Day began with midnight mass on Christmas Eve. This mass was always special, even for people who usually found going to church every Sunday something of a chore. The Church made little attempt to exclude the pagan spirit of Christmas fun from the Christmas midnight mass and people would be marvelling at the decorations, admiring each other's new clothes and calling out 'Happy Christmas!' across the aisle.

Superstitions were theoretically frowned upon by the Church as being beliefs arising from ignorance. However, in the Middle Ages, when so much of nature seemed inexplicable even to the Church, many simple superstitions were permitted as long as they did not conflict with the Church's teachings. There were a whole host of superstitions about midnight on Christmas Eve, e.g. people thought that animals celebrated the arrival of Christ and that the cows in the cattle-sheds and the deer in the forests went down on their knees at midnight.

Christmas Day

BC/AD

In the Western world the birthday of Jesus Christ has been celebrated on December 25th since AD 354, partly to replace the pagan worship that was commonplace in those days. However, we can be fairly sure that Jesus wasn't actually born on that date.

The Bible tells us that shepherds were staying out in the fields overnight when Jesus was born (Luke 2:8), but in that part of the world it would have been far too cold at night to do so in December. What is more likely is that He was born in the Spring, perhaps between March and May. Whatever the time of year, it is virtually impossible to identify the actual date.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that the Christian scholar Dionysius Exiguus was asked by the Pope in AD 525 to calculate new cycles for fixing the date of Easter. However, he decided to base his calculations on the date of Jesus's birth. Unfor-

tunately, it wasn't discovered until the 9th century that he got it badly wrong, by which time it was too late to change the calendar.

He fixed the birth in the year 1 BC or AD 1 (Historians apparently can't agree which.) and began counting from the latter. Earlier and later scholars agreed that Jesus was born at an earlier date. Indeed, it was eventually established that Herod the Great died in Spring of 4 BC. If Jesus had been born at the start of AD 1, as we currently have it, then Jesus would have been born some 4 or 5 years after Herod died. There is no way of accurately establishing the date of his birth. It is most likely to have been between 5 and 6 BC.

The important thing is that he was born, and his nominal birth date of December 25th is as good as any to celebrate his birth and his message. It is also a wonderful catalyst for enjoying the precious and simple pleasures of being, close together in the warm familiarity of friends and family, renewing relationships and sharing memories.

Boxing Day

Boxing Day takes its name from the ancient practice of opening boxes that contained money given to those who had given their service during the year. It was also the day when alms boxes, placed in churches on Christmas Day, were opened. The money was then given to the priest or used to help the poor and needy. Another name for Boxing Day used to be Offering Day.



The earliest boxes of all were not box shaped, as you might imagine, nor were they made of wood. They were, in fact, earthenware containers with a slit in the top (rather like piggy banks.) These earthenware 'boxes' were used by the Romans for collecting money to help pay for the festivities at the winter Saturnalia celebrations.

During the seventeenth century it became the custom for apprentices to ask their master's customers for money at Christmas time. They collected this money in earthenware containers, which could be opened only by being smashed, and on Boxing Day the apprentices would eagerly have a 'smashing time!' (origin of expression)

S t M a r y's D i r e c t o r y

Team Rector	Terry Clark	01204 61819
DLM	Elizabeth Plant	01204 63730
Readers	David Dewhurst	01204 651347
	Nola Kilsby	01204 665700
Wardens	Les Kilsby	01204 665700
	Beccy Rutter	01204 654737
	Ken Tidmarsh	01204 652184
Administrator	Beccy Rutter	01204 654737

District Church Council

Lay Chair	Jane Hampson	01204 848433
Hon Treasurer	Les Kilsby	01204 665700
Hon Secretary	Bryan Shephard	01942 817288

Other Responsibilities

Flowers	Josie Crompton	01204 655964
Gift Aid Sec	Les Kilsby	01204 665700
Handicraft Group	Dorothy Benyon	01204 417794
Ladies' Guild	Josie Crompton	01204 655964
	Pat Sewell	01204 61278
Magazine Editor	Anne Roberts	01204 849468
Memorial Hall Bookings	Church Office	01204 659357
Music Group	Beccy Rutter	01204 654737
Verger	Josie Crompton	01204 655964
Weddings Admin	Anne Roberts	01204 849468

Sunday Schools

Climbers (3-7)	Sally Cooper	0777 644 1440
Explorers (7-11)	Paula Small	01204 650981
Pathfinders 7-9	Elizabeth Tidmarsh	01204 652184
CYFA (10-13)	Karen Greenhalgh	01204 654737

Youth Groups

Voltage/Element	Karen Greenhalgh	01204 654737
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Uniformed Organisations

Rainbows	Paula Small	
Brownies	Anne Calderbank	01204 398206
Guides	Carole Baxendale	01204 419167

Please tell Anne Roberts or office of any error or omissions.