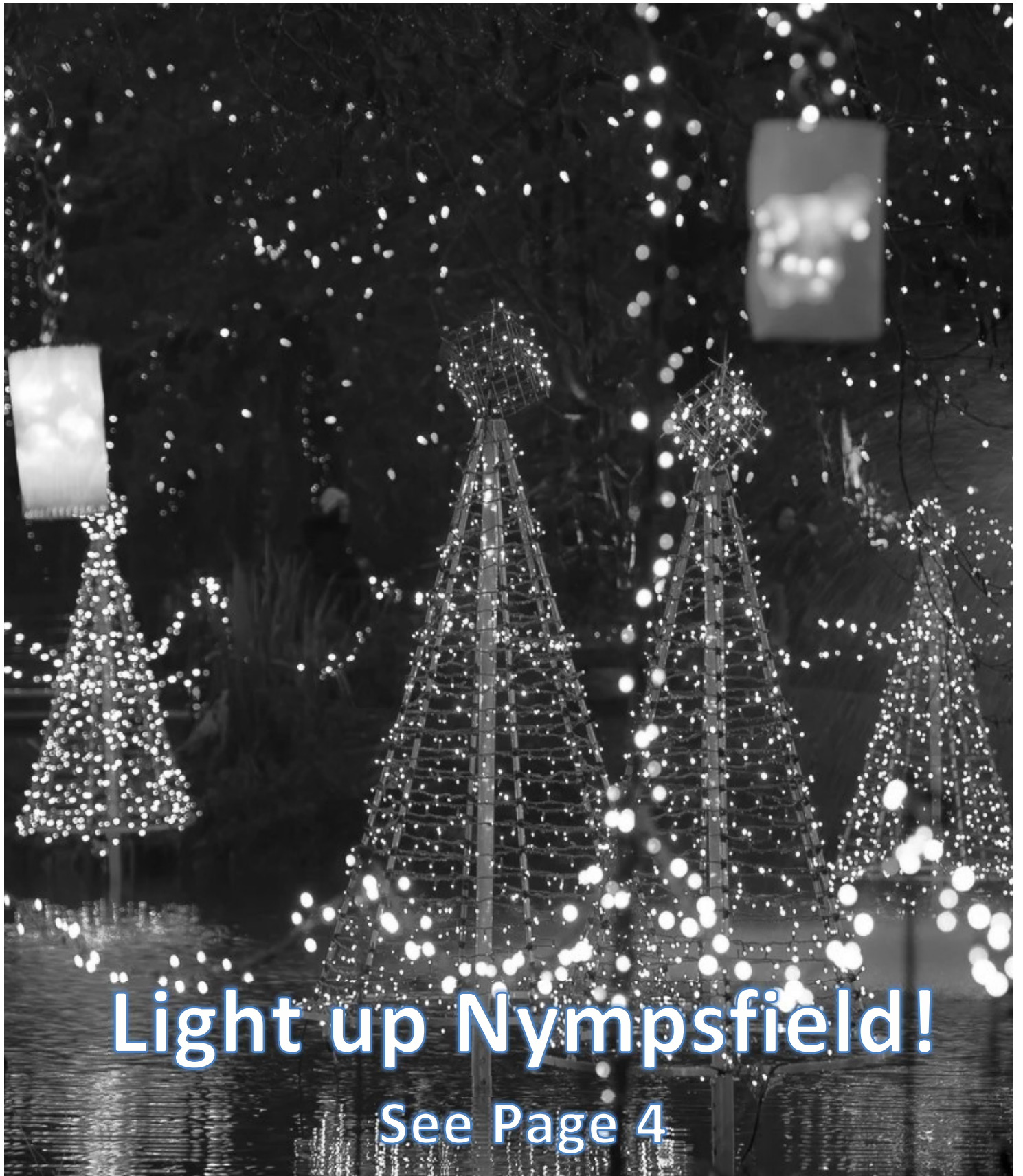


THE Christmas Special 2020

Nymphsfield

NEWS & ADVERTISER



Light up Nymphsfield!

See Page 4

Xmas Special

Welcome to another bumper issue of the Nymphy News. Inside are a specially-written Christmas Story, articles by writers we haven't seen here before, poetry and lots more to enjoy.

Cases of COVID are, at the time of writing, fairly high in the Stroud District although we may be past the peak, and there are at least a couple in the village. It looks as if we're back to a tiered semi-lockdown which might be easier for some but not others.

Whatever, we wish everyone the best for the festive season. Stay safe, look out for your neighbours, offer help if you think someone might need it and let's have a lovely time!

We've taken out most of the usual ads for this Xmas Special. Don't worry, they'll be back next time.

Help! We're still looking for someone to take over delivery to Benton Court plus another four houses on Tinkley Lane.

The Editors

Email: nymphynews@gmx.com

Deadline for the New Year Jan/Feb 2021 edition is 20 December.

Cover picture: random stuff from the interwibbly.

BUS TIMES

Stagecoach service 65 to Upper Cam (St George's Church) via Uley, Dursley, Woodfield (Yew Tree), Cam & Dursley Station and Coaley (*terminates at Cam & Dursley Station*).

Mon to Fri: 06:36*, 09:16, 11:46, 13:46, 15:47 & 17:47*

To Stroud (via Nailsworth*)

Mon to Fri: 07:50, 10:35*, 13:00, 15:00, 17:05 & 19:00*

All times are shown from the bus stop on The Cross. Service times may vary and are correct at time of print.

Stagecoach timetable with service updates: tinyurl.com/y66myhuj

Cotswold Green service 65A Saturdays only:

To Coaley via Dursley (NOT via Cam & Dursley Station): 10:21, 12:36

To Whiteway Colony via Stroud: 11:17, 12:32

The detailed timetable can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/ybghffac>

BOOKING CONTACTS

KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD

Bookings: npfbookings@outlook.com

VILLAGE HALL

Bookings Marie Knight 860115 or nympsfieldvillagehall@gmail.com

WORKING MEN'S CLUB

Bookings: Wayne 07769 317559

LAST POST COLLECTION: MON-FRI 4PM, SAT 09:00 AM

Classified Ads

We've taken out most of the ads just for this issue to make space. Just a couple of new ones! Normal ads back next year!

100 Club:

Week 13. No. 83 Sharon Wilton. (£25)

Week 14. No. 72 John Price.

Week 15. No. 100 Mark James.

Week 16. No. 38 Syd Gwyer.

Week 17. No. 45 Tim Hardy.

Week 18. No. 65 Trevor Gaunt.



THE BOOK

CLUB is normally held monthly. We are a very informal group whose aim is to discuss the book selected and have a social evening too. Everyone is welcome (whether you have read the book or not). Enquiries to Carole 860610.

Meetings will be held via Zoom until further notice. Sort out your own drink and nibbles!

16 December: A Man called Ove by Fredrick Beckman (Carole's choice)

20 January: The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox by Maggie o'Farrell (Verity's choice)

Daniel Taylor Leatherwork: I make custom leather products and gifts to order, including wallets, bookmarks, knife sheaths and more! All products are made to order and can be customised to suit any need. Get in contact soon for delivery before Christmas! -Email: dan@dtdm.co.uk, Phone: 01453 860968, Web: www.dtdm.co.uk

For sale: silver Corsa 1.2 petrol, 3 door, 2008. 62,000 miles, MoT until Nov '21. £1800 ono. Martin or Kate, 860133.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND SERVICES

Parish of Uley with Owlpen and Nympsfield (part of the Ewelme Benefice): Parish Holy Communion is at 10am, held at St Bartholomew Nympsfield on the first Sunday of the month; all other Sundays at Uley, St Giles.

Other services in Dursley, see website <http://tinyurl.com/ssra4z3>
Vicar Rev Michael Cozens 546459

ST JOSEPH'S RC SERVICES

Vigil Mass every Saturday 5:30pm
Sunday Masses at St Dominic Dursley

Parish Priest Fr Philip Beisly
542039

dursleynympsfieldrcparish.co.uk

SEE WEB SITES FOR CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

VILLAGE HALL

The village hall will be closing permanently soon unless you do something about it.

Yes, you.

When we first came to the village the village was “run” by people in their thirties and forties. We all had young children and full time jobs but we made time to serve on organisations like the VHC for the good of the village and its small, close knit community. We loved the village and wanted to be part of the community and to give something back for the privilege of living in such a lovely warm and friendly place.

In the past, as people grew older they used to be replaced by younger members of the community but this has not been happening. On the current Committee, with one exception, we are all of retirement age and between us we have racked up an impressive nearly 90 years of service on the Committee. We rather feel we have done our bit and would like younger members of the community to step forward and start taking over.

None of us are planning to give up immediately but we cannot go on for ever, especially with the dwindling numbers on the Committee. The constitution of the Village Hall Committee allows for approx. 12 members. At the moment we have 7 and are shortly due to lose another one. We are looking for several new members.

With the exception of this year’s newcomers, I’m sure you have all organised/attended something in the VH and have been pleased and proud to have such a facility in the village.

If there is no Committee to run it, the Village Hall will simply have to close.

Do you want to lose it?

Contact Carole Pittaway, 860610

Santa’s Visit

All being well, Santa will be visiting Nympsfield on Christmas Eve and will do a quick tour of the village to see everyone as is custom. Unfortunately he will not be able to issue presents from the float this year as he needs to keep safe and protect his elves as well as protecting you, but you will be able to see/wave to him.

The elves will be supporting Santa as well as keeping a safe distance from everyone. They won’t knock on your door but if you wish to make a donation to the collection for the Village Hall, please make it known to an elf who can place a collection bucket in front of you whilst still social distancing.

Thank you from the Village Hall Committee for supporting us. We, along with other volunteers, have been able to help Santa on Christmas Eve for over thirty years now and hope we can carry on this village tradition for many more.

Nympsfield Christmas Lights

Some of us thought that it might be a nice idea to cheer us up with a Christmas lights lighting up evening – all turn on their lights at 18:30 on Saturday 5 December and use it as an excuse to walk around the village (bottle in hand optional) and talk to each other from an appropriate distance. Of course there’s no reason not to get the lights up earlier, just try

to turn them off before turning them on again on at 18:30 on the 5th.

I'll put up a few posters as a reminder nearer the time, and if the weather is

awful the Everything Nympsfield Facebook group will doubtless come up with another suggestion. (Every Saturday until twelfth night?!) - MartinP

Early days, early lessons learned - by Tod Cook

Tod Cook was a countryman through and through. Before the stroke which stopped his many adventures out hunting with his beloved dogs in 1999 he wrote this about his early days shooting, when his family lived at Fourwells cottage.

Some early incidents are still very clear in my mind. One Saturday, when I was about seven, Dad (Ted Cook) took me for a walk down the park. We heard a rabbit squeal out. Dad ran towards it and found a stoat had killed the rabbit. The stoat ran towards a rabbit earth, stopped momentarily. I could see how brown it was before it went to ground. Dad pounced the rabbit. It had only a bite mark on the neck. He hung it on a tree. "No point in carrying it down the park and back up, boy," he said.

On going on down we stopped at the gate to the Paddocks. The banks of the paddock

were moving. There were hundreds of rabbits feeding. Dad looked at the sky and said: "It looks like we'll have some falling weather tonight." Sure enough, next morning it was a white world. Dad decided he would take the ferret, some nets and his gun to get some rabbits.

As we passed the earth where we had seen the stoat, Dad said: "I think I'll risk the ferret and try to take the stoat out." He quietly entered the ferret into the hole and we were stood back behind some trees. After about 5 minutes a shot rang out. I remember seeing the blood on the snow from the dead stoat, but the stoat had changed colour overnight and was almost as white as the snow. How marvellous to have changed its colour to suit the environment. Over the years I have found you can often predict the weather from the behaviour of animals and birds.

Dad told me of a friend who a few months earlier had heard a rabbit squeal and took a rabbit off a stoat. A little while later, another squeal and he took another. By following the stoat all afternoon he collected 12 rabbits and as dusk was nearing he shot the stoat. So he had 12 rabbits and a stoat for one shot. As this was during the war, when cartridges were scarce, this was a big bonus.



Early Days, Early Lessons continued

During the war years Dad worked at an aircraft factory at Woodchester. His transport was a 1926 500cc Raleigh motorcycle with hand change gearbox. He kept his double barrelled 12 bore shotgun at Scar Hill, the home of the Miss Leighs at the top of Woodchester Park as that was where he did most of his shooting. He had a rough haired terrier spaniel dog called 'Busy.' An excellent and clever gundog. Very obedient. If Dad was on nights Busy

would go with him. He would ride for miles on the tank of the motorcycle. He would call in at Scar Hill and shoot some mornings. If Dad was on days, Busy stayed home but every Wednesday evening Dad would call in at Scar Hill for his tea and then go shooting. It was my job to walk Busy to Scar Hill after school. If I forgot, Busy would go on his own and arrive at Scar Hill before Dad. He knew what day of the week it was. He never went any other day.



William (Bill) Hayes 1922-2020

Bill was born in 1922 and our Grandmother, Louisa Benton, fostered him when he was six months old. Louisa took him to London twice a year to see his mother when he was a school boy, and then he met up with his mother 'til she retired from nursing and returned to Ireland. Bill was a conscientious pupil at St Joseph's school where he won two prizes for English. One was for a book called Fighting the Whale and he kept that all his life. Bill had lots of friends in the village, especially the Smiths, Elliotts, Mabetts and Donald Mills. He was a keen sportsman, and played soccer for Nympsfield, Stonehouse and others. He enjoyed going to the cup final at Wembley with his mates.

He was the best man at our wedding (Bill and Rose Westwood): he was family and we all loved him. He enjoyed Worker's Playtime when it came to Mawdsley's where he worked. (A BBC comedy show that toured the country during the war).

He was in love with Lilly Monahan and when she left the convent to go to Canada and then on to America they lost touch. Bill never married and Sister Claudia, who had kept in touch with Lilly all those years, reunited them. Lilly came to England in 1986 and they spent many happy years together. Sadly, Lilly had a stroke and he faithfully visited her in hospital and in Henlow House for many years until she died.

His later years were spent living at North Nibley, and Christina Powell visited him every week, taking him shopping and to the betting shop. He was just a few weeks at Henlow and died there after a long life. Rest in peace Bill.

Christina Powell and Rosemary Beach.

[Bill lived in Nympsfield in the Blacksmith's House at the Cross, and left the village in around 1980 – ed]

A Christmas Story: December 2020

By Ian Beales

Illustrations by Carys Hellewell

.....
The Little Miracle of CLOCKDOWN

A village where Time stood still

DAY 1- December 21

IT WAS the longest night of the year: dark, stormy and just four days to Christmas, in Clockdown, a village hung with rainbows. And where Time stood still...

For years, the hands of the old Church clock had stayed at 9.33. Precisely. Just twice a day it was precisely right. But it never chimed, nor ticked, let alone tocked. And even the big church bell itself had mostly stayed strangely silent for *ages*.

Perhaps in solidarity, the clock at the village's former bus shelter had stopped, too, at 5.20, as if still waiting for a No 65 bus that would never come ... as so often it never had.

But down at the parish church, Christmas preparations were under way. The church looked especially smart: decked with holly and berries, shimmering candles, and the best Christmas Crib, they'd ever had. So good, that last week the judges of the Bishop's new Christmas Crib of the Year competition had short-listed it for top prize. Everyone was excited.

Everyone, that is, but Margie, the Chief Church mouse. Plump, grey and with dark, pretty eyes, she had a big, cheerful heart and should have been happy: Christmas was her favourite time. But today she was immersed in woe.

For whenever the wind soughed, and the rain raged – as it was now – it was the mournful sound of long, loud sighing, and low sob-sob-sobbing, from within the clock-tower that sent shudders through her. It was getting worse. And, as she sat on a pew with her faithful deputy, Bartie, it upset her so much that her little whiskers began to twitch.



“Bartie,” she whispered, “Listen... it’s the dear old Church Clock we can hear, groaning and grieving, alone and unloved. For 150 years, or more, it faithfully counted all the minutes, struck all the hours and ushered in our Christmas

Eves. And now...*nothing* – silent for *a decade*. Broken, un-mended and almost forgotten. It’s so sad, it makes *me* weep, *too*. It’s such a shame.”

“You’re right,” said Bartie, who was very sensitive, and rather fond of Margie. He was now struggling to hold back *his* tears. “It’s... it’s a *crying shame*,” he said. “That’s what it is.”

And soon they were sobbing in harmony so loudly that some of the Undermice came sprinting along the pew-tops to see what was up.

First, came the girls – Agatha, Tabatha, Maisy, Molly and Tallulah – who’d been hop-scotching on the black-and-white tiled aisles. Then the boys scurried in from some graveyard game, squeezing under doors, and even through a keyhole, to investigate the fuss. There was Alonzo, Bonzo, Turnip-top, Bazza, and a simply *gi-normous* mouse, who was called, for reasons nobody knew, *Nudger*.

Very soon they also had joined this chorus of damp dismay. Except for Nudger, who just rubbed his tough, stubby nose on the stone floor, as he always did.

Then, suddenly, there came a loud, echoing Voice... from On High.

What is this, My Little Ones, said the Voice from the rafters. *Why do you weep-eth so?*

The little mice froze. As one, they all slowly peered upwards, fearful of heavenly wrath... And then groaned with a mixture of disappointment and relief.

For, there, perched on a lofty beam, plumped up and pompous – and still giggling at his joke – was Oswald the Owl.

Once known to all as Ozzie, he’d taken on airs since leaving the Dark Wood: installing his nest on the Church’s highest turret, insisting on being called *Os-wald* – and proclaiming himself High Tenant of the Tower, to distinguish him from the humble squirrels inhabiting the belfry below. Who called *him* the Upstart Upstairs.

So the little mice were faced, not with the Almighty, but a name-dropping Tawny owl with delusions of grandeur and a nasty line in practical jokes. On Hallowe’en night Oswald had scared trick-or-treaters witless by gliding around the graveyard, his wings widespread, pretending to be a ghost. “It was such a hoot, he said.”



He probably thought frightening the Church Mice was a hoot, too. But Margie wasn’t having that. “Oh, Os-WALD!” she scolded him, “Sometimes, you really are more Twit than T’woo...”

Oswald’s, piercing eyes and noble, hooked beak, always made him look rather imperious, but he’d become much posher and puffed up since moving to his classy new address. Not now. After his public dressing-down by a Mouse That

Roared, he was visibly deflated: perched on a lectern, shifting uneasily from one clawed foot to another.

“Sorry, Old Thing,” he said abjectly, “Just my little jest. Can I ...er... *help* in any way?”

Margie had a brainwave. Oswald, while a pain, was *quite* clever and boasted of influential friends. Perhaps *they* could help the crying clock? She had one particular ‘friend’ in mind.

So Maggie told the now-squirming owl of her fear that the Church clock was sad and tearful, after been broken and unused for so long. Oswald nodded, dutifully. “We mice don’t know *what* to do,” said Margie, targeting his vanity. “Could *you* get the clock working, Oswald...?”

Oops! The owl gulped. Where was this going? Boasting was one thing: deeds another.

“.....Maybe, with the help of your friends – you have *influence*...,” continued the mouse, piling on flattery with a pitchfork, “So if you’re *too busy yourself*, you might perhaps find us someone else, with *more time*...?”

Oswald’s wide eyes stared dead ahead: desperate, but vacant. Margie swooped.

“.....Someone, possibly, like your very good friend Silas...the Badger?”

Pop! Oswald fizzled like a pricked balloon. Margie had challenged his swaggering brags about having powerful friends. Could he really influence *the Badger*?

Silas was the uncrowned King of the Woods: big, shambling, fierce and *very* blunt speaking. Indeed, he was pretty much *Very* everything. He was both *Very* Clever and *Very* Wise. So wise that he was Chief Judge of the Woodland Court. No one was more eminent.

The Badger was also *very* eloquent – he’d once eaten a dictionary whole, page by page, so that he’d digest every word. He knew everything and everyone and lived in the Dark Wood in a vast, underground mansion with four impressive front doors, to face North, South, East and West. And the uncomfortable truth for Oswald – whom Silas called ‘Little Ozzie’ – was that, despite his boasts, *he* had never passed through *any* of them.

Margie’s suggestion that the owl might fix a meeting with the Badger struck him dumb. His heart-shaped face wrinkled like a crimped crumplet. His eyes contorted in anguished and seemingly endless concentration. But then, they suddenly flickered and brightened, almost as though he’d come back from the dead. Oswald had an *idea*...

“Oh, *Yes*,” he resumed, now in a casual, matter-of-fact voice, “My dear old friend *Silas*? Yes, I can work you an introduction with *him*. No problem. Would *tonight* suit you? “

Margie, astonished by this speedy response, did not hesitate. “Of, course!” she said. “But how do I find his house? We Church mice rarely venture into the Dark Wood....”

“No need,” said Oswald, now fully restored to his usual breezy self. “I’ll arrange a meeting at the Old Bus Shelter tonight. It’s so much closer for you. Just after midnight maybe? I’ll give you a hoot when we’re ready. OK? Bring your little pal, too, if you like.”

And then off he flew. With an audible...*phew!*

Margie was amazed that Oswald could both fix a meeting with Silas – without even asking first – *and* invite a friend. Had she misjudged the owl? Perhaps he had influence, after all.

Day 2 December 22 | The University of the Night

SOON after midnight, there was a low *T'wit-T'woo* from the Churchyard: the signal for Margie and Bartie to head for the Bus Shelter for their *hush-hush* rendezvous. But a surprise awaited them. When they arrived, the supposedly discreet and private venue was packed with animals from the fields and woods – absolutely buzzing with activity.

As a secret meeting place, this was easily two hushes short of a conclave.

Unknown to the Church mice, who didn't get out much, the Old Bus Shelter had recently been transformed into the Hub, a sort of drop-in Daytime Community Centre. It was lined with books, magazines, word games and even offered occasional yummy bites for visitors.

But after midnight, when the village pub and club were long closed, and the last cuddling lovers had kissed goodnight and left the building, it had another, secret role.

It was now Clockdown's University of the Night.

Hub had become Nub – The Night University Board – and was quietly pirating the daytime facilities to provide Evening Classes for upwardly mobile animals, with cultural lectures, debates and popular readings from the books.

They even had occasional Guest Speakers; some better than others. A visiting Brent Goose from Russia had enthralled the audience with a stimulating talk called *Is Marxism For The Birds?* But an old stag with a limp had been less successful when his enticing session *Oh Deer, What Can the Matter Be* turned out to be a dry discourse on antler health issues.

The Patron of this new dawn of enlightenment was none other than Professor Silas himself, who was Dean, Principal, Chairman of the Board, and much else besides. *TONIGHT*, blared a poster, was Book Club Evening: The Badger would "Review Select Volumes for an eager audience." With a brief vote of thanks from Oswald the Owl.

No wonder artful Ozzie was so certain of fixing the rendezvous. It was a public meeting!

As Margie and Bartie watched, everywhere animals were *reading*. In the Garden Section, a rabbit was swotting up – not on *how* to grow tasty carrots, but *where* to grow them, as he wanted to take Mrs Rabbit out somewhere special for dinner. A mole was buried deep in an article on lawn management; and two frogs argued over a slimy volume on pond life.

In the Fiction Section, a young fox nosed its way through a murder mystery, quietly grunting with approval each time another victim got bumped off. While, nearby, a passing migratory duck, who'd got lost in a storm, was consulting a 1971 Readers Digest Atlas, for guidance.

Margie and Bartie watched with a hint of envy as a pair of tiny pygmy shrews in exotic hats used a shiny chessboard as a dance-floor to practise the Paso Doble for an upcoming *Strictly* Night. But the mice politely declined their kind invitation to join in.

Meanwhile, strutting Oswald was lecturing a stoat and a weasel on an ancient tome called *Britain's Wonderland of Nature*, which he loudly decried for understating the importance of owls, despite having *vast sections* devoted to foxes and (in a whisper) badgers...



But of Silas, there was no sign. Until finally Bartie espied him, snoring loudly, tucked under a yellowing copy of *Country Life*, while still wearing, at the end of his formidable nose, a pair of half-moon spectacles that he'd found under the seat. He looked very professorial.

Silas had already given his lecture, in which he'd warmly praised *Britain's Wonderland of Nature* coverage of badgers, then gobbled up a few of the tasty dainties supplied, and was now having an after-dinner nap. Do not disturb.

Margie and Bartie waited, obediently. Finally, as the other nocturnal students drifted away, the Badger awoke. He blinked and, staring over the top of his half-glasses, fixed his rheumy eyes on the two mice waiting, silent and apprehensive, in the corner.

Oswald, anxious to confirm his role as an influential go-between, suddenly sparked into life.

"Let me introduce you," he said. *This is...*"

"Do shut up, Ozzie old boy," interrupted Silas, "I can see very well who this is. It's the Church mice. Nice to see you both, but you're not here for the books. What's the problem?"

Not for nothing was Silas sometimes known as Brock the Brusque. But he listened carefully as Margie told him of the crying Church Clock that couldn't work and how they'd like to get it ticking again. And tocking, too, if possible. And, mightn't it be nice to do it by Christmas?

"It means a lot to you," said Silas, quite tenderly. "I can tell."

"Yes!" said the mice in harmony. Then shy Bartie, usually as quiet as – well, as a mouse – spoke up: "In the old days the Church Mice used to play Hickory Dickory Dock ..."

Chuckling, Silas interrupted: "I remember Hickory Dickory Dock!" he said. "*The Mouse ran up the Clock. And when the Clock Struck One, the Mouse went Down. Hickory Dickory Dock!*"

"Totally *pointless*, but great fun, I expect. And did you mice used to do that?"

"*Actually, sir, No,*" said Bartie. "All of us Church Mice are too young – the Clock has been stopped for so long. Our parents and grandparents played Hickory Dickory...but we can't."

"That's a shame," said Silas. "Yes," agreed Margie," but the *real* shame is that this poor Clock has been *silent* for so long..."

The Badger nodded firmly. "Quite so, young lady," he said." Your priorities are right. You've kept us on the straight and narrow. Just as the Chief Church Mouse should. Well done."

Then, without further discussion, he announced his Battle Plan:

“Objective: Get the Clock going. **Target date:** the night before Christmas Eve. I can’t guarantee either. This is a prodigious project. I’m no horologist, let alone a mechanical chronometrist. So no promises. **Action plan:** I’ll come to the church tomorrow after dusk. We have only 24 hours. All you two have to do, is find a way of getting me inside: the doors will be locked...that’s your first test. Good luck.”

With that, Silas ambled off into the night, leaving the two mice with no idea of what a *chronometrist* or *horologist* did, nor what *prodigious* meant. “But I bet it was something massive,” said Bartie. And he was right.

They arrived at the Church, tired but happy. *Things were happening.* They’d won over Silas. He had a Plan – if they could smuggle him in. They had 24 hours. They agreed to sleep on it.

Day 3 December 23 | The Battle of the Bolt

Margie was up early, but Bartie was already missing. She finally found him standing near the Crib under the bell-tower, staring hard at the West Door... and yawning.

“I couldn’t sleep – I kept thinking of the Badger’s warning about this being our first test,” he said. “The other main doors are locked from the outside. We haven’t a key. And even if we had, we couldn’t reach up to get it into the lock, let alone turn it.

“This one is our only hope. There’s no lock – it’s *bolted* from the inside. But just look at that big bolt...” The West Door was so heavy that it was rarely opened. It was solid oak with wrought iron hinges. And a giant bolt to match.

Margie and Bartie tugged at the bolt. It wouldn’t budge. Other mice tried, too – without success. “It’s a bit rusted in at the other end,” said Bartie.

“Perhaps we need to push, from the that end,” said Tabatha, helpfully. And she inserted her delicate little nose into the open bolt-end and shoved hard. “I moved it a teeny bit – but it’s very painful!” she wailed.

With Margie and Bartie pulling at one end, Agatha, Tabatha, Maisy, Molly and Tallulah took turns to push at the other. It was working, but led to a painful crop of Rudolph-red noses. Some of the boy mice stood watching these heroic efforts with idle curiosity. Until Tallulah had a little explosion. “Don’t just stand there,” she fumed. “*DO something!*”

Alonzo looked at Bonzo, who looked at Turnip-top, who looked at Bazza, who said, very quietly: “I think we need to find *Nudger*...”

Helpfully, the outsized mouse came plodding along almost on cue. He politely asked Tabatha to withdraw her sore little nose from her pushing position, and forced in his own, not-to-be-sneezed-at snout, which was – as Silas might say – *prodigious*. And then he pushed and nudged. The bolt started to move. Just a little.

You’ve never heard a mouse growl. But Nudger wasn’t like ordinary, squeaky mice. He was built like a Rugby front-row forward – prodigious in all departments. And now he growled and pushed again: The bolt slid a bit more. “Push me—*harder!*” he bellowed at his team.

Alonzo and Bonzo threw themselves at his equally prodigious bottom and pushed and pushed. Then, just like the pack in a rugby scrum, Turnip-top, Bazza and Tallulah shoved them from behind. Harder and harder. Nudge by nudge, *the bolt was moving*.

“We need more pull at this end,” shouted Margie, still tugging. But there just wasn’t room for any more mice to hold the little bolt handle.

“Excuse me,” said a familiar voice. It was Oswald. “I think I can help,” he said. “You all push, I’ll pull. *All together...now!*” Then, as Nudger’s rugby pack heaved forward, Oswald hooked his imperious beak around the bolt handle, dug his claws into the floor – and yanked and yanked as though his reputation depended on it. As it very probably did.

And the bolt slid open.

They all cheered, loudly. Except the taciturn Nudger, and poor Oswald, now nursing a very painful – and slightly bent – beak. He sounded as if he had terrible toothache. “It-th juth awthul,” he lisped. “Abtholutely, awthul!”

The Church mice – and even the belfry squirrels, who’d been following this as terrific spectator sport – began to warm a little to the Upstart Upstairs.

The door was unbolted. But it was too heavy for the mice to pull open. *What now?*

Once again, Oswald came to the rescue. “Ith I were you,” he said, painfully, “I’d leath that to Thilas. Ith the door ithn’t bolted, he’ll juth barge hith way in! *Ouch!*”

For the second time, the newly reformed owl had saved the day. “Thank-you, Oswald,” said Margie. “I don’t know what we would have done without you.”

“Don’t menthon it,” came the muffled reply. “And pleeth call me O-th-ee.”

Enter the Badger

JUST after dusk, Silas rapped on the door. “It’s open,” said Margie, “It needs a *little* push...”

After two unsuccessful ‘little pushes’, Silas turned, took a short run and charged the door full on, head-butting it with such force that it instantly swung open – sending him crashing into the church, down unseen steps, through two half-open internal doors and very nearly skittling down the Crib’s Three Wise Men...before landing in a heap on the floor. Oops.

“A little push, eh?” he said, rescuing his half-moon glasses, now hanging off one ear. But, unfazed, he immediately conducted an appraisal. This was like a military operation. On one side of the chamber nearer the stone font, was the traditional little Manger, with Mary, Joseph and an ox under its rustic roof. On the opposite wall were the much larger, and impressively pristine, white papier-mâché figures of the Magi, Shepherds and Donkey.

“They don’t match size-wise, but they look *extremely* good,” he said. And so they should: before being rescued from a rubbish skip by a quick-thinking parishioner, they had been the early design models for a set of glossy, exotically-painted porcelain figures now gracing a cathedral In the North. This crib had a very fine pedigree.

Silas reviewed his troops. They were a raggle-taggle army of tiny Church mice, mostly with sore, red noses; an owl with a bent beak; a few agile squirrels ...and himself, now also nursing a bruised schnozzle. A wild bunch, but they would have to do..

The Judge-turned-Professor-turned-General addressed them: “First” he said, “We must do a recce of the Clock Tower to see what’s wrong. And I can already tell you that this clock is *illegal*. Under ancient law, a stopped clock in a public place must have its hands set at 12.00. Or risk a fine of *a farthing a month* for non-compliance.”

The mice, amazed yet again by the infinite breadth of the Badger’s knowledge, gasped. “Illegal!” they all repeated, in hushed tones. “*A farthing! Wow!*”

Plan A, declared Silas, at his dictionary-eating grandest, was “to examine this *incomparable* example of mechanised *chronometry*, to determine whether we can restore it to its glory, so the bell can ring-in the night before Christmas Eve, both as a signal of our success and as a clarion call to children to visit this superb crib. It would be this ancient Clock’s *finest hour*.”

Hurrah! cheered the mice, *Hurrah!*

But if that failed...

Plan B. “This, sadly, is a more *limited* objective,” confessed the Badger: “Simply to set the hands to Midnight so that it’s legal, and then we’ll all ring the bell by the pull-rope to welcome in Christmas, just as in the good old days.” The mice cheered again. *Hurrah!*

Plan A collapsed in a trice. The door to the clock chamber was locked. None of the team – including Silas – was tall enough to put the key in the lock and turn it. The mice, squirrels and owl could enter via the window. But not Silas himself. He was stumped. But stoic.

“Plan B, it is, then,” he said, solemnly. “We have only hours. Our deadline is midnight, to usher in Christmas Eve... *Action stations!*”

Oswald, Nudger and Sidney, a particularly acrobatic squirrel, were the clock-setting squad. Sidney had spent many happy hours cracking nuts for his supper on the cogwheels of the clock and knew how to reset its hands, using a special spanner hung nearby.

Oswald plucked the spanner from its hook, Sidney slipped it onto the winder knob at the back of the clock, and Nudger nosed it around until they guessed it was on the 12th hour. Oswald flew outside to check the clock-face: both hands were at 12.00. Bang on!

“*Thuckthess!*” he reported, still suffering with his bent beak. “*Mithon accomplished!*”

However, down in the ringing chamber by the font and Christmas Crib, they had hit a snag. They needed to toll the bell 12 times, at least. But the bell rope was too high to reach...

Even Silas couldn’t stretch high enough to grab it between his teeth. Sidney the squirrel leapt onto the rope from the font, but didn’t produce the tiniest bong. The mice followed, until all except Nudger – not built for leaping – were clinging to the rope like bees on a honeycomb, hoping their weight would lower the bell, enough for the Badger to grab it.

It made no difference. Loaded with passengers, the rope just swayed gently from side to side, like a pendulum. “Wh-e-e-e!” cooed Tabatha. “This is *fun!*” They tried to make it swing more. But the bell just swayed silently. And soon they were all feeling very sea-sick... Finally, Silas and Oswald gathered below to catch them as they leapt down. *Defeated.*

The Unauthorised Happening

GENERAL Silas addressed this troops from the base of the font. “Comrades,” he said gravely, “despite your valiant efforts, in the face of great adversity, we seem doomed to *failure*. No Christmas bell. No ticking clock, once again. I fear I’ve let you down. You deserved more...”

There were loud sighs, lumps in throats, and tears in eyes. Margie moved closer to poor Bartie, as he started to wobble. Oswald shuffled his feet. Even Nudger swallowed hard.

And then, from the other side of the font, came a polite cough.

Behind Silas, on the far side of the font, appeared a pair of large, pristine white ears... followed by dreamy eyes, a long nose and a mouth full of teeth like tombstones. It was the Crib donkey, craning her neck towards them and smiling. Nervously. *She’d come to life.*

“Pardon me. I’m Jenny,” she said. “*The donkey,*” she added, a trifle needlessly. “Can I help in some way? I’m easily tall enough to reach the rope. Perhaps I could give it a pull?”

Silas and his troops had been in awed silence since the entry of the speaking statue. That continued for agonising seconds before the Badger could re-assemble his scattered wits.

“Dear lady,” he said. “We are already in your debt. Please, do anything – *anything* you can.”

Still nervous, Jenny reached up, easily gripping the rope between her strong teeth, and pulled hard. It barely moved. She tugged again. No difference. “I’m just not strong enough,” she said, despairingly. “This needs a *team* of us.”

Jenny clung to the rope. “A *team,*” she repeated, more loudly. “Three, four, or even ***five, of us....***”, she shouted as though appealing to the very Elements – Earth, water, fire, air and space. And none appeared to be listening.

Margie, concerned for the poor donkey, edged forward to help, but then heard a shuffling of feet. And voices. Tetchy voices. “This is all very *irregular,*” said one. “An *Unauthorised Happening,*” said another. “Led ... *by a donkey!*” groaned the third.

It was the Three – rather exasperated – Wise Men who now joined them at the font: Caspar, Balthazar and Melchior were all pristine white, with matching crowns – and matching frowns. Following them at a respectful distance, and still looking sore afraid, were the two bearded shepherds, Benjamin and Omar.

The Magi fixed their gaze on the donkey. “An Unauthorised Happening,” said Balthazar, “A grave offence. You’ve let down the team, and made asses of us all. What have you to say?”

“I plead guilty to being an ass,” said Jenny, to loud applause from Margie and the others, “but I only wanted to help, and we are supposed to be a team, aren’t we? These little

animals are trying so hard to get their clock working, and I knew that we – you – could help. And you weren't. And it is Christmas, after all..."

There was more applause from the animals. The Wise Men looked uneasy. Then Silas rose. "Your Highnesses," he said. "I am a Judge. And, in the Law of the Wild, trying to help is not considered to be a crime. It is *failure* to help that is an offence. This little donkey may have broken some high code on unofficial Happenings, but she acted with compassion – most *admirable* compassion – in the spirit of Christmas.

"Might I suggest that, in that same spirit, you now have compassion on her – and us?"

Melchior spoke. "We hear your eloquent plea, Mr Badger. Your case is well put. But this is still an Unofficial Happening, an *offence* – what do you say to that?"

Silas rose again. "Sirs", he said, "Far be it for me to offer advice to the Magi, but if this is an unofficial Happening by a humble donkey, could it not be unofficially *Un-happened*... by three of the *wisest men in history*?"

The Wise Men looked at each other and smiled. "All things are *possible*, Mr Badger," said Casper. "And when do you suggest this *unHappening* might ...er... happen?"

Silas thought quickly. "I suggest," he said, "At 12.30 tonight, which – with your help – should give us time to complete our vital mission." Then he sat down to rousing Hurrahs.

The Wise Men pondered, then consulted the shepherds. Casper announced their verdict: "The donkey and the shepherds will all help to pull on the bell, " he said, "and if that is not enough, We Three Kings will also assist. It is Christmas. *The bell will ring!*"

Everyone cheered, and Silas and Margie danced a little jig around the font.

But with only hours to go, there was no time to be wasted. The Magi watched as Benjamin, Omar and Jenny formed a team to pull the bell-rope. It was strenuous work. Jenny, although a quite small donkey, was actually stronger than the shepherds, and laboured hardest of all.

They still could not pull it quite enough to get a full strike, but the rope *was* now low enough for Silas to grip it between his teeth – and then tug. The bell gave a small, but clear *bong!*

"Success!" said Caspar, "with a little more practice you'll be there. But could you keep it up with 12 bongs in a row at midnight?"

"Trust me," said Jenny, confidently. She had something to prove.

Meanwhile, Balthazar and Melchior inspected the locked door to the clock-tower. Unlike Silas, they were easily tall enough to turn the key. So Nudger towed it from its hiding place with his long tail and handed it over. The two Wise Men turned the key and disappeared up the narrow, winding stairs... locking the door behind them.

Casper, having left Jenny and the shepherds to rest a little, was mildly miffed to find he was locked out of the tower, so instead went on a churchyard tour, with Oswald and Nudger.

The storm had eased. It was a clear, starry night, lit by a quarter moon. "I can calculate the time by the stars," said Caspar, "but it's a pity it's not bright enough to light the Church clock. It would be good to see it when it strikes midnight. "

"There's a *floodlight*," said Oswald. "It lights up the tower." Nudger took them to it. Caspar's eyes lit up, too. "It illuminates the *whole* tower? he asked. "Can you make it work?"

"It's just a switch," said Nudger. "You could work it."

Just then, Caspar was distracted by the sight of a pure white dove sitting in a yew tree. "Are there *more* of those?" he asked Oswald, curiously. The baffled owl confirmed that there was a whole flock, who often gathered on the tower. Some were good friends of his.

"I have an *idea*," said Caspar. "If you'll both help?" And they went into a hushed huddle.

If the clock had been working, it would have chimed 11.45pm when Balthazar and Melchior finally emerged from the clock-chamber: dusty, covered in cobwebs, but with a look of quiet satisfaction. Melchior whistled to himself. Balthazar hummed. They were almost *smug*.

They asked Jenny and her team how they were getting on. "It's been hard, practising," she said, still panting and perspiring. "But, ready when you are..."

Yet there was no sign of Caspar, Oswald, or Nudger. "This is *preposterous*," cried Balthazar, "Where are they? I have a major change of plan to announce – a great surprise!

"We *don't* want you to ring the 12 strokes of Midnight," he said, excitedly. "Listen....hard!"

They all fell silent and listened: Silas, Margie and Bartie, and all the mice except Nudger, who was nowhere to be seen, strained their ears until you could hear a pin drop. But it wasn't a pin that they heard. *It was the steady ticking of the old Church clock.*

No one spoke. They were dumb with amazement. Balthazar broke the silence. "We've managed to get it *working*," he said, proudly. "We found some oil, cleaned it up, added some Myrrh – and a tiny amount of Frankincense, here or there – and wound it. Then we gave the ticking mechanism a little push and ... it just ...*started*."

The stunned silence continued, until suddenly Silas gave a cheer. Then then all cheered.

"Does this mean," Jenny asked, plaintively, "that we don't get to ring the bell?"

Melchior saw disappointment in her eyes. "Yes...and No," he said, "The clock should strike Twelve on its own. But then, if you want to ring-in Christmas Eve, as we planned – you and your team take over. So we have the best of all worlds. " Jenny beamed.

Then Balthazar reminded them that there were just three minutes to go and urged them to move quickly into the churchyard to watch the clock hands move to Midnight – "A sight as well as a sound." So they hurried through the West door and took up vantage points. Two minutes to go...one minute to go – and then suddenly Bong! *The Clock struck.*

And, as it did, the floodlight came on, illuminating the clock hands at 12. Then, the big yew tree in the churchyard suddenly *exploded*...with a brilliant star-burst of dozens of dazzling white doves caught in the beam, soaring into the night sky as the church bell tolled out the hours...10, 11...12! After the last stroke, the floodlight faded. What a spectacle.

Suddenly – an agonised bray from Jenny! In the excitement, she'd forgotten that they had still to ring-in Christmas Eve – so she and the shepherds raced inside to resume their work.

As the bell rang, Casper – having stage-managed the dove pyrotechnics – emerged from the shadows, meeting Balthazar and Melchior at the West Door. He praised them warmly for working wonders on the clock. "And thank-*you* for not upstaging us," said Melchior, drily.

They met Silas on his way out. "Amazing," he said, "It all went like... clockwork!" And with a hug for Margie and a reminder to bolt the door behind him, he trundled off into the night. Balthazar looked at the Clock. "In just 10 minutes," he warned, "we must *Unhappen*."

The unHappening was conducted with speed, as the clock ticked, relentlessly. Balthazar herded his team into their original positions. He, Melchior and Casper at one end, the shepherds at the other and poor Jenny in the middle. She was exhausted at having been the driving force for the bell-ringing and now, clearly in some distress, was urgently beckoning to Margie. The little mouse rushed closer.

"Oh Margie," whispered Jenny, "I feel so bad. So embarrassed. All that bell-pulling has had an effect. I couldn't help it. I'm afraid I've had a little *accident*..."

Margie looked down and saw under the donkey a small, but unfortunate pile. "Don't worry," she said. "I'll clean it up in the morning. No one need know." But, at that very moment, as the clock hands touched 12.30, Jenny was returned to her pristine white eternity, her toothy mouth closed, and her soft eyes glazed.

The unHappening had happened.

DAY 4 Christmas Eve |

THE NEXT morning, the Churchwarden arrived early, to open the church, light candles for the children's Christmas Eve Crib visits, and switch on recorded carols as background music. But there were people already there, waiting. Both with children, and without. Word had got around about a weird sort of firework display in the middle of the night. And the church bell was suddenly striking the hours again.

This was all very peculiar, thought the Churchwarden. The clock was definitely working, she could hear it tick. It struck 8.00 am while she was there. Yet everything else seemed normal. So she turned on the carols, opened the doors, and let in the children.

The Churchwarden was not alone in hearing the Clock strike 8.00 am. It had also roused Margie from a deep sleep after last night's adventures: the Clock, the bell, the doves...and then it hit her. She'd *forgotten* Jenny's little 'accident!' Margie almost flew down the Nave, but was too late. Children were already there, laughing excitedly.

The source of the excitement was clear. It was the small – and rather exquisite – papier-mâché pile under Jenny. “Mummy,” said one giggling little girl, “The donkey’s done a poo!” And so it had. That was very odd, thought the Churchwarden. She hadn’t noticed it before. First, the clock is suddenly working, then the reports of strange pyrotechnics in the night. Now this. *What was happening?* She rang the Rector. “I’m on my way!” he said.

When he arrived, he viewed the Clock, now ticking happily. *Strange*. Even more children had arrived to view the Crib, tittering as they filed by slowly in their face masks, safely distanced. The Rector peered over their shoulders and saw the pristine little pile under the donkey. It hadn’t been there yesterday. *Strange*. And then there were vague reports of a Midnight starburst of white doves. *What was happening?*

He and the Churchwarden checked all the locks. No sign of entry. It was totally mystifying. Then his phone rang. The Rector turned pale as he took the brief call. It was the Bishop. “She said the Crib contest judges met yesterday,” he explained to the now-gaping Churchwarden. “It’s neck-and-neck between us and St Thora’s, so she gets the casting vote. She’s on her way now...with the Archdeacon!”

In any ranking of events most calculated to ruin a cleric’s Yuletide, having a Bishop inspect a pile of papier-mâché poo in his church on Christmas Eve would be Oscar-rated. “We must get rid of it,” hissed the Rector, desperately. And he and the Churchwarden tried to gently usher out the children, with a view to discreetly disposing of it. But both children and parents were reluctant to move. They’d been queueing. This was the star attraction.

The Rector’s head was – literally – in his hands as a muddy Land-Rover drove up and parked in front of the lych-gate. The Bishop had emerged, wearing a kind of camouflage jacket over her cassock, and was striding up the path, followed by the Archdeacon. And four noisy boys.

“They’re my grand-kids,” she explained briskly: “Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. I’ve appointed them as Expert consultants for the day. Who better than children to judge a Christmas Crib competition? We’ve already been to judge St Thora’s, so: Carry on Rector!”

His heart now – metaphorically – in his boots, the Rector led them to the Crib display, still lined with children. The Bishop’s’ grandsons joined in, eagerly. Very soon, there was an excited whoop. Then three more. They had discovered poor Jenny’s ‘accident’.

The Rector had to force himself to look. When he did, he saw the Bishop was heaving up and down in silent mirth. “What a masterstroke,” she said. “It’s a great display. The kids love it. Pastoral poo, who’d of thought it. Why didn’t you mention this on your entry form?”

“I’m afraid it was all a bit... last minute,” said the Rector, more accurately than he knew.

The Bishop consulted her young advisors “Is it this one – or St Thora’s?” “*This one!*” came the unanimous reply. “That’s my vote, too, Rector,” said the Bishop. “You’re the winner – congratulations! The Archdeacon will put a nice cheque in the post for your Fabric Fund.”

She surveyed the Church. “It’s very pretty isn’t it,” she said, approvingly, “I thought the prize money might help with your problem with the Clock. But it seems to be working now.”

“Yes, Bishop,” said the Rector. “It suddenly came to life today, apparently at Midnight. The donkey droppings weren’t there yesterday, either. It’s all rather strange.”

The Churchwarden, hitherto discreetly quiet, agreed. “Yes,” she said. “*Very strange*. It’s like a little miracle...”

“*Wh’o-o-a!*” cried the Bishop, as if halting a bolting horse, “Don’t use the *M* word! We don’t do miracles. And any divine intervention would disqualify you – *unfair advantage*.”

“Yes,” said the Archdeacon, who was in charge of Finances, “*And* it’s a different budget.”

So they all agreed to say no more about the little miracle of Clockdown. What mattered was that they had won the Crib competition, the Clock was ticking, and the bell was striking. Just like old times.

And on Christmas Day, when morning service was over, Margie and Bartie sat again on their favourite pew. He leaned over and gave her a shy peck on the nose. “*Happy Christmas*,” he said. She blushed. “We must never ever lose our Clock again, Bartie,” she sighed. “It brings us all together.”

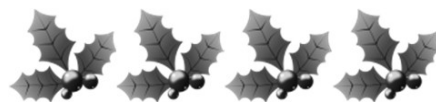
Then, at just before One, Margie went outside to the tower.

And the brave little Chief Church mouse ran up the Clock...

Hickory Dickory Dock.

And, when it struck One, she went down again.

Hickory. Dickory... Done.



Rose & Crown News



Back to as near normal as possible from Thursday 3 Dec. That means, in the absence of further changes from the government, that drinks can only be served with “substantial” meals. Check for opening times on the board outside or the web site

www.roseandcrownfarmhouse.com, email

roseandcrown55@gmail.com, Facebook message (link from web site) or 01453 860612.

Bookings recommended!

Jenny & Ross have purchased the freehold of the pub and barns and are hoping to open bedrooms soon. Hoping for a long future as a village pub!

St Joseph's School news

HOT NEWS! St. Josephs in the top 1% of English primary schools! 138th out of 15,000 in the Sunday Times rankings. Well done to all the staff and students!

As I am sure you are aware, remote learning had been a hot topic amongst schools and parents. Last week we had to put one of our strategies to the test! Friday morning 6.15am and two members of staff phoned me – they had been contacted by track and trace and instructed to self-isolate for 10 days! At 8.40am their classes came into school to be

met by their teacher on the interactive white board. The teachers taught and the children were supported by teaching assistants in the classroom. As I walked round the school there was team teaching, small groups reading in the corridor (with their teacher on a laptop) and even one to one assessments going on! Teaching and learning continued. We are so lucky to have such a hard working professional team who go the extra mile to do the best that they can for our children! There are many positives that are coming out of our current situation.



One thing that we are missing is the contact with our parents and how we share the children's work. We have recorded our Harvest and remembrance celebrations, there will be no open day this year – it's a virtual tour instead! All of these can be found on our website <http://www.st-josephs-nymphsfield.com/website> if you would like to take a look. We also have a tab for collective worship. Mandy Baker, the lovely chaplain from St Peter's High School, has produced a

reflection based on Sunday's Gospel reading during lockdown, there are three so far, these can also be found on our website. There is always a way to overcome things, it's just working out how...onto our next challenge, the Nativity for KS1 and what does a carol concert look like for Key stage 2?

Quotation Corner

The trouble ain't that there is too many fools, but that the lightning ain't distributed right.

Mark Twain

Every family has at least one weird relative. If you don't know who it is then it's probably you.

Paul Maycock

Poo Corner

We've heard of someone allowing their dog to foul the school playing field. There are no reasons for dogs to go on there (in any sense of the word). **STOP IT!** Could everyone please look out for the offender!?

Remembrance Service



A very minimal remembrance service was held on 8 November, with around a dozen people present. (We'd been asked to discourage attendance). The small crowd made the occasion the more poignant, but the display of poppies around the memorial was

lovely. Normal service next year?

Martin P

I would like to thank all these fantastic, creative ladies who knitted & crocheted poppies to display around the village, to remember the fallen: Rosemary Beach, Donna Guerin, Ann Overton, Paula Lockier, Christina Powell, Barbara Powell, Jenny Nisbett, Janet Acton & Ann Morgan.

We had so many, it was a great response & the village looked lovely. We also had purple ones to remember the animals that perished. Thanks to Donna.

Thanks also to Marie Knight, Brenda Smith & Paula Lockier who helped me display them around so beautifully. Thanks to Sue Cowle & Janet Acton who offered to help also. Greatly appreciated.

Huge Thanks to my mum (Rose Beach) who as well as making loads, helped me sew them up for hours. 'Lest we forget'

Julie T

NATURE COLUMN: THE ROBIN - BY "MISS DAISY"

It is that time of the year when we sit down and write the Christmas cards and I am sure that many of them will depict pictures of robins. Robins have been associated with Christmas since Victorian times – because Victorian postmen wore red waistcoats – and were nicknamed Robins - hence the fair sprinkling of robins you will see on the Christmas cards today.

The original name for the robin was a Ruddock and In fact the breast of the robin is not actually red, more an orange colour, but the word for the colour orange was not known at all until the Tudor times when we started to import oranges from Spain, and by then, "robin redbreast" had become the name of this perky little bird.

They are very territorial and will show their vicious side in order to preserve their own

territory of roughly the size of a small football pitch. The need to find a mate and breed is essential as robins rarely live longer than two years. Their enemies are sparrowhawks and cats and if the nest is raided and the fledglings killed, they will usually go on to have another brood.

Robins will often sing at night in cities as the streetlamps fool them into thinking that dawn is approaching and they are usually the first birds to herald the dawn. Their song is often confused with that of the nightingale and the famous song about "The nightingale singing in Berkeley Square" was more than likely a robin!

Margaret Thatcher apparently once breezed into a meeting one autumn day and announced that she had been serenaded by a nightingale the previous

night outside No.10 Downing Street. One very brave civil servant put her right by saying “nightingales are summer birds and by now they would have all left for Africa – it would have been a robin!” At this, Margaret Thatcher hissed in his ear...”IF the Prime Minister says she heard a nightingale, then she heard a nightingale!”

Robins have developed a unique relationship with us humans, and some have been trained to eat from our hands. They are also very opportunist at finding

places to nest – on top of cisterns in outside toilets, plant pots and old kettles...and there is even a story of a gardener hanging up his coat in a shed at 9.15 to start work...later, when he went to collect his coat to go to lunch, a robin had started to nest in his coat pocket!

So, as you sit down to write your Christmas cards you will know that there is much more to the robin than his “red” breast

Wishing you all peace and happiness this Christmas!

Remember the Song Thrush

Of the two great mendicant orders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, the Franciscans did not feature in Nympsfield's history while the Dominicans played a pivotal role thanks to their connection with the Leigh family who owned the Woodchester estate.

Today, however, when human activity has been responsible for seriously depleting the numbers of many wild birds, it is to St Francis that one must turn for guidance. Some 800 years ago, with his love for all the natural world, and in particular "his little brothers and sisters, the birds", to which he used to preach sermons, he embodied everything that a modern conservationist aspires to.

To its credit, Nympsfield is still home to song thrushes, skylarks and house martins (in summer) as well as other threatened species. Gone, alas, are the nightingales from the Bowlas Valley, the redstarts from Woodcock and the nightjars from Sheepcotes. Even the song thrush, common enough a few years ago, has seen its numbers decrease in the UK by at least

50% since the 1970s, and it would be a tragedy if we were to lose it altogether.

The song thrush, well known for eating the slugs and snails that decimate our gardens, has another great attribute, its noteworthy song. If one is lucky, one can even hear it on the bleakest evening in mid-winter. Thomas Hardy heard one on the last day of December 1900:

*An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.
So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound,
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air,
Some blessed Hope whereof he knew
And I was unaware".*

The plight of many of our wild birds is obvious. What to do about it is not so obvious. Grandiose schemes for re-wilding etc., may bring kudos to those who advocate them but will do very little to help the song thrush or other once

common birds such as the yellowhammer and the linnet whose numbers are also in sharp decline. Perhaps St Francis would simply have urged us humans, whose rights are protected by law, to remember that the song thrush has rights also; to remember to preserve as best we can its

habitat in the fields and gardens of Gloucestershire; and above all to remember that its sanctity of life is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be our own.

Ian Blair

What a Year!

The events of 2020 will keep this year in memory for some time to come – will the date spring to mind as easily as 1665 (Great Plague) or 1918 (Spanish Flu), I wonder? The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) recently called it an “unprecedented year” and, instead of just nominating one word of the year, they went for twenty. Mostly, these are not new but old words that have recently come to prominence and maybe, in the process, acquired a new meaning words (last year’s word was “toxic”). No surprise to find in the list “coronavirus”, “covid-19”, “lockdown”, “social distancing”, “pandemic”, “staycation”, “support bubble” and “superspreader”, followed, after the first lockdown, by “reopening” and, more recently, “moonshot”; this last, a child of the unloved and unlamented Dominic Dastardly, we can expect to quickly disappear without trace. Personally, I think “asymptomatic” should have been there.

Other words listed by OED were Trump-related: “impeachment”, “acquittal” and “mail-in”. Expect these to evaporate once the US has a human being in charge. Then we had two words associated with climate change: “bushfire” and “net zero” – we shall see these again for certain.

In the village there have been no Covid-19 fatalities (so far as I know) but five much-

loved near-fixtures did escape this earthly realm: Pat Cook (13 March, followed her adored husband Tod the previous December), Laura Freeman, age 104 (23 April), Margaret and Lionel Holloway, 63 years married (24 July and 9 August respectively) and Wendy Reynolds (2 October). On a happier note, Thomas Long was born on 28 March and the rest of us made it to another birthday.

The restrictions put a severe damper on most village activities: the Rose and Crown and the Working Men’s Club shut down, opened up, shut down and then opened up again. The pantomime was cancelled despite the tickets having been sold, the scenery built and the actors knowing their lines - as much as they were likely to, anyway. WiN meetings were stopped as was the Soup Kitchen. But the Book Club kept going virtually – like the Windmill Theatre in the war, they can brag “we never closed”. Despite the problems, the anti-Covid measures did bring a few advantages: there was greater neighbourliness with people more likely to look out for each other. A few kind souls went shopping for those who needed to be extra careful. We banged our pots and pans for the NHS workers toiling away so bravely. Knitted rainbows appeared throughout the village bringing a smile to the faces of

those who saw them. We also got ourselves a new village hub –the bus shelter as was - thanks to Sue Cowle’s efforts. And a new village signpost at The Cross thanks to Malcolm Jones and Richard Newman.

As we approach the year’s end there is hope in sight with, not one, but three vaccines in near view (not counting Mr Putin’s) and many others just over the horizon. Like buses, you wait ages for one and then... . It’s going to take months to get everyone immunized so, in the meantime, stay careful. Be sure to make good use of the miracle of modern electronics to have a wonderful Christmas and, when it comes, a happy and healthy New Year.

Ian Crossland



Christmas Greetings

Due to the current situation we have decided not to send Christmas cards this year and would like to take this opportunity of wishing all our Family and Friends in Nympsfield a

Very HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a PEACEFUL and HEALTHY NEW YEAR.

From Roger and Mary Jo Elmer,
Mike and Cis Whittard,
Theresa Freeman.

(And the same to all of you – Eds.

)

Wastelines

I was idly googling Christmas stuff recently and came across some quite alarming statistics about Christmas waste, so I thought I’d share them with you (not that I want to cast a gloom over Christmas!). So here are some examples of what we in the UK throw away at Christmas:

1 billion Christmas cards ~ 500 tonnes of Christmas lights ~ 8 million Christmas trees

42 million pounds’ worth of unwanted gifts ~ 100 million bags of packaging
108 million rolls’ worth of wrapping paper
~ 400,000 tonnes of waste paper, card and cardboard

which is not put out for recycling, or is rejected for recycling because it’s contaminated by glitter (which clogs up recycling machinery) ~ on Christmas Day alone we throw away...

130 million sprouts, 93 million roast potatoes and 91 million slices of turkey!

Ben Elliott, co-chair of the Conservative party, is the current government spokesman on food waste and its effects on the environment, so if you’re interested in hearing what he has to say, you can find him on YouTube Ben Elliot, UK Food Surplus and Waste Champion. According to www.wrap.co.uk household food waste dropped from 8.1 million tonnes in 2007 to 6.6 million tonnes in 2018, and of that amount in 2018, 70% was still good to eat. It looks like we are moving in the right direction with food waste, though very slowly. We still waste 30% more at Christmas than during the rest of the year. www.gwp.co.uk and www.edie.net are the main websites I looked at, but there are many more which also make suggestions

about what we can do to reduce waste at Christmas time. Here are a few of them:

- send ecards or make your own cards using the ones you received the previous year (30 sheets of A4 white card for £1 in the Pound Shop, plus 4 gluesticks for £1, last time I went in) or put the cards in the recycling bin
- if your Christmas lights stop working and you can't fix them yourself, try the Repair Cafes in Nailsworth or Stroud, when they reopen after Christmas
- look out for SDC news on taking Christmas trees for recycling
- give unwanted gifts to a charity shop or to the Nymphsfield Soup Kitchen raffle ~ give something consumable like a treat food or soap ~ try googling 'sustainable gifts'
- consider giving or asking for unpackaged gifts like tickets for an event, a subscription to a digital magazine, a certificate of adoption for a needy or endangered animal
- reuse wrapping paper, and when it gets torn recycle it; when it runs out use brown paper or newspaper, or fabric remnants ~ use paper tape instead of plastic tape, or just use string or ribbon ~ give up glitter
- go shopping in your fridge, and turn all those leftovers into soups, pies or curries (with fried Christmas pud for afters?) There are many recipes using leftovers on the internet

Well, best wishes for a Very Happy Christmas and New Year to you all!
from *Wastelines*

and 3 festive cheers to Stroud District Council for being one of the top Councils in the UK for recycling!

POETRY



Nutty Knitter

I am a nutty knitter – I've knitted all my life
My teacher loved his scarf so much I made one for his wife.
My husband wears a bobble hat – a cosy blanket for the cat
A knitted cosy for the pot – keeps the tea so nice and hot.
Hot water bottle covers – in red and blue and green
It doesn't matter very much – as they are rarely seen.
I've knitted sweaters out of mohair – made several of those
But now I've had to give it up – the hair got up my nose.
Baby jackets – pink or blue
Are very easy things to do
All my children wore wool mittens
I've made blankets for some homeless kittens.
All the many garments I've knitted and I've purled
If they were all unravelled, the wool would stretch around the world.

Jenny Nisbet

A young lad who lives down in Uley
Was in trouble for playing the fool – he
Then stood on his head
'til his face turned bright red
Shouting "come on, let's all have a hooley"

Gerry @ Tinkley Corner

NYMPFIELD PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

VACANCY AT NYMPFIELD PC

A permanent Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer is required by Nympsfield Parish Council in Stroud.

The main duties will include the preparation of agendas and attendance at monthly evening meetings, the writing of minutes and implementation of decisions taken/actions decided; also conducting the council's financial affairs from control of banking and accounting arrangements to preparation of records for audit and VAT reclaims.

Training will be given through the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils, leading eventually to the Certificate of Local Council Administration qualification.

The successful candidate will be required to work from home for 21 hours a month with necessary equipment – laptop, printer and mobile phone – provided, and should be IT proficient.

Salary will be negotiable but within the National Association of Local Councils 2019 scale range LC1 (13-17).

Applicants should forward their CV and a concise statement of why they are interested in the role and what they feel they could offer the council to:

clerk@nympsfieldparishcouncil.org by a deadline of noon on Weds., 2nd December 2020.

Meetings are usually held the 2nd Monday in the month at 19.30 in the Village Hall. However, in the current circumstances, all meetings are now held "remotely". Please visit our website www.nympsfieldparishcouncil.org to view the Agenda and Minutes of all meetings.

<p>Your Parish Councillors:</p> <p>Cllr Elizabeth Sturgess (Chair) 861076 Cllr Susan Cowle (Vice Chair) 861010 Cllr Ann Hardy 860876 Cllr Gemma Warden Cllr Peter Tomiak-Baquero 07768 669747 Clerk: clerk@nympsfieldparishcouncil.org</p>	<p>Your District Councillor</p> <p>Cllr Jim Dewy cclr.jim.dewey@stroud.gov.uk</p> <p>Your County Councillor</p> <p>Cllr. Loraine Patrick loraine.patrick@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Your Member of Parliament</p> <p>Siobhan Baillie (con) siobhan.baillie.mp@parliament.uk</p>
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USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergencies		Police (non-emergency) 101
Electricity	0800 6783 105	Police: Neigh'hood Policing, Dursley & Cam Team (non-emergency) 01453 753500
24h Floodline	0845 9881188	Rose and Crown Inn 01453 860612
Severn Trent	0800 783 4444	St Joseph's School 01453 860311
Police	999	Stroud District Council 01453 766321
Childline	0800 1111	Building Control 01453 754871
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111	Dog Warden 01453 754491
Doctors' Surgery Nailsw'th	01453 832424	Pollution, noise, bonfires etc 754478
Doctors' Surgery Uley	01453 860459	Neighbourhood Warden - Andy Beamish 07834 419332
Glo'ster Royal Hospital	0300 422 2222	Rubbish collection 01453 754424
NHS Direct	111	Village Agent – we no longer have one!
Nuisance callers (Information Commissioner Office if you are registered with telephone preference service)	0345 070 0707	Vet (Bowbridge) 01453 762350

The Nympsfield News and Advertiser is produced bi-monthly and delivered throughout Nympsfield on a voluntary basis and is free. The cost of printing is met by Nympsfield Parish Council. Extra copies are usually available at St Bartholomew's Church and the Rose and Crown. You can also download a digital version from www.nympsfieldparishcouncil.org/newsletter.

Views published in the NN&A are not necessarily those of the Editors or of any other contributor. Contributions are published at the Editors' discretion. Please note that the NN&A is merely offering a platform for services and cannot accept any responsibility for the quality of work offered. Information is usually correct at the time of going to print.

Produced in the village by Ian Crossland and Martin Phillips and delivered by Katrina Douglas-Phillips, Lindy and Brian Egglestone, Janet and Douglas Jackson, Ute McFarling, Julie Trinder and Peter Tomiak. The editors can be contacted via email at NympyNews@gmx.com. Copy must be provided by the 20th of the month preceding publication and may be modified without notice (e.g. for reasons of space).

It is free to advertise in the Nympsfield News and Advertiser. All we ask is that you are a resident of the Parish or have a close connection to the village. Advertisements will remain until you ask for them to be removed. Please check for correctness. We accept no responsibility for errors.
