

DECEMBER 2021-JANUARY 2022

SPIRE



HAMPTON HILL'S PARISH MAGAZINE

YOUR FREE COPY



Happy Christmas
to all our readers

stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk or find us on     THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Meet the clergy



VICAR Rev Derek Winterburn
Derek was born in Orpington, Kent, and ordained in 1986. He served in several diverse London parishes before becoming vicar here in 2016. He is married to Sandra, a teacher, and has two children. A keen photographer, he posts a picture online every day, combining it with a daily walk or cycle ride. He can be contacted at any time other than on Wednesdays (his day off).
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ASSOCIATE PRIEST Rev Jacky Cammidge

Jacky was born in Abertillery, South Wales, and ordained in 2015. She is a self-supporting minister and has been at St James's since starting her ordination training. Jacky is married to Alan, and has three children. During term-time she runs Hampton Hill Nursery School, based in the church hall, with her family.
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ASSISTANT PRIEST Canon Julian Reindorp
Julian was born in Durban, South Africa, and ordained in 1969. He has worked in parishes in East London, Chatham and Milton Keynes, and was Team Rector in Richmond until retirement in 2009. He continues to lead a busy life, often out and about on his trademark red scooter. Julian is married to Louise and has four children, three stepchildren and nine grandchildren.
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FROM THE EDITOR...

I'm sure we are all hoping we can celebrate Christmas this year with family and friends, and enjoy all the build-up. Christmas in the church starts with Christingle on Sunday 5 December (see page 3).

The centrespread this month has been written by Jacky Cammidge, who recalls how she celebrated Christmas in Wales, and the traditions she has continued.

I have written about my favourite carols on page 8 — the final in the Favourites series. When we launched the page in 2014 we thought it would run for a couple of years, but such was its success we continued it for eight. It has covered 72 topics, ranging from non-alcoholic beer to folk songs, places to visit, animals, birds, music and films. Thank you to everyone who contributed. We can't wait to unveil the new feature next year!

It has been a very challenging year, but we can now start to enjoy the things that have been missing from our lives. The Spire Team wishes you all a happy Christmas and a better year in 2022.

Best Wishes

Janet

Janet Nunn



Cover photo: Home for Christmas reflecting the hope of a warm and happy celebration

SPIRE

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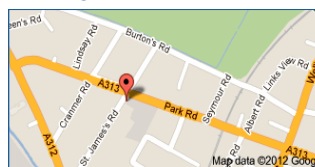
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Finding us



The church is on the corner of St James's Road and Park Road. The hall is between the church and vicarage. There is ample unrestricted parking. Buses stopping nearby include the R68, R70 and 285.

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For the very latest news go to our website or follow us on social media:

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Clerical Capers



The Nativity should still make us ponder



DEREK WINTERBURN

Do you 'ponder'? We all think, and we are often encouraged to 'reflect'. There are other words that mean similar things: meditate, muse, ruminate... But I think in English we catch the echo of the word's cousin, ponder and ponder has the particular element of weighing a matter carefully, of turning a matter over and looking at it from different angles.

In one of the Christmas readings Luke tells us that, after the shepherds returned to their fields having seen the newborn in the manger, Mary kept all the things the shepherds had said 'and pondered them in her heart'.

Story of Mary and Jesus

We tell the story of Mary's pregnancy, and Jesus's birth frequently in the days running up to 25 December.

The string of scenes is well known, and open to all to follow; there is no secret about Christmas!

But even history is more than 'one thing after another.' The Christmas story has

been retold for centuries, not simply to repeat events that happened, but to provide doorways into understanding more: more about ourselves and more about God.

So Mary, who was the most closely involved in 'the Nativity', had not fully understood all that had happened to her, and around her, and needed to 'ponder them in her heart'.

Church's Christmas branding

The Church of England has a 'motto' for each Christmas. This year's, seen below, picks the idea of the line from Luke's gospel. It nudges us to think more slowly about what it is all about.

At the heart of Christmas



What might Mary expect us to ponder?

- What lay behind God's decision to come into human history — what is it that we couldn't work out for ourselves?

- Why was God's son born in a stable, amongst some very ordinary people and not in somewhere rather smarter (as the wise men expected)?

- If God did that then, what is he doing now?

This year many people will have high hopes for a Christmas celebration; last year was somewhat subdued.

Families and friends were not able to gather freely. Parties were rather suspect.

In church we held two candlelight Carol services — because we could not fit everyone in safely distanced! The children's Christmas Eve ones had to go online.

This year there is a fuller schedule of events and services (seen in the panel on the right), but even so I think it would be good discipline to ponder too.

Reflecting on Christmas

For those who belong to a church we should reflect on what the fullest meaning of Christmas is, and for others here is an invitation to join in with the carols, and the candles and ponder.

I wish you a Happy Christmas and hope that you will join us at one of our services as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who will always be at the heart of every Christmas.



Sundays

Holy Communion (said) 8am

Parish Communion 9:30am

Come to church or watch live or later on our Facebook and YouTube pages.

Together 11:15am (not 5, 12, 26 Dec)

Our shorter, all-age service, including a story, singing and crafts. All ages are welcome!

Christingle

Sun 5 December 10am

Our service to mark Advent Sunday and support the work of The Children's Society. Everyone can make and take home a Christingle candle.

Mon-Fri (but not Thu)

Morning Prayer 9am

A short service of daily prayer in church

Thursdays

Holy Communion (said) 9:30am

Messy Church

Sun 12 December 3pm

Please book at <https://bit.ly/StJMessyDec21> for a Christmas Messy Church with stories, music and crafts and snacks.

Alistair's Big Christmas

Sat 18 December 8pm

Alistair Griffin returns to perform Christmas classics from Slade to Cliff Richard, plus carols, backed by the Games Maker Choir. Tickets from alistairgriffin.eventbrite.co.uk

Carols by Candlelight

Sun 19 December 6pm

Our popular service includes readings, music from the choir and favourite carols.

Children's Carols

Fri 24 December 3pm & 4.30pm

So good we do it twice! Just choose the best time.

Christmas Eve

Fri 24 December

11pm Parish Communion

Christmas Day

Sat 25 December

8am Holy Communion

9:30am Family Communion

Time to Pray Mon-Fri

If you would like to listen to the weekday podcasts please email: vicar@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

Weekly News

If you would like to receive the weekly eFlyers, with details of services and events, email: vicar@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

My Welsh Christmas



JACKY CAMMIDGE



Three fathers Jacky, in the arms of her father Ronald, alongside Father Christmas and grandfather Reginald

At some point over the Christmas period, usually when I am listening to carols or some traditional festive music, my mind will wander back to my homeland of Wales, to the valley of Abertillery where I grew up, and to the Christmases of my past.

I can remember clearly the golden glow of the coal fires. The wonderful smell of mince pies and turkey cooking, Christmas puddings bubbling on top of the stove for hours. There were multicoloured Christmas lights shining like jewels on the Christmas tree, and the sound of Christmas music playing and lots of laughter and neighbourly good cheer. Not forgetting the bite of the cold when waking up to frost on the inside of the windows, as the fire had gone out during the night. And the school carol concerts, and midnight mass where the church burst with people, and music, and more music.

Christmas tree magic!

The Christmas tree would always appear overnight, my mother denying all knowledge of how it had appeared, but declaring that it was part of the magic of Christmas. Now, our family tradition is to decorate the tree with our grandchildren — there would be a mutiny if our tree appeared overnight!

Waking up on Christmas Day in the darkness, I still remember the shapes of gifts at the end of my bed, the stocking bursting with goodies which

Most of us have happy childhood memories of Christmas, surrounded by several generations. Jacky Cammidge grew up in Welsh valley mining town of Abertillery, nestled beside the Brecon Beacons. Although now living in London, family and friends remain at the heart of celebrations as they were for her family. But the Cammidge clan have made one surprising change — turning Christmas Day on its head!

usually included a satsuma and chocolate coins. Whoever woke first, usually my little brother, would shout 'he's been' and with that, Christmas had begun.

Christmas was about people and we spent time visiting each set of grandparents, family and

neighbours on the day. In fact we spent very little time in our own home on Christmas Day. The excitement was at the prospect of seeing those we loved, not playing with toys or gifts;

I am so pleased that we still get to spend Christmases with my

brother and his wife and our children and grandchildren, because Christmas for me is about being with the people we love.

Back then, after Christmas dinner with Nanna Eileen and Grampa Gral, it was time to move on for tea with Nanna Nelmes — Evelyn, or 'Chapel Nanna' as I called her. She had a strong faith in a loving God which sustained and comforted her throughout her life, especially after the death of my father Ron.

He was just 30 when he died, in fact the year after the photo above was taken. Evelyn's husband died a few years later.

Holly and symbolism

Nanna didn't have a traditional Christmas tree. Instead, in a pot she would place branches of holly and decorate them with wonderful ornaments, robins, Father Christmas and snowmen figures and I am sure that there was a small nativity scene.

Nanna told me the holly berries symbolised the blood of Christ, who was sacrificed for us, and at Christmas, the time of his birth, we needed to remember the price he paid to save us from our sins.

We ended the day at the house of my stepfather's parents, Rene and Ron. As it was full of different families coming and going all evening, this was a total contrast to the quiet of Nanna Nelmes' house.

Again, it is the people that I recall. I have very little recollection about the presents we received.

My awakening faith

I grew up surrounded by strong women of faith and this moulded my childhood. I just accepted that there was a God.

But it was a service in the local Methodist chapel at Christmas, in which I was singing a solo, that stirred me. I was totally captivated by the minister's wife who told the Christmas story. I remember being filled with awe and wonder at the story of that first Christmas.

Deep inside, the words filled me up and I would probably say now that I was indeed filled with the Holy Spirit.

By the following Christmas I had moved to Abertillery Grammar School. The school carol concert was held in St Michael's, the local Anglican church.

The church organist, who played for us, asked me if I would sing a solo with the church choir at Easter. As a result, I started attending weekly services and very quickly I felt totally at home in the Anglican tradition — and the rest is history.

Midnight mass was an important part of Christmas celebrations in Abertillery. I always went with my mother, and my brother was a server.



Family Jacky with her brother, John, left, cousin Gavin, right, and their grandfather Gral

is in reverse!



A welcome in the valley Abertillery in Blaenau Gwent

The service started in candlelight at midnight and after the choir had sung *Once in royal David's city*, the lights went on, flooding the church with light and we all welcomed in Christmas.

At the end, everyone poured out into the town and there were shouts of 'Happy Christmas' all the way home as the bells rang and goodwill really did resound.

Excitement of waiting

I enjoy the build-up to Christmas as much as the day itself. In Wales there was a wealth of amazing musical talent in the valley and the weeks before Christmas were full of concerts and services, community carol singing, going door to door, visits to care homes with both the school and the male voice choir.

For me, the nativity concert at my family's nursery school, the carol services in church, the Advent course and Compline are all part of what I love about Christmas.

Our 'bonkers' Christmas!

Since I was ordained, our family have developed a new Christmas tradition which to many may sound bonkers — but it works for us.

We have Boxing Day food on Christmas Day after church, and then relax by playing games and celebrating with my brother and my oldest daughter's family.

It is on Boxing Day that my family all get together and celebrate with a turkey dinner. The call goes up, 'He's been,' and the children discover their gifts under the tree.

Our new tradition still holds fast to my Welsh Christmases, where people are what matters. We often end the day in the garden with the firepit lit, drinking hot chocolate and toasting marshmallows.

What is wonderful for me is that as we light up the church at midnight mass and declare that 'Christ is born' and wish each other 'Happy Christmas', I remember all the wonderful family that have now

gone — but the warmth, their love, good cheer and traditions live on.

Together again

The pandemic meant that family gatherings were cancelled last year. The joy of celebrating our Lord's birth remained the same, but without family to share it, it was a very quiet day.

This year I pray that we can all be together. The gifts and trappings aren't important. What I long for is being in a church full of people, with carols ringing out and — just like my Christmases past in Wales — being surrounded by family and friends.

Whatever your traditions are, and whether you are in a house full of family, celebrating with friends, or on your own this Christmas, I pray that God's love will be a blessing to you.

Love, peace, happiness and joy be with us all. *Nadolig Llawen!*



All together Around the firepit with my family on Boxing Day

Around the Spire

Two dates for your diary Comeback for Messy Church and Christingle

TWO POPULAR events in the church calendar are making a comeback this December.

Our annual Christingle service, which raises money for The Children's Society, is back in church on **Sunday 5 December at 10am** after going online in 2020. The event 'shines a light' on the true meaning of Christmas. Everyone will get the chance to make and take home a Christingle candle. The All Age service is perfect for families of every age.

We are also pleased to host a Christmas Messy Church on **Sunday 12 December at 3pm**. Please book at: <https://bit.ly/StJMessyDec21>.

Messy Church is a well established brand across the UK, and we launched our own in 2019, attracting numerous families to our church for the first time. However,



after two busy dates we had to put it on hold because of the pandemic.

Now that it is safe to resume we are busy planning a celebration of Christmas with crafts, activities and some singing. Perhaps we will see you there!

Pedalling for Milo Hospital appeal

CONGRATULATIONS to Derek Winterburn and Liz Wilmot who helped raise £2500 for Milo Hospital, Tanzania, by completing a 20-mile sponsored cycle ride across Bushy and Richmond parks in November. The money will be used to furnish a new paediatric ward.

Farewell to a loyal member

ROSALIE Meyerowitz, a long-standing member of our church, died in Kingston Hospital on 13 November, aged 90.

Rosalie was born in Jamaica and came to Birmingham to train to be a professional ballet dancer, where she also met her future husband who played in an orchestra.

Her interest in dance continued here, as she was a member of our church liturgical dancers.

Rosalie attended Sunday services and mid-week Communion regularly until recently, and also spoke warmly of a visit to the Holy Land.



Rosalie's husband, Michael, died in 1993. We extend our sympathy to their three children, Louis, Ruth and David.

Details of the funeral were being arranged as we went to press.

Deciphering the codes



PRILL HINCKLEY

In its simplest sense a symbol stands for something, like red and blue for hot and cold water. But the symbols in most churches, including St James, have deep and significant meaning. The church has many symbols, but we will look at just a few.

The cross

The most important is the cross, such as the one centred over the high altar. It reminds us that Jesus died for us. Unlike some Christian traditions, crosses in the Church of England do not generally include the body of Jesus.

Either side of the cross are symbols depicting the bread and the wine distributed in the communion service. Christians break bread to remember the body of Jesus 'broken' on the cross. They drink red wine to remember that Jesus bled when he died for us.

Symbols on the font

The octagonal font, pictured below, is full of symbols. Four sides show four living creatures, a man, a lion, an ox and a eagle, which represent the four Gospels. The other faces have symbols representing Christ.

In the picture below the central square contains A and Ω, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the book of Revelation, Jesus calls himself the Alpha and the Omega.

Cockle shells

Of particular interest are the symbol of the cockle shells dotted around the church (on the pulpit, the altar, above the vicarage door and on the hall consecration stone).



These remind us that Saint James was a fisherman from Galilee before Jesus called him to be an apostle. In 43 AD James was the first apostle to be martyred. He was beheaded by order of King Herod and, according to Spanish tradition, his body was taken to Santiago de Compostela, where his shrine attracts thousands of pilgrims each year.

There are cockle shells on the beaches of north-west Spain and these were adopted as symbols of St James from Medieval times up until the present day.



Other symbols

Other prominent symbols in our church include the dove, below, as was seen at the baptism of Jesus, and the Trinity, depicted often by a three-leaf clover and representing Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Churchyard

Many of the trees, shrubs and flowers in the churchyard are thought to have special significance.

Stained-glass windows

The beautiful stained-glass windows in our church have symbols and tell their own stories, as highlighted in the November issue, but most of all they should be appreciated for what they are — links to our living God.

Making all the right notes



JANE NEWMAN

Music - the organ voluntaries and congregational singing, play a significant part in our worship at St James's, and on regular occasions throughout the year, on 'Choir Sundays', the church choir aims to add an extra dimension to the 9:30 service, as well as providing the occasional Evensong and special services to mark solemn or festive days.

I have been a member of the church choir for many years and greatly enjoy the fellowship it brings as we work together on Friday evenings to prepare the music for these services.

It's all in the planning

All are warmly welcome in the choir and we have a mixture of experienced and inexperienced singers, so plenty of time is allowed for rehearsal in order to ensure that everyone is confident on the day. Although we have a number of anthems already in the repertoire which just need refreshing from time to time, it is rewarding to learn new music and Thom has introduced us to some lovely 'new to us' anthems and introits.

Thom and Derek meet to discuss the hymns and anthems which complement the theme of each choir service. Then Thom prepares a rehearsal schedule to give choir members a full picture of the music and services we are preparing for.

Choir practices are carefully planned so that new anthems can be learnt in small, easy steps over a period of weeks. Thom's enthusiasm, patience and encouragement have been invaluable in developing our

confidence and our willingness to challenge ourselves when learning new music!

The 'choir invisible'

In the first lockdown, Thom proposed recording at home to create a virtual choir for online services. It was disconcerting to sing by yourself, even with Thom's organ backing track and conducting to help us, and occasionally very frustrating when, on the last verse of a hymn, the phone rang and a new 'take' was needed!



Thom Stanbury, Choir Director & Organist

But it kept us together as a group, helped by regular choir practices on Zoom, although we always kept in our thoughts those choir members unable to join us for these.

It also provided the opportunity for some cheating. We would often record ourselves two or even three times and would sometimes record more than one voice part if it was within our range!

Through Thom's (and Derek's) hard work the tracks were expertly mixed to make a lovely, rich sound.

Christmas starts early in the choir

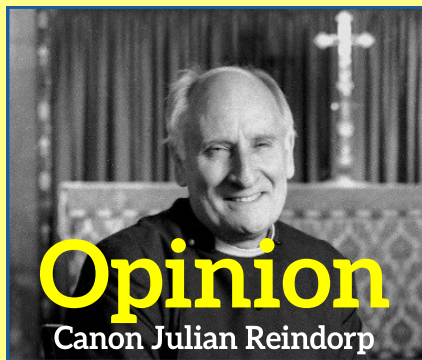
Now thankfully back rehearsing in person, we started work on a beautiful new carol in early September.

We rehearse most Friday evenings from 7-8pm (7.45 at time of writing) and new members are always welcome!



The choir at the Carol Service

The challenges of our link parish



Opinion

Canon Julian Reindorp

HOMELESS AT CHRISTMAS

John Bird founded *The Big Issue* magazine in 1991, now published in four continents and giving employment to thousands of homeless people. He wrote recently, 'We have reached the cliff-edge of a mass homelessness crisis. 4.3 million people are behind on household bills, 564,000 are in rent arrears — their jobs and homes at risk.'

Those losing £20 a week in Universal Credit (still about four million after the Budget) are very vulnerable. People think of homelessness as rough sleeping, but this takes away the focus on those who will be evicted, and they and their children could end up sofa-surfing into temporary accommodation, and headfirst into homelessness. Anything is vastly more sensible than letting people slip into homelessness.'

WOKE CAPITALISM!

On 7 April Jamie Dimon, the CEO of the investment bank JPMorgan Chase, published his annual letter to shareholders. Following George Floyd's killing he had 'taken the knee' and said the bank was fully engaged in solving issues including climate change, poverty, economic development and racial inequality.

Later that day, he and his board published their proxy advice for how shareholders should vote at the annual meeting: vote against all the measures he had claimed to support e.g. against a bank equality audit, and against a review into its political lobbying. The shareholders duly voted as their board suggested. The report also revealed that Dimon who had previously said the 'fault line' in his fractured country 'is inequality' is paid 758 times the median American income.

MILLIONAIRES – 'TAX US'

A group of 30 millionaires, in an open letter before the Budget, called on the chancellor to tax them and other rich people. 'We can afford to pay and the cost of recovery cannot fall on the young or on those with lower incomes.' They encouraged him to introduce a wealth tax to help pay for the virus crisis and tackle the inequality gap. 'We know where you can find that money: tax wealth holders like us. We can afford to contribute more, and we want to invest in repairing our shared services.' They pointed out that the current tax system places a deeply unequal burden on working people.

TRIBUTE TO MPs

Simon Preston in the *Guardian*, reflecting on the killing of Sir David Amess MP wrote, 'In grand bureaucracies such as health or social care, the citizen confronts what can seem like overwhelming power. Each edifice is barricaded behind zombie phone lines of recorded voices and websites awash in codes and passwords. All are designed to deter any but the most determined assault. The modern state is an electronic fortress. The only humans who seem trusted by the public to lay siege to it are MPs. To many people in Southend, Amess must have seemed the local face of the British government, albeit in a friendly guise. He was a point of live contact. As such he could have seemed a natural focus of antagonism and hatred.' I suspect we all hope our MPs continue to be democracy's local and personal champions.

CLERGY NUMBERS

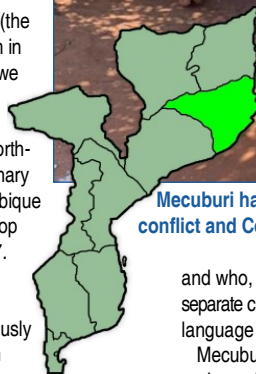
When I was ordained in 1969, 509 men were made deacons. This year 591 were recommended for training, the highest figure for 13 years. Of these, 431 plan paid ministry, the rest self-supporting. Over half, 58% were women. Nearly a quarter are under 32 and 11% of these ordinands are from UK minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 4% of current clergy. Overall, there are nearly 20,000 active clergy in the Church of England, the majority working in a particular church or churches. This number includes people with 'permission to officiate'. 230 people began training to be Licenced Lay Ministers.



LAURENCE SEWELL

Events can move slowly, especially in Africa... and so it has been with establishing a new link for St James's Church with a parish in northern Mozambique, which has been over two years in the making.

This is being arranged through ALMA (the partnership between the Anglican Church in Angola, London and Mozambique) and we have exchanged parish profiles with the Parish of St Luke the Evangelist in Mecuburi. The town lies some 100km north-west of Nampula, the seat of the Missionary Diocese of Nampula in northern Mozambique – some of you will recall the visit of Bishop Manuel Ernesto from there to us in 2017.



Mecuburi has many challenges including climate change, conflict and Covid-19. Left: Nampula Diocese highlighted.

Building a relationship

The formation of the link was unanimously approved by the PCC at their meeting in September. This twinning arrangement is fundamentally about building a relationship between the two congregations; that we should come to better understand each other's situation and needs, and support each other in prayer. It also means we can give a greater focus to our charitable support that we have historically given to the ALMA appeals over the years.

Mecuburi is a small rural township and the headquarters of the district of the same name encompassing 7,000sq km – a little larger than the county of Devon!. It is primarily an agricultural area and is under-developed in terms of access to clean water, education and health facilities.

The parish priest is Rev Mauritius Namilo, with whom Derek has established initial contact through WhatsApp,

and who, together with lay catechists, oversees many separate congregations in scattered villages. The local language is Emacua, with Portuguese the common language. Mecuburi has not been directly affected by the violence and population displacement in the north of the Diocese, but it has had a strong humanitarian impact and the Anglican community are focused on addressing this violence, the climate emergency following the cyclones of the past two years, and tackling the effects of Covid-19.

Challenges we are facing

Building this link has its challenges. Communications will not be easy, and we need someone with Portuguese language skills, but this link can be of benefit to both congregations. The privileges we enjoy can only be imagined by those in Nampula province, and we need to have a better appreciation of their lives. So commitment and support is needed from us all here at St James's.

Tools to change lives



Janet Nunn, who is retiring as local TWAM co-ordinator, writes: **DUE TO** Covid my last collection has been delayed until next January. Each year Tools With A Mission sorts half a million tools, sewing machines and computers. They are refurbished by volunteers and sent to developing countries, helping to change people's lives.

Prince, above, is deaf and was unemployed when TWAM found him. Now he has tools, is in training, and thanks to the charity has real hope for the future for the first time.

If you have tools to donate, contact me on 020 8979 6325.

REGISTERS

OCTOBER

WEDDING

22 Ben Tiffin and Mary Louise Edmonds, Teddington

INTERMENT OF ASHES

14 Margaret Taylor, 91, Hampton



Timeless messages



JANET NUNN

I have chosen very traditional carols and it was fascinating to delve into their history. Mostly, they come from the 18th or 19th centuries. We hear a lot of Christmas music in shops and on TV, but there is nothing to beat a choir singing Christmas carols. Lots of families have the tradition of watching the Nine Lessons and Carols from Kings College, Cambridge, on TV on Christmas Eve. Perhaps after this you will start humming or singing the carols as I have done!

Once in royal David's city



Originally written as a poem by Cecil Francis Alexander, the carol was first published in 1848. The first verse is traditionally sung as a solo and whether sung by someone from our choir or King's College, it is so atmospheric. I am told that in a children's choir the conductor doesn't tell the chosen soloist until just before the service, to avoid them being nervous!

O come all ye faithful (in Latin *Adeste Fideles*)

The original version of this his carol is attributed to King John IV of Portugal. The four verses have been extended to eight and have been translated into many languages. The English version was written by Frederick Oakeley, a Roman Catholic priest, in 1841. I love the verse 'Sing choirs of angels...' sung with a choir and organ. The last verse is reserved to be sung on Christmas Day, but is sometimes sung before then!



Silent night

Composed in a small Austrian town in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber, to lyrics by Joseph Mohr. The story goes that on Christmas Eve the town was flooded and Mohr took the words to Gruber to write music for the guitar as the organ was damaged and the carol was needed for Midnight Mass.



Eventually the church was destroyed and replaced with the Silent Night Chapel. The carol is often sung in its original German, *Stille Nacht*.

We thee kings of Orient are

This carol was written in 1857 by John Henry Hopkins Jr, rector of a church in Pennsylvania, and a music teacher. He composed both words and music. It was sung by his family and friends, and because of its popularity in 1863 he decided to publish it. This is a lovely carol, particularly if sung by a choir with separate solos for the three kings. I also love the refrain at the end of each verse.



Away in a manger



Probably one of the most popular carols. There is something very special about young children singing this carol. It was first published in the late 19th century and

claimed to be the work of Martin Luther, who lived much earlier. Others say it is American in origin. It used to be called *Luther's Cradle Song* as he sang it to his children. It has always been a favourite of mine as it is sung so simply and quietly when compared with all the joyful carols

Ding! Dong! merrily on high

The tune first appeared as a dance in the 16th century. The English composer, George Ratcliffe Woodward, published it in 1924. He was particularly interested in bellringing.

This carol is noted for its refrain – not for the faint-hearted, as the 'O' in Gloria is fluidly sustained through a lengthy rising and falling sequence, extending the word to 33 syllables.

You need a lot of puff!



Unto us a child is given



This is both a carol and part of Handel's *Messiah*. The carol was published in 1582, in a volume of 74 medieval songs and Latin texts. Handel composed *Messiah*

in 1741 with the scriptural text by Charles Jennens. After Handel's death the oratorio was adapted for performance on a much larger scale. I love the *Messiah* version, with all the various harmonies.

The holly and the ivy



This is a traditional British folk carol and can be traced back to the 19th century, but the lyrics reflect an association between holly and ivy back dating to medieval times. The version we sing was collected in 1909 by Cecil Sharp for his English Folk Song Collection from Mary Clayton, who lived in Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire. I have both variegated holly and ivy growing in my garden and they are popular at Christmas.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night



The words are attributed to Irish hymnist and England's Poet Laureate, Nahum Tate, around 1700. This was the only Christmas hymn to be approved by the Church of England in the 18th century. Most carols, which had roots in folk music, were considered secular and not used in church services until the end of the 18th century. It is sung to a wide variety of tunes.

In the bleak midwinter

This is a poem by Christina Rossetti, published in 1872. There are two music settings (both of which I like): Gustav Holst's in 1906 and Harold Darke's in 1909. The last verse is so poignant: *What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb, If I were a wise man I would do my part Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.*

