

I recently paid one of my, thankfully, infrequent visits to the doctor. I buried my head in a well thumbed copy of a magazine in which I had no particular interest. After a few minutes someone walked into the waiting room whom I knew quite well. 'Hello' he said 'How are you?'. 'Fine' I replied, 'Yes, fine thanks. And you?'. That was a big mistake, for I was then treated to a fairly exhaustive medical history of the most intimate nature by way of reply. Fortunately the buzzer sounded and off I went to my appointment. Clearly, we each heard very different things in that simple question 'How are you?'. My reply 'Fine' was rather stupid, for why would I be sitting waiting in the surgery waiting room if I were 'Fine'? Equally, his pouring forth of an encyclopedia worth of illnesses was not what I had expected. A simple 'Not so good today' or 'Touch of the old trouble again', would have done nicely. Each of us read into the question what we wanted to hear, without asking the other what we really meant.

It strikes me that Advent and Christmas can be rather like this encounter. On the one hand we can nod assent, say 'Fine' and seem to accept it all in one giant package. On the other hand we can treat Christmas as an almost endless shopping list to be soldiered through so thoroughly that we forget what lies at the heart of it.

So what does it mean? I would put it like this. In the baby, and in the man he became, is to be found the key to the meaning of all life. The Christmas gospel tells us, I would hold, that what we see in Jesus describes the heart of living with God. It says that the risky, self-giving, self-emptying generous love, which is God's nature, is the most central thing there is. Thus what we see in Jesus, baby and man, is a window onto what God is like. And what you see is what you get; that 's what we mean by the divinity of Christ, namely that in Jesus of Nazareth what you see on the surface is the same as what God is like, at the heart of all things.

All the 'tinselly' bits of the Christmas story are the bible's way, and our way, of saying 'God is in all this', 'God comes through all this'. The shepherds and wise men, in Bethlehem or in tea towels and dressing gowns, serve to deepen the mystery of God who identifies with creation and whose desire is for creation to mirror the glory of God. So it is with angels singing to shepherds, or the homeless being sheltered; with wise men bearing gifts, or wise men and women bearing one another's burdens; with donkeys and cattle in the stable, or with humankind living in justice, peace and integrity with creation. 'God is in all this, God comes through all this'.

So let this Christmas be a time when the story of this strange birth overlaps with your story in the mystery of God's loving purpose for you and for all humankind. You will be very welcome at any of our Christmas services, which are detailed opposite.

Christmas Services 1996

Sunday 22nd December

6.30 p.m. Parish Carol Service

Tuesday 24th December

Christmas Eve

For Children and Families

11.45 p.m. Midnight Eucharist

Wednesday 25th December

Christmas Day

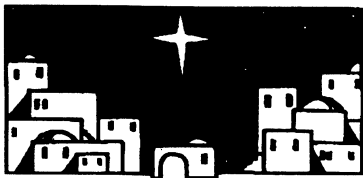
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion

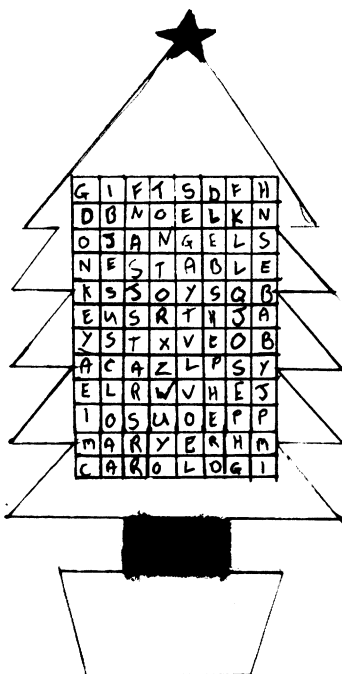
Thursday 26th December

St. Stephen

10.00a.m. Holy Communion



A Christmas Wordsearch



**GIFTS
NOEL
JESUS
MARY
DONKEY
STABLE
JOY
STAR
JOSEPH
BABY
ANGELS
CAROL
SHEPHERD**

by Joanna Highley

KILLED BY A TIGER

- Memories of South India (Part II)



The hill station of Coonor lies in the Nilgiris at an altitude of 5,600 feet. We travelled down on the toy train from Ooty on a cool, dank afternoon and found ourselves booked into an old, colonial bungalow-style hotel. Right next door stood the parish church of All Saints, eminently Victorian and set amid its own extensive churchyard. We discovered that it was almost contemporaneous with St. James, having been consecrated in 1851. Inside were the familiar wooden pews and choir stalls and Hymns Ancient and Modern. Once again, tombstones and memorial tablets bore witness to the tragically short lives and often painful deaths of those who had lived and worked in the surrounding hills and plantations.

The tortuous descent from Coonor to the port of Cochin - not recommended for the fainthearted or those of delicate constitution - brought us from Tamil Nadu into the beautiful state of Kerala. The islands and small towns which make up Cochin contain many surprises and reflect its rich past as a trading post frequented by Arab and Chinese merchants. Fort Cochin, believed to be the oldest European settlement in India, was built by the Portuguese in 1503 under the command of Albuquerque. He arrived with six ships and five friars and the church which they constructed in 1510, the first European church in India, still stands today.

St. Francis, originally a Catholic church named after St. Francis Xavier, now finds itself somewhat incongruously situated on the far side of an English-style village green. It is surrounded by mock Tudor houses, manicured lawns and the ubiquitous 'club'. Apart from the palm trees, it could be mistaken for suburban Surrey. When the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese in 1663, St. Francis became a Dutch Reformed Church and acquired a distinctive gable front. It then passed to the Anglicans from 1804 to 1947, and is now part of the Church of South India.

Each colonial power has left its mark on this tranquil, whitewashed building. Vasco da Gama, the great explorer and Portuguese Viceroy of the Indies in succession to Albuquerque, died in Cochin and was buried in St. Francis. His gravestone can still be seen, although his remains were taken back to Portugal in 1538. Memories of the Dutch occupation are evoked by the gravestones lining the interior walls and the 18th Century register of baptisms and marriages. More recently, the English added their own memorial tablets, recalling as always the dedication and generosity of countless servants of the Crown. They also installed the rattan backed pews and the great fans in the nave, operated by ropes from outside by a team of punka wallahs.

Although only about a quarter of the inhabitants of Kerala are Christians, the visitor is assailed at every turn by new, colour-washed Catholic churches and life-sized statues of saints imprisoned in glass-fronted shrines. As we sailed along the backwaters of Alleppey we glimpsed any number of towers and steeples hidden among the palms. At one point a group of nuns giggled and

waved to us before disappearing behind a high convent wall. Eventually we turned inland, traversing the Western Ohats, and were immediately plunged into another, more ancient world. Ahead of us lay some of the most haunting and beautiful temples anywhere in India. But that, as they say, is another story.

Lesley Mortimer

"NOW THE GREEN BLADE RISES. . . "

When we arrived here less than two months ago the adjoining fields were being ploughed after the harvest. Within a week the winter wheat was being sown and about ten days later the first green shoots were appearing. Very quickly there was a green haze over the land and then a much thicker growth until now there is a solid mass of green wherever you look.

The writer of the anthem, I don't think envisaged the green blade rising quite so early. He probably had in mind springtime; after all it is an Easter Anthem;

*Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;*

There is no doubt that the wheat we see growing in the surrounding fields has definitely not lain many days in the dark earth. The tune of the anthem is taken from a French Christmas Carol so the wheat is nearer the tune than the words in this particular case.

Of course it is an exaggeration to say that everywhere is clothed in green. At the moment the big harvest round here is Sugar Beet - tons of it stacked up in enclosures of straw bales waiting to be taken to the processing plant in Bury St. Edmunds, an unlovely structure which dominates the sky-line as you approach the town on the A14. The plant, which belongs to British Sugar, works about six months of the year producing Silver Spoon sugar. So how about this for a dilemma should one buy Silver Spoon sugar and support the local economy, or buy Tate and Lyle sugar made solely from sugar cane upon which many small countries and islands are totally dependent? Difficult one, that. I suppose that in the true spirit of compromise one sometimes buys one and at other times the other.

Winter is now approaching fast and we are trying to get all our out-door jobs done before it closes in. The autumn has been very kind to us and we are gradually getting to know people in our local Church and round and about. The Church is dedicated to St. Andrew, so later this month we shall be celebrating the Patronal Festival before moving on into Advent.

Happy Christmas to you all!

Helen Taylor



HAMPTON HOME CARE TRUST

This is a newly-formed charity, administering the funds belonging to the League of Friends of the now closed St Mary's Hospital, Hampton. The Trust will be available to supply the wants of older disabled people who need a little bit more than the N.H.S. will provide. So if you or a friend need things like toilet articles, extra bed linen etc., you will find an application form either at your doctor's surgery, health centre or from your district nurse. Or ring Mrs Gwen Fitzgerald on 979 6198; she will be pleased to advise you, discuss your requirements and help you to apply to the Trust.

ADVENT COLLECTION

It is our usual practise during Advent to have a plate at the back of the church for a special collection to help boost our charitable giving for the year.

By the time you read this we will already be into Advent and on the first Sunday, 1st December, we will have our Christingle Service at which money is collected for The Children's Society. I particularly want to let you know that on the following two Advent Sundays, 8th and 15th December, we will be collecting for the Community H.E.A.R.T. charity.

Community H.E.A.R.T. is a very well run charity that is helping to put the heart back into the communities in a new South Africa. The H.E.A.R.T. actually stands for Health Education And Reconstruction Training. In last month's magazine it was noted that Professor Denis Goldberg, president of Community H.E.A.R.T., recently attended a short evening service at St. James and was presented with the proceeds of the Hannah Stanton Memorial Fund. It is now three years since Hannah's death and this Advent will be a good opportunity to remember her in our giving to a cause very dear to her.

Community H.E.A.R.T. are running innovative and practical projects and information will be displayed in the church throughout Advent. Let's try to really help make a difference.

Ann Peterken

THE BRIDGE CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP AND COFFEE SHOP

The Bridge Christian Bookshop and Coffee Shop is part of the Bridge Centre, Holy Trinity Church, High Street, Hounslow. It is a useful resource for all Christians within easy reach of Hounslow and a place to meet and chat. We hope to have further information about their activities in future issues.

CHURCH SCHOOLS NEED GOVERNORS - CAN YOU HELP?

As a governor you can do much to support and encourage staff and pupils in a church school. Special skills are not needed. The main requirements are a willingness to learn, to be able to work in a team and to visit the school. Support and training for governors is available from the Diocesan Board and the Local Education Authority.

Most governing bodies meet twice a term, usually in the evening. Each governor is normally expected to serve on a committee or working-party. Responsibilities include admission policies, religious education, monitoring progress of pupils, supplying parents with information about the school and their children, employing all staff, looking after and improving the premises, ensuring the finances of the school are properly allocated and administered.

Details from:

Jane Arden, LDBS, 36 Causton Street, SW1P 4AU - 0171 932 1151

PRAYER AND REFLECTION WITH CHRISTIAN AID

A place to stay

*'Here we have no abiding city,
But we seek the city which is to
come... Do not neglect to do
good and to share what you
have, for such sacrifices are
pleasing to God.'*

Hebrews 13, 14 & 16

AMIDST the squalor of Ein-el-Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon, southern Lebanon, I was humbled by the indomitable spirits of the Palestinians. Their lives have been shattered repeatedly, but their faith and hopes remain. More than half of the 400,000 Palestinians refugees here live in camps, and despite such poverty-stricken conditions, they were able to smile and welcome me: "Ahlan wa Sahlan".

Many of these people either fled from Palestine in 1948, when the State of Israel was created, or are descendants of those who fled. Several people I spoke to had never known Palestine, but they still considered the towns their parents or grandparents had left nearly 50 years ago as their rightful homes.

I can identify with them, for although I lived in the U.K. for 20 years, I still consider Sri Lanka my home. But my experience diverges from that of the Palestinian refugees. Firstly, I am not a refugee and am here by choice, and secondly I am able to return 'home' whenever I please.

Palestinian refugees have always faced difficulties in Lebanon. As aliens they have been unable to secure work permits and are not entitled to social security benefits. Palestinians do not have equal protection under the law. Their camps

continue to be targets of sporadic Israeli attacks and the agreements signed by Israel and the P.L.O. have so far made no provision for the refugees of 1948. Despite these experiences, hopes of returning to their homeland are very much alive. Sana Kondos, a young Palestinian refugee woman I met in Ein-el-Hilweh camp had lost her home when an Israeli bomb struck in April this year. She continues with her embroidery work, passing on her skills and keeping alive traditional Palestinian designs and patterns.

The sacrifices she makes daily are evident, but her hope sustains her. "Inshallah," (God willing) she said: "I hope to return to my family's village of Ze'eb in Palestine and live without war, in peace." I am reminded of the words of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

I walk between darkness and light, the night of exile and the shining memory of home. The land I knew is given up to strangers. There, in the sunshine do they feel my shadow?"

Ramani Leathard

FROM CHRISTIAN AID NEWS *October - December 1996*

CHRISTMAS DAY HELP REQUEST

The Churches Together in Teddington are helping to provide lunch on Christmas Day for lonely and elderly people at Elleray Hall. Help is needed for:

- Transport for guests to arrive between 10.30 and 11.30 a.m. and leave at 3.30p.m.
- Kitchen help from 9.00 a.m. onwards. An hour or two would be useful.
- Greeting and chatting to guests, and waiting at tables.
- Providing Christmas cakes, small presents and cards for distribution at the end.
- Serving teas, washing up and preparing bags of food and presents.

Please give your name Stella or Trevor King on 977 3891 before 14th December.



SCOUT GROUP NEWS

The Beavers have started this term with evenings on bees, bicycles, football and a back to front evening which started with the closing ceremony and went backwards to finish with the opening ceremony. A current theme is Fire which will culminate in a visit to Twickenham Fire Station. The Beavers also recently had a Teddy Bears' Picnic in Richmond Park, which included a teddy treasure hunt and various games.

The Cubs are beginning their 80th Birthday celebrations, which will involve

them making passports to "visit" different countries around the world on their pack nights as part of their "Around the World in 80 Days". They are currently working towards the "My Faith" badge, which brings them on visits to see Brian and the Church. This has been an educational experience for both the Cubs and me. For the first time in over eleven years church membership, I noticed a plaque commemorating the man who started our group nearly 50 years ago. The District Cub Swimming Gala was held on 11th October and our Pack came a very creditable 6th out of 16.

The Ventures took part in "Night Owl", a little while ago. This is quite an event, being an overnight hike to various checkpoints which are approximately three miles apart, with a test or task to perform at each one. They are building a "chair" at the moment to take part in the "Sedan Chair Rally", a fancy dress race for which eggs and flour bombs are apparently prerequisites.

The Group ran a quiz over the summer, consisting of 100 questions of the style 7=D in the W, i.e. days in the week. The winners were Guy Rumens and family (in Cubs) with 98 correct. The answers are available from me if there are any that drove you up the wall. Tikkis Challenge took us on a sponsored walk from Walton to Hampton Court Bridge in September to raise funds towards our new hut. Some of the more intrepid (foolhardy) walkers went on to Kingston Bridge. As regards our new H.Q., the plans are now out to tender and we are expecting replies soon.

Paul Fitchett 941 7186



ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION

(Twickenham and District)

Invite you to their

CAROL CONCERT

With audience participation

Teddington Salvation Army Band with Singers

1st Teddington Scout Handbells

Saturday 7th December at 7.00 p.m.

Teddington Baptist Church, Church Road, Teddington

Souvenirs and Christmas Cards

Refreshments

Further information from Jill Denton on 287 7438

AROUND THE SPIRE

November has proved to be a busy month with much going on, beginning on 2nd November with a very successful concert in Church to help raise funds for the Organ Fund. Also for the Organ Fund, on 16th November, there was an

informal "reading" of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. Both events have made a significant contribution to the Fund and towards our fellowship at St. James'.

On Sunday 17th November Michael, Bishop of Kensington, came to St. James' to confirm five of our young people - Kelly Fitchett, Kristian Fitchett, Joanna Highly, Ben Newman and Jodi Warrington.

We have news of Jennifer Martin (nee Makepeace) who was baptised and married at St. James' in October 1968. She is now a grandmother and is also doing a lay reader's course at Winchester Cathedral. She expects to be licensed in April. Jennifer is also very involved with the Guide movement in her area. We have heard that Reverend Nicholas Chubb, previously Vicar at St. James', has undergone heart surgery. We send our love and best wishes for a good recovery to him and to his wife Susan. Roy Brooks is at home again, and Catherine Jones is in Teddington Hospital recovering from a second operation. We wish them both continued recovery. Ron Metcalf is undergoing treatment and we pray for him and Mary at this time. Hettie Burgess has recently died. Our good wishes to Margaret and Tony Laurance on their move to Bradford-on-Avon. Margaret has done much fine embroidery for the Church, including the regularly used altar cloths and vestments. John and Nelly Malundo are now working at the Moat House Hotel, Shepperton.

It is good to be able to mention the very successful trip to Turkey, led by our Vicar. It was a superb holiday, well organised and full of interesting and unforgettable sights. About 37 of the congregation and others went, and were all well cared for and returned safely on 27th October.

News of the High Street - Pet Gear has changed its name to Hampton Hill Pet Shop. Proprietor Rhona Farrugia will also be undertaking dog grooming, and there is an aquatics section at the back of the shop. Max Renzland has opened a new restaurant called Monsieur Max (old Pickwicks location) specialising in "Cuisine Bourgeoise"! Coopers at 139 High Street, are now selling properties in addition to their successful management of properties.

Stuart Ward, who wrote and produced 'Dawnlight' and 'The Song of the Hill' for St. James, has been granted a Doctorate of Music, based on his 336 page thesis, 'The Training of the Tenor Voice'. Stuart Sang professionally as a tenor from 1946, later turning to composition. Some of his works were included on a radio 3 programme 'British Composers of the Twentieth Century', together with the works by Benjamin Britten and Frank Bridge.

A final note. Please take a look at our church hedge which is looking very much better for a smart trim!



FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms	6	Jessica Alice Miles, 22 Uxbridge Road Phyllida Jane Miles	
	27	James Samuel Brooks, 20 Edward Road	
Weddings	26	Marc Neil Friedrich Meyer-Hubner and Lucinda Karen Scott	
Funerals	3	Lucy Elizabeth MacDonald, 22 Bay Leaf Close	89
	9	Ida Ellen Wills, Oketon Nursing Home, Teddington	91
	25	Blanche Audrey Richards, Laurel Dene	83

DATES TO NOTE

1st	9.30 a.m.	Christingle Service & Holy Baptism.
Advent Sunday		
4th	2.30 p.m.	Women's Forum. From Jew to Christian.
7th	7.30 p.m.	An Evening Recital of Music (including refreshments) in aid of the Organ Fund.
8th	6.30 p.m.	Friends of St. James's. Minced Pies & Mulled Wine in Church Hall.
11th	1.30 p.m.	Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Concert in Church.
12th	7.00 p.m.	Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Concert in Church.
13th	2.30 p.m.	L.E.H. Junior Department Carol Service in Church.
16th	7.30 p.m.	L.E.H. Senior School Carol Service in Church
17th	7.30 p.m.	Rectory School Carol Service in Church
18th	8.00 p.m.	Women's Forum. 'Faith, Festivals and Food'
22nd	6.30 p.m.	PARISH CAROL SERVICE
24th		CHRISTMAS EVE
	4.30 p.m.	CRIB SERVICE
	11.45 p.m.	MIDNIGHT EUCHARIST
25th		CHRISTMAS DAY
	8.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
	9.30 a.m.	Parish Communion
26th	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
St. Stephen		
29th	9.30 a.m.	Parish Communion & Holy Baptism

Come and worship
Christ the New-Born King



COPY DATE: DECEMBER 8th!!