

Keeping in Touch..... Number 38

Thank you as always to those who have sent in contributions this week. As we embark on another lockdown the need for us as a church community to keep in touch is more important than ever so please keep sending things in. The deadline for next week is noon on Wednesday. Please send anything to c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com if you would rather just tell us something, rather than type, then please lift up the phone to Chris or Alan— 01480 350787 or pop a note through the door.

Here's to a happy and healthy 2021! Keep safe everyone.

A note and poem from John :-

Almost a year ago I wrote a poem about a walk along Thicket Path to Houghton, observing the winter scene and the closed mill, looking forward to Spring and the re-opening. What irony! Because we all know what happened in March so I've written another verse or two:.

THICKET PATH RETURN

Here we walk while the west wind blows
And the River Ouse flows
On its journey to the Fens.
What are those mysterious fields
Beyond the trees where the river bends?

What hidden creatures swarm the soil
Beneath the warden's continual toil
To keep the grounds at Houghton Mill
Where winter strikes the air with chill?

When will the spring show forth again
After such gloom, cloud and rain?
Not long now, the N T cafe will
Open it's doors so we can swill
Warming soup, coffee and tea,
They'll be just right for you and me.
We'll eat toasties, scones and cake,
The weekends here our joy will make.

Then, late in March, the ancient mill
Will grind it's gears and bags will fill
With stone-ground flour on a Sunday
Showing simply the Good Old Way
Of 'Olde time' machinery at play!
(9th January 2020)

Alas! How wrong this man can be,
For when March came, there was no tea!
No food at all, the toilets barred,
The mill was silent, the door shut hard!

Lockdown had come, the virus was here
And now we must book to park anywhere near.
Now we are hoping vaccines will appear
So that we can look forward to an open New
Year!

December 2020

**And of course since John sent this in last week
things have changed yet again!**

Six words of hope for the New Year.....

**Hebrews 10:25, Let it
be asap.**

Derek N

**Doubt brings sadness:
Hope brings gladness!**

Sally B

**Save OUR planet before
colonising another!**

Stewart D

**God send us Spring after
Winter**

Liz D

**Bulb tips appearing;
new life coming.**

Lin F

**Snowdrops peek, hope
for the future**

Chris C

Several church friends had difficult experiences over Christmas. The Denhams had a power outage for eight hours and the Carters almost had to evacuate because of rising water around their home. Irene has written about in her poem below. Happily everyone is now safe, warm and dry. Fortunately they were helped by good neighbours and in turn helped others out. Irene thanks everyone for their good wishes and “thank yous” for her poetry. Others had lucky escapes e.g. the Runhams.

CHRISTMAS SURPRISE 2020

The sky was grey
The outlook bleak,
The rain clouds threatened
Christmas week.

Then down rain fell
From blackened sky,
Just what we need
I thought with sigh!

All day, all night
It poured and poured,
I couldn't sleep,
And Geoffrey snored!

The morning came,
The rain had stopped,
I looked outside
And my eyes popped!

Water, water
Everywhere,
No ground in sight
I could only stare!

Geoff woke up and
Said "Let's walk"

I said "I think
We need to talk.

"Forget the walk,
We need a boat,
Or maybe water-wings
To float!"

Eventually,
The water drained,
Flood warning however
Still remained.

And so we sat,
Packed up to wait,
Making the best
Of this quirk of fate!

cc IRENE CARTER



Awash with Kindness by Sally Runham—the story of a friend.....

Many people in St Ives were affected by flooding from excess rainfall over Christmas. Some members of church were evacuated to relatives; others spent Christmas Day with no cooking facilities. A friend shared her experience in Godmanchester:

“At 11.20pm on the 23rd, my (elderly and disabled) Mum was tucked in bed in the house next door to mine. I was about to retire too. It had been raining all day, and what can only be described as a wave came down the road. This was surface run-off and even worse... We had about 20 minutes to evacuate. I rang friends and shouted for neighbours. I managed to sandbag Mum’s house, and only her door curtain and one rug by the door got soaked. The water came past my front door so fast it did not come in too much, and a stone floor and piling furniture up quickly helped. The driveway is on a slope, though, so the water poured down and a couple of inches got in the kitchen before the back door could be boarded. My daughter lives nearby at number 9 and she really suffered... Despite 15 helpers (found from a call out on Facebook), extra sandbags and boards, the water got into the low down air bricks and pushed up through the floor boards and tore the ground floor carpets up.

Emergency services were too busy to help as they saw no risk to life, which was the same for town, district and county council, Environment Agency and Anglian Water. Helpful? NO.

Luckily we have a friend or two, and the kindness of strangers is humbling. A boy I did the Duke of Edinburgh's award with 40 years ago came and managed to dig out a storm drain and that helped. A neighbour sawed the back fence down to allow the water to escape from the garden. A random bloke with a water compressor arrived at 3am to pump water back into the river and out of the road. The vicar made us a cup of tea at 5am, but, overall, our situation was just horrific.

Despite all being signed up to national flood warning systems, and prepared with sandbags, as we live 30ft from a river, there was no warning, no nothing as this was NOT the river. A treacherous combination of building new housing on large concrete floats with less than adequate run off, all local ditches and streams left uncleaned for years and three years with no storm drain cleaning. To compound it all - last year was the end of the £60 million spend on Godmanchester's flood defences. As part of this, the river wall that we live opposite does have one-way valves in it, to allow road run-off water back into the river, and EVERY ONE OF THEM WERE BLOCKED, as apparently nobody had realised they needed regular cleaning.

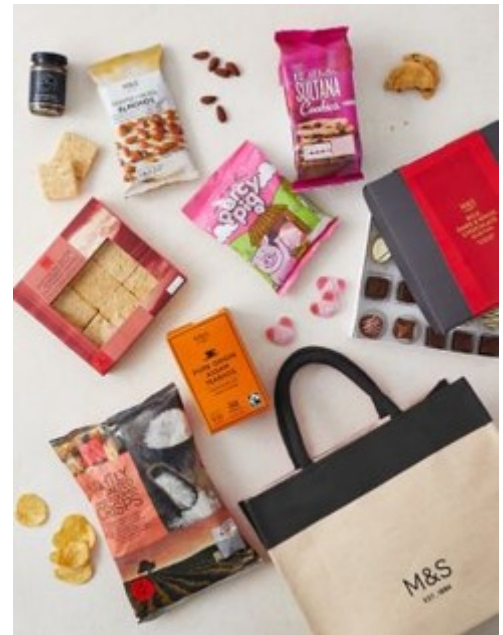
The kind man from Elphicks who fitted the carpet 13 years ago arrived on Christmas Eve having seen Facebook and removed all the floor covering he had fitted all those years before. A random builder arrived with heaters and dehumidifiers to help. Friends emptied the house at number 9 into a rotting pile in the garden, leaving my daughter to find alternative housing. I emptied my kitchen and scrubbed, and telephoned the insurers, who howled with laughter, and said as they could see the policy had been in force for over 50 years with no claim, rest assured we could have all the things we needed, but a combination of Christmas and the pandemic means it will not be quick.

We had Christmas Lunch in wellies. The electrics blew, but because we never throw away useful things, we still have the Edwardian fixings and lamps, and an open fire, so it was like stepping back in time, and we used all those decorative candles. Mum’s stair-lift has a giant battery, thankfully.

Sally's article cont'd.....

The next morning a lovely lady from the Church arrived with hampers for all of us! Apparently, a local business had ordered hampers for all staff last summer but, come Christmastime, a lot of the staff had left, been made redundant or were furloughed and did not want or could not get a hamper. As they could not be returned, the business owner gave a lot of them to the church to distribute as they saw fit. We were just delighted, a huge M&S hamper with chocolates, tea, coffee, biscuits, jam, cake, even Percy Pig, in a beautiful bag. People are so kind, that is strangers, and not any of the local services one might have thought would help. As I said, humbling, and am so delighted to live here and know that some people do actually care; it's very restorative.

The loss adjuster came, lovely chap, all waste will be collected on Thursday, and industrial drying equipment installed, he has taken a list of all items lost and is happy that we replace all. The Elphicks carpet fitter is coming again tomorrow to measure up to replace all flooring, the electrician and handyman too, to get started on repairs, happy days."



Jigsaw Therapy by Sally Runham

As restrictions continue in the new lockdown, we are urged to find useful occupation, one suggestion being to take up a new hobby. Hats off to those who master a musical instrument for the first time, and my daughter and granddaughter tackled playing ukuleles in the first lockdown. My own small bubble has been doing jigsaws together for the first time in 15 years. We bought several from charity shops before Christmas, but ran out of a supply in the early New Year. "Pop to the library," suggested a friend at the Farmers' Market on 2nd January (three stalls only, sad but understandable).

We were not allowed to go into the library, but they offered a service of bringing books and jigsaws out to people, which we really appreciated. This one is quite a challenge as the jigsaw is a lot darker than this picture indicates. By Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer, this oil

on canvas dates from about 1666 and is called the Art of Painting or Painter in his Studio. Owned by the Austrian Republic, it is on display in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Has anyone else taken up a new interest or taught themselves a new skill during lockdown?



From the Green Heart of the Snowdrop by Kate McIlhagga....

Time Turns

Clocks tick

Time turns

Bells chime

The new year

Sweeps across the world in glory

Glory to you

God of history

And new beginnings.

Glory to you Lord of eternity.

May we use your gift

of time

More carefully

More prayerfully

More peacefully

Form now on

and for ever

Amen.

Final postscript to Philip's Quiz.....

Why did General Patton have bad memories of St Ives?

“ OLD BLOOD AND GUTS “ AND ST IVES

I refer to question 12 of my recent £5000 Group Quiz Challenge which no one could answer. How could you know about General “ Old Blood & Guts” Patten, America’s richest soldier and most successful World War II general and why he didn’t harbour pleasant memories of your town? Notta lotta people know – but I do.

Patton was reputed to be a millionaire; he never drew army pay. He was something of a rebel soldier who had little respect for the military tactics of his Allied superiors Eisenhower and Montgomery. But he made his mark in the North African campaigns against Rommel and the final BIG Battle of the Bulge, Germany’s final fling.

But he blotted his copybook somewhat by daring to strike two shell-shocked GI soldiers, who he claimed were cowards. Officers NEVER strike enlisted men. So he was sidelined by his superiors. But in 1944 his Supreme Commander, Eisenhower, conceived a vital subterfuge for the planned D-Day Invasion of Europe. He created a Phantom Army, under Patten, in the East of England to convince the Germans that Pas de Calais was the point of invasion and not Normandy. (Patten was the enemy’s most feared and respected General.) Eisenhower’s “ Operation Fortitude” plan worked - brilliantly. And Patten was back in business.

In the spring and summer of 1944, Patton roamed around the country inspecting his Phantom Army units. In so doing, he found himself passing through St Ives in his distinctive Dodge staff car. It was early in the morning as it cross the bridge. In all probability someone, unexpectedly, emerged from one of the bridge’s pedestrian refuges. The driver had to take rapid evasive action and the car became jammed. It was rapidly shunted and towed clear by escorting Jeeps.

The episode was witnessed by a lady who had been early morning exercising her dog on the meadow. She recalled that the Dodge staff car sported three stars. Patton was a three-star general. It could only have been Patteon’s. The witness lived on Bridge Street. She related the incident to her son – my very best friend. And he told me. And now you know whatta lotta people don’t know! **Philip Simpson**

Alan being a country lad at heart loves a bit of pheasant and bought one (oven ready!) from the butchers the other day. He was searching for a recipe for cooking when he came across this in my mum’s old “Glasgow” cookbook. Needless to say we found a simpler one NOT involving feathers!!

Servings: 3–4 **Time:** 45–60 minutes
Oven Temperature: 190°C, No. 5
Position in Oven: Middle shelf

Method:

1. Pluck and draw the pheasant; put a piece of margarine inside the body to keep it moist. Truss.
2. Put slices of fat bacon on the breast, cover with thickly-greased paper.
3. Melt dripping in roasting tin, sprinkle in a little salt; place in the pheasant and cook in a moderate oven from 45–60 minutes, according to age of bird.
4. Ten minutes before the pheasant is ready, froth the breast. Remove paper, baste pheasant with melted margarine or dripping; dredge with flour and baste again.
5. Return to the oven set at 220°C, No. 7, and leave till brown, about 10 minutes. Place bird on serving dish.
6. Pour fat from tin, leaving sediment. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ litre cold water, skim off solidified fat; stir well, boil up and season.
7. Decorate pheasant with tail feathers the ends of which having been seared and serve with accompaniments.