

SHALFORD NEWS

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There's No Humbug Here!

When Christmas seems to be ever more a commercial bonanza, one might be forgiven for thinking, like ScroogeHUMBUG! However, in these pages we remember simpler times, memories or perhaps Christmas spent in far away places.

We thank all our contributors and wish all our readers a very 'Traditional' Christmas.

Christmas Czech Style

by Verka Hammond

My family celebrate Christmas in a traditional Czechoslovakian way and since I was a little girl Christmas has been white, magical and surrounded by those I love. One of the traditions on Christmas Day, 24th in the Czech Republic, is for children to fast until they see a "Golden Piglet", I suspect this custom is to prevent children stuffing themselves with sweets before Christmas dinner. In the morning Dad's job is to trim the tree, I listen to Christmas music as I decorate it, after this presents are wrapped and then everyone goes for a walk.

Once back home, Mum and my sister prepare dinner; it's chicken although most Czechoslovakians eat carp and potato salad. The table is set with an extra place for an unexpected guest and a coin is placed under each plate to ensure wealth to our home. A prayer is said for those less fortunate than ourselves. The meal over we gather around the piano to sing carols, the boys are not as excited about this but we girls really love it and give it our best performance. Mum brings an apple for each of us, which we cut, in half; if we see a star in the middle it is a sign of happiness for the following year. At last presents are unwrapped before we go to Midnight Mass.

Tudor Christmas in Shalford

by Dorothy Gardner

If we were living in Tudor times, an important part of our Christmas preparations would be polishing up the Wassail bowl. This was passed round for everyone to drink "your good health" an old Anglo-Saxon custom.

But for four weeks before Christmas we would have had to fast, no meat, cheese, or eggs could be eaten. On Christmas Day we would all be in St. Andrew's Church before dawn, holding lighted tapers for the first of the three services of the day. After which we would go home to a lavish meal, the best we could afford. Two more celebratory meals would follow on New Year's Day and Epiphany (Twelfth Night)

Wealthy people, (not many of us!) would give one another gifts, partly as status symbols. Perhaps villagers exchanged simple gifts; these are not formally recorded, but Thomas Tusser of Witham, a helpful writer of the time mentions them: "We give many gifts in the joy of that King." Popular items of the modern Christmas, trees, cards, crackers, turkey and Father Christmas were not known, though there were carols.

Christmas was a celebration more for the community than for families separately and brightened the winter before the farming year began again on Plough Monday, the first Monday after Twelfth Night. On this day the ploughboys begging for money before starting work again probably dragged the plough round. The villagers who could not afford their own plough shared the village one; as this was a valuable possession it was probably kept in the church.



Dorothy in modern times!

ALTOGETHER NOW!

Come along and join Alistair Kay on Thursday 14th December for a fun evening carol singing around the village. Everyone welcome, no auditions required! Wanted... singers, musicians, supporters and money collectors. This house-to-house "choir" will start from the George PH car park at 6.30pm. Whatever the weather, Alistair will be there! All money raised to be donated to St Andrew's Church.

Stop press!

Latest news from FOSTAC

The Friends of St Andrew's Church were recently overwhelmed by the generosity of two very supportive members who have donated large cheques of £1000 each as early Christmas gifts. One was given in memory of a deceased relative; both donors wish to remain anonymous. With this extra £2000 FOSTAC hope that the fundraising will reach £10,000 before 2006 is over.

Christmas 1946 – Cinderella?

By David Cobb

So we come to the golden jubilee of the first (and only) performance of my first (and only) play. It never had a review, but the “History of the Life Guards” 1945-1992, devotes a line to it: “a hilarious production of Cinderella through the Looking Glass, scripted by Trooper Cobb.” We were camped on the desert’s edge, somewhere between Alexandria and El Alamein, and the Welfare Officer (WO) was in charge of lifting morale with a “traditional English Christmas” making do as best he could with what was locally available. I seem to remember the lunch, served by the officers as waiters, was a passable imitation of Christmas dinner back home; though there was an ugly rumour that the roast birds were kites. During the afternoon, everybody lurched out into the dusty wilderness for what the WO had imaginatively christened “a country fair.” The coconut shy, for example was not a hit-or rather, the coconut was rapidly hit to smithereens, for he had only been able to get his hands on one. Fleas won the donkey race. By sundown, the mood of the revellers was no

higher than the dung beetles at their feet, and it was up to the pantomime to rescue the day.

We expect the Dame, the Ugly Sisters and Buttons to be played by males, and that wasn’t a problem. We had six hundred males, many of them eager to be cast, as the weeks of rehearsal excused them from spud bashing and nights on guard. But in the case of Prince Charming, Dandini his aide, and most categorically of all, that of Cinderella herself, you expect to see a pretty leg. Not a single female crossed our sandy horizon. Imagine finding a Cinderella among a band of bulky, hairy six-footish guardsmen....well, we did; and all went fine until “she” got “jankers” for making unacceptable contact with an NCO’s nose. We pleaded the case that she was the only Cinderella in the regiment, and she was escorted to rehearsals by a corporal of the Military Police.

And so the night. The Fairy Godfather slams his six-foot hickory wand down into a small hole bored in the stage, and blue smoke rises. Meanwhile, the soldier who let off the smoke is nearly asphyxiated and has to be dragged out from



Trooper Cobb about the time of the pantomime!

underneath. The blue smoke is enough to mask Cinderella as she throws on her ball gown, cobbled together from some surplus camouflage netting. Her coach is summoned; a dispatch rider roars up a ramp onto the stage and she is borne away on his pillion, to the consternation of her escort in row one.

As for the script-afterwards the padre rated it as the cleanest Army show he’d ever seen. Cinderella did not go off to the palace, but to Sister Street, the notorious red light district in Alexandria. Dandini made fun of the adjutant’s stammer, but he came up at the show’s end and said, “That was an awfully good skit on the C-C-Colonel!” For the Colonel stammered too.

And the next day Cinderella was back in prison. We never saw “her” again.

All that glitters by Angela Ridgewell

Excited and enthusiastic school children thrilled by the glue and glitter set before them ignore “Take care with the glitter, none on the floor.” Faint hope! The afternoon session ends, sticky cards festooned in shiny paper are presented. Glitter, in hair, on faces and gluey hands, sticks to everything. Result, lovely Christmas cards, emphasis being on covering the space with glue and ... of course glitter.

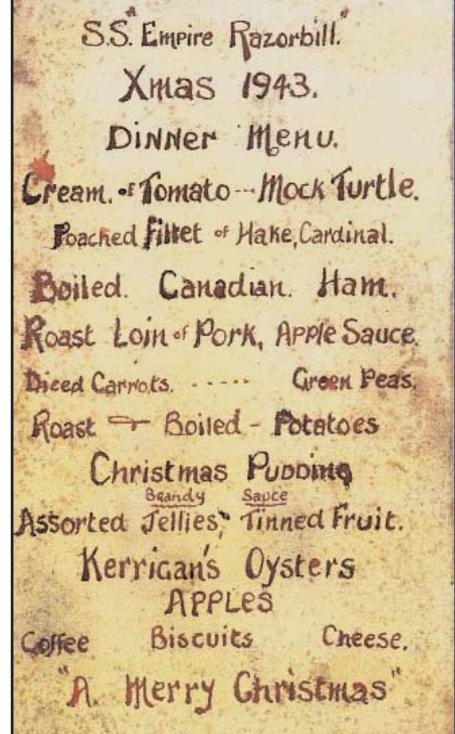
Razorbill Christmas

by Brian Beard

The SS Empire Razorbill was on the North Atlantic run during my service aboard as a Radio Officer.

To avoid the submarine wolf packs’ (not always successfully), ships steered a northerly course via the icy waters off the Greenland coast.

The menu below was what the stewards cheered us up with for that Christmas sixty three years ago.



The Dinner Menu provided by Brian Beard. The original was printed in red ink on cream card but sadly it can only be reproduced here in black and white.

Seasonal Sayings

Cribbed from various sources by Andrew Overall.

If the sun shines on the branches on Christmas Day, the fruit trees will bear well.

A green Christmas means a fat churchyard.

Ice in November to walk a duck, the winter will be all rain and muck.

Much February snow, a fine summer doth show.

Hot Christmas

by Angela Tanner

“Come over for Christmas” was the suggestion from an Australian couple heading off to a posting in Kenya. A chance of a “Hot Christmas” was too good a chance to miss.

With a bucket shop ticket purchased, two suitcases bulging with the hosts’ extensive shopping list, including a full sized Stilton, I arrived at Nairobi airport. Christmas Day dawned, copious champagne, then after communion in the beautiful Cathedral, the ex-pat Christmas celebrations. A massive indulgence of food, drink, sun, swimming pool and two Labradors who just loved the water. A total switch off from snow in the UK. Bliss, complete bliss! After a game of croquet, complete relaxation in a chair. Minutes later a mortified guest, deeply distressed was by my side; the head of his croquet mallet had spun violently onto the back of my neck. I laughed it off with joy and delight, but now realise my homecoming could have been quite different.

Christmas Eve

by Brian Beard

The bells are silent,
carol choirstalls stand in quiet rows.
Coloured window lights no longer tint the snow;
an owl returns on noiseless wings
to settle in the yew.

Beside the inn a snowman gazes out across the green
where revellers hear it’s
“Time gents please, we’ve beds to go to.”

Under thatch young eyes are closed
but dreams persist
with fantasies of what may lie
beneath the tinsel tree.

There is a turkey in the fridge.
The village sleeps

Christmas Carolling

by Mollie Wright

In the 30’s and 40’s the church choir and Sunday School pupils anticipated and enjoyed the Christmas seasonal highlights. Carol singing was first organised by Mr.Challis, the then organist and choirmaster and for three nights in the week before Christmas, members of the 4-part choir walked around the whole village so all parishioners had the chance to hear the sung carols. Carrying lanterns to light their way and sometimes accompanied by a piano accordion the singers were often invited into the bigger houses but were also happy to sing in gardens. Favourite, well-known and much loved carols were requested and rewarded by mince pies and drinks as well as money. This money was used to buy the Sunday School children gifts of books, which were distributed at the annual Christmas tea party; the amount spent on each book was dependent on the individual’s attendance record. At the Village Hall, venue for this party, games and prize giving followed the meal. Celebration for the choir was a lavish supper, which usually consisted of cold roast beef and ham and pickles, members looked forward to and appreciated this yearly social event, filled with fun and laughter. Over the Christmas period in the St. Andrew’s children’s corner a Nativity scene was set up and a Nativity play, for many years written and produced by Mr. Grubb, was performed in the Church.

The Wishing Tree

by Pamela Westland

Christmas wouldn’t be Christmas at Spices without the Wishing Tree – affectionately dubbed the Curly-Wurly Tree by local children.

Every year ceiling-high branches of twisted willow grow out of an old iron cauldron near the inglenook. Then, throughout the twelve-or-so days of Christmas, everyone calling at the house is invited to choose a gossamer ribbon from a basket, tie it on the tree and make a secret wish.

Well, not always secret. One child said if he didn’t tell me his wish it might not come true. “I just wish you’d ask me to come again” he confided. “This is fun.” Well, that’s one wish the Tree was delighted to grant.

Christmas in Delhi

by Charlotte Lewtas

My tenth Christmas was spent in Delhi. We were living in Lahore and drove across the border into India in a bright yellow Ford Zodiac; air con was a pair of green curtains across the back window. There were no Christmas trees, no decorations, no stockings. Present buying was difficult as there was little to buy. Christmas Eve was hot and sunny and we went to Midnight Mass at the Anglican Cathedral and sang about snow. During the service all the tyres on our (Pakistani registered) car were slashed. But I watched the peacocks strut the lawns at the Red Fort and saw the Taj Mahal by day and by midnight. I’ve forgotten many other Christmases, but never that one.

Spot the Difference!

By Margaret Sparks

“If I hear Jingle Bells one more time” I hear myself mutter when entering American shops about the end of November, but perhaps the biggest noticeable difference between Britain and the USA is the outdoor lighting displays. Elaborately decorated Christmas trees are seen either through a window or outside houses. Lights outline rooftops, windows and doors, illuminated Santas, reindeers and life-sized toys appear on lawns, and twinkling lights flash, particularly on Rudolf’s nose.

Some of these ostentatious outdoor displays attract queues of traffic from miles around. Christmas dinner is different; turkey features accompanied by sweet potatoes, cranberry or oyster sauce, rather than the chipolata sausages and bread sauce in England. Pumpkin Pie follows the American dinner, the traditional Christmas pudding and mince pies, crackers and Christmas cake as known in the UK are missing, the latter replaced by a sponge cake with soft icing. Some families treasure recipes from their ancestors’ country of origin making interesting variations on American Christmas food.

Melbourne Memories

by Sue Morton .

Hot sand-ouch-can't walk on it.
Hot leather car seat-where's the towel to sit on?
Hot steering wheel-can't hold it.
Sand everywhere.
Cool water in the bay-just right for swimming.
Next year we'll come to the beach at night.
Please don't mention turkey!

Croatian Christmas Story

by Milanka Phipps

I was born and grew up in Yugoslavia, (part of what today is Croatia), where the emphasis was on New Year rather than Christmas. However, Santa Claus, lots of presents, decorating the tree, the house filled with joy and wonderful baking smells. Great food ranged from fish dishes, dry spicy sausages and prosciutto, called "sunka", and pork jellies to whole roast pig.

What I remember most and long for now, are Christmas visits to my Grandmother's house. On her kitchen table, there were nuts and oranges for presents, delicious "orehnjaca and makovnjaca", the most wonderful walnut and poppy seed cakes and the best homemade bread in the world. These were baked by my Granny in a specially brick built outdoor oven.

Talking Turkey

by David Smith

A succulent roast turkey has been a British Christmas tradition since Edward VII made it fashionable in the early 1900's. It is estimated that 10 million families will enjoy a turkey this year TIPS Order early, buy locally, hen birds have better meat to bone ratio. 14-16lbs is ideal for most families, a 20lb turkey gives 30 servings, but small families might consider buying a turkey breast roll or turkey crown. Collect turkey as near Christmas as possible, and keep refrigerated. Follow cooking instructions carefully. Enjoy!

Christmas Aboard

by Derek Ruffle

It was 10a.m. on December 25th, on the high seas the Shell tanker laden with bitumen was 24 hours away from its destination port, Boston, Mass. USA. All was quiet until the news broke, there would be no Christmas dinner. The reason? The second cook had stabbed the first cook. Normal life aboard ceased, no celebrations, indifferent meals. We reached port on Boxing Day, the FBI swarmed aboard; ship and crew were placed under embargo. Another 24 hours passed before investigations were completed. The second cook, charged with murder, was taken away in custody. At last we were allowed ashore to celebrate a lost Christmas.

Bus Shelter Mystery

Villagers will have noticed that the bus shelter outside the VH is presently out of use because it has been damaged. How did this happen? Who was responsible? Any information? No prizes given but the Parish Council Chairman would like to know, please tel 850088 if you can unravel this mystery.



USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Freshwell Health Centre

01371 810328

Outside surgery hours TEDS

(Emergency Doctor) 01279461502

Vicar Rev'd Colin Wilson

01371 810309

Brooks Newmark MP

01376512386

Email: newmarkb@parliament.uk

Parish Council Chairman

850088

Shalford VHMC Chairman

01371 850622

VHMC Booking Clerk

01371 851003

Police (Braintree Station)

01376 551312

Many thanks to all the contributors, who are now too numerous to mention.

Please note that the Autumn copy deadline is Friday 16th February.

The Editors welcome articles of village happenings/events, ideas and photos. Please contact Jo Crow tel: 850101 or e-mail pinelodger20@hotmail.com Brenda Hanley 850480 or e-mail hanley.millfields@btinternet.com Writers' names and addresses are required, but will not be published, with articles.

St. Andrew's Church

Services are held at the following times:

1st Sunday in the month:
Family Service 9.30am

2nd Sunday:
Holy communion (sung) 9.30am

3rd Sunday:
Morning Prayer (1662) 9.30am

4th Sunday:
Holy Communion (1662), 8.00am
Not Dec. see Diary.

5th Sunday: United Benefice Service, see Notice Board or Vicar for time and place.

Parishioners unable to attend church but who would like Holy Communion should contact Rev. Colin Wilson tel. 01371 810307.

If a lift to Services is required please contact the Vicar, or Church Wardens, Margaret Smith 850488 and Roger Singleton 850918.

News in Brief

Correction

Autumn edition correction: Page 1: May Langford had seven brothers, (not six) four of whom served in WW1. May's mother, Alice Holmes, died 1952, (not 1953).

VHMC

There are two not unrelated subjects, which have been causing exasperation to the Village Hall Management Committee and local residents over the past few months. First, is the increased incidence of the misnamed "joyriding" on the playing field and second, the crass inability of a minority of dog walkers to clear up after their defecating pooches. With police assistance not forthcoming to help either deter or apprehend the vandals on wheels, you will have seen that defensive measures have been taken. Access to the field is now hindered by wooden posts and a locked barrier, which it is hoped will be a deterrent, but do please let the Committee Chairman or Secretary know if you see any cars where they shouldn't be. As for those dogs, the assistance of the local Parish Ranger has been called upon, there will be more notices and dog litter bins installed. However, how to tackle the minds of those who freely make use of a finely kept field and leave it damaged, fouled and possibly diseased is more difficult. A minor justice might be extra muddy paws and shoes thanks to the first anti-social activity and nicely "fragrant" tyres, thanks to the second. Happy Christmas.

Shalford Local History Association

The History Association has a limited number of local artefacts on display but would welcome the loan of further items which would fit in the VH cabinet. Household items, small old farming equipment, and family memorabilia, such as old cricket programmes would be suitable. Contact David Cobb, Chairman, tel 851097 or Iris Beard, Secretary, tel 850906 if you can help

Royal British Legion

The Poppy Appeal collection amounted to £1878.42, which included the collections taken at the Shalford Green Congregational Church and the

Wethersfield History Society. Alan Oates, the local appeals organiser thanks everyone who gave so generously.

FOSTAC

Members of the committee who have been catching their breath after the end of the first year's fund raising have now organised a series of social events. Following on from the recent "Jazz Evening" in the Church is an opportunity to test your knowledge on Saturday 9th December at the Village Hall. Play "Trivial Pursuits," with all questions based on Christmas. Supper is served before this seasonal quiz. Tickets available as usual from Jo Crow, tel. 01371 850101. Saturday 17th February, Charlie Haylock, well-known East Anglian entertainer, author of "Slightly on the Huh," as seen on BBC TV "Look East" and the Quay Theatre, Sudbury. Enjoy an evening of his wry humour in St. Andrew's Church. On Saturday 3rd March, "Peter Mayo and Young Friends" present an opportunity to hear the wealth and variety of local musical talent in the Church. Monday 9th April, Easter Monday, FOSTAC hosts a first ever "Open 10k Road Race" around Shalford. Open to all male/female participants over the age of 15. Runners get in training now! Non-runners needed to help organise this event. Volunteer marshals, time-keepers, and many officials required on the day, watch this space.

Shalford Carpet Bowls Club

The Chairman, Gerald Wisby reports that there has been a welcome increase in playing members but the club would like more people to join. He emphasises that bowls is for all ages: it is not necessary for members to compete in matches, club evenings are primarily social. The club meets Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the VH. In the last two months teams have played three matches losing two, but winning one

Creamer Fund

The October Great Bardfield Garage Sale raised the highest total ever for this event £1,345.

The Jab Clinics Tombolas went well. Please note the Christmas Raffle begins 11th December, draw on 20th. Items for the raffle welcome and can be left at the surgery. Thanks to all the wonderful support, although these events are hard work, they result in community benefits.

Agreed purchase, a portable re-chargeable nebulizer, other items will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Diary of Events

DECEMBER

Mon. 4th Horticultural Society AGM Village Hall 8 pm.

Wed. 6th W.I. Meeting "The Art of Magic" Speaker Mr. Paul Clancy. V.H. 7.45pm.

Sat 9th FOSTAC. "Christmas Trivial Pursuits" with light supper. VH 7.30pm. Tickets £10. from Jo Crow. Tel.850101.

Thurs. 14th House-to-house Carol Singing. Meet in "The George" Car Park 6.30pm. Everyone welcome.

Sun. 17th Carol Service. Congregational Church, Shalford Green. 6.30pm Light refreshments afterwards.

Sun. 24th Christmas Eve Candlelit Carol Service. St. Andrew's Church, 5pm
Children's Crib Service, Finchingfield. 3pm.
Midnight Mass, Wethersfield and Finchingfield. 11.30pm.

Mon. 25th Parish Communion St. Andrew's Church. 9.30am.

Sun. 31st "Carols in the Cowshed" Boydells Farm, Wethersfield. 2.30pm

JANUARY

Wed. 3rd W.I. Christmas Social Evening. VH 7.45pm

Fri. 12th Friendship Club, for the over 55's. First meeting after Christmas. VH 2.15pm, thereafter fortnightly. Tel. Pauline Rawlinson on 01376 321450 for more details.

FEBRUARY

Wed. 7th W.I. Meeting "The Sighisoara Children's Assoc." Speaker Sue Bright. VH 7.45pm.

Sat. 17th FOSTAC Charlie Haylock – "Suffolk Humour" St. Andrew's Church. 7pm. Tickets from Jo Crow, tel.850101.

MARCH

Sat. 3rd FOSTAC. Peter Mayo and Young Friends in Concert. St. Andrew's Church 7pm. Tickets from Jo Crow. Tel.850101

