

# ELSTOW PARISH MAGAZINE



## From Jeremy Crocker

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> we celebrate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Candlemass, which concludes the great 40 days of Christmas, so I thought I would test your minds and general knowledge as to the meaning of the Carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas". So, before you read my answers, please try and think what in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans and especially a partridge who won't come out of a pear tree have to do with Christmas?

Today, after research, I have found out. Let me set the scene. From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practise their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known to members of their church. Each element in the carol was a code for a religious reality, which the children could remember.

### *So please fill in the gaps with the missing codes*

- A partridge in a pear tree.....Seven swans a-swimming.....  
Two turtledoves.....Eight maids a-milking.....  
Three French hens.....Nine ladies dancing.....  
Four calling birds.....Ten lords a-leaping.....  
Five gold rings.....Eleven pipers piping.....  
Six geese a-laying.....Twelve drummers drumming.....

### *Answers*

- The partridge in the pear tree was Jesus Christ.  
Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.  
Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.  
The four calling birds were the four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.  
The five gold rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.  
The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.  
Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophesy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership and mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.  
Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.  
The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.  
The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.  
The twelve drummers drumming symbolised the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

So now I know and have shared with you how this strange song has become a very well known Christmas Carol, and is full of interesting and important meanings to remember.

With Best Wishes,

**Jeremy**

# CINDERELLA

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2006  
Elstow Abbey at 5pm**

**Performed by many young people (and a few adults) from Elstow and Cardington Churches.**

**It is a lot of fun and all should enjoy it.**

**The performance starts at 5 p.m. (there is no charge) and is followed by a bring and share supper in the Church Hall.**

**All are very welcome!**



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## **Elstow Team Parish Holiday**

**Sandown, Isle of Wight  
Sunday July 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday July 29<sup>th</sup> 2006  
Carlton Hotel - Esplanade**

**See details and booking form on page 17 of this magazine**

## Archbishop's Presidential Address to the General Synod - 15/11/ 2005 (extract)

In summary: take personal responsibility for maintaining communion as best you can in forming some new relationships, in the Church of England and more widely. Pray with people you might not otherwise pray with. Show that you are ready to learn from each other and from God, not least in how you think and plan about our ordained ministry. Work for a theologically educated church – a church that gives thanks to God and sings praise with mind as well as heart. Keep asking what visible difference (it doesn't have to be a huge difference, just a real one) any discussion or ideal or plan will make for the Kingdom of God – and if you can't answer, look again at the importance you're giving it. Find a voice to challenge younger disciples into deeper faith and fuller ministry. Above all, remember that you – we – are a community of people committed to seeing and hearing Jesus Christ Our Lord in one another.

Renewing wisdom is found in odd places. For me, one of the most penetrating spiritual commentators in the English-speaking world is the Australian cartoonist, Michael Leunig. I leave you with two extracts from a recent book of his prayers and meditations; looking for words with which to end, I found these were the ones that seemed to me to be possibly the sort of thing that our Lord might want a Christian Synod to hear.

*There are only two feelings.*

*Love and fear.*

*There are only two languages.*

*Love and fear.*

*There are only two activities.*

*Love and fear.*

*There are only two motives, two procedures, two frameworks, two results.*

*Love and fear.*

*Love and fear.*

*God help us to find our confession;*

*The truth within us which is hidden from our mind;*

*The beauty or ugliness we see elsewhere*

*But never in ourselves;*

*The stowaway which has been smuggled*

*Into the dark side of the heart,*

*Which puts the heart off balance and causes it pain,*

*Which wearies and confuses us,*

*Which tips us in false directions and inclines us to destruction,*

*The load which is not carried squarely*

*Because it is carried in ignorance.*

*God help us to find our confession.*

*Help us across the boundary of our understanding.*

*Lead us into the darkness that we may find what lies concealed;*

*That we may confess it towards the light;*

*That we may carry our truth in the centre of our heart;*

*That we may carry our cross wisely*

*And bring harmony into our life and our world.*

*Amen.*

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The Presidential Address may be read in full at:

[http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons\\_speeches/051116a.htm](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/051116a.htm)

## TUNES OF GLORY

We will be singing No. 365 *God moves in a mysterious way* by William Cowper (1731-1800), to the tune *London New* from the Scottish Psalter of 1635, adapted in Playford's Psalms of 1671. Frank Colquhoun considers that this is William Cowper's greatest hymn on divine providence. Cowper had passed through a period of utter despondency, when everything was dark and it seemed life had no meaning. Then in God's mercy the cloud lifted, faith and hope were rekindled, and he wrote the hymn. The opening words recognize that God's ways often are mysterious to us, unfathomable, and beyond our comprehension. But this does not mean that life is all mystery, and that we have nothing to hold on to when things are dark. *God is there*, in the situation in which we find ourselves: and he *moves*: he is active, not passive. He *works his sovereign will*. The clouds are *big with mercy*, so we can take courage and believe in his benevolent purposes: "*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust him for his grace; Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face*". The scripture which Cowper attached to the hymn was John 13 -7, the words of Jesus to his disciples: "*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*". Life's mysteries will one day be made clear. This is the truth Cowper emphasises throughout: we should have confidence in God's wisdom, and can trust him as fully in the darkness as in the light.

Elsie Houghton writes that Mrs. Unwin did not wish to continue living in Huntingdon after her husband died. [Incidentally Gretta and I recently visited the house in Huntingdon, and also the Oliver Cromwell Museum]. The question as to where they should go was decided by the arrival of a visitor who called to express his sympathy, "A little, odd-looking man of the Methodistical order"; he was in fact the curate of Olney, John Newton. Within weeks the matter was settled. Newton's Olney parish would be their home, and Mrs. Unwin, her daughter and William Cowper moved there in 1767. Newton, then aged 42, and Cowper, aged 35, were to spend the next twelve years together, forming one of the great friendships in church history. Newton said of Cowper, "I can hardly form an idea of a closer walk with God than he uniformly maintained".

Olney, in the coaching days of 220 years ago was a thriving place, and kept John Newton so busy that he needed a helper. William Cowper became that helper, caring for the poor, visiting the sick and dying, and was always present at the prayer meetings in the "Great House". Periodically there were reminders of Cowper's earlier mental disorder, when he became depressed. Newton noted in his diary, "Mr Cowper down in the depths". In 1771 there were increasing signs of this, and out of concern to arrest the tendency, John Newton proposed that they should start hymn writing. But in 1773. Cowper's previous problems returned. The awareness that God understood the burdens under which his reason reeled was probably the inspiration for 'God moves in a mysterious way', the last hymn which Cowper contributed to the Olney hymns. Newton's six good years with his friend were followed by six years in which he said "I walked with him through the valley of the shadow of death". Cowper never recovered. Finally, John Newton, now aged 75, took his friend's funeral service.

John Newton wrote in the Preface to the first edition in 1779 of the Olney Hymns, "It was intended to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship. I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, if the wise, though mysterious providence of God had not seen fit to cross my wishes. My dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any further assistance. My grief and disappointment were great; I hung my harp upon the willows, and for some time determined to proceed no further without him. I had so few of my friend's hymns to insert in the collection. I have now thought it proper to preclude a misapplication, by prefixing the letter C to each of them [Cowper's]: for the rest I must be responsible."

Consideration of the tune “London New” brings a much lighter story (James T Lightwood). The Puritans’ love of singing was so deeply engrained in the nature of the people that the practice of psalmody revived. But the kind of music beloved by King Charles II was hated by the Puritans. The King liked tunes he could nod his head and beat time to, in church or elsewhere. Strange new customs were introduced from France, and violins were heard for the first time in the Chapel Royal. A Scottish psalter published in 1635 used harmonised versions of all the melodies, and one of the new tunes was “London New”. This revival was begun in 1671 by John Playford, a London music publisher.

However it was Thomas Mace who revealed the state of psalmody at that time. He drew a dismal picture of the singing in the country churches: “Tis sad to hear what whining, toting, yelling, or screeking there is in many country congregations”. His remedy was to have an organ and organist; but that brought the problem of expense. He said that an organ for a small church then would cost £30 to :£60, while an organist was altogether too expensive. So he devised a way out: “Let the parish clerk be taught to pulse or strike the common psalm-tunes for a trifle - say 30s or 40s a year. This would lead to business for the clerk, and the children in the parish would ask a shilling from their parents for a lesson on how to pulse a psalm-tune well, and in a short time the parish would swarm with organists. Unfortunately this idea proved good only on paper, and the villages did not swarm with prodigies, as he had proposed.

The opposition to organs was very deep in many districts. A country parson, writing sarcastically in 1689, tells of a countryman who went to church, and when he heard the organ “He fell a-dancing and jigging all up the aisle, having never heard anything like it before, except the Bagpipes in an Alehouse where he was always accustomed to trip it”! Interest in psalmody thus increased, and John Playford’s preface provided an interesting insight, complaining of the Scottish manner of giving out a line at a time, which had problems. He added that such a custom might do in villages near the sea!

Well we at Elstow do nothing of the sort, so let us sing Cowper’s *God moves in a mysterious way to London New* from Playford’s Psalms of 1671.

**John Crookall**

## Nationwide celebration of Bach



More than 550 organists from around the country, including John Crookall at Elstow Abbey, joined a nationwide celebration of Johann Sebastian Bach in December as part of BBC Radio 3's 10-day broadcast event 'A Bach Christmas'. College members were invited by Peter Wright, President of the Royal College of Organists, to take part in the national event by playing Bach's iconic Toccata and Fugue in D Minor for church congregations on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2005. He says: "College members have helped make this a truly national event".

Many at Elstow will have heard it at (one of) our 3 services that day. Despite its authenticity and origin being shrouded in mystery, the work is one of the most famous pieces of organ music, and is extremely popular with music enthusiasts of all ages. “The beauty of this celebration was that it reached out to so many people across the length and breadth of the country. I'm sure that all who were involved, be they performer or listener, were impressed by the drama and intensity of the piece.”

## Missionary Giving at Elstow Abbey – 2005

Each year we try to give one tenth of our income as missionary giving. The actual amount given varies according to our level of income over the year but as soon as John Hinson (the Treasurer) has added the income and expenditure for the year we are able to decide on the amount we can afford for missionary giving. A sub-committee of four gathers information from local charities and makes the very difficult decision of allocating monies to deserving causes.

For 2005 we divided the overall allowance into, Practical Action, Christian Aid and Help the Aged in Africa and for 2005 we also supported the following local charities:- Christian Family Care, Bechar, Multiple Sclerosis and Yarl's Wood.

On going throughout the year we support, Farm Africa, Christian Aid, and the Children's Society through the activities of Harvest, Christian Aid Week, and the Children's Society through collecting boxes and the Christingle Service held each December.

This year we hope to support other charities by your generous weekly giving and if you know of any local charities and you would like to nominate them, then please contact Rosemary Albon either at church or on Bedford 407084 or any Missionary Team member.

Members of the Missionary Team are: - Rosemary Albon, Clare Lammin, Anne Morris and Barbara Routledge.

### Diary Dates

Michael Norton who was vicar from November 1976 to June 1982 has accepted an invitation to return to Elstow. Michael and Jean will be with us on Sunday April 30th at the 11.00am Parish Communion service. Michael and Jean have now retired to Wales and it will be good to have them both with us again. After the service there will be a bring and share lunch in the Church Hall so that everybody who wishes can talk to Michael and Jean and can catch up on all their news.

It is hoped that Richard and Anthea Huband will be able to join us for the Harvest Festival weekend at the end of September. Details to follow once the visit is confirmed.

### Card Stall

Please remember the Abbey Card stall when you are buying cards during the coming year. There is a good stock of all types of greeting and sympathy cards etc. Easter Cards will be available in a few weeks. All profit goes towards helping church funds.

**Colin Albon**

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

### **Tomato and aubergine gratin**

Quantities for this will depend on how many you are feeding – one biggish aubergine and five or six tomatoes are enough for two.

Slice the aubergine and fry it in oil; try to use as little oil as possible or the dish will end up too greasy. Slice the tomatoes. In an oven dish, put a layer of tomato, a layer of aubergine, a little grated cheese (Parmesan and Gruyere, mixed, are best but Cheddar will do), and continue until all the vegetables are used up, finishing with a layer of tomato with a thicker layer of cheese on top. Pour enough cream, or milk if you have no cream, to come about half way up the vegetables. Cook in a moderate to hot oven until the top is browned. Serve with bread or baked potatoes to soak up the juices.

**JMCE**

## BOOK REVIEW

“William Cobbett” by Richard Ingrams (HarperCollins £20.00 - 2005)

I have only twice reviewed a biography in my six-plus years of reviewing books for Elstow Parish; and one of those was an appreciation of the life of St Francis of Assisi which to my mind doesn't really count. Besides, reviewing a biography leads a reviewer all too easily to review the life of the biography's subject rather than to assess the merits of the book.

If I choose to bring you *The Life and Adventures of William Cobbett*, it is for a complexity of reasons, all focused on Cobbett himself and none of which includes any particularly kindly comment about the book as a biography, because, as a biography, it may be an exciting read but it is incomplete in certain important areas where one would expect a biographer to probe.

First of all, William Cobbett was perhaps one of the most famous and influential English writers of the first decades of the nineteenth century, if not of all eras. Known today all over the English-reading world for his *Rural Rides* (1830), Cobbett was in fact one of the most widely-read political commentators of his age with an enthralling turn of invective (he called reviewers such as myself: “*shuffling bribed sots*”). Not surprisingly, as a persistent gadfly, he wound up in prison for a couple of years in 1810 and was significantly more circumspect thereafter. He was never a “mover and shaker”, not becoming an MP until his last year despite two earlier attempts, but people read what he wrote and it moved them. For example, although known nowadays for his *Rural Rides*, his *History of the Protestant Reformation* was a far wider-selling and better-received book in its day.

Secondly, the author, Richard Ingrams, the founder of *Private Eye*, is very much a kindred spirit and brings a delightfully sure touch to a fluent and well-researched book. He manages that difficult balancing act of keeping his own powerful personality in the background whilst doing justice to a most remarkable man. He, too, as the founder of *Private Eye*, has been known as a gadfly and, although he has not served a prison sentence for his views, has nonetheless been frequently, and often painfully, prosecuted for them.

Thirdly, Cobbett (1763-1835) lived in the very interesting and busy times of such as Napoleon, the Poor Laws and of mad George III's family and cronies. He witnessed at first hand the deep recession which followed the wars with France and which seems to follow every war. He had an extraordinary career and became amazingly popular, personally attracting literally thousands of people wherever he went in public and selling phenomenal numbers of his pamphlets and papers. To read about his Age is important in understanding what made – and even makes – Britain tick; to do so in a carefully crafted and authentic work is a rare pleasure, even a privilege.

Where Ingrams excels is in putting across to us the fact that Cobbett, for all his vicious sniping at so many targets of injustice and corruption (and, believe me, there were plenty of them), was essentially a man who deeply loved his country and its countryside.

Where Ingrams fails is that he plays down the impact of Cobbett's obsessive nature on his friends and family (whilst praising his kindness and tolerant approach to raising his children). For instance, he passes over the breakdown of his marriage (he reduced his wife to attempting suicide) with hardly more than a brief and belated comment. It is almost a surprise, therefore, find Cobbett, at the end of his life, living alone in an isolated house in Surrey and presumably regretting the impotence he finally achieved when he became an MP in the last years of his life.

Finally, I find that Ingrams underplays the total lack of hypocrisy in his subject which was, perhaps, the outstanding feature of the man in an age when hypocrisy was as necessary a part of public life as it still is today.

*Bookworm*

# PARISH PUMP

## Signs & Symbols - Church Services

Look around you in church this coming Sunday – what are you all doing there?

What draws people to come to church, ever? Each of us has different needs and enjoys different things, so what is it that pulls us all together?

For some it's where we've always come on a Sunday; Sunday wouldn't be Sunday without coming to church. 'Church' becomes a way of living without us really thinking about what draws us there - or the reasons behind it.

Are we hypocrites? Do we just come on Sunday and then behave badly the rest of the week? Do we use church to get our weekly bucketful of forgiveness so we can start again?

Do we come to see our friends and make arrangements for socialising with them, saving the money on telephone calls? Or is it perhaps a chance to try out our new outfits?

Do we come to feel better? To get a weekly 'fix' of happy high?

Or is it because it's our duty to come, and by doing that, no matter how good or bad the service is, we at least feel we've done our bit.

Do we come to bring our troubles and worries and give them to God so we leave less anxious and more comforted?

It's amazing that church congregations work so well together when the basic reasons of our actual being there are so often poles apart - if not in actual conflict with each other!

So, you may be wondering, where do the signs and symbols come in? Well it's fundamental: we could all stay at home or walk in the countryside but we choose to come to the same place at the same time. Presumably if we had warm weather and not many articles needing to be stored between services, we could meet outside rather than in a building. As it is, we meet in a church building, and we deliberately plan to meet at the same time rather than have a larger time into which we all 'drop-in' for our own chosen shorter periods.

So 'church services' are about meeting together; together with each other and with God. The expectations we each bring with us about God, ourselves and other people help to shape the results of that coming together.

## World Church continues to grow

The world Christian population continues to grow. It stood at 2,140 million people in the middle of 2005, the latest published figure, some 140 million more than five years earlier. This is one-third, 33%, of the world's population, which stood at 6,450 million in 2005.

Furthermore the increase in Christian numbers is growing slightly faster than the population generally, 1.3% per annum against 1.2%. This is because of the huge continuing growth in Asia and Africa (respectively growing at 2.6% and 2.4% per year). It is only in Europe where the numbers are decreasing.

However, although they have smaller numbers overall, the Muslims and the Hindus are growing faster than the Christians. There were 1,310 million Muslims in 2005, growing at 1.9% per year, and 870

million Hindus, growing at 1.5% per year, but it will be many decades before these overtake the number of Christians!

The charismatic independent churches are growing the fastest (2.4% per year), something which is also seen in the growth of the charismatic black churches in the UK.

### Faith, Hope and Love in Today's World: Hope

In today's society the tangible symbols of hope for many are the scratch card and credit card. The lottery scratch card expresses peoples' aspirations for a better life and secure future. In a world where many have lost confidence in the future and the present is the only thing they can be sure about, the credit card expresses the all encompassing power of consumerism. It enables us to live for the present by 'taking the waiting out of wanting'.

To a large extent we have lost the 'big story' that makes sense of the world in which we live. Individual choice has replaced progress as a core value and belief in society. Christianity is viewed sceptically when it comes to offering a coherent 'grand narrative'. However, there is still a genuine desire to find hope in an uncertain world, as often seen in the response to high profile deaths, most notably that of Princess Diana.

In the light of this, how does the Christian Faith offer hope in our current culture? The challenge involves Christians living a lifestyle which can offer an alternative image of the 'good life', based in the hope of a future that is worth living for. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the key, for God 'has anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come' (2 Cor. 1:22). Within the Christian community, we can encourage each other to live in the Spirit to express our future hope. This means looking together critically at our lifestyle, spending, habits, giving, ministry to the poor, response to God's call etc and asking: "to what extent are we witnessing to a hope in the future?" "How can this impact on the people around us?"

### St Valentine's Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day -14 February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows. There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.



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