

Groomsport Parish Church

CONTACT

November - December 2021
groomsportparishchurch.org

*You are the light of the
world. A city built on a
hill cannot be hidden.*

Matthew 5: 14



Church Officials



Rev Duncan Pollock

Rector of Groomsport Parish Church
028 9146 4476

Rector's Hour

There is no Rector's hour at present due to social distancing rules. It will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

Rector's Recess

Whilst our Rector is always available to his congregation at all hours of every day, it is hoped that, where possible, the period between lunchtime Friday and Sunday Services may be void of contact so as to allow him family time, quiet reflection and preparation for the week ahead; emergency requirements and visits excepted.



From the Rector

Yes it's formulaic and you could guess the plot before the opening credits. Fantastic car chases, helicopters appearing from nowhere. Lots of shooting and loud explosions, as well as some all too realistic fisticuffs. Gorgeous women aplenty (who turn out to be double agents), beguiling locations and, at the end, a cryptic

reference to the next thrilling instalment. Whatever others may think, I found the latest James Bond movie nearly three hours of terrific, spellbinding hokum! I was enthralled, shaken, if not stirred. There were parts of the film that I didn't really understand, but as with all Bond movies, it doesn't do to lift the curtain

on the mystique, the magic. Did it add to the sum of my knowledge? Do I think the world a better place for its' production? Did it make me think? Of course not! It is hokum, but none the worse for that. The Gospels are terrific adventure stories. A baby born in a byre, forced to flee with his parents from an angry tyrant; grows up in exile and settles in a two-bit hamlet in the middle of nowhere. As an adult, he speaks of a radical new way of living, comes into conflict with vested business, political and religious interests, is eventually pursued by mobs who either want him to do them favours or kill him. It all becomes too much and in the end he is put to death on a cross, crucified. Although of course it isn't the end. And yet, despite its potential, no-one has made a really good film/movie of the life of Jesus – and don't get me started on "The greatest story ever told" (hokum?).

What could Steven Spielberg or George Lucas make of such a story? It probably wouldn't be pretty. Danny Boyle would make it almost too realistic, and doubtless would incur the wrath of Christians the world over. I think there is a film to be made that would challenge our

ideas of Christ Jesus and His world and culture. I can almost guarantee that it would be anything but cosy or comfortable, but it would be familiar in ways we might not want to imagine.

It is our tradition to approach Christmas through the season of Advent and Advent is meant to be a season of penitence and preparation. Unfortunately, with all the commercial ballyhoo that now comes with November and December, Advent as a season is lost. Perhaps we might try this Advent to really concentrate on the truth and the reality of the Gospel stories, attempting to get away from the familiar and the cosy. We could start by re-reading the nativity stories in Luke's Gospel, chapters 1 and 2. And perhaps we might use our imagination to rediscover the truth of the Christmas story, that the God who created everything, everything, was born in a byre, a stable, in dirt and poverty. If I came away from watching "No Time to Tie" elated by three hours of pure escapism, imagine how engaging with the real Christmas story might leave me. Shaken? Stirred?

Duncan

Your Magazine

The words on everybody's lips just now (including mine) is "Who can believe that this is now almost the beginning of November?" The next thing we know it will be Advent and then Christmas Day! In preparation for Christmas, we are once again running our Alternative Christmas Fair. It was a roaring success last year and we hope this year will be the same. Please, consider buying some lovely tray-bakes or jams, what about mince pies or a cake or two? If last year's baked deliciousness was anything to go by, then they will certainly be worth your while. Then there is also the Luxury Ballot; I am never lucky enough to win any prizes, but I live in hope.

This issue of the magazine contains some interesting pieces. Did you enjoy Maggie Smith's account of her time in Hong Kong in the last issue? Read more of her account inside this magazine. I also like the message in the 'The Quiet Corner' article written by Susan McNair. A poem sent in to us by Freda Conway gives us a few moments of reflection. If you are hungry then look no further than our Cook's corner on Page 23, don't blame me for the consumption of excess calories!

Amanda

The Rector's Warden

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The People's Warden

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The Rector's Glebe Warden

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Vestry Minutes

Vestry members were reminded that masks should still be worn entering and exiting the building, but should be removed when people are speaking during the meeting.

Barry will continue researching grants but was pleased to report receipt of £250 from Rank Organisation. Members were reminded to use Amazon Smile when making purchases from Amazon who donate a small percentage to the Church. Work has begun in the Maxwell Hall but will it be a bigger job than first thought. The storage shed is now in situ behind the Halls.

The new oak hymn boards are now in place and will be commissioned at a future service.

Faith has been commissioned as the new Mothers' Union leader.

The Presbyterians have accepted an invitation to the Harvest service.

Following discussion, it was agreed that organisations will not meet in the Parish

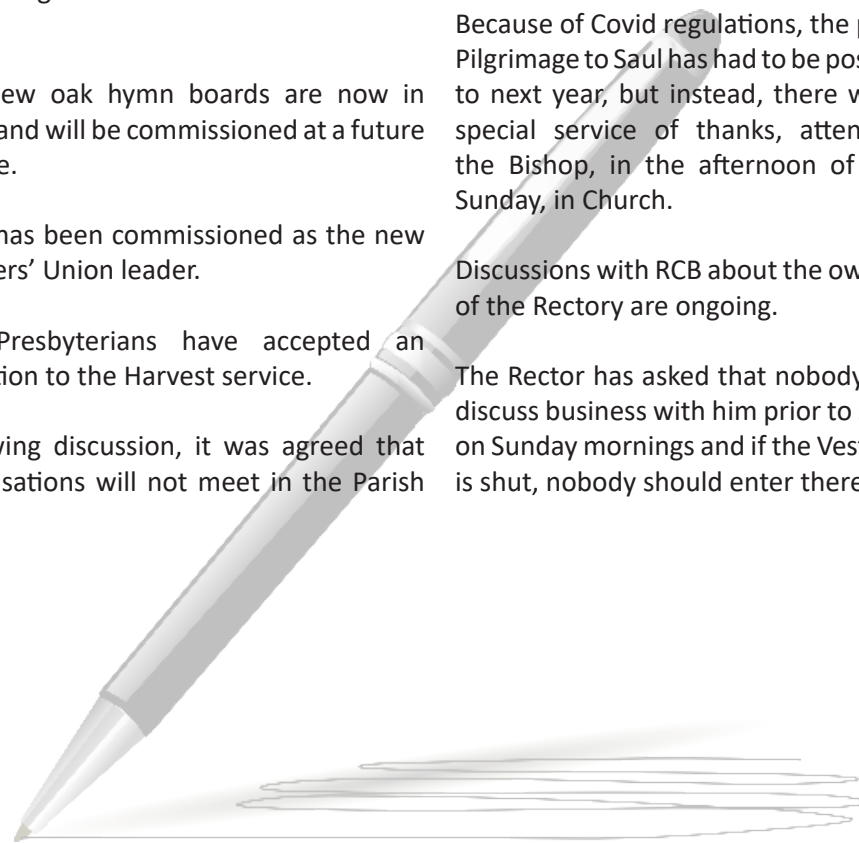
Halls until January, but a newly formed subcommittee will examine requirements and draw up rules and risk assessment forms for the use of the hall. The Rector will write to the leaders of the organisations and explain our cautious approach. The Rector will speak to Maggie about the reintroduction of Sunday School. Jubilate will meet to prepare for the Christmas Carol Service.

Money raised from the Book Sales will be shared between the Church, CMS and the Harvest Appeal.

Because of Covid regulations, the planned Pilgrimage to Saul has had to be postponed to next year, but instead, there will be a special service of thanks, attended by the Bishop, in the afternoon of Advent Sunday, in Church.

Discussions with RCB about the ownership of the Rectory are ongoing.

The Rector has asked that nobody should discuss business with him prior to services on Sunday mornings and if the Vestry door is shut, nobody should enter therein.



Services For November & December

Sunday
07
Nov

The Third Sunday before Advent

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
2:45 pm A Village Act of Remembrance
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Sunday
14
Nov

Remembrance Sunday

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Parish Communion, with an Act of Remembrance
6:00 pm A Meditation for Remembrance Sunday

Sunday
21
Nov

The Sunday Next before Advent

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm Holy Communion

Sunday
28
Nov

Advent Sunday

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Morning Prayer
2:00 pm A Special Service for Advent Preacher, The Bishop of Down and Dromore.

Sunday
05
Dec

Advent 2

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Sunday
12
Dec

Advent 3

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Parish Communion
6:00 pm Compline

Sunday
19
Dec

Advent 4

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am A Christingle Service
6:00 pm A Service of Lessons and Carols

Friday
24
Dec

Christmas Eve

5:00 pm A Family Crib Service
11:30 pm The First Communion of Christmas

Saturday
25
Dec

Christmas Day

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am A Family Service for Christmas

Sunday
26
Dec

Christmas 1

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Morning Prayer
6:00 pm Evening Prayer (said)

Sunday
02
Jan

Christmas 2

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Sunday
09
Jan

Epiphany 1

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Parish Communion
6:00 pm Compline

14th November – Remembrance Sunday. In place of our usual act of worship, there will be a special series of readings, music and hymns to mark our National Day of Remembrance. Many in our congregations have been touched by the misery of conflict. This will be a time to pause, consider, reflect and pray.

28th November – Advent Sunday. We had hoped to mark Advent Sunday with a pilgrimage to Saul, the “Cradle of Christianity” on this island. Alas, Covid restrictions have put paid to that ambition. However, we will still hold a special service in the afternoon of Advent Sunday. The theme of the service will be ‘Thankfulness’ that the worst of the pandemic, for us, is over, and ‘Hope’ for a new year walking in fellowship with each other and Christ. Our Bishop, the Right Reverend David McClay, will be joining us at this service. After the service, we will enjoy some time together over a cup of tea and a tray-bake!

Christmas Services - It will be wonderful to be back in Church for a normal range of services celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace. Our Christmas services begin on the morning of the 19th December with a Christingle service, a magical service for all the family. In the evening, at 6.00 pm, we will hold our traditional service of Lessons and Carols. To help with this service we are looking for singers to make up our “Jubilate” Choir. What is needed is enthusiasm! If you’d like to join in some music making for Christmas, do please let the Rector know.

Every Wednesday, Compline will be said in the Canon Tyney Hall at 7:30 pm. Bible Study is at 8:15 pm after the service.

Every Thursday Holy Communion will be celebrated in Church at 11:00 am.

Please note, there will be no mid-week services in the week after Christmas

From The Registers

Holy Baptism

Oliver Clegg - 22nd August

In a quiet service in Church attended by family and close friends. As a five year old, you can understand that Oliver was somewhat suspicious of what was going on around him and especially doubtful of the Rector. His sister, Charlotte was baptised in Church, almost seven years to the day of Oliver's christening. We pray God's blessing upon Oliver and Charlotte and Oliver's parents and godparents.

Reuben Hamilton - 24th October

Many family members and friends accompanied Reuben to Church for his baptism at lunchtime on the 24th October. Reuben's sister, Georgia, was Christened in our Parish Church three years ago and it was lovely to catch up with the family. Do keep Shelly and Aaron, Reubens's mum and dad, in your prayers as they bring up little Reuben.

Holy Matrimony

Oliver Gibney and Margaret Thompson
4th September

Like the swifts and the swallows that grace Groomsport in the summer, Oliver and Margaret Ann are summer residents in the village, spending most of the summer months in their static caravan. It was a particular joy, therefore, to be asked to solemnise their marriage in their summer home, Groomsport. Many of the residents from Seahaven and Windsor turned out to wish them joy on their special day. May God bless them in the years ahead.

Holy Rest

Carol Hamilton - 3rd September

Carol was a popular member of the sailing fraternity of Bangor and Ballyholme. Bright, vivacious and industrious in all she undertook. Originally from Cheshire, she moved to Northern Ireland for two years in the seventies, but quickly made her home here. Our hearts go out to her husband John and daughters Julie and Amanda. "Rest eternal grant her Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon her."

Dennis Brown - 19th October

Dennis, for many years, owned an electrical business on Albert Street in Bangor. He was also a very accomplished yachtsman. He and his wife Cathie lived on Ballyholme Esplanade and many of their local community were in Church to say farewell to a good friend and neighbour. We continue to keep Cathie in our prayers.

Brian Dempster - 21st October

Perhaps not known to many in Church directly, but Brian will have touched many lives in his capacity as a Chef at the Royal in Bangor. Many friends and colleagues were in Church on a lovely sunny afternoon to remember Brian and pay tribute to his courage in facing his final illness. Do remember his family Audrey, Michael, Jessica, Gillian and Philip, in your prayers.

Church Magazines

Did you ever wonder how church magazines first got started? According to some historians, the first-ever church magazine was produced in Derby in 1859, shortly after the government abolished the tax on newspapers.

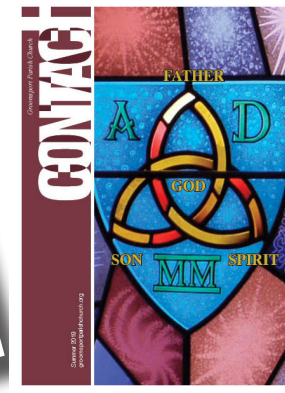
Of course, there had been other religious magazines before this, but they circulated on a national scale. It took John Erksine Clarke, vicar of a poor parish in Derby, to come up with the idea of producing a local church magazine.

And after that, nothing was ever the same again. Clarke's idea of a localised magazine gave power to the parishes. For the first time local Christians could have a common, regular Christian voice in their communities.

That may not seem like much now, but as one historian says: "In the early days those

magazines were one of the very few pieces of print that many working-class homes would see. In middle-class homes they were often read aloud, as the family sat around the fire. By the turn of the century church magazines were going into several millions of homes around the country." And we should not underestimate their influence for the good. As Bishop Percival, preaching in Plymouth in 1886 said, "You cannot create a new world except by creating a new heart and a new purpose in common man."

It is the same today – our magazines can still have a regular, common Christian witness in our communities, sharing our Christian hope in the grace and love of God, through Jesus Christ. Our communities surely need to hear this message, and if we don't share it with them, who will?



Tales From The Archives
November 2021

Our Parish Archives are just some old, musty documents from long ago, filed away in a cabinet somewhere and taking up space. Only our Parish Archivist is interested, and maybe the odd individual researching their family history or past connections with the village. Why bother with them these days... what's the point? Some will ask.

Is that what you think? It can be easy to disregard or ignore our archives. We remember our history lessons at school and how they were all very tedious, with numerous dates and obscure battles to learn and names of Prime Ministers long dead. History was boring, wasn't it?

Well, it doesn't need to be. Real history begins at a local level. It is all around us if we care to look. It helps us better understand our surroundings and those events and people who have shaped and sustained our village and our Parish of Groomspoor. Our Archive records that evolving history and written by ordinary people. The important events, but also the little mundane things of Parish life. About how our Church family struggled at first but persevered and steadily grew in numbers through those early years. Many generations have filed into our little Church every Sunday, sat on the same pews we do today, to worship, offer praise and give thanks to the same God. What follows is just a small part of that story.

There is a document from our Archive (Ref 007/126 B8), which records Parishioners' monthly attendance at Holy Communion "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper", from July 1856 to 1862. It also shows what the Parish spent its money on between 1859 and 1868; and details the Rural Dean's Returns (Reports) from 1854 to 1870. This is one of the oldest and most valuable records we have, stretching back to the earliest years of our Parish, following the Church's construction in 1842.

So what does it tell us about our Parish back then?

[illegible]

Parishioners' attendance records cover the first five pages, all carefully written in pencil and black ink on sheets of rough paper, held together with thin string.

It was probably written by the Rector himself, Rev A H McCausland. The pages have no cover, or they may have been torn from some other book. There was no fancy Rector's Book back then to record attendance like we have today. A sign perhaps of a small, newly instituted, rural Parish struggling to establish itself?

The list for 1856 shows that 22 Parishioners attended Holy Communion during the year. Most of the families named have since passed from the Parish; people such as the Dockeralls, the Skinners, Newmans, Airds, McDades, Higgins, and the McElheron's. Also listed is "The Cook", unnamed but presumably from the nearby Groomsport House. The Percival - Maxwells had originally built the Church as a private chapel for family and their estate staff. The Maxwell's maintained their connection after it became a Parish Church. The names of Robert Percival-Maxwell and his wife appear at the top of the attendance list, closely followed by the Dowager Lady Dufferin, who must have stayed with them on occasion and attended monthly Communion. Also prominent were the Waterson family, John, Abigail, Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna, members of which still live in the village today. Named too is the Rev. A.H McCausland, our first Rector and Mrs McCausland.

The years 1857 to 1862 show steady growth in numbers, to almost 50 Parishioners attending Holy Communion each month. Interestingly, “Servants” are recorded as attending Communion during

1860. Whether this included “The Cook” is unclear but unlikely. The Cook would have held an important position within the Maxwell household and certainly would not have considered herself among the lesser “servants”.

The following four pages of the document are headed "Church Estimates". They show the main items of Parish expenditure from March 1857 to March 1870 and make for fascinating reading. For example, in the twelve months from March 1869, the Parish Clerk, William Brice, was paid £7; while the Sexton, John Waterson, was paid £4. Holy Communion was administered 14 times, with an average attendance of 35 and the 18 pints of wine used costing around £1-16-8p. Other spending included:

two tons of coal for the stove... £1-10-0
 bogwood for the fireplace... 3 shillings
 58 lbs of candles for lighting... £3
 washing... 7/6
 brushes and black lead... 2/6
 sweeping flues... 1/6p
 postage... 4p
 dusters... 2 shillings
 sweep and hand brushes... 4/6

Some other items catch the eye. In 1865 an extra Surplice for the Rector was applied for, although it's unclear whether this was obtained and at what cost. One item is depressingly familiar, even after 156 years. In 1865, an extra £3 was required to "stop wet in the Church". The damp problem didn't stop then, because in 1868 is recorded "repairs at Church and the roof. Ventilation in the ceiling and

because in 1868 is recorded “repairs at Church and the roof. Ventilation in the ceiling and pipe laid from each down flow of corners outside the Vestry. Painted outside”. The cost of this work is not clear, although the record suggests it may have exceeded £16, a large sum at that time. The Rural Dean’s Return for the twelve months from April 1862, gives further insight into what was happening in our Parish at that time:

Average attendance at Morning Service was 102, with 71 at the Evening Service. 31 Parishioners attended Easter Service, with 41 at Christmas.

The Lord’s Supper was administered 14 times.

£34 -17-0 was collected in Church for the Poor, while £31 was for “Societies”.

63 children attended the Sunday School which had 6 teachers. They were instructed in their Catechism by the Rector and their teachers.

Church growth is evident from these early years. In 1854, the number “of Members of the Established Church” is shown as totalling around 172. By April 1870, this had grown to about 260. By comparison, in 2015, the Parish had around 200 families. An interesting footnote from 1870, shows the continuing involvement of the founding Percival-Maxwell family; during that June, Robert P-M and Hugh Newman were elected to attend “the Synod”, although whether it was the Diocesan or General Synod is not clear.

The last two pages of this little book give details of the Church Choir from 1856 to

to 1868, who they were and surprisingly, what they were paid. The unnamed Organist was paid according to how often he or she played, usually around £1 annually. The singers were all ladies of the Parish, and in 1868 they were named as Abigail, Lizzy and Annie Waterson, Jane Robinson, Ammie McKane, Lizzie Orr and Maggie McIlloin. Interestingly, in sharp contrast with today’s practice, our choir members were paid, usually five or seven shillings each year. These were not insignificant amounts for a small Parish like ours and makes one wonder why the payment was thought necessary and what it was for. Presumably, they were to recompense the members for expenses incurred, but what could these have been?

So there it is. A brief but fascinating, informative and intimate glimpse of our Parish life in the years immediately following its establishment 180 years ago. There have been great changes since then, yet much remains familiar to us today. There is a lot more to read and enjoy in our Parish Archives. So why not take an hour or so and take a look for yourself. Barry Greenaway, our Archivist, will be delighted to help you. And don’t forget, he is always on the lookout for more historical material.

Ian Sloan

Please contact Barry Greenaway if you wish to learn anything more about the history of Groomsport Parish.

barry@groomsportparishchurch.org

Alternative Christmas Fair and Ballot

It’s time to fill out your order forms for delicious homemade Christmas food and have a go at winning a luxury item(s) and a fantastic Christmas cake. You will find all the information you need in the attached flyer.

Just complete and return your orders with the payment in a sealed envelope to the Parish office or Church Wardens by 21 November. Don’t forget to let us know if you can bake shortbread or traybakes, make jams and chutney, or help with deliveries. We will be in touch to sort out the details with you.

With your help, we can have another successful fundraising event and hopefully help you prepare for Christmas.

Flowers in Church



Flowers in memory of John Parkinson.



Autumn flowers in memory of Barry McIlwaine.

Adapting To Life In Hong Kong cont...

This article is part two of one that has been sent in by Maggie Smith. Interesting and very descriptive, Maggie reminisces about life in Hong Kong.



At this time, part of Bert's remit to the regiment was as Sports and PT instructor; he also played football for the Irish Guards Team and played as an amateur for Caroline Hill, one of Hong Kong's professional first division football teams. It amused us all to see Bert on Match Of The Day, Hong Kong style on a Saturday night. These activities offered further social opportunities, in attendance at many sporting events and establishing friendships outside of military life.



There were several quirky lessons to learn, one was that we could not simply make direct phone calls home. To make a phone call to the UK, the process entailed making a booking at least one week in advance with Western Union for a time slot, then travelling to the mainland by ferry to their office in Kowloon to wait for the connection to be made. I only managed this once, so speaking to my mum only once in two years was a poignant experience. Even wandering around the markets and commercial centres was an experience, particularly with Julie and her light brown hair and Paul's strawberry blonde hair. Hong Kong's Eastern population was fascinated by these hair colours and the children were frequently touched and prodded. Although there was just less than one year between them, Paul was the same height as Julie so on occasion I was asked by Chinese mums, "Are they one baby?", which I understood to mean twins.

My enthusiasm for having spent those two years in Hong Kong is still strong, to the point that it is my positive experiences that come to mind most readily. There were, however, some less favourable memories. One being the torrential rain which often caused falling trees and rocks and being cut off from main roadways. One such rainfall episode led to a massive landslide

causing four tiers of housing to domino down a hillside into the valley below. Hundreds of lives were lost with the Irish Guards working on rescue and recovery for many days. Elements of this experience were difficult to erase from Bert's memory. Bert's duties also necessitated frequent absences to carry out the task of guarding the Hong Kong/China border posts and participating in various military exercises.

Never the less I was rarely housebound, I just fully enjoyed exploring as much as I could or spending all day on some beach. Not all of Bert's absences had pleasant outcomes; for example, he was on a six-week exercise in New Zealand when Typhoon Rose struck in 1971. I was used to some level of excitement in plotting the courses of approaching typhoons, with help from special map charts and TV reports. Most typhoons were not too bad or simply veered away from the island. Rose, however, was the most severe typhoon since The Great Hong Kong Typhoon in 1937. Rose hit in the middle of the night with much devastation and damage to our quarter. Her continuous, torrential rain and howling, screaming wind broke the anemometer after registering 150 knots, causing devastation inside our house as well as to falling trees, property and debris outside. With Bert being in New Zealand, myself and the children required rescuing by a neighbour. Windows had been broken and the swirling debris destroyed everything in its path. We could not open the outside doors initially, but eventually, we were transferred to a safer, nearby house. Next day all families just had to get on with building some normality using

the full extent of our resilience without husbands. However, the men were brought back from New Zealand within a day or two, not only to attend to their families but also to support the Hong Kong authorities in restoring the island-wide devastation. Incidentally, when the men were absent on duty, families at that time were referred to as 'headless families'. Certainly, an erroneous label because it is on these occasions that wives excel at keeping their heads and are at their most self-sufficient.

One misguided outing was when Bert and I, with another couple, wandered inadvertently into the red-light district in Wan Chai on a night out. We took the lift up to what looked like an inviting restaurant. The lift stopped, we stepped out, myself and Brenda, my friend, were almost immediately assailed with a shower of chicken bones being thrown at us by a group of alluringly dressed Chinese women. As it was clear that we were unwanted guests, we scrambled back into the lift with the penny dropping as to what type of establishment we had entered. We found the situation hilarious afterwards but eventually realised that our naivety could have led to danger.

Writing down these memories re-invokes my love of the whole Hong Kong experience. I would have stayed there forever and indeed we could have done so. Bert was offered that opportunity when the Owner of Caroline Hill football team suggested that he resigned from the army to play full time for them. He turned down that offer as remaining in the army

offered long term career prospects. It was a good decision as he served for forty-seven years. He could never have played football for that length of time!

Our departure from Hong Kong in November 1972 came all too quickly, causing a degree of sadness for each of us. A parting remark from Paul, then aged four and a half was particularly poignant and made my heartache for him. As our plane skimmed over the hilltop quarters of Lei Yue Mun Barracks, he sobbed, “Bye- bye Hong Kong, we’ll never see you again”. This was true for Bert, myself and Paul (though as he is fifty-three now, there is still the possibility of return for him).



Julie, however, has made a return trip and visited Lei Yue Mun Barracks. The whole site remains, including the quarters. She stood outside what had been our house and re-enjoyed that amazing view and atmosphere, which is one of the attractive features of the former British Military Barracks and now very popular Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village! This was an example of Chinese ingenuity and recycling at its best; leaving me with some satisfaction that a location that meant so much to me, for a short period of my life, is still in existence.

As a footnote, it is likely that as a family, we possibly found adapting to life in Hong Kong was more pleasant than adapting to the November weather on our return to England. The difficulties were evidenced by two incidents relating to the children. One was when Julie got into bed on her first night, she asked me what was that white hairy thing on her bed and instructed me to remove it as she did not like it. She was referring to a blanket, she had no memory of ever having used one previously. The other occurred when they went out to play in the garden next day, I looked out of the kitchen window to see two pair of shoes lying together in the snow and two cold-looking children running around in bare feet. Now, after all that reminiscing, it’s time to make our evening meal and what do you think is on tonight’s menu? Well, fried rice, of course.



Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer - Anon

The Quiet Corner

I was brought up in sunny Portstewart and am an inveterate birdwatcher and beachcomber. My poor mother often would inquire as to what was in the box under my bed or in the bulging pockets of my anorak only to be told that I had collected more treasures from the beach. Tiny cowrie shells were my particular favourite.

However, on one occasion, Mum was horrified to discover that I had very helpfully brought an unexploded yellow flare up from the shore. She immediately rang the police, who retrieved two more from the shoreline before any more helpful eight-year-olds could create pandemonium!



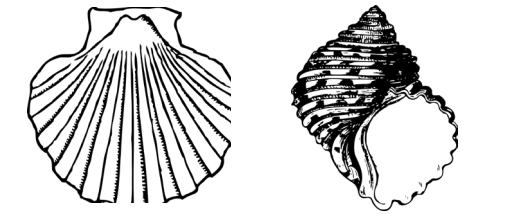
I still walk the beach whenever I can and am still beguiled by the shapes and colours of the shells and pebbles. There is something addictive about looking for the perfect shell, the size, shape and colour must all be perfect and any broken or imperfect shells are quickly discarded. Often too, I reach for a shell that appears

to fit the bill, only to discover on lifting it that it has a broken edge buried in the sand. Stones, too, look smooth and perfect until you hold them up to the light and see the cracks inside.

God has created us just like the shells and pebbles. We are all His treasures and we are all different. Not one of us is perfect, yet God does not discard us in His search for perfection. He gathers us all to Him, no matter how damaged, no matter how seemingly plain and insignificant. It doesn’t matter to Him if our imperfections are small or large, hidden from view or clearly visible; we are each of us unique and precious in His sight.

So the next time you are searching for treasure on the beach, remember that God sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within us until we join Him as his treasure in Heaven. The Holy Spirit is our treasure and thanks to Jesus’ death on the cross for us, we do not need to go in search of it.

Susan McNair



Everybody needs a seashell in her bathroom to remind her the ocean is her home. - Anon

The Church at Crom

For many years we have cruised the Erne-Shannon waterways on our motor yacht "Mosquito". One of our favourite overnight moorings is in Trial Bay, Derryvore Quay, a quiet inlet across the Erne from the Crom Estate. The mooring is a short, pleasant walk to Holy Trinity Church, Crom, Teemore. Many times, we have read the tombstones and memorials in the church graveyard, several telling the life story of the Erne family. This summer, we moored on a Saturday night in August and when we checked the website found there would be a morning service in the Church.



The Church was built as the Crom Estate church for the Earls of Erne and is now owned by the National Trust in a secluded location within the 1200 acre estate. The foundation stone was laid in 1840 by the 3rd Earl of Erne and consecrated in 1840, for a cost of £7,200. The present nave has retained most of the original features. The original candles and oil lamps have been retained and wired for electricity. There are magnificent stained glass windows,



one of which illustrates Jesus blessing the little children. This window was dedicated in 1868, in memory of Lady Louis Crichton, only daughter of 3rd Earl of Erne. Several memorial plaques are decorating the internal walls, including a memorial to those who died during the 1st World War. A belfry tower was added and dedicated to Selina, Countess of Erne in 1888. We declined the invitation to climb the 69 stone steps to the parapet from where there is a spectacular view!

In the early 1900s, the service was a rare spectacle as members of the congregation arrived to worship. Some came by horse and cart or by foot, while the gentry came by boat, converging from the islands and pointing along the shore on both sides of the Upper Erne. A steamer came from



across Crom Bay, while a few came in rowing boats. They all brought the worshippers to the quay to make their way up the path to the Church.

A new church hall has been completed recently, it will be used for various church activities. As it is on National Trust grounds the planning restrictions were very restricted and it is a lovely, sympathetic design.

The rare Telford organ has been recently restored and was being played as we entered the Church. The small

congregation was well spaced in the beautiful old Church. We were made very welcome by the warden, several parishioners and the rector, Alistair Donaldson. His thoughtful sermon was on the theme "Be Ready" and the hymn singing was enhanced by the lovely organ music. We went back to the boat feeling blessed and peaceful.

Sally and John McKee



Gift Aid

"Gift Aid" really is the gift that goes on giving! If you pay income tax and you sign up for "Gift Aid", for every pound you donate to Groomsport Parish Church, HMRC will give us an extra 25p. It is a hugely valuable income source for us; for example, last year we were able to claim nearly £14000 through the "Gift Aid" scheme. That represents around 14% of our annual income.

If you haven't already signed up to the "Gift Aid" scheme, please do consider it for the New Year. It is totally confidential – as a Parish we have no idea of people's incomes or tax liabilities. All we know is that if Mrs X gives £100, we will receive an extra £25 from the tax man.

Further information can be had from the "Gift Aid" secretary, Amanda, in the Parish Office.

Walking For Softies

On Monday 23 August the Softies met at the car park of Antrim Castle. Antrim Castle was the former seat of the Sheffington family and originated in 1610. The gardens began to be laid out during the seventeenth century. Although the castle itself was destroyed by fire in 1922, the principal Anglo-Dutch water features remain.

It was a relief to have a dry bright morning. Everyone was so eager to catch up with each other, that the walking turned into a stroll, then the stroll turned into an amble,

but the craic was galloping! We visited the river, Sixmilewater, Clotworthy House, the Large Parterre, the lime avenue and the canals. The lower canal dates from the early 18th century, while the upper canal was added in the 19th century. The cascade that separates the two canals, forms a pretty viewpoint. Finally, we arrived at the garden cafe, where coffee and freshly made scones were enjoyed outside in the courtyard. This treat at the end of our walks is rapidly becoming one of the highlights!



Saturday 25 September was a sunny, mild day. The Softies met at Bangor Railway Station and took the train to Carnalea. From there, we walked back to Bangor. The walk along the coastal path was delightful and the chat was great. We all really appreciated being together after the long months of Lockdown. We arrived at the cafe at Pickie Fun Park. As we entered the cafe to place our coffee and scone orders, another customer told us there were no scones. We were very disappointed, but the scones appeared from the oven as soon as we reached the counter.

How delicious they were! It is hard to beat the smell of freshly baked scones after a walk! None of the outdoor tables was occupied so we had the whole outdoor cafe to ourselves.

Wonderful weather, fresh air, great company and freshly baked food washed down with steaming tea or coffee. What more could anyone desire!

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Zandra 0796 8401386 or Ian 0796 8401387.

God In The Arts

The philosopher Wittgenstein gave the following advice to people visiting an art gallery or exhibition: never try to rush through all the paintings on show, but instead choose just one painting. Sit in front of it for twenty minutes. Then get up and leave the art gallery. It is difficult advice to take to heart because we feel we want to get our money's worth from an exhibition. Once in the gallery we then feel so overawed by the number of paintings on show and the pressure of the crowd that we go quickly from one canvas to the next.

The rushing around at a gallery is part and parcel of the way we meet each day. We rush out of habit, and we rush because everyone else is rushing. Our world seems set in the fast lane. Carl Honoré in his book 'In Praise of Slow' tells how, as a busy journalist, he experienced a flashback to a time in his youth when life was unhurried. He reflects, with regret, that it was a better life then.

If we do want to take Wittgenstein's advice seriously and find ourselves in the National Gallery in Edinburgh, we could do no better than choose to sit in front of El Greco's 'The Saviour.' El Greco was born in 1541 in Crete. From Greece he travelled to Venice and Rome and finally to Toledo in Spain where he died in 1614. His art is a fusion of eastern and western traditions, given extra fervour by the Counter-Reformation and resulting in a unique style of painting. His canvases are peopled by elongated figures who seem always to be straining upwards, just as the Counter-Reformation was exhorting the faithful to set their sights on heaven as they made

as they made their journey through life. As we look and see, we find here in El Greco's work a Christ-calmed steadiness amid the spinning world of rush and busyness. The nearer we draw to this Jesus, the slower we will find ourselves spinning. The duties and responsibilities that demand so much from us take their place in the wider perspective of the Saviour's grace and love. Then we can begin to experience that peace which the world cannot offer, but which Christ can bring.

The first step in that process is to stop and look. The Curé d'Ars, a parish priest in France in the early 19th century, told how he noticed an old man sitting at the back of his church every day. He didn't seem to be doing anything, just sitting there in the same place at the same time, looking towards the Blessed Sacrament on the High Altar. Eventually, the young priest became suspicious. He asked the man what he was doing. 'I'm praying,' came the reply. 'Yes, but what exactly is it you do?' enquired the priest. 'Well, I look at Him, and He looks at me.'



The Revd Michael Burgess writes about 'God in the Arts' with El Greco's 'The Saviour'.

Cook's Corner

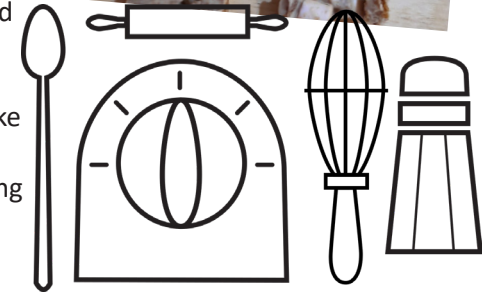
Biscoff Rocky Roads

By Jenny Craythorne

- 400g White Chocolate
- 50g Unsalted Butter
- 125g Biscoff spread
- 150g Mini Mallows
- 250g Biscoff biscuits (crushed)

1. Line an 8 inch cake tin with cling film.
2. Melt the chocolate and butter together.
3. In a separate bowl, melt the Biscoff spread
4. then mix in the melted chocolate.
5. Add the mallows and broken biscuits.
6. Spread the complete mix into the lined cake tin.
7. Chill the mix for several hours before cutting into squares.

You can halve the quantity if needed.



Lockdown Wheaten Bread

By Elaine Lester

- 400g porridge oats
- One tablespoon bicarbonate of soda
- 500g pot of natural Greek yogurt
- 50ml milk
- One egg

Mix the oats and soda.

Lightly beat the egg in the milk.

Add yogurt and milk to the oats.

It's a fairly sloppy mixture but roughly shape it into an oval.

Put it into a floured 1lb loaf tin.

Bake at 180° for 45 minutes.

It's beautiful, easy and quick.

Thoughts of a Blow In...

Despite being well into October, apart from a few days of windy and wet weather to remind us that it's truly autumn, it has been such a pleasure to have a long and sunny stretch of weather.

Another bonus is that more people are taking advantage to get out and about before the inevitable November storms. It has been so nice to bump into familiar faces that I haven't seen since before the first lockdown. I've enjoyed a chat and catching up with all their news and that of their families.

Of course, for friends from further afield, if we can't see them face to face, a handwritten note or electronic message is always a lovely surprise. My godson in England, now a strapping seventeen year old (where does the time go?) is showing his newfound maturity by dropping me the occasional email of his own volition. When asked what he would like as a gift for his recent birthday, he asked for a relevant to me to help him with his driving test and even proudly enclosed a photo of his

brand new second-hand car! However, as he pointed out in his latest message, given the current fuel shortage, as he'll have to concentrate on the Highway Code rather more than driving practicalities, my gift has been more timely than we thought.

During these bright afternoons, it is a treat to enjoy the sea view from my window. I often see next door's little ones coming home from school in their uniforms, trudging wearily up the path with their satchels and backpacks bearing the weight of the world on their shoulders. However, as if by magic, in no time at all, they are changed into their own clothes, racing back down the front steps to have a lively football kick-about in the front garden. The subsequent fun and games are very entertaining, especially the expressions of horror if a ball is accidentally kicked into the road, with a guilty glance at their house to see if a parent is watching!

Wishing you all a calm, safe and peaceful autumn, which this lovely verse by William Cullen Bryant seemed to summarise.

The sweet calm sunshine of October, now
Warms the low spot; upon its grassy mold
The purple oak-leaf falls; the birchen bough
Drops its bright spoil like arrow-heads of gold.

Bookstall - November & December

The Clothes On Their Backs Linda Grant



The Clothes on their Backs by Linda Grant. This extraordinary book deals very largely with what it is like to create a life in a new country having arrived as a refugee. Vivien is the daughter of Hungarian refugees who fled from there in 1938 and settled to a quiet life behind

the closed doors of their small rented accommodation, where they tried as hard as possible to be invisible and to be utterly assimilated in their surroundings, not, above all to be noticed. So, on arrival in England, this Jewish family were faced with a choice between "the Jewish refugee agency or the nice ladies from the WRVS"; they chose the latter making themselves, as they saw it "English", and no one bothered them after that. Thus Vivien's childhood and adolescence is restricted and limited. One day the family receive a rare visitor, it turns out to be Vivien's uncle Sandor, her father's brother, and she is amazed and horrified to discover that he is profoundly unwelcome in her parent's home. She can discover nothing from her parents who refuse to discuss the matter with her, resulting, almost inevitably in her burning curiosity about him. A little later a chance encounter enables her to discover his story and she learns a great deal about her family's past. Suddenly she has a past and, what she craves, a "thick history". Uncle Sandor is highly disreputable and unlike his brother is very well known, for all the wrong reasons. Based on the character of Peter Rachman the notorious landlord in London in the 1950s and early 60s, the background story reveals a much more complex figure than the newspaper reports and vilification of the time suggest. Thus a fascinating

For various reasons, I have had rather more time to read recently and have made use of that by working my way through the piles of books that have been waiting for me to deal with, so there are rather more reviews here than usual. I have tried as always to have a variety of genres and this time we have a thriller, two non fiction, two police detective novels and three stories which I would have difficulty classifying.

Death May Surprise Us Ted Willis



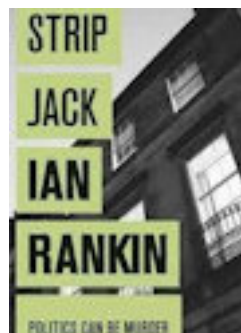
This book has been on the shelves for many years, but it caught my eye during the September book sales; I recognised the author but couldn't remember why. I learnt, for those of us of a certain age, Dixon of Dock Green

could well have been our introduction to the TV police drama and it is the author of that series who wrote this book. It is, inevitably, set in simpler times - no mobile phones, no computers, let alone the internet, and, of course, negative examples of police practice that would not go unchallenged these days. A certain amount of "inappropriate" behaviour on the part of men towards women in the workplace.

That said, I found the storyline really gripping and tense. The British Prime Minister on a visit to his constituency is invited to open the local fair; trapped into entering the gypsy caravan to have his fortune told, he and his wife disappear. It seems they have been kidnapped. By whom? Why? There is even a Northern Ireland element to the story, which I can recommend for those who enjoy a crime thriller.

tale is told as Vivien learns how to live her own life, away from her restricting family home. This is a great story wonderfully told, which teaches us that every “villain” is much more than simply that. The detailed descriptions of clothing and appearance place the reader as a very close observer of all the characters, which I particularly appreciated.

Strip Jack Ian Rankin



Strip Jack by Ian Rankin. Ironically, we have here another crime novel about a politician. A popular MP is discovered in a police raid on a brothel, which unaccountably has a posse of press and photographers present to witness the whole affair. Gregor

Jacks MP is destined for advancement in his chosen career, upright, warm, approachable and widely respected; the discovery at the brothel is a bombshell that reveals a great deal more about this man. Inspector Rebus (this is the fourth in the series of John Rebus novels) is unhappy with the way the case is proceeding and, as is the way with popular detectives, frequently at odds with his superiors and sometimes his underlings. The story is complex and intriguing and encourages the reader on swiftly; this is fortunate as the story is peppered with friends of Jacks and his wife, all of whom are referred to by both their proper name and their nickname. For example Ronnie Steele is “Suey”, Bill Fisher is “Bilbo”, Cath Kinnoul is “Gowk” - it can be hard to remember if you leave it too long before picking up the story again. Ian Rankin is a superb story teller though and this is a first-class example of his work, if you enjoy a good detective story, this comes highly recommended. One extra warning, there is a lot of Scottish dialect, it helps to have Mr Google to hand if you are

not conversant with such expressions as “the snell wind” and “smirr”!

Our Spoons Came From Woolworths Barbara Comyns

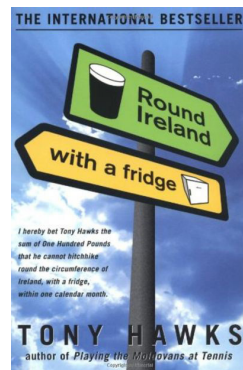
Our Spoons Came from Woolworths by Barbara Comyns. I chanced upon this book during the recent Book Sale and was intrigued, particularly when I read the first few sentences of the introduction by Maggie O’Farrell, who spoke in glowing terms of it as a “discovery”.



Having read it now, I understand why. The style is very distinctive, it is written in a light-hearted, almost childlike style, with short simple sentences and a matter of fact attitude to all that befalls the narrator Sophia. Much does befall her as she starts her married life in what can only be described as ‘genteel poverty’. Set in 1930s London, Sophia, coming from a very sheltered background, takes every new experience in her stride but suffers accordingly. She clearly does not understand the thought processes of those around her and does not question the indignities and challenges that are presented to her but struggles on. As a consequence, there is much gentle poignant humour and horror at, for example, the appalling way she is treated in hospital when giving birth to her first child. Her husband is utterly taken up with his artwork so her poverty is emotional as well as financial. This remains, however, a book well worth reading, as it befits a Virago Modern Classic.

Round Ireland With A Fridge Tony Hawks

Round Ireland with a Fridge by Tony Hawks. I read this some time ago and reread it to share it with the book stall, that is how entertaining it is! Tony Hawks is well known to those who enjoy Radio 4 panel shows, his humour is gentle and self deprecating and is well fitted to this story.



It is effectively a journal of a trip he spent in the 1990s as a direct consequence of a bet with a friend in a pub entered into after a considerable amount of alcohol had been consumed! As he makes clear at the beginning all the events in the book actually took place and most of the characters are actually named. It is complete with photographs and makes a really enjoyable story of a hitch hiking adventure round Ireland. The stipulations of the bet were that the journey should take in Tory Island at the extreme northwestern tip of Ireland, Cape Clear Island in the xtreme southwest and Wexford in the southeast; apart from that his route was up to him. Well worth a read.

The-Hundred-Year-Old Man ... Jonas Jonasson

The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed out of the Window and Disappeared by Jonah Jonasson.

It’s hard to define the genre to which this book belongs. It is part historical fiction, part crime fiction and all humour. Allan Karlsson sits in an old people’s home on his hundredth birthday, awaiting the moment when the bossy and unpleasant manager of the place comes to take him to the party she has planned for him in the communal lounge - the party he does not want to attend. So he does what seems perfectly reasonable to a relatively fit and active centenarian, he climbs out of the window - and disappears! His subsequent adventures involve him with serious criminal networks, initially innocently, but as his mantra is “Things are what they are, and whatever will be will be” he goes with the flow—interspersed with his current adventures, we are treated to his extraordinary back story. Extraordinary is scarcely adequate for a man who, during

the course of his long life managed to be involved with many of the major events of the 20th century. The storyline requires the reader to suspend belief and just enjoy the absurdities of Allan’s encounters, with amongst others, Stalin, Churchill, Mao Tse-rung, Franco, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman and de Gaulle. His influence on events of the time as an explosives expert, is extraordinary, but in his seeming innocence of the enormity of his contribution lies much humour. It is a long book, unusual to say the least, but I found it very enjoyable.

Killing Eve - Codename Villanelle Luke Jennings

When I read the first few pages I felt that I was reading a James Bond story as a group of highly secretive, powerful men met to ensure their supremacy over a rival gang with widespread influence and plan to remove its leader “permanently”.

Oxana is a psychopathic woman who is rescued from the horrors of a Russian prison where she awaits the death penalty for the brutal murders of her gangster father’s killers. She is rescued by a strange man who knows much about her and clearly wants to make use of what he sees as her capacity for utter ruthlessness. She is put through five months of extreme physical and mental training then taught to dress and comport herself as a very stylish woman. Oxana is now officially dead with documents to prove it and Villanelle is born. Eve is a former MI6 operative who is given the task of hunting down the ruthless killer that Villanelle has become. This is the first story in a series about Villanelle. What follows in this story is described in very explicit detail, which some readers may not like. It is a thriller involving complex and strange relationships, extreme violence and strong language. It is not a read for the faint-hearted, but it is nonetheless a good read.

The Three Trees

Sent in By Freda Conway - author unknown

Tall and stately the three trees stood
Close together, in the wood.
Years it had taken to make them grow,
Sun and wind and rain and snow;
Now they were ready, these beautiful trees,
Dreaming together of what they would be.

"I know what I'll be", said the first tall tree,
"When the woodman uses his axe on me.
I'll be a cradle, carved and rare
To rock to sleep a baby fair,
A cradle fit for a royal house,
A beautiful cradle will be my choice".

"What will I be?" murmured the second tree,
"I love the winds that blow over the sea;
A graceful ship with tall white sails,
And a cargo of spices and silk in bales;
Facing the storms, sailing the seas,
A beautiful ship, that's what I'll be".

The third tree, tallest one of the three,
Looked over the forest to where he could see
Far in the distance, streets and roads,
People on foot, carts carrying loads;
"A signpost I'll be to point the way,
A beautiful signpost, for that I'll pray".

The woodman came and the three trees fell,
And what they became is the story I tell;
They had dreamed of their future, what they wanted to be,
A beautiful cradle, a graceful ship, a signpost clear for men to see.
They were cut, they were carved, they were hammered and nailed,
But what they became? Seems their dreams had failed.

For the first tall tree was a manger stall
In a stable in Bethlehem town so small;
It was filled with straw for the cattle feed,
But once it fulfilled another's need,
And three wise men their gifts did bring
To the manger which cradled a baby King.

The second tree's future was spent on the sea,
As a strong fishing boat on Lake Galilee;
Owned by Peter and James and John
Who used it to fish in the early dawn.
And from it, a man called Jesus preached
To a crowd of five thousand upon a beach.

The third tall tree was roughly hewn,
And dragged to a hill at Jerusalem
By a Man who was wearing a crown of thorns;
This was the purpose for which He was born.
And the tree was the cross, which pointed the way,
A signpost to all of Christ's victory.



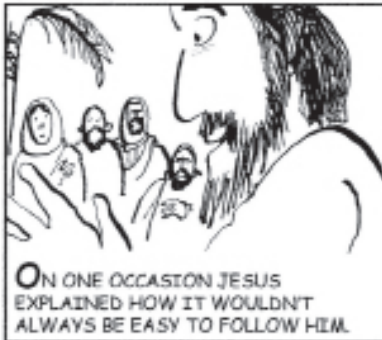
The tale of the Tower Builder



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ON ONE OCCASION JESUS EXPLAINED HOW IT WOULDN'T ALWAYS BE EASY TO FOLLOW HIM.



JESUS BEGAN, "IF ONE OF YOU PLANS TO BUILD A TOWER..."

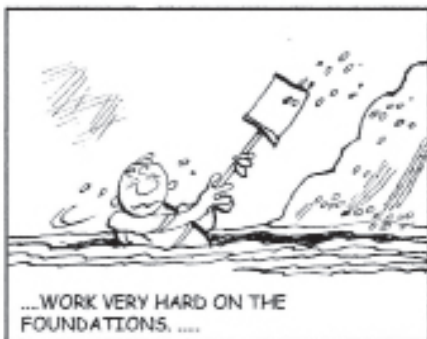
...YOU'LL FIRST NEED TO WORK HOW MUCH IT WILL COST.



IF YOU DON'T DO THE SUMS...



...YOU MIGHT MAKE A START, ...



...WORK VERY HARD ON THE FOUNDATIONS, ...



...THEN START TO LAY THE BRICKS...



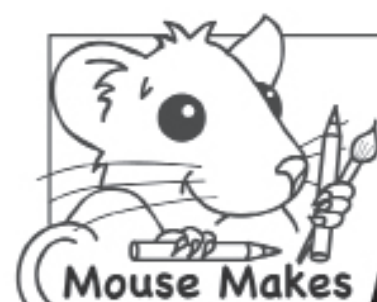
...BUT SUDDENLY RUN OUT OF MONEY!!



THEN PEOPLE WILL LAUGH AT YOU!



WE NEED TO REALISE THAT ALTHOUGH FOLLOWING JESUS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, IT'S ALSO A GREAT CHALLENGE.



Mouse Makes

I AM THE

Read John 10:11 and 14



I AM THE

Read John 15:1 and 35



I AM THE

Read John 6: 35, 51

OF



AND THE

Read John 11:25



I AM THE



OF THE

Read John 18:12

I AM THE

AND THE

AND THE

Read John 14:6



I AM THE

Read John 10:9



I AM THE

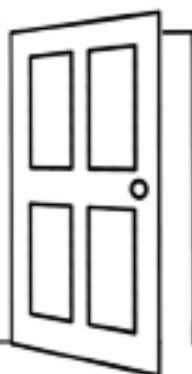
B R A N C H E S L I F E T B
S H E P H E R D F A T H E R
L O J G A T E R W O R L D E
I V E D D I A M O A U I N A
F I S E O B L I G H T F O D
E N U G O O D W A Y H E H E
R E S U R R E C T I O N B L

Look up the Bible references, fill in the missing words then look for them in the word search

Nov21 © Deborah Noble - parishpump.co.uk

Jesus said:

I AM THE DOOR



**'If anyone enters by me, he will be saved
and will go in and out and find pasture.'**

John 10:9

Groomsport Parish Church

CONTACT

groomsportparishchurch.org