

YOUR

DECEMBER 2025

ALMHOUSE

MAGAZINE



Your Photos



Fireworks at St James Primary School, Twickenham by Becky Evans



*Autumn Trees at
Kew Gardens
by Lesley Cizek*



Kew Gardens by Margaret Goddard

Seasonal or local photographs.

To have ***your*** photos appear on page 2, please send the images on WhatsApp to: Becky Evans **07386 667185** or Derrick Thompson **07796 619697**

Welcome

to our new residents:

Eve Mainoo,
Hickey's Almshouses.

Jacqueline Smith,
Queen Elizabeth's
Almshouses.

Farewell

It is with great
sadness that we say
goodbye to:

Michael Cordell,
Hickey's Almshouses.
RIP

Janice Kendall,
Twinings
Almshouses. RIP

Joy Sayles, Michel's
Almshouses. RIP

Correction

In Ian Heath's article in our September issue headed *My New Book, '1989, 1997 and 29 days respectively'* should have read '89, 97 and 29 days respectively'. We apologise for the error. Ed

Photo Credit:

Front and back cover:
*Branches of fir waiting to
be made into Christmas
wreaths*, by Chantal
Richards.

Editorial Committee and Content:

Mike Townsin *Editor*
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Gennie Thompson

Magazine Design:

Chantal Richards



This magazine is recyclable.
Please feel free to share your
magazine with others.

Dates for Your Diary



2 December
String Quartet
see page 9



5 December
Parkshot Singers
see page 9

9 December
Meditation 11am
see activities sheet

12 December
Yoga 10.15am
see activities sheet

15 December
Zumba 11am
see activities sheet



17 December AM
**Marshgate Carol
Service**
see page 11



17 December PM
**Christmas Carol
Service**
see page 11



24 December
**Candlelit Crib
Service**
see Chapel
Schedule on page 8



25 December
**Christmas Day
Communion with
Carols**
see Chapel Schedule
on page 8

Deadline for the December
issue is:

Friday 12 December

Forthcoming Out and About Days

Tuesday 2 December
Minibus trip to [Adrian Hall
Garden Centre](#) in Feltham

Thursday 8 January
Hickey's Get-Together

Wednesday 14 January
Museum of the Order of St
John

Letter from Emma



Dear Residents,

Well, here we are
in December and
almost at the end of another year.
How has that happened? Is it me
or is time speeding up?!

I think the almshouses are just
as pretty at this time of year as
they are in full summer, largely
thanks to the lights and the festive
decorations. If you think things are
looking sparkly now...just wait until
you get to the Christmas party. This
year we have taken our inspiration
from all things *Strictly*. There will
be all manner of dancing, feather
boas, and of course glitter balls. I
hope to see you at the lunch and
if you have a little bit of sparkle on,
all the better.

If you can't make the lunch, there
will be other opportunities for
us to get together, including the
carol singing with the children
from Marshgate School (such fun
in October – come and try it) and
the candlelit string quartet (back
by popular demand). Check the
Events Leaflet for full details of
everything that is going on across
the community.

Finally, however you will be
spending the holiday period I hope
it is everything that you would like
it to be, and I wish you all the very
best for 2026. There are so many
things we can do together, and I
cannot think of a better place to be.

In the meantime... I must
practice... da da da da...da da
da...da da da da da!

All the best

Emma

Out and About Trip: Raid on the Bank of England



by Richard Yardley

The Bank robbers (should have said 'residents') set out from Richmond to the Bank of England. After stopping for a drink and something to eat, we entered the Bank and passed the security checks, and finally made our way into the building which has been based on Threadneedle Street since 1734.



The Bank was established in 1694 and is the world's second oldest Central Bank (Sweden's is the oldest). The Bank is custodian of the official gold reserves of the UK (and some 30 other countries); the Bank holds around 5,134 tonnes of gold.



We had a very interesting talk on the history of the Bank in the afternoon which mentioned Sir John Houblon the 1st Governor of the Bank 1694—1697, who also served as the Lord Mayor of London 1695 - 1696. He married Mary Jurin in 1660 and had five sons and six daughters, two of whom were Rebecca and Susanna Houblon — of the Houblon Almshouses on Worple Way. When Sir John Houblon died in 1792, his widow and two daughters came to live in Ellerker House on Richmond Hill.

Sir John Houblon appeared on the back of £50 notes issued in 1994, which were replaced in 2011. This note ceased to be legal tender in 2014; the design includes an image of the Houblon House in Threadneedle Street. (see photo left).

Back to the Bank robbers: we sat on a seat made from recycled plastic Bank notes — valued at £2.5 million. How could we get this back to the Almshouses garden? (see bottom left photo). We also tried to lift a gold bar which was on display weighing about 12.4 kilos or 27.4 pounds, but failed to get it out of the cage. (see bottom right photo).

We left a bit poorer after visiting the Bank shop, but were amazed at the history of the Bank and the connection to our almshouses: the pink of the uniform of some of the Bank people is called Houblon pink (see photo right).



Our thanks to the Bank of England museum for information, and some of the photos in this article.

The museum is free to visit, and open Monday to Friday.

Our Next Outing is on Tuesday 2 December — Minibus trip to [Adrian Hall Garden Centre](#) in Feltham. Christmas shopping and breakfast are available. Travelling by minibus, leaving Hickey's Chapel at **10am**, returning about 2.30pm. Please book with your Scheme Manager as places are limited to the minibus seating. This is a chance for other folk to join the Out and About group.



Food Glorious Food

Winter warmers was this month's theme — spicy pasties, baked beans, chickpeas and spicy relish.

And to soothe our winter ailments — coughs, colds and flu — honey, lemon, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon and cardamon.

Next month we meet again at Heather's (3C Adelaide Road) to discuss traditional Christmas foods from around the world — and we hope to sample some of them!

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

Please join us for our next session
...the more the merrier!

Tuesday 9 December
11am at Heather Shipley's home
Traditional Christmas Foods
from around the World



The Richmond Charities Membership of Kew Gardens

We are delighted to announce that our membership of Kew Gardens is open.

Entry tickets for residents are FREE!

We have 120 tickets to use per year and encourage residents to come forward and make use of them.

We will monitor usage so that residents can visit throughout the seasons. If tickets are high in demand, we may have to restrict use to one ticket per resident every six months.

Royal Botanic Gardens
Kew

Scheme Managers will keep you informed of the process upon request.

Perhaps you would like to invite a friend, bring a neighbour or go it alone, watching the seasons change among the world's most diverse collection of plants.

Our membership offers entry-only and does not permit entry to exclusive events.



Review of *Singing Together*

by Lorna South

What a joyful and uplifting experience it was singing with the pupils from Marshgate School in the Chapel in October, an event which had been arranged by Derrick.

Into the Chapel they trooped, about twenty of them all with smiling faces and obviously very excited. Ms Valero, the teacher in charge of the choir, introduced herself and said the children were between seven and nine years old. Before the singing began she asked the children to introduce themselves; some were more confident than

others but all told us their names and what their favourite lessons were.

All the words of the songs were printed on a screen and the first song was *Consider Yourself* from *Oliver!*. We residents joined in, but the children's enthusiasm had us enthralled. They all stood up so straight, and sang their hearts out with such enthusiasm.

During the session Ms Valero suggested that we have a short break and chat to the children nearest to us. The children seemed

to love this opportunity and so did we. The little girl that I chatted to was delighted to tell me about her pet hamster and what tricks it got up to.

After the break the singing resumed again with, to my delight, *Let It Be*, my favourite *Beatles* song. Despite the hysteria of *The Beatles* era having taken place a long, long time before the children were born, they had all done their homework and delighted in calling out the names of the Fab Four.

Our sing-song came to an end far too soon. The children were due back to school for their lunch. But there was still time for two more songs, one from *The Jungle Book* and Cliff Richard's big hit *Summer Holiday*.

I do hope a similar event like this can be organised again, and that the children got as much enjoyment out of it as the residents did. We residents did our best to add our voices and join in but, for me, seeing the children's happy and sweet faces as they sang their hearts out was the highlight of my day.

And now I am looking forward very much to 17 December when the children are coming to sing carols outside some of the Almshouses. It will be difficult not to join in, but I'm sure they won't mind if we do. (see advert on page 9)





The Chapel of St Francis

Service Times: December 2025

Sunday 7 December <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	10.30am Holy Communion Followed by refreshments.
Sunday 14 December <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	10.30am Holy Communion.
Wednesday 17 December	6.00pm Candlelit Carol Service - 'Stars in the Night' <i>With singers from St. Mary Magdalene's, Richmond.</i>
Sunday 21 December <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i>	10.30am Holy Communion.
Wednesday 24 December Christmas Eve	3.00pm Refreshments 3.30pm Candlelit Crib Service – a simple service of carols and readings as the figures are placed into the Nativity scene.
Thursday 25 December Christmas Day	10.30am Christmas Day Communion with Carols
Sunday 28 December <i>First Sunday of Christmas</i>	10.30am Communion with Carols

All are welcome to join us.

Morning Prayer, most Tuesdays at 10am.

For more information email

Chaplain Derrick:

d.thompsonrichmondcharities.org.uk

07796 619697

Christmas Events



Residents' Christmas Lunch

Thursday 11th December

12.30pm arrival
for lunch at 1pm

See You There!





AN EVENING
OF CLASSICAL
CHRISTMAS MUSIC
WITH

**THE
ELOYSIA
STRING
QUARTET**

TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER
MUSIC WILL START AT 5.30PM
IN THE CHAPEL OF ST FRANCIS

Please arrive at **5.15pm** so that you are seated before the music starts.

Mulled wine, mince pies and soft drinks will be served.

If you wish to attend, please let your Scheme Manager know.

CAROL SINGING
WITH THE CHILDREN FROM
MARSHGATE SCHOOL

Wednesday
17 December
10.30am to midday

The children will be touring around Houlton's, Church Estate, Twining's and Hickey's Almshouse to sing Christmas carols. Look out for the children arriving, come outside and join in the festive cheer!



If it's a rainy day the children will sing Carols in the Chapel - so come and join us there!

The Chapel of St Francis

The Parkshot Singers

will be coming to entertain us on

Friday 5 December
at 3pm
in The Chapel of St Francis.

Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be served after the concert.

The Parkshot Singers are a group from The Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College.

The Chapel of St Francis

Annual Carol Service

Stars in the Night Sky

Wednesday 17 December 2025
6.00pm

Come and hear the Christmas Story
Sing carols:
Away in a manger
O little town of Bethlehem
Silent Night
See amid the winter's Snow

Listen to the beautiful singing of the Choral Scholars of St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Richmond

Followed by Mince Pies and Mulled Wine!

Richmond CHARITIES
Almshouse Community Living

Elizabeth Doughty Almshouses Design and Build

Timeline: February 2021 – Oct 2025



September 2023



December 2023



March 2024



September 2024



January 2025

by Mick Tinson

Back in February 2021, I first learned about a potential development opportunity that had caught the Charity's attention. The site, located right next to our Manning Place estate, felt like a perfect fit and a chance to expand and strengthen the small community we'd already established there.

We were aiming to start the ground works in April 2022; however, final pre-development checks uncovered a major challenge: high-voltage power lines supplying much of Richmond Hill were running directly

beneath the proposed building site. This discovery meant construction couldn't begin until the cables were safely diverted, which was no small task. It required months of careful planning, coordination with utility companies, and plenty of patience to ensure the work was carried out safely and with minimal disruption.

By February 2023, after a lengthy period of negotiations and approvals, the cable diversion works finally began. The following month, we appointed Leslie Clark as our project manager and agent

to keep everything on track, overseeing contractors, timelines, and budgets.

Six months later, in August 2023, the major hurdle was cleared: the power lines were successfully relocated, paving the way for construction to commence. Then, on 18 September 2023, London House Companies, our appointed development contractor and their project teams officially broke ground – a huge milestone following more than two years of planning and problem-solving.



From that point on, progress was steady, despite the occasional hiccup (mostly courtesy of the great British weather doing its best to slow us down!). Even so, the team kept things moving, staying on schedule and maintaining momentum throughout the year. By late spring, the site was a hive of activity; every visit revealed something new: walls rising, rooms taking shape, and the building gradually coming to life.

In May 2024, we invited staff for a site visit to see the progress first-hand. It was great to walk them around,

meet the on-site team, and witness how far things had come.

By September 2024, the project reached another exciting milestone: the topping-off ceremony. With the structure complete, we could finally appreciate the building's full form and begin to imagine the new homes that would soon welcome some of those on our ever-growing housing register.

From there, it was all systems go. The project continued to take shape with each visit revealing new developments

and a constant reminder of just how far we'd come. By spring 2025, the finishing touches were being added, and the end was in sight. However, a few final hurdles, including gas connections, water connections, and building control sign-offs, delayed completion past the planned April 2025 date, pushing it into early October 2025.

We're delighted to say that we have since welcomed 14 very patient residents, who are now settling in and becoming part of our community.

Your Photos



Autumn at Kew Gardens by Margaret Goddard



Radnor Gardens by Becky Evans



Leaves on Richmond Green by Lesley Cizek



Hickey's Lights by Shobna Lakanai's son

Be Aware of Christmas Scams

Common Christmas scams:

Fake online offers: Scammers create fake websites or ads for popular or sold-out items at unrealistically low prices to steal personal information or money.

Delivery scams: You may get a text or email claiming a package has a problem, with a link that leads to a phishing site to steal your details.

Impersonation scams: Emails, texts, or calls can pretend to be from banks, government agencies, or popular companies to trick you into giving up personal information or clicking a dangerous link.

Social media scams: Fake contests, giveaways, or marketplace listings can appear on social media platforms.

How to stay safe:

Shop carefully: Only shop on trusted websites. Look for “https” in the URL and a padlock icon for a secure connection.

Be cautious with messages: Do not click on links in unsolicited emails or texts, especially those about package deliveries or fake deals.

Protect your information: Never give out personal or financial details in response to an unsolicited message or call.

Verify requests: If you receive an urgent request from a company or person, hang up and call them back using a number from a trusted source, not one from the suspicious message.

Use secure payment methods: When shopping online, use credit cards, which often offer better fraud protection, and avoid public Wi-Fi for sensitive transactions.

Monitor your accounts: Regularly check your bank and credit card statements for any suspicious activity.

Debbie's Things to Do in December



For your garden, focus on planting bare-root roses and fruit trees; performing winter pruning on fruit trees and dormant plants; tidying up by clearing debris and clean your tools. It's also a good time to protect plants from the cold frosty weather ahead.



Look up some Christmas markets to get into the festive spirit. See pages 16 and 17!



Focus on your home by sealing any draughts.



Stock up on food and essentials, also medication.



Winter weather coincides with the flu season and flu can affect people in different ways. Get your flu jab if you qualify for one.



If you have a car, make sure it's stocked up with anti-freeze and that you check the tyre tread levels.



Keep essentials like a torch, batteries, a power bank for your phone, in case of power outages.



Create a budget for gifts, food decorations and travel.



Prepare any make-ahead food items to reduce the stress for Christmas get-togethers or gifts, and the day itself.



Focus on decorations, including setting up and inspecting your tree, and get wrapping supplies ready.



Shop early to avoid the last-minute rush.



Wrap gifts as you buy them!



Your Photos



Petersham Nurseries by Chantal Richards



*Return of the Fox at Kew Gardens
by Mike Townsin*



Isabella Plantation by Mariana Davis



Treetop Walkway at Kew Gardens by Margaret Goddard



The Harvest Moon over Hickey's by Lesley Cizek

Andrew's Africa Odyssey

by **Andrew Bald**

I recently took a trip to South Africa. Here are my photographic highlights from Cape Town, Fish Hoek, Simonstown, Cape of Good Hope, Franschhoek, Arniston, Hermanus, Paternoster, Karoo National Park and Kruger National Park.



Local News, Events & Information

This month's round-up of local news and events that are relevant to you.



Sir Vince Cable awarded Honorary Freedom of the Borough. "Distinguished, dedicated, diligent" – those are the words many use to describe the Right Honourable Sir Vince Cable, who was awarded Freedom of the Borough of Richmond upon Thames.



Residents can now enjoy the **Thames towpath** between Richmond Lock and Kew Gardens, following a year-long programme of major riverbank repairs.



The restoration on the riverbank at **Mereway Nature Park** located at Rowntree Road, Twickenham, (a conservation site) is now finished, bringing further wetland habitat for wildlife back to the Lower Crane River.



Recycle for Richmond.

Did you know that 78% of what ends up in Richmond's rubbish bins could have been recycled? That's a huge opportunity to save resources, cut emissions, and help keep our borough clean and green. Recycle for Richmond – a community-wide campaign to help everyone across the borough recycle more, waste less, and understand exactly what belongs in each bin and box.

There is an excellent resource on the Richmond council website with an A-Z recycling guide.

www.richmond.gov.uk/services/

by Ian Heath



Barnes Community Association

Barnes Christmas Fair.

Friday 5 December. 3pm-8pm

Barnes Village will be filled with festive cheer for the annual Christmas Fair. Local choirs and musicians will perform around the village, and there will be late-night shopping, funfair rides on Barnes Green, and festive stalls.

www.barnes-ca.org



KEW SPARKLE

Kew Sparkle. Friday 5 December, 4 - 8pm.

Kew Sparkle combines a Christmas market with food, drink and craft stalls with family entertainment including fairground rides, stilt walkers and Santa's Grotto. Musical entertainments bring merriment and festive cheer to the village. www.kewsparkle.org



Annual Christmas Shopping Night
3 December, 6pm - 9pm

Petersham Nurseries Christmas Shopping Night. 3 December, 6pm - 9pm.

Christmas spirit Petersham style. Braziers will be lit, carolling in the restaurant, mulled wine and mince pies, a festive market and seasonal dishes in The Teahouse.

LOCAL CHRISTMAS EVENTS



Hampton Court Palace Festive Fayre.

5-7 December and 12-14 December. This much-loved Christmas shopping event is back for two weekends, hosted entirely in the stunning Great Fountain Garden of Henry VIII's palace. Visit on Fridays to save on entry. Return on the second weekend to discover even more independent stallholders, with members visiting for free.

£1 tickets are available to anyone in receipt of the following: Universal Credit or Pension Credit

www.hrp.org.uk



Christmas Art and Craft Fair. 14 December 12pm - 4pm. Whitton Centre, Percy Road.



Late Night Christmas Shopping. Thursday 18th December, 6pm-9pm

Church Street, Twickenham

Support your local shops, and soak up the Christmas spirit in the heart of Twickenham.



Panto at Richmond Theatre!

7 December to 5 January.

Tickets from £15

www.atgtickets.com/shows/cinderella-pantomime



London's Christmas Lights by Bus!

The #139 bus is considered the best for seeing many London Christmas lights, as it travels along Oxford Street and Regent Street, passing Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circus.

Route: Travels between Waterloo and Golders Green, passing through key areas for lights.

Highlights: Includes Oxford Street, Regent Street, Trafalgar Square, and Piccadilly Circus.

Best seats: To maximize the view, try to sit on the top deck, particularly on the right-hand side. Cost £1.75



Christmas Moonlight Swim. 12th and 20th December 2025. Take a festive dip at Hampton Pool with Christmas Moonlight Swims. Swim under the stars and enjoy the magical glow of our Christmas lights! A perfect way to celebrate the season with friends and family. Book in advance: £6.80 for over 65s

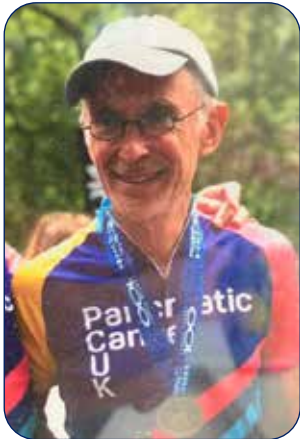
www.hamptonpool.co.uk/swimming/moonlight-swim/



Christmas Eve ParLOUR Games. 24 December 8pm to late. Vintage ParLOUR Games & Pass-the-Parcel, open to 1am. Brewery Market 49 Church Street Twickenham TW1 3NR

Trustee File

Jon Blythe



Hello, I'm Jon Blythe, a Trustee of The Richmond Charities since 2022 (having been Chair of the Mortlake Almshouses). I'm a member of the Finance Committee. I attend All Saints Church and I'm Treasurer for the Parish of Mortlake with East Sheen. I'm an accountant by trade

with a tax practice on the Upper Richmond Road West.

I come from Coventry (remember Coventry City beating Tottenham in the 1987 FA Cup Final?). As it happens in 1987, I moved to East Sheen from Mortlake.

My interests are more sporting than intellectual — tennis features very high, but rugby is always top with life memberships of Kenilworth, Southampton University and Windsor Rugby clubs (I played fly-half and tried to avoid the rough stuff!).

Being a twin was a joy! Often mistaken! I'm still a twin but sadly Andy died six and a half years ago from pancreatic cancer (hence the photo after completing the London 100). I can often be heard telling parents of twins how blessed they are!

Four and a half years ago joy returned to my life when I became a grandfather, and it didn't take long for the boys and girls (5 so far) to cast their spell!

With rugby days long gone I cycle everywhere with (usually) an annual trip in Europe (don't tell anyone but I do like France). I also enjoy juggling (only three balls!) and have been known to cycle and juggle at the same time (don't try it at home!).

On a more sedate front I can often be found at the Hare & Hounds in East Sheen, I tend my wife's allotment when necessary, I love: drawing (must get lessons!), guitar (poor) and Tommy Cooper: "Doctor Doctor, you've got to help me out... certainly sir, which way did you come in?"

If Only

by Steve Harbud

If only we could turn the tide,
If only love could be our guide,
A world where no one's torn apart,
And kindness lives in every heart.

If only we never went to war,
And closed the wounds we made before,
If only we chose another way
To heal the night and greet the day.

If only young children didn't starve,
If only hands could heal the scars,
If only the world could live in peace,
If only....if only...if only.

If only hate could turn to dust,
And every heart was built on trust,
If only freedom was for all,
No voice too small or dream too tall.

It's a story waiting to be told,
Just waiting for our love to unfold.
The power's here within our hands
To build a world that understands.

If only young children didn't starve,
If only love could fill the dark,
If only the world could live in peace,
If only...if only... if only

If only we could learn to see
The way our world was meant to be.
If only... if only...if only

And the Good News is...

Curated by Mike Townsin

• This year, which has produced a glut of **seeds and nuts in British forests**, has been a boon to red squirrels – an increasingly rare sight. It is believed to have enabled two breeding seasons, and rangers counted 215 reds from January to September, 24% more than last year.

• **After 185 days at sea**, and a journey of 8000 miles braving storms and 30ft waves, two British women have become the first female pair to row across the Pacific. They rowed from Lima Peru to Cairns Australia. They raised more than £80,000 for The Outward Bound Trust.



• **Walking football** began in Chesterfield in 2011 as a gentle way to encourage older men to exercise. Now it is the fastest growing sport in the UK with more than 70 teams competing in the World Nations Cup in Spain in October. More than 100,000 people in the UK play this six-a-side sport. Players have to keep one foot on the ground and contact is not allowed.

• **The Science Museum** has received a donation approaching £50 million from the Serum Institute of India. It will help transform the museum's Making the Modern World gallery, which is 20 years old, and which will reopen in 2028 as Ages of Invention, with objects including Puffing Billy, the world's oldest surviving steam locomotive.

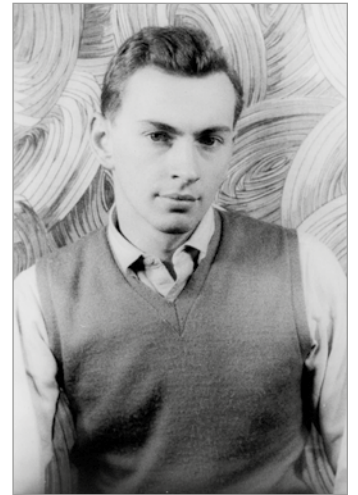
Wit and Wisdom

Curated by Mike Townsin

• Delay is the deadliest form of denial.
C Northcote Parkinson, British historian

• The four most beautiful words in our common language: 'I told you so'.

Gore Vidal



*Gore Vidal,
age 23*

• Good comedy is based on pain and danger and fear. *Prunella Scales*

• The definition of a good speech, I once read, is a joke at the beginning, a joke at the end, and the shortest possible time between. *Bill Nighy*

• After you make a fool of yourself a few hundred times, you learn what works.
Gwen Stefani

• We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. *Albert Einstein*.

• In ancient times, cats were worshipped as gods; they have not forgotten this.
Terry Pratchett

• Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.
Mark Twain

• People vote their resentment, not their appreciation. *William Bennett Munro, Canadian politician*

Miscellany

Curated by
Mike Townsin

- The Russian intelligence service keeps Hitler's teeth in a cigar box.

- American Kitchen Foods tried to rebrand peas by shaping them into chips and calling them *I hate peas*! (1970s)



- In 2010 the national mint of Chile issue thousands of coins stamped 'CHIIE'.

- British trains arriving up to nine minutes late are counted as being on time.

- In 2017, a Japanese rail company apologised when one of its trains departed 20 seconds early.

- Ancient Egyptians used giraffes' tails as fly swatters.

- In Honolulu it's illegal to cross the street using a mobile phone.

- Breathing the air in New Delhi is equivalent to smoking 45 cigarettes a day.

- A pluviophile is someone who loves rainy days.

On This Day...

curated by
Debbie Flaherty

1

December 1761.
Born this day: Madame Tussaud who made lifelike wax sculptures of famous people. She founded her own museum in 1835.

7

December 1835.
The first steam railway in Germany opened. The Bavarian Ludwig line.

9

December 1955. The flag of Europe was adopted by the Council of Europe. It features a dark blue background with a circle of 12 golden stars at the centre, symbolizing the union of European nations.

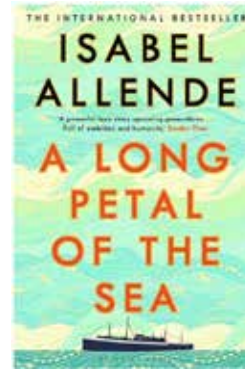
16

December 1932. Quentin Blake, artist, was born, whose recognisable illustrations have donned many books including children's author Roald Dahl.

25

December 1914.
In the midst of World War I, British and German soldiers called a brief truce, halting battle to meet in No Man's Land. Some even played football together before returning to the trenches.

Page Turner



A Long Petal of the Sea
by Isabel Allende

Review by
Kate O'Brien

The title refers to Chile, and some refer to it as an island with the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Andes on the other.

This book covers the period from 1938 to the 1990s, starting in Spain during the civil war.

Our main protagonists are Victor, a medical student, and Roser, his brother Guillem's fiancé. After Franco's victory they need to leave Spain to avoid retribution, and they end up on the Winnipeg. This was a ship organised by the poet Pablo Neruda, who was also a senator, to take Spanish refugees to Chile.

Whilst the story is fiction, it is intertwined with real people and events. The political scene in Chile lurches from the Marxism of President Allende, with whom Victor plays chess, to the military junta of General Pinochet.

Unusually, in my experience, the book wears its history lightly with the external events impacting the lives of the characters we have come to care about without the feeling that you are being 'taught' the history.

However, I did learn a great deal about times and places that I had very little knowledge of. A fascinating read.

Podcast Recommendations

by Chantal Richards



CHRISTMAS *The Calm Christmas Podcast*

Beth Kempton's podcast is the UK's number one podcast for Christmas! In Season 5, Winterlude, Kempton delivers "seasonal stories and recipes, memories and journalling invitations, craft ideas, get ahead tips, wintery words and the sharing of traditions from listeners all around the world. Most of all, there will be companionship, as we, the Keepers of Christmas, settle in each week for a moment of pause and a little bit of festive magic. As the darkness begins to inhale the light, may our gathering be a lantern to guide us through the season and into the new year". What more could you wish for at this time of year.



HISTORY, NATURE, and FOLKLORE *The Scottish Folklore Podcast*

In each episode of The Scottish Folklore Podcast host Jenny Johnstone retells traditional Scottish folk tales from around the country, bringing age-old adventures, local lore, and strange creatures to life. Episode 6 explores the **Scottish Yuletide & Hogmanay Traditions**. "From ancient burial cairns being aligned with the setting winter solstice sun, to different types of divination, cow-hides and clubs, and of course, first-footing, these traditions are part of the celebration of the darkest days of the year, and the rebirth into a new cycle of life"

This fascinating podcast is the audio version of Johnstone's book www.scottishfolklorepodcast.com

You can listen to these podcasts on any of these apps: [Spotify](#), [BBC Sounds](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#).

What's the Origin of..?

Curated by Mike Townsin

• **Namby Pamby**. This was the title of an 18th century poem written to mock the prose of Ambrose Philips, tutor to the grandchildren of George I. He also wrote sycophantic works praising the children of aristocrats to ingratiate himself with that circle, using what was regarded as tasteless language, and people started using the term to critique all writing that seemed weak, fake and ineffectual.

• **As mad as a hatter**. Between the 17th and 18th centuries, mercury was used to turn animal hair into felt in the manufacture of hats. Many hat makers (hatters) started exhibiting neurotoxic symptoms associated with mercury poisoning, including mood swings and general antisocial behaviour. People had no way of understanding the reasons for this apparent madness among hatters, so they named the condition "The Mad Hatter's Disease" and the phrase 'mad as a hatter' stuck.



by John Tenniel 1865

• **As easy as pie**. This idiom probably has nothing to do with pies. It originated in Australia in the 1920s when the term "pie at" or "pie on" meant "to be very good at something". Prior to that mark Twain used the word "pie" to mean "generally pleasant and accommodating". The merging of these two meanings first appeared in print as the phrase "like eating pie" referring to experiences that were generally easy and pleasant.

• **Dead ringer**. Means 'an exact duplicate'. "Dead" was a word used by marksmen meaning a shot being on target. "Ringer" comes from an old slang phrase "to ring" meaning "to switch, or substitute", and was first used in horse racing in the US to switch two horses that looked the same to defraud bookies and punters.

If anyone has a saying they would like 'originated', email mike_townsin@yahoo.com and we'll do the research.

Vitamin Alert

by Mike Townsin

Vitamins are essential nutrients that help the body function properly. The body can't produce enough on its own, so they must come from food. There are 13 vitamins.

Iron

The main functions of iron:

Important in making blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body.

Signs of deficiency:

- Anaemia

The best food sources are:

- Liver
- Red meat
- Kidney beans
- Edamame beans
- Chickpeas
- Nuts
- Dried fruit
- Soybean flour

How much do I need?

- 8.7 mg a day for men and women over 50
- 14.8 mg a day for women under 50.

Consult GP or pharmacy if in doubt.

Next month: other nutrients.



TRY MORE BEANS!

Making positive, healthy changes will put you in a good mood! Consuming nutritious foods promotes mental well-being by supporting brain function and the gut microbiome.

FULL OF NUTRIENTS: Filled with protein and fiber, beans also contain a suite of essential nutrients, like iron, zinc, magnesium, and folate.



GUT HEALTH: Beans are rich in plant compounds called polyphenols, which support your gut health.

HEART HEALTH: Beans have potassium and antioxidants which can lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol levels, which may decrease the risk of heart disease.



DIGESTIVE HEALTH: The fiber in beans may help us maintain a healthy weight while promoting regular bowel movements and improving overall digestive health.

Gennie's LIFE HACKS

How to make the most of unused herbal tea bags:

- **Facial Steam or Toner:** Brew chamomile, lavender, or rose tea and use it as a gentle facial steam to open pores. Once cooled, strain and store in a spray bottle as a natural facial toner (keep refrigerated).
- **Hair Rinse:** Herbal teas like rosemary, nettle, and hibiscus boost scalp health and shine. After shampooing, pour cooled tea over your hair and leave it for a few minutes before rinsing.
- **Soothing Bath Soak:** Add a few tea bags or a muslin pouch of loose herbal tea (like chamomile, rose, lavender, or calendula) to your bath for a relaxing, skin-calming soak.
- **Foot Soak:** Peppermint, coffee or green tea make great foot baths — they deodorise, soothe soreness, and soften skin.
- **DIY Face Mask Mix-In:** Mix cooled tea with clay (like bentonite or kaolin) or honey to form a detoxifying mask. Green tea and rooibos are great antioxidants for the skin.

Adaptogens:

Gentle herbal support for good health and wellness

by Gennie Thompson

You may be familiar with the term adaptogen or, if not, you probably will have seen it referenced on adverts or on packets recently.

Adaptogens refer to medicinal herbs and roots that can help the body adapt to stress and restore balance. Rather than stimulating or sedating, they work where support is needed, helping the body find its own rhythm again. The idea isn't new, Adaptogenic plants have been used for centuries in Ayurvedic medicine in India and Traditional Chinese Medicine, before modern science gave them a name in the 1940s. Ancient healers used these herbs to strengthen what they called 'life force' or 'qi' – the body's natural energy and resilience.

Modern research confirms what traditional healers observed throughout history: adaptogens support the adrenal glands and nervous system, helping to regulate the stress hormone cortisol. When these systems are balanced, energy, sleep, mood and immunity all improve. The term is receiving increasing focus in modern science and wellbeing as new studies evidence the benefits, which are most needed in humans.

Some of the best-known adaptogens include:



• **Ashwagandha:** deeply calming, may reduce anxiety and improve sleep.

• **Rhodiola rosea:** used to lift mood and reduce fatigue, especially after illness.

• **Siberian ginseng (Eleuthero):** enhances stamina and recovery.

• **Holy basil (Tulsi):** helps with mental clarity and blood sugar balance.

• **Schisandra berry:** supports liver function and hormone health.



Mushrooms

• **Reishi:** calms the nervous system, supports quality sleep and useful for people who feel 'tired but wired'.

• **Lions Mane:** particularly useful for brain and nervous system regulation, and research suggests it can help with memory and mental clarity.

Adaptogens aren't quick fixes, but with time and continuity, they can help the body respond to stress more evenly and regulate more effectively.

If you are interested in trying for yourself, choose good-quality sources: often Holland & Barrett staff can provide advice and information, start slowly, and if you're on medication, check first with a health professional.

Brain Food for Concentration

by Debbie Flaherty

It is very beneficial for your brain to keep energised, and what you eat can give you a marked improvement in focus, researchers say.

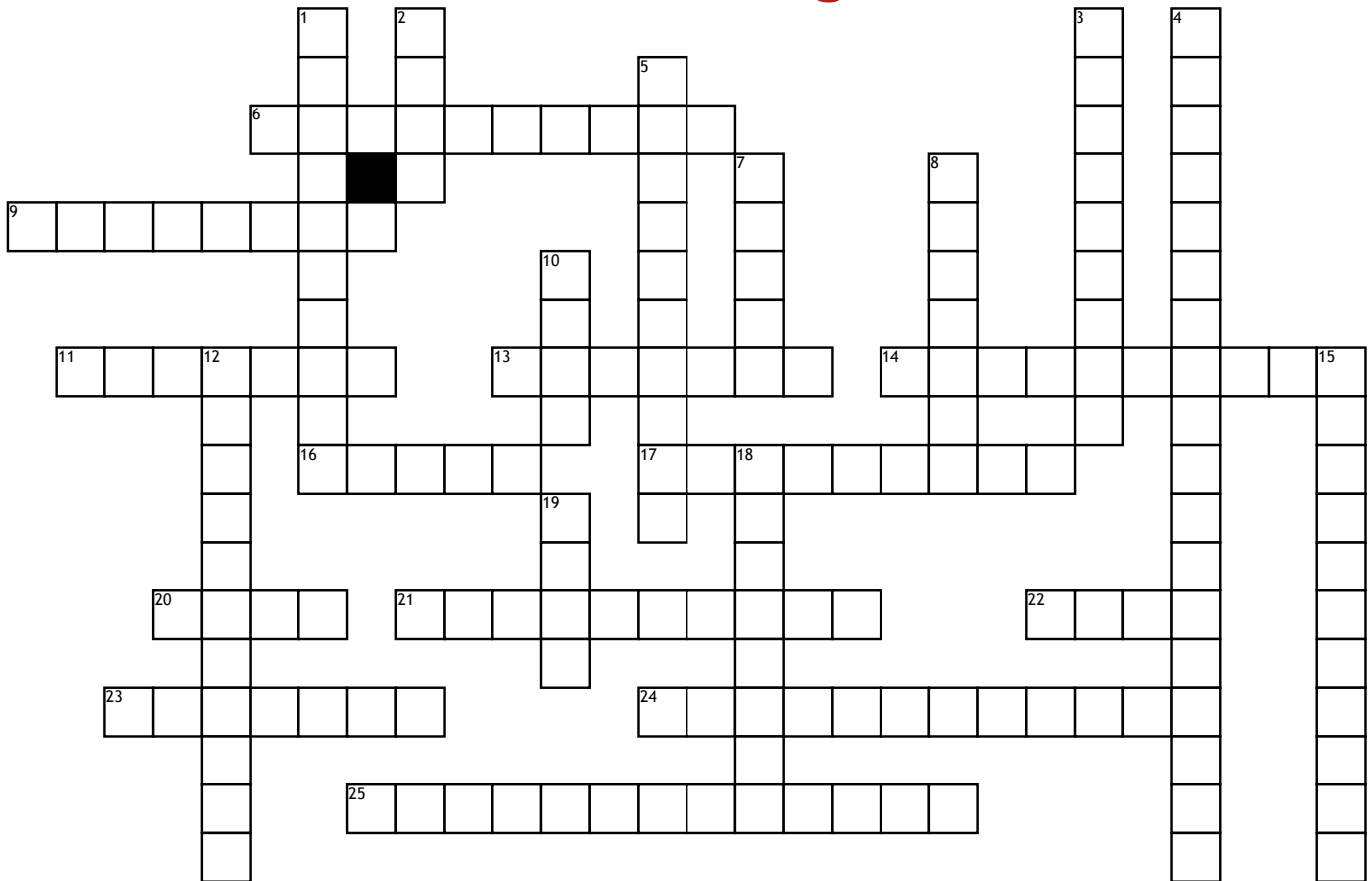
Good protein like eggs, fish, tofu and pulses all help to sustain a good steady energy.

Energy balls, oat muffins and banana loaf cake are all good just to snack on instead of crisps and chocolate.

Breakfast is an important start to the day. Overnight oats, scrambled eggs on wholegrain toast, porridge or a nice smoothie with berries; nut butter and oats are all recommended.

And best of all: water to stay hydrated.

Crossword: Christmas Songs!



22. Andy William's first Christmas album included "*It's the Most Wonderful ?? of the Year*" (1963)

23. "*Feliz Navidad*" is Merry Christmas in which language?

24. Who sang "*I'll have a blue Christmas without you*" ? (1957)

25. Brenda Lee sang "*Rockin' Around the ?? ??*" (1958)

Clues: Down

1. "*He's gone two thousand miles, Is very far, The snow is falling down, Gets colder day by day, I miss you, The children were singing, He'll be back at Christmas time*" was sung by The ?? (1984)

2. "*Mistletoe and ??*" by Cliff Richard (1988)

3. Christmas Carol: "*Good King ??*"

4. The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl did a duet called *?? ?? ?? ??* (1987)

5. Who sang "*White Christmas*" in 1942?

7. "*Thank God It's Christmas*" is a Christmas single by which British rock band ? (1984)

8. "*Oh I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday*" was sung by ?? ?? (2006)

10. Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin both released a song called "*Let It ??*"

12. Who sang "*All I Want For Christmas is You!*"? (1994)

15. "*Stille Nacht*" is translated into which carol in English?

18. "*Have a Holly Jolly Christmas*" is a Christmas song written by Johnny Marks and most famously performed by ?

19. Eartha Kitt sang "*Santa ??*" in 1953.

Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Identify as many Christmas Songs as you can. Please submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box **before Friday 12 December.** Name:



Wordsearch

Happy Christmas in 20 different languages!

H Ú G X H H Ú Ž L G M W W J H O H A T W Ú F D R
 V K D U J N Ú D B E A E C F B Ú C N X Y R O Z J
 A Y Ě T Ú E F I U Ú U G L F Ž I Z Ú Y O A T V Ú
 N R S N D W E D O W R S K E L A D Ě H U F T N K
 N T O I B O L S N C K Á A O K A R E Á H C S D E
 E Á Ú E E L I Ě N Ú T K Á M D A W F F F U M D Ú
 G Ú M S Ú K Z N A V N I R I U E L K Č Á E L O S
 Ú K G Č T I N D T C L A V Y I S L I F L Ú M T M
 O Ž H I E L A M A W M A D H J R I M K U Ě T I G
 T L Ě Ž Ž E T S L W N C N O R A Ě R O I Ě K Ž T
 S E A O Ě D A V E Z F A F M L A U O U O M F X V
 I R Z B N A L L I W C L S T N I M Ě R K G A Č Ú
 R Z X N X N D L Y H V T O Ě I C G Č H K I M K Z
 H Z Y A S A E I T A N O H S G I A L L O N R K A
 C J Č T Z F E E N B M Č X S Ú K A S L S H T E O
 Á M Ž E I Ě N Ě Ú Á S L I S Ě T F Č R A T M W M
 L G V R O L I J K K E R S T F E E S T C W Ž S C
 A I I S Á H S E E F S R E K E G I K K U L E G G
 K H A L Ě O N X U E Y O J A L F Ú W H Ž V T N O
 Č V F N M Y K R I S M A S I N J E M A Z K J X D
 R I T S I R H C M E L A T A N M E C I L E F U J
 D I S A M I S I R E K E L A I U N A M Á H N Č U
 Ě D Ě W S U K S U N W A N C H R I S T M A S E L
 J A D J O G R E L L E O N U L T U M N J J Ě Ě K

Buon Natale (Italian)

Joyeux Noël (French)

Frohe Weihnachten (German)

Nadelik Lowen (Cornish)

Nollaig Shona (Irish)

Meri Kurisumasu (Japanese)

Mutlu Noeller (Turkish)

Feliz Natal (Portuguese)

Feliz Navidad (Spanish)

Vrolijk Kerstfeest (Dutch)

God Jul (Swedish)

Mele Kalikimaka (Hawaiian)

Krismasi Njema (Swahili)

Felicem Natalem Christi (Latin)

gelukkige Kersfees (Afrikaans)

Nadolig Llawen (Welsh)

Suksun Wan Christmas (Thai)

Manuia le Kerisimasi (Samoan)

kalá Christoúgenna (Greek)

Sretan Božić (Croatian)

Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Find all 20 words and submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box before Friday 12 December.

Name:

Poetry Corner

by Nigel Davis

The Nativity at Christmas has been presented in poetry, hymns and carols from a number of different perspectives — of the angels, of Mary, of Joseph, of the three kings (though actually they arrived a bit later), even of the donkey and the innkeeper.

This poem is written from the perspective of the shepherds. They actually are hugely important to the Bible story. In those days shepherds were, because of their contact with animals and lowly status, on the edges of society, and so their inclusion in the Nativity story is of symbolic significance as to the inclusivity, from the very outset, of Christianity. The poem asks us to look at it all from the unsophisticated and uneducated viewpoint of herdsmen. Although they do not know just what is going on, they knew enough to understand that something utterly amazing and all-changing had happened. And it stayed with them — just as, over two thousand years later, it has stayed with us.

As always, a very Happy Christmas and New Year to all in the Almshouse community!



Song of the Shepherds

by Richard Bauckham

We were familiar with the night.
We knew its favourite colours,
its sullen silence
and its small, disturbing sounds,
its unprovoked rages,
its savage dreams.

We slept by turns,
attentive to the flock.
We said little.
Night after night, there was little to say.
But sometimes one of us,
skilled in that way,
would pipe a tune of how things were for us.

They say that once, almost before time,
the stars with shining voices
serenaded
the newborn world.
The night could not contain their boundless praise.

We thought that just a poem
until the night
a song of solar glory,
unutterable, unearthly,
eclipsed the luminaries of the night,
as though the world were exorcised of dark
and, coming to itself, began again.

Later we returned to the flock.
The night was ominously black.
The stars were silent as the sheep.
Nights pass, year on year.
We clutch our meagre cloaks against the cold.
Our ageing piper's fumbling fingers play,
night after night,
an earthly echo of the song that banished dark.
It has stayed with us.

