

Church & Village News

Baconsthorpe • Barningham Winter • Edgefield • Hempstead
Matlaske • Plumstead • Saxthorpe with Corpusty

December 2023 & January 2024



Hempstead Church

Photograph by Jonathan Neville

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Parish Council Websites

Baconsthorpe
<http://baconsthorpepc.wixsite.com/baconsthorpepc>
Edgefield
<https://edgefieldparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk>
Hempstead
<https://hempsteadpc.wixsite.com/hempsteadpc>
Matlaske & Barningham
<http://matlaskeparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk>
Plumstead
<https://plumsteadpc.wixsite.com/plumsteadpc>
Saxthorpe & Corpusty
<https://corpustyandsaxthorpeparishcouncil.wordpress.com>

Village Websites

www.baconsthorpe.org
www.hempstead-norfolk.co.uk
www.plumstead.org.uk
www.corpustyandsaxthorpevillagehall.org.uk



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What's On

DECEMBER

Fri 1	10.30am	Hempstead Coffee + Catch-Up	Village Hall
Sat 2	10.30am	Hempstead Family Crafting Day	Village Hall
Sat 2	11.00am	Edgefield Fuel Fund Distribution	Village Hall
Sun 3	10.30am	North Barningham Advent Carol Service	St Peter's Church
Sun 3	2.00pm	Matlaske Christmas Party	Village Hall
Sun 3	2.00pm	Edgefield Painted Pebbles	Village Hall
Mon 4	2.00pm	Hempstead Wreath Making	Village Hall
Tues 5	10.30am	Barningham Wreath Making	Barningham Stables
Fri 8	5.30am	Baconsthorpe Christmas Quiz	Village Hall
Fri 8	5.30am	Saxthorpe Christmas Tree Festival daily until Sun 10	Village Hall
Sat 9	7.00pm	Edgfield Christmas Party	Village Hall
Sat 9	7.00pm	Hempstead Christmas Party	Village Hall
Thur 14	10.00am	Hempstead Crafty Creations	Village Hall
Sun 17	4.00pm	Edgefield Christmas Special Service	Edgefield Church
Fri 29	6.00pm	Baconsthorpe Pop-Up Pub	Village Hall

JANUARY

Fri 5	10.30am	Hempstead Coffee + Catch-Up	Village Hall
Mon 8	2.00pm	Hempstead Crafty Creations	Village Hall
Mon 8	7.30pm	Matlaske Parish Council Meeting	Matlaske Church
Sat 20	2.00pm	Hempstead Crafty Creations	Village Hall
Fri 26	6.00pm	Baconsthorpe Pop-Up Pub	Village Hall
Sun 28	4.00pm	Edgefield Family Service	Village Hall

Post Offices

Baconsthorpe Mobile Post Office Van
Wednesdays 10.45am – 11.30am Village Hall
Corpusty Stores 587726
Monday-Friday 9.00am – 12.00noon
Itteringham Shop 587325
Monday + Thursday 9.00am-1.00pm

Local MP

Duncan Baker MP
Tudor House, Grammar School Lane
North Walsham, NR28 9JH
duncan@duncanbaker.org.uk www.duncanbaker.org.uk
Monday - Friday 9am – 5pm 01692 557140

County Councillor

Steffan Aqarone
steffan.aqarone.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk / 01603 327827

Mobile Library Van

21 Dec / 18 Jan / 15 Feb / 14 March

Matlaske	12:40	NR11 7AQ	Old Post Office
Plumstead	13:00	NR11 7LG	Walnut Farm
Baconsthorpe	14:30	NR25 6LJ	Council Bungalows
	14:55	NR25 6LE	Hare & Hounds
Hempstead	15:05	NR25 6TL	Telephone kiosk
Edgefield	15:45	NR24 2AL	The Memorial
	16:10	NR24 2AX	The Street
Corpusty	16:35	NR11 7BU	Great Farm Cott

Times and dates sourced from Norfolk County website: <https://bit.ly/2AJdSGA> Tel: 01603 222303

Holt Library

9 Church Street, Holt NR25 6BB 712202
Tues 10am-7pm / Wed 2pm-7pm
Fri 10am-7pm / Sat 1pm-4pm

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Church & Village News. Apologies if contributed material is not published due to space constraints. All facts are believed to be correct at the time of going to press.

Letter from the Rector - Reverend Canon David Longe

577252 / 07881 950294 / rector@matlaske.org.uk

Dear All

It's Christmas time, there's no need to be afraid
 At Christmas time, we let in light and we banish shade.
 And in our world of plenty we can spread a smile of joy.
 Throw your arms around the world at Christmas time
 But say a prayer, pray for the other ones
 At Christmas time it's hard, when you're having fun.

There's a world outside your window
 And it's a world of dread and fear,
 Where the only water flowing
 Is the bitter sting of tears.

And the Christmas Bells that ring there
 are the clanging chimes of doom.

...Feed the world - Let them know it's Christmas time!

How many of us only know the opening line of Geldof and Ure's 1984 song *Do They Know it's Christmas?* written to raise money for the famine in Ethiopia, and echoing in homes again this Christmas? Its words, listed above, challenge us. The song encourages us to think again about Christmas and, perhaps, to question why we bother with decorations or placing a 'cute' baby Jesus in the crib.

In her article, *Why I am now a Christian* (a twist on Bertrand Russell's 1927 lecture) Ayaan Hirsi Ali explains how she was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's literalistic interpretation of Islamic texts to take the "straight path". She says it "...articulated a direction: a straight path...a manual of do's and don'ts ...the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, God and the devil." It was right to wearing the burqa; wrong to go the cinema. As she began to question this perceived clarity, she found comfort in atheism. Russell's comment that "Religion is based... upon fear...fear of defeat, fear of death" resonated.

Dissatisfied with atheism, Ali detected the moral fibre of the next generation "being eaten away" as we struggle with issues such as the resurgence of authoritarianism in China and Russia. "What unites us?" she asks, is it that "...there is no God"? Still unsatisfied, she explored the Judeo-Christian tradition learning about the sacred nature of life, of freedom, dignity – factors uniting us beyond national boundaries and ethnicities.

But this doesn't address the fundamental question of "what is the purpose of life?" It was in Christian response to this question with compassion, humility and respect, that Ali appears to find solace.

Is this why those decorations and Geldof and Ure's lyrics blasting on the new Bluetooth speaker are important? Do they show generosity, compassion and humility to be at the heart of Christmas? They point to solidarity with those near and far away – whether cowering in Gaza (I write in November) or fearful in Ukraine, or hungry in Ethiopia. This 'cute' baby is not so distant – born in an occupied country to poor folk - is not about fear, rather freedom, light and hope in all the tragedy we see.

For this baby is Jesus, Light of the World, Prince of Peace, the Wisdom of God. May you have the most peaceful and wonderful Christmas.

David



Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand



The Benefice of Matlaske Church Services for December

3rd	Advent I	
8.30am	Eucharist	Hempstead
10.30am	Advent Carols	North Barningham
10th	Advent II	
10.30am	Eucharist	Plumstead
4.00pm	Informal Carols & Christmas Songs	Saxthorpe
17th	Advent III	
8.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske
10.30am	Coffee & Croissants	Hempstead Village Hall
4.00pm	Carols & Nativity	Edgefield
21st	3.00pm Nativity	Plumstead
22nd	5.00pm Carol Service	Baconsthorpe
24th	Advent IV	
10.30am	Eucharist	Baconsthorpe
5.30pm	Candle Lit Service	Saxthorpe
11.00pm	Midnight Mass	Plumstead
25th	Christmas Day	
10.30am	Eucharist	Edgefield
31st	Christmas II	
10.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske

Church Services for January

7th	Epiphany	
8.30am	Eucharist	Barningham Winter
10.30am	Plough Sunday	Saxthorpe
14th	Epiphany II	
8.30am	Eucharist	Baconsthorpe
10.30am	Morning Worship	Plumstead
21st	Epiphany III	
8.30am	Eucharist	Edgefield
10.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske
28th	Epiphany IV	
8.30am	Eucharist	Hempstead
10.30am	Eucharist	Baconsthorpe
4.00pm	Children & Family	Edgefield Village Hall
4th Feb	Candlemas	
8.30am	Eucharist	Matlaske
10.30am	Eucharist	Barningham Winter

Coffee: Plumstead Church, Mondays 10.30am

Coffee Cake & Chat: Saxthorpe Church, Wednesdays 10-11am

Country Mice Toddler Group: Baconsthorpe Village Hall, Tuesdays 10.30-12noon

Baconsthorpe

200 Club

£50 J Cooper, £25 D Hall, £10 S Arnold, £5 R Youngs, I Benton Worboys, H Martin

Church News

Many of you will know that sadly this year the youth ministry will not be performing the Nativity as planned. However, I am very pleased to say that on December 22nd at 5pm in St Mary's Church we will all be gathering for a carol service. And not just any carol service!! Readings will be performed/delivered by various people from the village and these will be accompanied by projected images of scenes from the Holy Land. Mulled wine and mince pies will round off the evening. The church will be decorated and the candles will be lit. Do come and join us and we can make it a real community gathering at Christmas.



Hazel Martin
07879 414577

A Happy Day

In last month's newsletter, I announced the marriage of Guy and Leonie de Soissons at St Mary's Church. At the time I had not managed to secure a photo but here it is! Worth the wait, I think.



Flower Rota

I am pleased to announce that Jane Warner and Leonie de Soissons have offered to join Delphine, Tessa, and myself in providing flowers for the church. If anyone else would be willing to join us that would be wonderful. Please do get in touch – 07879 414577. There are just the two vases, no great skill required and Tessa is always happy for us to raid her lovely garden. Thank you, Tessa.

On the subject of church decoration, if anyone is free on December 19th at 10.30am we are going to decorate the church ready for the carol service. We will hopefully be awash with greenery and pine cones and would love willing helpers. Again no skill required just enthusiasm!

An Apology

Last month I shared the sad news of the death of Bryan Thurtell. Unfortunately, I made a typing error – Bryan served in the NHS for thirty years not twenty as I stated in the article. My apologies go to Bryan's family.

Mobile Post Office

Just to confirm that the mobile post office arrives in Baconsthorpe at the village hall on a Wednesday from 10.45am until 11.30am.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Village Hall News

Christmas Quiz The Christmas Quiz is taking place on Friday 8 December. A fun, festive evening is in store. £10 a head including supper. To book call Emma Youngs on 07884 432412.

Pop Up Pub Friday 29: Macaroni Cheese / January 26: Ham, Egg + Chips

Food served from 6.30pm, bar opens 6pm

200 Club We have been calling around the village with details of joining. If you missed us and would like details of how you can subscribe and win, please call me on 07493 227591 or go to the village website: www.baconsthorpe.org/village-hall

Piers Warner

Barningham Winter

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas.

There are still a few places for the wreath-making on 5th December at 10.30am at Barningham Hall. The cost is £25 which includes the materials, coffee, and a soup lunch. Please let amelia@barninghamestate.co.uk know if you would like to attend. Remember to wrap up warmly.

Matlaske and Barningham Parish Council benefit from the bottle and paper bank. Please do use them.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 8th January at 7.30pm in Matlaske Church.

Advent Carol Service at St Peter, North Barningham, on December 3rd at 10.30am. YES, the Advent Carol Service is going to take place as usual. Veteran attenders will already know the importance of WRAPPING UP WARMLY. The atmosphere is truly medieval: no light, no heating, hence extremely cold. Damp too, most probably, and the grass so wet that thick shoes or boots are essential to allow you to get to the church itself..

In spite of all the above, a warm welcome awaits you, and refreshments after the Service. We look forward to seeing you.



Sara Buxton
577207

Edgefield

Church News

Our church has been very busy this month, though our Remembrance Service was again held in the Village Hall, next to the War Memorial. Thank you to Judy Rosser who led us, and Kevin who provided some music, which makes a big difference. Squeezing the Benefice Office into our vestry has been an interesting



project, and we are nearly there. The electrics are now sorted, some new furniture bought, a lot of things removed to other places (!) and Kevin is installed. We hope he will be happy there. The electricians have done a great job updating several things, and we are all set for our Carol Service (see below for details). Mulled wine, hot fruit punch and mince pies will round off the evening.

We much enjoyed the visit of Canon Marcon's great-great-granddaughter, the New Zealand painter Amanda Green, and were pleased to be able to present her with an inscribed jug that had belonged to her ancestor. We are lucky to have a Christmas Day Service this year, at 10.30am. Wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.



Richard Peaver
587486

Angela Turner

Children's Events

On Sunday 3rd December, starting at 2pm, everyone is welcome to find and take ONE painted pebble from around the village. These pebbles will have a painted baby Jesus on them and a number on the back. You are then invited into the church for refreshments and to register your pebble.



This is an exciting way to start the Advent season for the whole family. If you require any further information, please email our youth ministry team at youth@matlaske.org.uk.

On Sunday 17th December at 4pm there will be a Christmas Special service in church with carol singing and a children's nativity. All children can arrive and take part as shepherds, stars, angels, sheep, innkeepers, and kings. The more the merrier, plus refreshments afterwards. Please text if you would like

to be involved: 07941 985635.

And this is advance notice that we will hold our January family service at the Village Hall on Sunday, 28th January at 4pm. Enjoy crafts, singing, prayer and meal.

Village Hall News

Final call for our Christmas party on Saturday 9th December at 7pm. At the time of writing there are a few tickets at £10 left - this includes a drink on the house, a meal and lots of silly games and great company. 200 Club winners for October were: 1st Carole Baker (162), 2nd Charlotte Wheeler (219) and 3rd Lin Pateman (103).

Jim Frost

Community Speedwatch

Edgefield CSW scheme has run successfully for seven years and still needs extra volunteers to enable the scheme to continue. If you are interested in helping out, please contact the Parish Clerk, Amanda Yacoubian, by email or speak to any of your Parish Councillors. Our Co-ordinator, Jeremy, has had to step down due to work commitments. Anyone with an hour or two to spare, please get in touch. We have willing members, who can tell you all about the role of radar monitoring, recording, and reporting speeding vehicles through our village. Norfolk Constabulary regularly supports our village with the Road Safety Camera Team recording and convicting speeders. The volume of traffic is increasing and the average speed continues to rise to dangerous levels. If you are concerned, please offer your help. Thank You.

Edgefield Fuel Fund Distribution

The Trustees will distribute a payment of £25 per eligible* household in the Village Hall on Saturday 2nd December between 11am and 12noon. No payments will be made outside these hours. Face masks will not be compulsory, but be aware of the vulnerability of others if you are feeling unwell.

*To be eligible:

- (a) you must have reached the age of 60 years;
- (b) you must have been permanently resident in the Parish of Edgefield for five years and be a resident on the day of distribution;
- (c) you must apply in person;
- (d) the infirm or incapacitated may send a representative, who must bring a written authority signed by the person who qualifies.

Please note: The distribution of funds is at the discretion of the Trustees. Rude and abusive behaviour is not acceptable and is likely to result in a refusal to release a payment to an applicant or their proxy.

Hempstead

Hempstead 200 Club

£50 Ian Summers; £25 D Sanders; £10 Sue Thurston; £5 Evelyn Summers, Mike Thody, Pammie Wallis

Coffee & Catchup Fri 1st Dec and Fri 5th Jan 10.30am - midday all welcome

Crafty Creations

Saturday 2nd 10.30am - 4pm Family Crafting Day - all ages welcome
Monday 4th 2- 4pm Wreath Making / Thursday 14th 10am - 12noon
January Monday 8th and Saturday 20th 2 - 4pm

Village Christmas Party - Saturday 9th December at 7pm

Please let us know if you can attend the Christmas Party. Knowing numbers is a real help. Call 01263 71339 - Thank you.

Diana Spalton Memorial

It has been proposed that there should be a memorial to Diana Spalton within the village - a bench with a plaque has been proposed. Anyone willing to contribute, please contact Jonathan Neville 07836 675369 or jneville@hempstead-norfolk.co.uk

Autumn Craft Market

The last weekend in October saw the Village Hall host the first Hempstead Autumn Craft Market. With a large variety of locally made crafts displayed ready for sale, the hall was alive with a great atmosphere. A busy Saturday with visitors from around the area and some unexpectedly finding us on their local rambles. Sunday was a little quieter although the stall holders had busy sales that day. A successful event raising funds for our hall. Thank you to all involved in this event, especially those manning the refreshments throughout the weekend.



Jonathan Neville
07836 675369



Matlaske

100 Club

£25 Louise Kinsley, £10 Toby Palmer, £ 5 Charlie Courtauld

Welcome

We welcome Jack, Celina, Jackson & Wyatt who have moved into Glenholme and hope they will be happy in their new home.

Stories Gleaned From The Matlaske Burial Register

CRICKET CAN BE A COSTLY GAME. Samuel Tolman of Matlaske, 59, was buried on 10th July 1929 by Revd J Whiteside, Rector of Matlaske. A marginal note by the Rector says that Mr Tolman “fell down while playing cricket in Barningham Park” [?] unclear] for Aldborough. July 6th The coroner’s certificate said “heart failure through over exertion”. The Northampton Chronicle and Echo of 9th July 1929 reported: “While batting for Aldborough at Haveringham Park [?] against Cawston, Norfolk, Samuel Tolman collapsed between the wickets and died before a doctor arrived. Tolman, who was 58, was a well-known figure in North Norfolk cricket.”

MATLASKE MAN KILLED BY NAZI BOMB. Daisley Charles Montagu Burton of Matlaske, 30 years old, a labourer, was buried at Matlaske on 23rd August 1940 by the Revd J Pallister, Rector of Wickmere. A labourer, he was killed by a German bomb while at work at Scottow Aerodrome on 19th August 1940. His wife Ethel was from the Quantrell family and the couple had been married in Matlaske Church on 17th November 1934 by the Revd Whiteside. He has relatives in the village still.



Duncan Wood
570293

Plumstead

Christmas Get Together

There will be a Christmas get together in St Michael’s Church on Tuesday 19th December at 5.30pm for Plumstead residents. There will be nibbles but bring anything you like to drink (like “Pond Life” in the summer). It’s the same format as last year and there will be a raffle in aid of church funds. The church will be festooned with Christmassy foliage and origami peace cranes this year. Do come along for some festive cheer.



Harriet Rossi
577239

Nativity Service

Come and join us for a Nativity with Carols followed by tea and mince pies on Thursday December 21st at 3pm at St Michael’s Church. All are very welcome, please come along and join us.

Saxthorpe with Corpusty

Christmas Tree Festival

The Christmas Tree Festival in St Andrews (Friday 8th to Sunday 10th) aims to capture the joy of the birth of baby Jesus, while recognising that this can be a time of year for reflection. As well as an avenue of decorated trees and a visit from Father Christmas on Saturday, there will be a corner for prayer and contemplation, and a chance to post thoughts and prayers on a tree.



John Birchall
584290

Coffee sessions boom

The Wednesday (10am) Coffee, Cake & Chat sessions at St Andrews reached a new high during half term week when 40 adults plus a large contingent of children of all ages came along to enjoy the home-made cakes, good coffee and each other’s company. It is down to a number of dedicated volunteers, led by Lesley Last and Jill Perry-Warnes, that these get togethers have become so popular, and they could do with a little help! Anyone who is able to join the rota should contact Lesley or Jill.



Remembrance

Remembrance Sunday brought a congregation of 55 to St Andrews, Saxthorpe. The reading of names from both world wars was particularly moving, especially the terrible toll in the two villages from 1914-18 - the youngest to lose his life was just 18 years old. The service was taken by Jane McLarty, with the Corpusty & Saxthorpe Brownies, led by Brown Owl Alison Mawson, reading their own remembrance prayers.

Plough Sunday - 7th January at 10.30am on Corpusty Green by The Plough

Definitely don’t miss this special service - wrap up warm and dry and bring spades, forks and trowels to be blessed! We will process to the church for a short service followed by warm refreshments as an early lunch. Keep an eye on Facebook for more details.

Looking After Our Trees

The recent loss of a number of trees, including mature oaks, in both Corpusty and Saxthorpe has led to several more tree preservation orders (TPOs) being made in the parish. (These can be seen on North Norfolk District Council’s website.) However, TPOs can only be made where trees are under threat, so can come after felling has already started.

At its November meeting the Parish Council agreed to create and publish a list of trees that are considered important either as fine individual specimens, or as groups that contribute to the village scene.

Trees also improve air quality, including the removal of CO2 and pollutants, and are vital to many wildlife species. Oak trees are particularly important, supporting more wildlife than any other type of tree in this country.

The purpose of the tree survey is to make local people aware of important trees in the two villages, improving the chances of action to protect these trees before they are damaged or felled. John Birchall will be coordinating production of the list and would welcome suggestions. (See page 2 for contact details) The Parish Council will then decide what should be included and how it should be published.

More Than a Village Hall Website!

Corpusty Village Hall now has its own super-useful website! As well as things you would expect - booking details, what’s on at the Village Hall and contact information for activities - there’s also a wealth of other information, including history of the Village Hall and surrounds, pictures, and links to other essential elements of village life, and a link to extracts from Janet Wilson’s fascinating village history and memoir. Explore it at corpustyandsaxthorpevillagehall.org.uk.

The Village Gardener - To Plant a Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow



It is with more than a slight sense of shock that I write December's article, despite the almost hourly bombardment of 'Festive' advertising, when the weather outside is trying to convince us otherwise. Christmas feels like it's rather reluctantly, soggily making its presence known, instead of crisply announcing its arrival with some good hard frosts, which would help everything feel a bit more seasonally 'normal' - whatever normal is!

I have been taken aback with just how waterlogged some of our garden is. The walled garden has been distinctly boggy, which in all the 12 years we have been here is a first. Normally, it is extremely free draining so much so we are having to regularly top it up with extra oomph to help it hold onto moisture, but now it's distinctly soggy under foot, which is a bit of a worry for the dahlias who have thrived in there so far, thoroughly enjoying its free draining disposition, so fingers crossed it will all come good!

Elsewhere in the garden we have been very keen on having a good 'sort' before the weather gets too tricky, but it feels as if we have perhaps missed that boat, just because the ground is so waterlogged. With this in mind, I am going to revert to my usual advice for when you want to be moving your garden forward but the weather is just not playing fair! I would suggest having a good sort of what you can access without making more muddle, so do give your sheds a thorough clear up, I would also put away anything you can to help clear the decks. Now is a great time to see if there is anything you are lacking in your garden, which could also sit happily on your Christmas list! Or, if you're like me and you'd rather not find a new wheelbarrow under the tree Christmas morning (however much you need one) then add it to the New Year sale wish list instead. Now back to the garden to-do list! Even if you're limited to inside shed work like us whilst the weather is being pretty unhelpful, you will still be getting something moved forward in the garden. Which will help no end, as it will also free up your time when the weather is on your side.

Another positively heroic task I will be embarking on soon is to clean and pack away all of this year's pots and seeds trays. This requires a quite high level of determination and stoicism (and several sturdy cups of tea!) when the weather is as testing as it is at present, but in a few months' time you will really thank yourself. It makes for a lovely positive start to the new growing year. Onto more jolly seasonal matters: we have happily noticed how many berries are about this year which should bring some cheer in the next few weeks, I was also reading up on mistletoe just yesterday (my favourite seasonal greenery) and

the article had said that mistletoe positively thrives in damper weather, in which case we should all be absolutely inundated! What a bonus!

Now for my favourite thing to do in December: after the first initial flurry of excitement and hard work of Christmas day and Boxing Day and before the New Year gets going, I like to tuck myself away in a cosy spot in the house with a good fire and my favourite gardening books alongside a good pile of seed catalogues. If I am being super organised, I will have my notes from this year, too. In this way I can see what worked this year in the garden (and what didn't) and I can work out what I would like to look forward to growing in the New Year in our garden. Happy days!

Finally, we would like to wish you all a really lovely Christmas and an even better New Year and we will be back again in February.

Thank you very much for all your letters and emails this year! Do keep the questions coming in! Email us at redmaple@btinternet.com as ever the most interesting question will be published next month.

Michelle and Mick McCarter

History Watch Christmas Bells by Arthur Pentney



On Christmas Day mornings some seventy-five years ago our battery powered radio would be turned on to hear a delightful programme of bells ringing out across the country – not just from the great cathedrals of the kingdom, but some from more humble and homely churches that happened to have a peal of bells installed and a happy band of campanologists to ring them.

The programme moved along with a brief description of where the next peal was to be sounded, and it was a great joy to hear all these places ringing out on that one very special morning of the year.

John Betjeman was "Summoned by Bells", and so were we, all those years ago, these wonderful sounds making a lasting impression on us all. No electricity then, no television, of course, but neither were needed, just that radio and the ability to sit, listen, absorb, and then remember.

The sound of church bells can be carried for miles on a still morning. Perhaps on this coming Christmas Day some of us will be fortunate enough to hear them sounding out their message of peace and goodwill from Holt.

Drive to save the planet (and cash!)

by John Birchall



I'm a bit of a petrol head. I love cars and driving and I was lucky enough to be the Evening News motoring correspondent during the 1980s when worrying about global warming was left to a few scientists. Now, climate change is rarely out of the news, and it's easy to feel that the issues are just too big for us to deal with. Take transport, for example. Living out in the sticks, it's hard to do without a car, and not everyone can afford to go electric. Hopping on a bus or a bike isn't always possible.

But, as I found out, there's a lot we can do without changing cars or becoming hermits in our homes. The last time fuel prices went through the roof, I took a serious look at ways of getting more miles for my money, with the bonus of cutting CO2 emissions at the same time. I am, of course, the best driver on the planet*, but I had to admit that I was locked into a way of driving that was to squeeze seconds off my journey. I wouldn't ignore speed limits, but I would drive at the speed I thought I could get away with - 33 in a 30, 65 or 75 on the open road. My car told me I was doing 53 miles per gallon. It was capable of doing more than that - but was I?

It took a while to break the habit of hard on the accelerator and hard on the brakes, and to stick to speed limits, but the results were astonishing. Quite soon I was getting 60 mpg out of the car. Spurred on, I tried harder, and now maintain almost 64 mpg. That's 20% more miles for my money, and a big reduction in CO2, and little difference to journey times.

If you want to give it a go, it's quite simple:

The big fuel-eaters are speed and braking. Allow a little more time, take it easy. Don't whizz up to bends or junctions and slam on the anchors. There are plenty of other tips that can add up, but for goodness' sake avoid using a roof rack - it's like driving around with a parachute. If you have to use one, take it off afterwards! And remember that any unnecessary weight in the car is costing you money, so keep your car free of stuff. Best of all, think twice about when to use the car. It's the perfect green machine when the engine's not running.

*This may not be true!

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