



Parish Pumpings



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Good Riddance 2020 and Covid 19!

I doubt any of us will mourn the passing of 2020, as a year of an awful pandemic, painful social isolation with lockdown, and the so sad passing of many dear friends and family. Challenging, to say the least, I write to the backdrop of the announcement of a historic deal with the EU, and an ongoing advance from a persistent Covid 19. But now is a time to think positively. Vaccination is on its way, the threat of deepening recession a little diminished, and with the warm glow of Christmas now around us, I am looking forward to near return to normal in 2021, a new decade now awaits us.

Bicknoller Village Shop

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR OPENING HOURS

We will be open as usual, Monday to Saturday 9.30 am - 1.00 pm, in the run-up to Christmas and New Year. Please note that we will be closed on:

Christmas Day (Friday)

Boxing Day (Saturday)

New Years Day (Friday)

We'd like to wish all our customers a very safe and happy festive season.

Covid 19

Everyone will be fully aware now that as from Boxing Day, this area will be in Tier 3, which is moving us ever closer to a full lockdown that we all suffered in March this year. It is clear to me, though, that many of us are totally fatigued with all this, but the risk remains, so our Community may have to show its mettle yet again, and with so many good souls stepping up to help others. Track and Trace QR Codes are now displayed in the Village Hall and Shop so just download this app and scan in the code if you want to be contacted should you be put at risk by close contact.



<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/>

Loneliness.

Spare a thought this Christmas for those members of our Community who may be spending this time on their own. We may not be able to invite them to dinner, this year but we can pick up the phone. I am sure many will, anyway, but if you know someone in our village who is alone, why not give him/her a ring? A friendly call can be so uplifting, and even if others have done so, it is still great to have another!

Local History.

The St. John Couch tapes – Part 10 for Pumpings will continue the saga in the New Year.

Christmas Facts

As you may recall, I have been indebted to **Geoff Parle and Probus Coleridge** for their kindness in allowing me to reproduce various excerpts from Geoff's wonderful publication, sent to members fortnightly during the pandemic lockdown. He has excelled himself with his Christmas edition, so I make no apologies for sharing so much of it here, as he produces it so well. Thanks Geoff!

Some Christmas Traditions and origins

The word "Carol" actually means dance or song of praise and joy, and they used to be sung during all four seasons, but the tradition of only singing them at Christmas is the only one to survive.

Christmas is a contraction of "Christ's Mass," which is derived from the Middle English Cristemasse, which in turn comes from the Old English Cristesmæsse, a phrase first recorded in 1038.

Hanging stockings out comes from the Dutch custom of leaving shoes packed with food for St Nicholas's donkeys. He would leave small gifts in return.

The tradition of putting **tangerines in stockings** comes from 12th-century French nuns who left socks full of fruit, nuts and tangerines at the houses of the poor.

Boxing Day gets its name from all the money collected in church alms-boxes for the poor.

The first commercial **Christmas cards** were commissioned by civil servant Sir Henry Cole in London in 1843. Featuring a family drinking wine, one sold for £8,469 in 2014.

Robins on cards started as a joke 150 years ago when postmen wore red tunics and were named after them.

The Christmas cracker was invented by a London sweet shop owner called Tom Smith. In 1847, after spotting French bonbons wrapped in paper with a twist at each end, he sold similar sweets with a "love motto" inside. He then included a little trinket and a "bang". His "Bangs of Expectation" included gifts such as jewellery and miniature dolls. By 1900, he was selling 13 million a year.

It's technically illegal to eat **mince pies** on Christmas Day in England. In the 17th century, Oliver Cromwell banned Christmas pudding, mince pies and anything to do with gluttony. The law has never been rescinded.

Why red, gold and green? Green has long been a symbol of life and rebirth; red symbolizes the blood of Christ, and gold represents light as well as wealth and royalty.

Santa hasn't always dressed in red. Pre 1930s there were many different variations of Santa, sporting a variety of different coloured garments and ranging in size from big to small. Some people claim the modern day image of Santa Claus was created by Coca-Cola, but this isn't strictly true. The original red-suited Santa became popular in the US and Canada in the 19th century due to the influence of caricaturist and cartoonist Thomas Nast. Coca-Cola commissioned their depiction of Santa in 1931.

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer was invented for a US firm's Christmas promotion in 1938.

Holly and Ivy have been used to decorate homes since the 9th century because they symbolise everlasting life. The holly represents Christ's crown of thorns and the berries his blood.

US scientists calculated that Santa would have to visit 822 homes a second to deliver all the world's **presents** on Christmas Eve, travelling at 650 miles a second.

The origins of there being **Three Wise Men** aren't clear. There's certainly no mention of it in the bible - in the Gospel of Matthew it refers to just "wise men"

13% of families in the UK always attend **church on Christmas Day**.

According to a survey conducted in 2016, 57% of adults in the UK would gladly sacrifice seeing relatives on Christmas day if it meant they could spend more time on Facebook.

Myth busting Christmas Facts

The abbreviation **Xmas** isn't irreverent. The letter X is a Greek abbreviation for Christ.

For a **Christmas** to be officially classified as "**white**" a single snow flake needs to be observed falling in the 24 hours of 25th December on the rooftop of the Met Office HQ in London. During the 20th century there were only seven official white Christmases in the United Kingdom. The chances of a **White Christmas** in London this year? 6% Ebenezer Scrooge's famous line "**Bah Humbug**" almost never existed. Charles Dickens' initial choice was "Bah Christmas".

The Star of Bethlehem - the one the wise men followed to find the little baby Jesus - was probably a comet, or Uranus.

Christmas facts about the amount of money spent

British folk love Christmas – **UK Christmas spending** hit £77.56bn in 2018, up by 1.9% on the previous year and almost double the European average. The average home will splash out £809.97 at Christmas; on food and drink, travel, decorations and presents, with the latter accounting for 58.5 per cent of the budget.

£700 million will be spent on **unwanted Christmas gifts** this year

£51,000,000 - is the amount saved each year through the use of **discount voucher codes**.

£18 billion - will be withdrawn from **UK cash machines** over Christmas.

£330 - The average amount a UK adult spends buying **Christmas presents**. During the Christmas period, nearly 28 Lego sets are sold EVERY SECOND.

Christmas facts - Food and Drink

According to research carried out by Jarlsberg cheese (of all things), the strain of cooking the big Christmas dinner sees the average Brit start to sip their first alcoholic drink at 11.48am.

A survey has revealed on average, British women do not attempt their first **Christmas lunch** until the age of 34.

Nearly half of women polled said they felt a real sense of achievement when finally dishing up the Christmas dinner and 28% of British men admit that their partner's dinner is better than their mother's. (Source: Food Network)

230,000 tonnes - The amount of **wasted Christmas food** that is thrown away each year.

In Somerset and parts of Dorset, it's traditional for the last person to finish eating their sprouts to have to do the Christmas Day washing up dressed as a giant turkey. This tradition is believed to have started in the 1960s as a way to encourage children to eat the vegetable.

And finally,. A one liner from Geoff which made me chuckle...

I asked my wife what she wanted for Christmas. She told me "Nothing would make me happier than a diamond necklace" So I bought her nothing.

Happy Christmas, everyone. Thank you for all that you do, and I wish you a return to a normal existence in 2021 and therefore a very Happy and Peaceful New Year.