

Redditch History Society



NEWSLETTER



Christmas 2020

Volume 2 / Issue 5

MERRY CHRISTMAS



AND A



HAPPY NEW YEAR



*From Don, Tony, Graham, Elizabeth, Pete and Dave
your Management Committee*

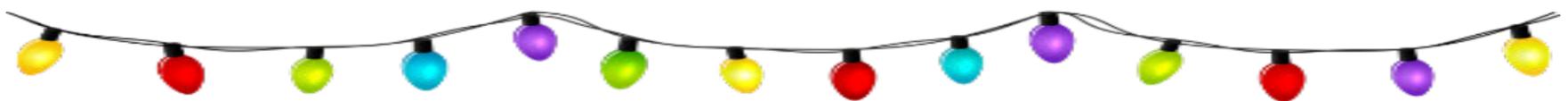
Christmas Greetings.....

I'll start by wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and a fervent hope that 2021 bodes better than 2020. The festive season this year will have something of a nineteen forties feel about it apart from the fact that food is more plentiful.

Instead of opening that tin of Old York Ham that had been jealously guarded for twelve months, people will be tucking in to all sorts of rubbish. Rubbish 'sold' to them by the bombardment of advertising. If half of the money wasted on advertising was diverted to the starving millions in other parts of the world we might approach the Christian message.

Let us not forget that Christmas is supposed to be a Christian festival. Even if some Christians e.g. Jehovah Witnesses don't celebrate it because the exact date is unclear.

Don Vincent, Society Chairman



Wow, what a year! We seem to have had ten years' worth of major events, nationally and internationally, all happening in 2020.

Of course, the really major event is the Covid 19 crisis since it is almost unknown during peacetime to have an event that affects every person in the country. Nevertheless, there is reason to be optimistic as the scientists have been busy and we seem to have a new vaccine discovered in record time every few days.

So, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we can be hopeful that we will return to a level of normality at some stage in 2021.

So, I will finish by giving my seasons greetings to everyone and take care, look after yourselves and, hopefully, we can resume our meetings sometime 'soon'.

Anthony Green, Society Secretary



Christmas Greetings cont



I wish all members the very best possible Christmas and here's hoping for a Covid free 2021 so we can all meet again.

I am sure you have made good use of all the extra time we have had this year. I have sorted out my loft with numerous trips to the tip. My garden shed is tidier than it has ever been, as is my garden, with much bulb planting this autumn.

We have had a bumper crop of fruit and vegetables as, with no holidays, we have been able to water and tend all the crops. We've also enjoyed discovering new walks which were invaluable during lockdown. Now, we are trying to work out the best way forward over Christmas so we can stay safe while seeing some family.

After Christmas we can all look forward to a more normal year and, most importantly, the return of history meetings.

Graham Smith, Society Treasurer

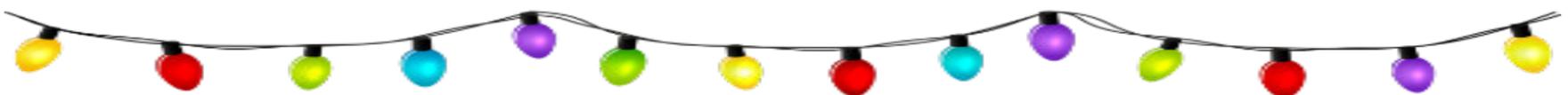


Wishing you all a healthy and safe Christmas and a more normal 2021.

I sincerely hope that you have been able to achieve something positive from this strange and difficult year. Personally I have used my time at home to work in the garden and restart my vegetable beds and I am still enjoying the results of my labours.

Having recently planted 200 spring bulbs and bedding plants, I am looking forward to a bright and colourful start to the new year, which should be a prelude to more normality and freedom.

Elizabeth Simpson, Management Committee Member



2020 has been a year with problems and opportunities, I remember one of my directors saying to me there are no problems only opportunities and that is how my wife and me have dealt with lockdown since March

We have spent more time doing things together particularly gardening and sorting out the vast numbers of books, records, and CDs we, or should I say I, have.

Being in lockdown has enriched the time we have spent together and it looks as though we are near to the stage of having a vaccine in early 2021 when we can all return to normality.

I have missed our RLHS meetings but have found other ways of satisfying my interest in local history via Facebook and google.

So we are looking forward to celebrating Christmas and New Year though it may be different than previous years and approaching 2021 with a positive approach to life, to quote my wife look forward not backwards, your approach to life can have an effect on today and tomorrow, always try to be positive!

David Spyer, Management Committee Member



Blessed is Covid, in this awful year,
Spend time with your family, cut down on the gear.
Presents for no-one your purse will stay full,
A feeling of happiness, simple 'n' joyful.

Your family comes first, a few bottles for thirst.
Cold turkey and pud, tum fit to burst.
Remember the old days, when families had nowt,
the best we 'ad in our 'ouse was one lonely sprout.



Our tree with its candles set fire and burnt down,
so drink up me hearties and rejoice of days past,
When snow fell so deep as we all fell asleep,
Thank God we're alive and happy at last!

Bah HumbugHave a lovely time if you must!
Bet my Christmas lights won't work!
All I want for Christmas is a vaccine shot.

Pete Harris, Management Committee Member

Let's begin with a story.....



The Ghost of Bates Hill by Pete Harris

My offices were at the bottom of Bates Hill.

Underneath the building was a creepy subterranean cave. On a dark night, many pairs of red eyes were visible as the rats came out to scavenge.

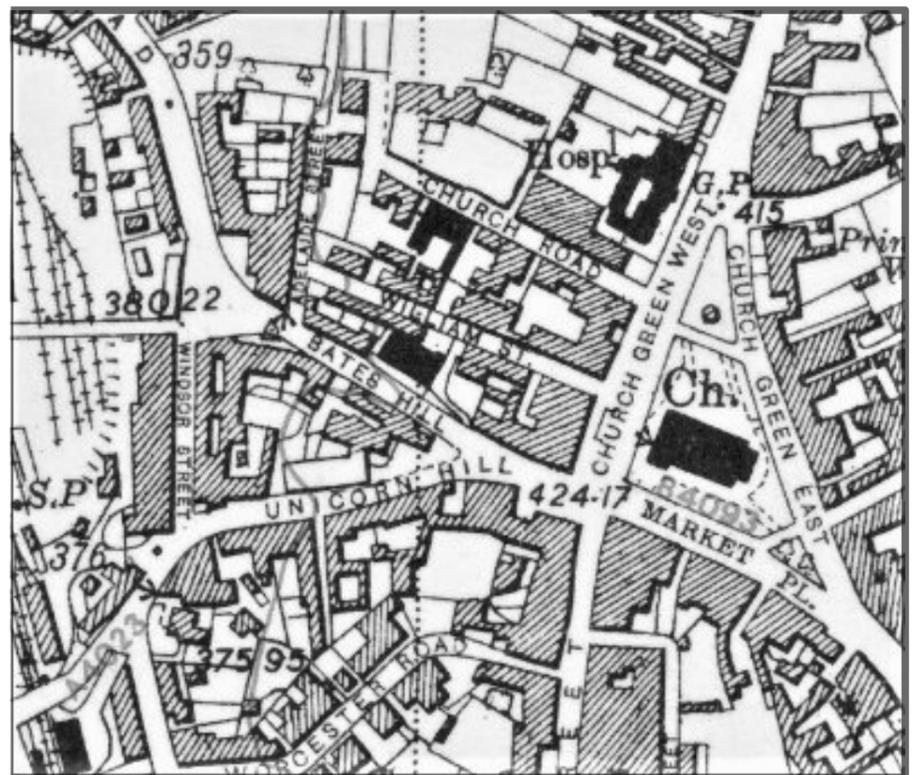
My front door led to a flight of creaking stairs leading off to the right before turning sharp left and ascending to the small landing at the top.

In late afternoon I would be tying up loose odds and ends and waiting for the odd straggler to come in. Often, I would be aware of footsteps on the stairs.

Silence followed which I can only liken it to hearing the loud ticking of a clock when it suddenly stops. There was no sign of anyone just a light breeze and dried leaves blowing around in the vortex. We jokingly referred to it as the ghost of Christmas Past.

Later I expanded into the front set of offices with windows looking over the street.

**Right: The area around Bates Hill in 1949
(6 inch Ordnance Survey Map of the area
around Bates Hill)**



Across the road was the huge derelict blue brick building of Bates Hill Methodist Church. Beneath were some derelict houses with an archway.

I had the cream of top local secretarial staff, working for me. As my turnover of staff suddenly took its toll, a common reason for leaving appeared. All had strange premonition of someone else being present when left alone in the office. One day something strange happened.

A friend of the family had just finished carpeting the end office with a stiff hard-wearing cord. The door now tended to drag and scuff, leaving a furry arc trail on the surface.

A substantial push was needed to open it to its full extremity. Being busy meant it never got fixed.

One afternoon all alone in the office, footsteps were heard on the stairs. With a crash, the door flew open. I waited. No one came in. I got up to investigate. There was no one there, dead brown leaves swirled around in the gentle breeze.

I checked the door. It required the usual force to close and open it, yet it had suddenly flew open? I never found the answer to that one. I continued to hear those phantom footsteps for the whole time that I occupied that building.

One cold November day, I gazed towards the entry of the house opposite. I saw the hunched figure of an old man in a tan duffle coat, his back towards me so I could not see his face, his hood was pulled up over his head. He glided into the entry and disappeared.

I saw him on several occasions after this and wondered if he were sleeping rough in the buildings as I would like to have helped him. I thought no more about it until mentioning it to a police officer.

The Ghost of Bates Hill cont....

Later one evening my next-door neighbour Olive Oil came around.

I recounted my experiences at the office. My ghost was well known to her. A monk had been murdered in the house years ago in the mists of time. The houses had been exorcised a least twice in the past. With demolition impending, it was obvious that the poor spirit was to become homeless, my offices eventually looking like a suitable replacement.

I suppose he must have been glad of somewhere new to stay as we never suffered any break ins or vandalism, as happened to our neighbours from time to time. If he had not been so creepy, and scared my staff half to death, I might even have got to like him. The Duffle coat? Well have you ever seen a monk's habit...not too dis-similar is it!

Soon after the offices were reduced to a pile of rubble, becoming an unofficial bomb site car park. When the dust had settled another bit of the history of Redditch was no more! Whatever the reason, I never saw my ghostly old duffle coated monk again! I hoped he was happy now.



Left: Bates Hill in 1971 (photo Vincent Green)

Above: Bates Hill in 2019 (photo Anthony Green)

Lenny Rudge had a driving school before moving into the bike shop at the top of Bates Hill, vacated after many years by Frank Mills. The entrance had a blue brick threshold. Due to grit embedded in the bottom of the door it had 'dropped' a bit, resulted in the threshold bricks being ground away and making the door hard to open.

Inside were two rooms. One was used by Lenny as a showroom the other where Lenny would work, repairing bikes, building up spoked wheels, or whatever else was profitable to earn a shilling. At a chance meeting in the street one day, he recounted the following:

Whilst in his workshop, the outside door would suddenly fly open. There would be no one there but there was always a breeze, and dead leaves blowing around in a sort of vortex.....

It was his usual custom to nip up the hill to The Fisherman's Catch to grab a quick lunch. Sitting at an upstairs window he could see any potential customers requiring attention. On this day, having just sat down with a plate of golden chips and deliciously battered cod, he saw a potential customer. An oldish bloke in a duffle coat with the hood pulled up over his head, approaching the shop and entering.

Hurrying down the stairs, steaming cod and chips in hand and leaving the instruction to put the plate on the back burner, he left the premises.

When he arrived at the shop door a few seconds later it was open.

Despite searching both left and right, there was no sign of anyone anywhere. It was unusually cold inside, there was a gentle breeze blowing, a smattering of dead leaves blew aimlessly in the vortex of the empty shop.

Lenny went back in a confused state to finish his lunch.....



Chestnuts roasting on an open fire...



Beware, those who Cancel Christmas! by Graham Smith

In early December 2019 I was busy researching a talk for the Christmas meeting of the History Society. It was to be called The Story of Christmas Traditions and to feature the history of ten traditions we all enjoy at Christmas. Christmas trees, decorations, carols, and pantomimes were just four of the ten.

I decided to finish my talk with some pictures of local Christmas scenes. I took pictures at Forge Mill's Victorian Christmas Market, the trees at the Palace Theatre and library, the trees in St Stephen's Church (there were lots!) and the very large tree on Market Place.

Alas, this year none of these would be possible. There is no pantomime at the Palace, no Christmas market at Forge Mill and no trees in Stephen's. Decorations around the town will be limited. It almost seems like Christmas has been cancelled.

The last time this happened was in 1647. At this time Parliament had won the first Civil War, King Charles I was held in captivity and the Church of England had been abolished.

A Presbyterian system had been installed and holy days had been banned.

This was hardly surprising, considering the rise of the Puritan movement during the 16th century.

From the mid-1500s Puritan leaders saw Christmas as a wasteful festival that threatened Christian beliefs and encouraged immoral activities.

The rejection of Christmas as a joyful period was made clear when a 1644 ordinance confirmed the abolition of the feasts of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun.

Then in 1645 Parliament produced a new Directory for Public Worship that made clear that festival days, including Christmas, were not to be celebrated but spent in respectful contemplation.

From this point until the Restoration in 1660, Christmas was officially illegal. Although Oliver Cromwell himself did not initiate the banning of Christmas, his rise to power certainly resulted in the promotion of measures that severely curtailed such celebrations.



Nevertheless, the Puritans' prohibition of Christmas proved very unpopular, and pro-Christmas riots broke out.

So, by 1647 the usual festivities of Christmas were banned. Shops had to remain open and the use of holly, ivy and other decorations was illegal.

Feasting and the drinking of alcohol were also forbidden.

These were not popular regulations and in many places the rules were challenged.

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire continued...

In Canterbury, the usual Christmas football game was played, and festive holly bushes were placed in the streets. Over the twelve days of Christmas the partying spread across all of Kent and armed force was used to stop the fun. Even in London, at Westminster, there was partying, and the shops closed.

The mayor of London was assaulted as he tried to rip down the decorations that had been put up in the streets. In Norwich, the mayor turned a blind eye to the illegal celebrations, but in April 1648 he was summoned to London to give an account of his inaction. But a crowd closed the city gates to prevent him leaving.

Armed forces were deployed again and in the ensuing riots the city ammunition magazine exploded, killing 40 people.



Matters got so bad in Kent that when the party-going rioters were summoned to answer to the law it turned into a rebellion against Parliament.

The rebellion, encouraged by those still loyal to the king, eventually led to the second Civil War and, in 1649, the execution of the king. Fortunately, we do not live in such troubled times, but these events do remind us that no government should even contemplate cancelling Christmas without due regard to the possible consequences.

May whatever sort of Christmas we manage to get be joyful and, with a vaccine on the way, there is every hope of a return to normal and a wonderful Christmas in 2021.

But for this year, I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas.





Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.....



THE WINTER OF 1962/3 BY ANTHONY GREEN

The winter of 1962–63, known as the Big Freeze of 1963, was one of the coldest winters on record in the United Kingdom. Temperatures plummeted and lakes and rivers began to freeze over. In the Central England records dating back to 1659, indicated that only the winters of 1683–84 and 1739–40 was colder.

A wintry outbreak brought snow to the country on 12–13 December. A cold easterly set in on 22 December as an anticyclone formed over Scandinavia, drawing cold continental winds from Russia. Throughout the Christmas period a new high formed near Iceland, bringing northerly winds.

Snow continued to fall in February 1963, which was stormy with winds reaching Force 8 on the Beaufort scale (gale-force winds).

6 March was the first morning of the year without frost in Britain. Temperatures rose to 17°C (62.6°F) and the remaining snow disappeared.



Town Centre Crossroads looking towards Birmingham



Town Centre looking down Evesham Street

When the snow hit Redditch, I was 20, and at Aston University, and to attend lectures was impossible, so I set out with my brother Vince to record the effect on Redditch at this time.

Vince, at that time had a Land Rover, not a yuppie one but a real one, and we drove around the town and took photographs.

Vince was quite unshakable in confidence with his Land Rover and we drove all over town, as far down as Watery Lane, and I took a number of photographs. These were the days of 'film' cameras, so you did not waste film taking a number of shots of the same thing.



Alcester Street (to the right fork is Queens Street)



Alcester Street looking up towards the St Stephens Church

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow continued

I took these photographs with my first 'real' camera, a Japanese made 'Pal Junior' 35 mm camera.

It was made of die-castings and machined metal parts; and cost me £9.17s.6p. which in today's money is probable about £150.

So that it was a major acquisition and it was a reliable camera which I used for many years. Sadly, when it stopped working and I replaced it, I disposed of it.

This has always given me a sense of deep regret as it was such a well-made and useful piece of kit and would have fitted well into my small collection of veteran cameras.



Looking down Ipsley Street (Washford Mills on the left)



Pool Place (junction of Ipsley Street and Alcester Street)



Looking down Easemore Road



Bromsgrove Road looking towards the town



Ipsley Church



*Vince's Land Rover parked in Water Lane
(The large building in the background on the left is Ipsley Mill)*

Another place, another time.....



Cornish Winter Traditions by Elizabeth Simpson



Many areas of the country have their local traditions, some going back centuries and other developed in more recent times.

Cornwall is a county which takes great pride in its heritage and Celtic past.

One festival that celebrates this past is the Montol Festival. (Picture Below)

In the Cornish language Montol means 'winter solstice' and the festival is traditionally held on the feast of St Thomas the Apostle on 21 December in Penzance.

At the heart of the festival are several revived customs from west Cornwall including Guise dancing with masked dancers processing through the town, in traditional costumes and carrying lanterns.

They are led by the appointed Lord of Misrule and process up to Lescudjack Hillfort overlooking Penzance Bay and St Michael's Mount where they light the beacon and continue dancing and singing well into the evening.



In 1956 a new tradition was created at the National Trust property at Cotele, near the River Tamar. (Bottom Right Picture)

This was the creation of a flower garland hung in the Great Hall of the Tudor mansion. Each year a new garland is created from flowers grown in the grounds of the estate and made by staff and volunteers during the early part of November.

This creates the focal point for the Christmas activity at the site and is very popular with visitors.



Many National Trust properties around the country now decorate their properties for Christmas and Lanhydrock is another of these. There are decorations around the house and displays of seasonal food in the kitchen. (Picture Left)



Another place, another time continued.....



The Eden Project, which was probably one of the most successful Millennium projects in the country, has developed a Light Festival for the Christmas period. Laser light shows are projected across the biomes at the site and inside the Tropical and Temperate biomes further light displays take place. (Pictures above and right)

At Mousehole, west of Penzance, the harbour and surrounding area is decorated with thousands of lights.

This annual event started in 1963 and has grown over the years and now gets over 30,000 visitors during the Christmas/New Year period. (Bottom Picture)

On 19 December each year the village of Mousehole commemorates the Penlee lifeboat disaster.

On that date in 1981, the Solomon Browne lifeboat was launched near to Mousehole to aid the vessel, Union Star, after its engines had failed in heavy seas.

After the lifeboat had rescued four people, both vessels were lost with all hands and in total, sixteen people died, including eight volunteer lifeboatmen.





and then there were eleven.....

Redditch History Society Annual Christmas Meeting



When we formed the History Society in December 2009, we had 10 meetings a year, running from February to November and missing out the 'darkest' winter days in December and January.

However, there was a request from members that we should have a 'social' to allow members to circulate and meet each other.

We therefore decided that, in 2014, which was five years since the Society was created, that we would have a Christmas 'social' in December to celebrate this.

This increased our meetings from 10 to 11 but it was agreed that this would not be a normal meeting with a speaker, but essentially a social meeting.

For our first Christmas Social we had a 5-year celebration cake, and all other refreshments was supplied by members.

The cake, on the occasion was cut by our Chairman, Don Vincent.



Following from this we began to provide a 'spread' paid for from our reserves, but we found that most of this was not eaten and had to be given away.

So, we have finally finished with our current December meeting offer where we still have a meeting, which has some form of Christmas entertainment and this is followed by mince pies, seasonal biscuits, tea, and coffee.

This has worked well and has been appreciated by members and it is a well-supported meeting.



The way we were.....

Going back to Christmas Day in the nineteen forties / fifties.

Don Vincent



Worshippers would attend church on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christmas Mass which started just before or just after Midnight depending the particular segment of Christian belief. (Although since 2009 the Pope now celebrates Mass at 10:00 p.m.).

Children had been around the neighbourhood carol singing. More like religious begging actually. Lets face it even if one could prise the video game from the youngsters, would you fancy letting them roam the neighbourhood these days. Let alone anyone actually answering the door to them?

Then came the big day. The joy at finding the big present (notice the singular tense) plus the odd smaller ones (nuts, an orange etc.). One would see children out with their presents. Boys would have a bike or a scooter or a pair of skates; while girls might be wheeling a new doll in a new pram. In those days gender neutrality had not been invented.

Right:

Uncle Arthur and Aunt Emily my 'parents'.

Notice uncle is wearing a suit -

There were standards to keep up!

Plus the comfortably stocked drinks trolley.



We the kids might have had a cooked breakfast, doubtful though much too excited to eat.

The chicken, a rare treat, would be slowly sizzling in the oven. We always had a chicken never a turkey and a goose could be a bit fatty.

Uncle (from age seven I was brought by an aunt and an uncle but that's another story) may well have gone out to meet his brothers in law for a pint with the words " Don't be late for your dinner " ringing in his ears- he never was.

Christmas dinner was the immediate family only as opposed to Christmas tea when the not too extended family descended on us.

Average for Christmas tea was about ten present. What a spread! Remember it's the late forties/early fifties. Aunt was a great manager stuff had been squirreled away, marvellous trifles made (a tin of fruit went along way), salads fantastic.

It all came back the other day when I was making a sandwich for lunch. The tomato was a bit big so I cut it in two and save half for the next day. You can take the person out of the forties but not the forties out of the person. Very often the question 'Do you want half of this tomato'? Or 'do you want a bit of this pork pie'? was broached.

After tea the decks were cleared. Aunt was ordered out of the kitchen while the older 'children' did the washing up. Left Overs were wrapped and preserved for Boxing Day. Aunts, Uncles, Grandma decamped to the front room 'letting their tea go down'.

The adults would have a smoke. Cigars and cigarettes always featured high on the list as Christmas Presents, there was some truth in the quip that the colour of our ceiling was Embassy brown.

The way we were continued...

Once the washing up had been done and the tea digested we normally decamped back into the dining room and some silly game was played soon however the playing cards would be produced. A good hour or so of 'Newmarket' ensued. Of course various alcoholic drinks would be consumed. We always had a good selection drinks no over indulgence but something for every taste.

Right:

Granny Willis formerly Godson née Mills
(My mother's and Aunt Em's mother)
notice the curtains have been changed.

Shopkeepers always ran clubs in those days.

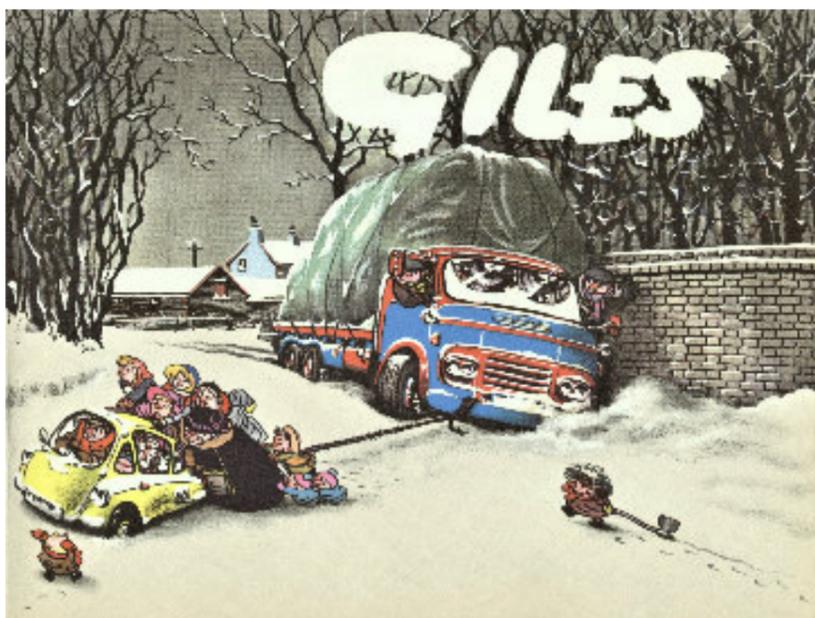
A few shillings a week mounted up enabling the purchase of festive cheer. We didn't finish Christmas owing money on the credit card.

Of course sandwiches had to be consumed during the card playing. Yet it all left enough for a cold dinner (we weren't posh enough to have lunch) on Boxing Day.

I suppose it all broke up at about eleven o'clock. Another Christmas had come and gone and who knew what the New Year would hold for us.

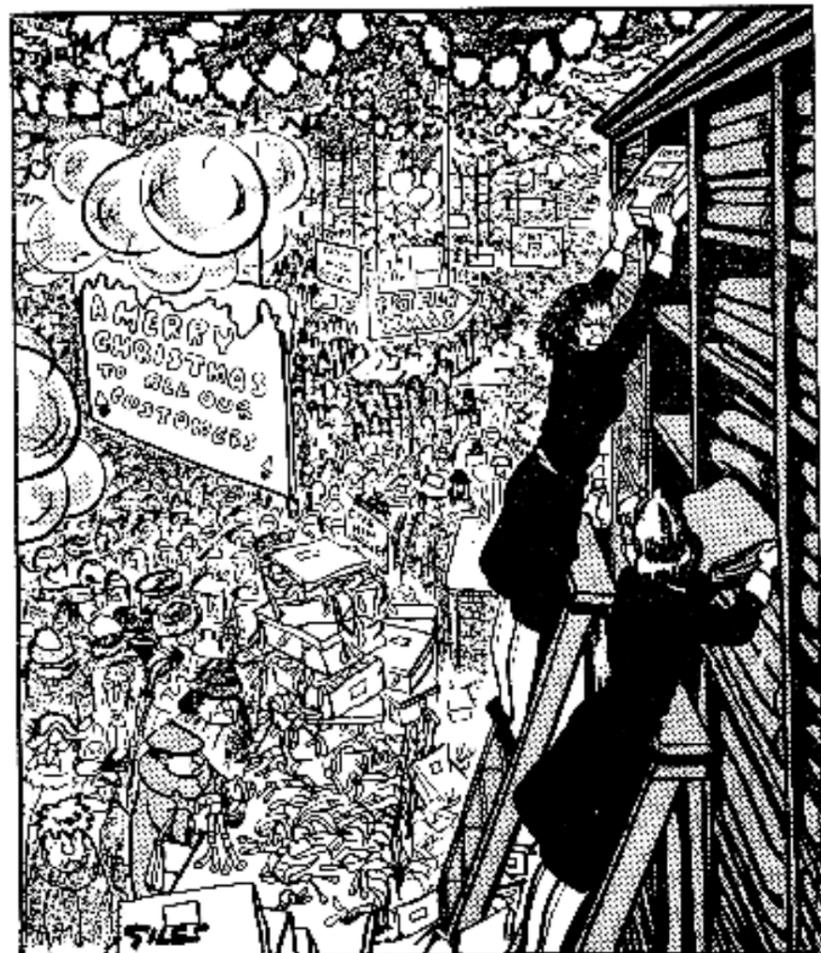


The Annual of Giles Cartoons from the Daily and Sunday Express was always worth waiting for.



"If Madom doesn't soon make her mind up, Madom is going to get a Yuletide ding across the back of the ear."

Daily Express, Dec. 21st, 1951





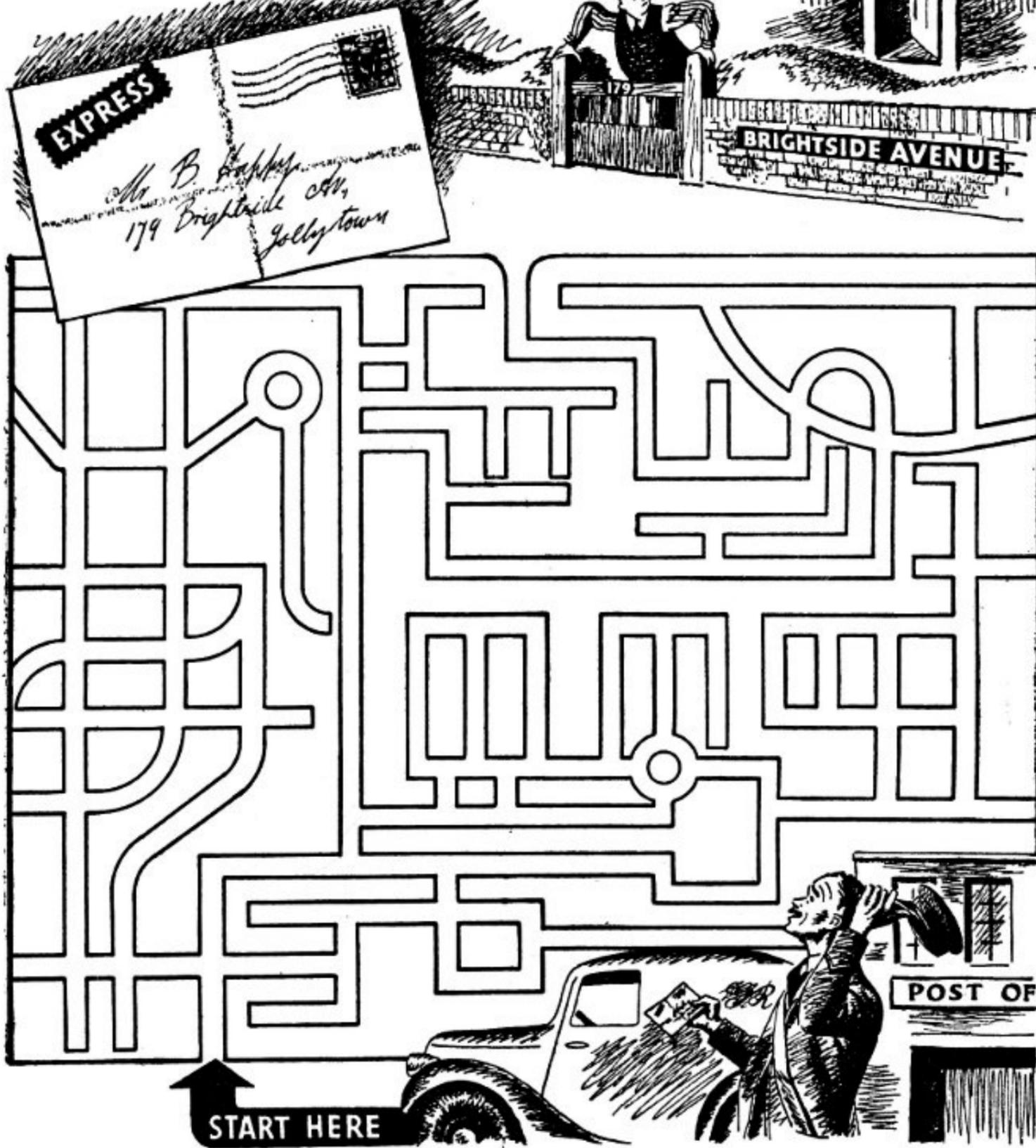
It's amazing what kept us occupied



From the Children's Own Treasure Book 1950

Who needs computer games??

Delivering the Mail



THERE is a very important letter for Mr. B. Happy, of Brightside Avenue. The postman gets his instructions to deliver the letter as quickly as possible, but unfortunately he doesn't know the district very well. Several times he goes wrong and eventually finds himself

back where he started. You are there to lend him a helping hand. Which way would you take him through the maze of streets? Do not forget, you must not take the wrong turning more than three times. And do not mark the maze, use a match stick.



And finally.....



The Needle Region Almanack of 1882

Victorian almanacks were annual publications listing forthcoming events in the next year and including information like weather forecasts, farmers' planting dates, tide tables, and other tabular data often arranged according to the calendar. Celestial figures and various statistics such as the rising and setting times of the Sun and Moon, dates of eclipses, hours of high and low tides, postal rates and religious festivals were also given. These would be tailored to a specific group of readers.

The Needle Region Almanack and Trades Directory was for Redditch and the small needle producing town and villages in the area which were Alcester, Alvechurch, Astwood Bank, Beoley, Bidford, Coughton, Crabbs Cross, Callow Hill, Feckenham, Headless Cross, Hunt End, Henley-in-Arden, Ipsley, Studley, Tanworth, and Webheath.

For historians the most interesting part of the almanack was the directory for the whole area organised by the individual town/village and the advertisements. This listed all the trades plus places of worship, schools, public establishments, public officers, sick benefit societies, post and money order and telegraph office etc.

The importance of Redditch is shown that for Redditch the directory was 9 pages, for all the other 15, there were a total of 11 pages.

The almanack itself had 26 pages and there were 40 pages of advertisements.

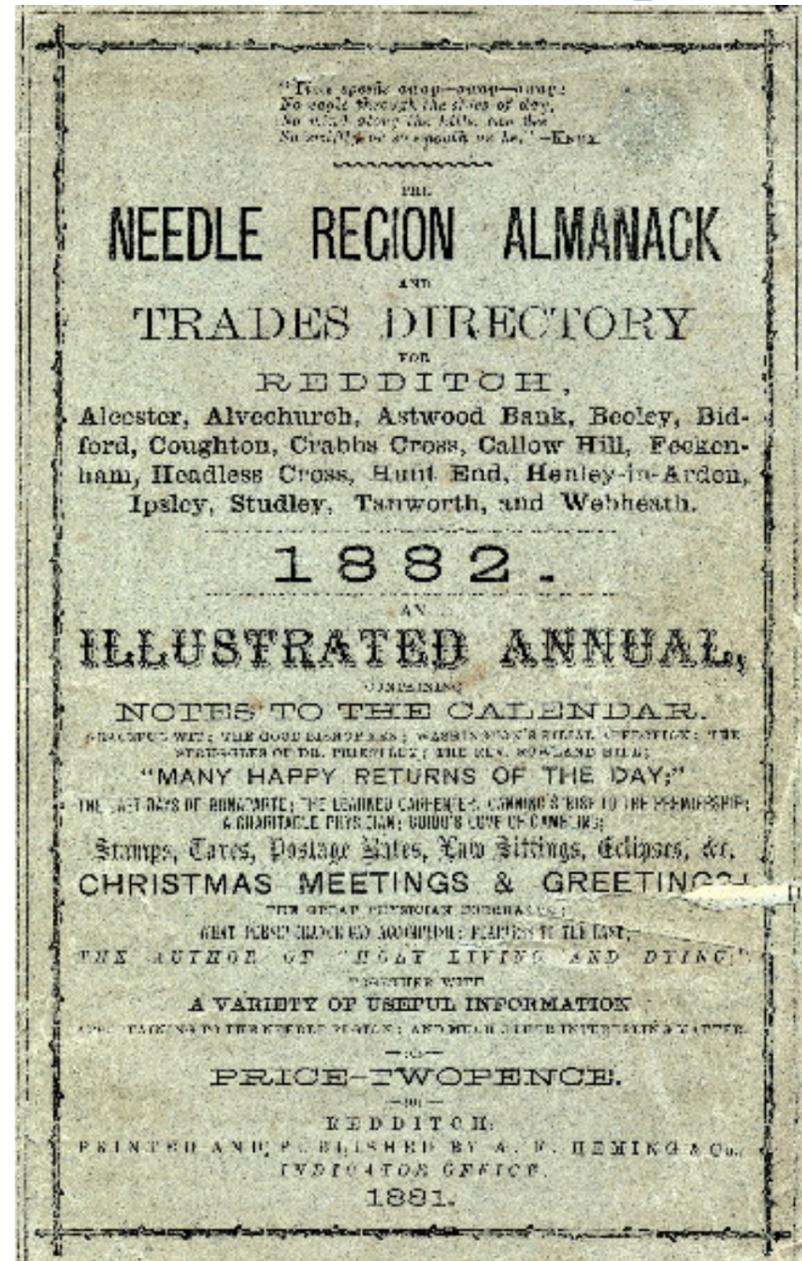
For each month of the almanack there was a calendar giving the moon's changes and the time of sunrise and sunset. There were also 'what happened on this day in xxxx' and general information.

There were also many texts, some with illustrations and usually of an improving nature, of which the Victorians were very fond.

Typical of these is the Christmas message which took up a complete page.

In order to enlarge it as much as possible I have put the main text and image on the next page and the title below on this page.

Anthony Green



POSTAL ORDERS.

Postal Orders are now issued at any Post Office in the United Kingdom. They can be obtained at the following fixed sums:—

1s.	4d.	10s.	2d.
1s. 6d. ..	4d.	12s. 6d. ..	2d.
2s. 6d. ..	1d.	15s.	2d.
5s.	1d.	17s. 6d. ..	2d.
7s. 6d. ..	1d.	20s.	2d.

Postal Orders are not payable at Post Offices abroad.

RATES OF POSTAGE.

To and from all parts of the United Kingdom, for prepaid letters:—

Not exceeding 1 oz.	1d.
Exceeding 1 oz. but not excludg. 2 oz. 1 1/2d.	
.. 2 oz.	4 oz. 2d.
.. 4 oz.	6 oz. 2 1/2d.
.. 6 oz.	8 oz. 3d.
.. 8 oz.	10 oz. 3 1/2d.
.. 10 oz.	12 oz. 4d.

Any letter exceeding the weight of 12 ozs. will be liable to a postage of One Penny for every ounce, or fraction of an ounce, beginning with the first ounce. A letter, for example, weighing between 14 and 15 ounces must be prepaid fifteen-pence. A letter posted unpaid will be charged on delivery with double postage, and a letter posted insufficiently prepaid will be charged with double the deficiency.

An Inland Letter must not exceed one foot six inches in length, nine inches in width, or six inches in depth.

ECLIPSES.

In 1882 there will be two Eclipses, both of the sun —

May 17.—A Total Eclipse of the Sun, visible at Greenwich as a Partial Eclipse.

November 10-11.—An Annular Eclipse of the Sun, invisible at Greenwich.

December 6.—A Transit of Venus, partly visible at Greenwich.

“CHEERFULNESS IS THE SUNSHINE WHICH GLADDENS LIFE.”



CHRISTMAS MEETINGS AND GREETINGS.



“Once more the rapid fleeting year
Has brought old Christmas to the door.”—BRIDGEMAN.



IN all civilised lands are taught the lessons of peace and goodwill that are associated with the great Christian festival which is celebrated on land and sea as regularly as it comes round with each returning year. A difference in climate makes none whatever in the heartiness of its commemoration. This is strikingly illustrated by a moment's reflection on the contrast presented between Great Britain and her Australian colonies. In this country the memories of Christmas are inseparably entwined with recollections of short days, powerless sunbeams, long nights, and cold weather. In the innumerable illustrations of scenes depicting the festive

is heartily commemorated in the ships which sail the seas; but in the households at home it possesses an attractiveness especially its own in the happy re-unions of families that it brings together. Aged parents once more meet the children who have gone out into the world, and are engaged in the competition which seems to grow more and more keen as time goes on. For months these joyous meetings are looked forward to, and the agreeable reminiscences left behind are never erased from the mind. Each household is a happy little circle whose members rejoice with a mutual joy, and are enabled for a brief time to forget the cares and anxieties of life in the felicity of once more meeting



“ THEN SING TO THE HOLLY, THE CHRISTMAS HOLLY,
THAT HANGS OVER PEASANT AND KING.”—*Eliza Cook.*

season which have been given to the world, the portrayals are those of clear frosty weather, when the hoary spangles glisten on the bare branches of the leafless trees, and the window-frame displays many a bright icicle. Such is the picture on this side of the world; but the residents at the antipodes keep Christmas under other atmospheric conditions. There everything is in contrast with that to which we are accustomed. Our Christmas always brings back remembrances of cosy fires and well-lighted rooms, when the warmth is grateful in the face of a cold temperature and a biting wind. With our colonists Christmas comes at Midsummer, when the sun shines high in the heavens, the windows are thrown open, and neither frost nor snow reminds them of what Christmas is at home. But while there is this great difference in climatic surroundings, there is none whatever in the pleasure with which the merry season is anticipated, the joy which characterises its celebration, or the happy nature of the greetings exchanged. There is something peculiarly softening in the influences which Christmas exercises over the minds of people in every country. It

and talking over the times which have passed away never to return. Artificial as some things in this life undoubtedly are, there is nothing forced nor strained in a Christmas greeting. The welcome is from the heart. It tells of a spirit of affection in families, and of good-will to all. It chases away the asperities which are too often the attendants of an earthly journey, and restores a harmony too liable to be broken amid the worries of life's progress. Many a changing scene has Christmas survived in the centuries that have elapsed since the foundation of this festival. The fluctuations of authority and the displacements of power, the rise and fall of empires and the passing away of dynasties, have had no effect upon it in the long roll of years,—except, perhaps, to increase its popularity. In all ages, and under the greatest variation of circumstances, it has been eagerly anticipated, joyously celebrated, and heartily welcomed, because it revives the tenderest emotions, and touches those chords of love and sympathy to which a grateful response is made in the breast of mankind of whatever clime or nation.