

VILLAGE VOICE

NEWS FROM WEST WICKHAM & STREETLY END

JANUARY 2014

ISSUE 129

VILLAGE DIARY

- Thur 2 Blue & green wheeled bin collection
Sat 4 **Farmers Market. 9.00 - 12.00**
Linton Village College
Sun 5 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Tue 7 Black wheeled bin collection
Wed 8 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Sun 12 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Mon 13 Local History Club. *Vikings in*
***Cambridgeshire and beyond.* Talk by**
Britt Baillie-Warren. 7.30pm, Village
Hall
Tue 14 Blue & green wheeled bin collection
Wed 15 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Thur 16 Deadline for items to go in the February
Village Voice
Sat 18 **Dog microchipping. 10.00 - 4.00,**
Hildersham Village Hall. See page 6
Sun 19 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Mon 20 Gardening Club. *Planting for winter*
***colour & scent.* Talk by Fiona Edmund.**
7.30pm, Village Hall
Tue 21 Black wheeled bin collection
Wed 22 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Sat 25 **Meadow School PTA Jumble Sale**
2 - 4 pm, Balsham
Sun 26 Family Service 9.30, St Mary's Church
Mon 27 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING.
7.30pm, Village Hall
Tue 28 Blue & green wheeled bin collection
Wed 29 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Daisy Chains Pre-School meets Monday to Friday
9.30 - 12.30 in the Village Hall

THE VILLAGE HALL

is available to hire at the rates below, it also offers the following equipment: Badminton, Short Tennis and 3 Table Tennis tables.

Village Hall rates (for Village use):

Sport Hire	day or evening £5.00 per hour.
Meeting Room	day (9.00 - 19.00) £5.00 per hour. evening £7.00 per hour.
Main Room	day (9.00 - 19.00) £7.00 per hour evening £10.00 per hour.
Complete Hall	day (9.00 - 19.00) £12.00 per hour evening £18.00 per hour
Children's party	£30.00 daytime £43.00 evening
Adult's party/disco	£60.00
Wedding reception	£150.00

To book the Village Hall contact Louise Salter
T: 01223 291226
or visit www.westwickham.org

The Village Voice is sponsored by West Wickham Parish Council and delivered free to all households in West Wickham and Streetly End. The views expressed herein are those of the contributors.

VILLAGE SIGN

West Wickham is one of a small number of Cambridgeshire villages that doesn't have a village sign and the Parish Council have decided to erect one. I have been talking to a number of residents and asking for their suggestions. Based on their comments the majority would like it to be sited at the Village Hall, made of wrought iron and depicting historical buildings, and our agricultural history. So we have come up with a design to join the three hamlets, starting in Streetly End with the windmill, through the High Street with St. Mary's church and up to Burton End with a Lancaster bomber.



We are hoping to get local craftsmen to make it, and to have this done in 2014.

Di Licence

BUS TIMETABLE CHANGES

We have received notice that the Stagecoach 16A timetable will change from Monday 5 January as follows:

Monday to Friday evening journey now 15 minutes later to improve reliability.

Saturday morning journey now departs from West Wickham at 10.47, arriving in Cambridge at 11.30. The changes follow requests from local communities.

PLANNING APPLICATION

LAND ADJOINING THE OLD VICARAGE/OPPOSITE 21 - 33 BURTON END

The owner of this land has recently submitted a planning application seeking **Change of Use to Touring Caravan Site and Camping Site and Ancillary Buildings**. The Parish Council will be objecting to the application and neighbouring owners who have been consulted have been given a deadline of 7 January to respond. If anyone else would like to have a look at the plans and make comments, please do so as soon as possible. The plans and documentation can be viewed online at

<http://plan.scams.gov.uk>, the reference is S/2492/13/FL.

Those living close to the site who I have spoken to have said they will be objecting to the application, as will I.

Sue Thurston

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

At the Parish Council meeting held on 2 December the followings items were some of the issues discussed.

Burton End signs: The second Burton End sign, at present in an inappropriate position, will be put up just beyond the last house out of the village.

White Horse public house: A Contravention Order has been served on the owner.

Finance: The external audit has been carried out satisfactorily. Finances are on budget. At the next meeting the 2014/15 budget will be discussed, councillors were asked to let Cllr. Morris have any budget requests e.g. hedge cutting round the playing field and Village Hall area; path cutting across the new wildlife area. Cllr. Hickford told Council that the cost of housing benefits will now be borne by local government and in 2015 the Parish Council will be asked to contribute 8% of the housing benefit given in West Wickham, therefore the Precept must reflect this.

Maintenance:

- a. A further 3 year contract with CGM Ltd, for grass cutting in the playground & playing field, was agreed. The Chairman said he would cut the path up to the Old Filtration Plant twice a year as the quote given by CGM to do this was too expensive.
- b. The County Council's new footpath Officer, Peter Gaskin, has agreed to cut more circular routes.

Bus Service Review: The new service has begun. The timetable has been published in the Village Voice, is on the notice board and is available at the Post Office & Village Hall.

CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy): This will take the place of the S106 levy and the money collected from new developments will go into a central pot to be used on community needs. 15% will go direct to the Parish where the development is built.

Report by Dist.Cllr. Fraser:

- a. Community Prize & Village Hero Awards are now open for 2013/14 and the closing date is 28th January 2014. Cllr.Plumb was nominated and the necessary forms will be sent to the Parish Clerk.
- b. A Community Chest of £1000 is available for community needs.

Report by County Cllr. Hickford:

- a. A1307 Steering Group: Highways Strategy team will be coming to view the road and visit villages to see exactly how bad the problem is.
- b. The City Deal may help with the upgrading of the A1307 and A10. Money has been earmarked for the junctions on the A1307.
- c. Minor Highways Improvement Scheme: It was agreed there was a need for a footpath in Burton End but as the parish has to contribute a tenth of the cost it is too much at present.

Any other business:

- a. Cllr. Grieve agreed to organise a Village Clean Up sometime in March.
- b. The Parish Clerk was asked to write to UK Power Networks to ask if a survey could be carried out to check the cabling and posts as every time the wind blows strongly the electrics trip out.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 27 January. All are welcome to attend

Jenny Richards, Parish Clerk

THE PETER & RUTH LLOYD TRUST AWARD

We are pleased to advise that, in the absence of any suitable applications in 2012, we were able to award two scholarships of £800 each in 2013. The successful applicants are Ashley Boreham of West Wrating, who is reading Chemistry at Birmingham University, and Emma Vidler of Weston Colville, who is reading Medicine at Oxford University. Congratulations to them both and we wish them every success in their future careers.

We are now inviting applications for pupils starting university in September 2014. Normally one scholarship is awarded each year and the amount is approximately £800. Broadly speaking the degree course should be from one of the following:-

Architecture, Engineering, Geography, History, Law, Mathematics, Medical Science and Veterinary Medicine.

The applicant should be living in one of the following parishes, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, West Wickham, Carlton cum Willingham, West Wrating, Weston Colville and Withersfield.

The Award is intended to be of assistance in the purchase of books, materials, equipment etc. Final decision and award will be made immediately after 'A' Level/Baccalaureate results and University offer are known.

For further information about the Trust and Award please contact: Jonathan Drury 01223 290968

For an application form please apply via email to: peterandruthlloydtrust@yahoo.co.uk

The application form and supporting documents have to be received at the latest by 31 March 2014

Meadow School PTA's



**JUMBLE
SALE**

**Meadow Primary School
Saturday 25th January 2014
2pm- 4pm
Admission 50p
School Children Free**

**books / games / toys / uniform / clothes /
fancy dress / bric-a-brac**

refreshments / plus much more...

Meadow Primary School PTA Registered Charity: 1142895
www.themeadowbalsham.co.uk pta@meadow.cambs.sch.uk

NATURE NOTES

By the time you read this the shortest day will have been and gone and yet I always feel that at the start of January the mornings keep getting darker while the sun does last a little bit longer in the afternoons. There is, I think, a scientific explanation for this phenomenon, or maybe it's just that I ought to get up and draw the curtains back to let in the light.

Another observation for which I would be grateful of an explanation is that the vast majority of pheasants we see during the winter are male. Is it because females are tastier and therefore more of them get shot? Or just that the boys are tougher and don't mind coming out in the open so much during the winter. I had three cock pheasants in the garden this morning circling the tree under the bird feeder in company with a squirrel. There was a certain tension there, but despite being outnumbered the squirrel stuck to his guns, scrabbling around for seed that had been dropped.

My theory about the relative toughness of the males hasn't really been put to the test this year yet, because as Di says *"December has been unusually mild, many of the oaks still have their leaves and the hedgerows are full of berries. The red hawthorn hedges along Dean Road are a magnet for the wintering thrushes, mainly the loud fieldfares that utter lovely chuckling noises as they feed or fly over. Recently disturbing a huge flock, it was almost like watching leaves being blown off the trees, there must have been over a hundred birds, all rising together."*

The kestrels and buzzards have reappeared and are often to be seen sitting on the top of posts between the church and Bottle Hall, and up Balsham Hill on the dead trees watching for prey.

We recently witnessed a 'charm' of goldfinches...the collective name for some birds sometimes seems odd, but not this one. A small flock of about 30 birds were feeding on teasel heads and thistles and as we approached took off in a swirl and landed on the road in front of us. It was like a quivering puddle of reds and yellows against the grey of the tarmac... 'charming' indeed.

The roe deer in Balsham wood seem to be quite active again; we have seen two recently running across the road at about dusk, jumping into the road and across into the fields opposite".

Despite the mild weather, Rod the great tit (or his successor) has taken up his winter quarters in Brian and Linda's televised nest box. Sadly he (or she) is still alone, feathers puffed up but with a minimalist approach to furnishings, apparently happy to spend the night on the bare boards.

Peter Grieve. T:290503. Email: mail@petergrieve.co.uk

VILLAGE WILDLIFE AREA

The Parish Council have decided to make a small wildlife area on some disused allotments for all to enjoy. We have taken advice from some environmental experts and planted some fruit/flowering trees, put up nest boxes and are mowing once a year. Daisychains Pre-School have donated some hedging, which we have planted. We have kept a list of flora and fauna observed during last year. We hope to install a picnic table this year, and cut paths through the meadow, and encourage people to enjoy the area.

Di Licence

DAISY CHAINS PRESCHOOL NEWS

We were very pleased to be advised during the summer holidays, that following an OFSTED inspection in July, we have been awarded an OUTSTANDING grade which we are immensely proud of. We have been deemed highly effective in meeting the needs of all children. This ensures that children are very well prepared for their next stage of learning. This is the first time that Daisy Chains has been awarded this grade for its quality provision for children of all ages.

We have had a busy productive autumn term at Daisy Chains-the first half of the term was dedicated to learning about "Numbers" and the second half of the term has been spent concentrated on "Machines" and "Christmas". This week we are working hard to make the decorations for the entry in the Balsham Christmas Tree Festival. The Children have made some lovely fabric covered baubles, paper hearts and tinsel daisy chains to go on our tree.

Next term we will be looking at "The farm" and "People who help us". We are hoping to pay a visit down to the local farm to see some baby animals and to have some visits from people who help us - a postman and a hairdresser are on the list at the moment!

Our Preschool operates from 9.30 - 12.30, every weekday morning during the school term. If you would like to visit us, then please contact Sue Harrow on 07943866294 (9.30-13.00) or email daisychainspreschool@gmail.com to arrange a visit. We would be happy to have you and your child visit and show off our outstanding Preschool.

WEST WICKHAM AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

The Club had a very enjoyable evening on Monday 16 December when a panel of local experts took questions on all aspects of gardening. Our members took part in the lively discussions and a certain jollity was evident. Perhaps this was in some way helped along by the wine, mince pies and savouries offered to them on arrival. We thank Kevin Marsh from Beeches Nursery in Ashdon & former Club Chairman Hilary Thomas who taught horticulture at Capel Manor and our own professional gardener Sue Kiddy for their kind participation on the GQT panel. A raffle of Beeches Vouchers for £25 and £15 was drawn and won by Sally Walker & Andrew Morris.

Next month we will have a talk on "Planting for winter colour and scent" by Fiona Williams of Green Island Nursery, this is on Monday 20 January at our usual time of 7:30. Looks interesting? Why not come to West Wickham Village Hall and find out.

Rosemary Yallop, T:01799584262:

HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE NHS!

Thursday 23 January
7.30-9.00pm at Balsham Church Institute

This is the second of a series of sessions, organised by the Parish Nurse Steering Group on related health matters. The first one, on First Aid, was a great success. There can't be anyone who wouldn't like to know how to get the best out of the NHS. And it's completely free. So put the date in your diaries NOW!

WEA GREAT BRADLEY

Great Bradley Village Hall hosts a group, Great Bradley WEA, which meets each Wednesday morning in the autumn and winter. The WEA (Workers Educational Association) started in the 19th Century to provide learning for adults. Today the WEA is the largest voluntary sector provider of adult education, both for those who have been disadvantaged earlier in their educational life (and for these there are courses to help them find a niche in life), and for those who want to keep their minds active after a working life, which is where Great Bradley fits in. The aim of our group is to provide friendly, informal and enjoyable courses with expert tutors. There is no need to have prior knowledge of the course subject, nor do you need to have any academic qualifications. In fact most people come to explore new ideas and topics and to enjoy a sociable morning with friends old and new.

Over the years we have covered a vast number of subjects ranging from the Development of the English Language to Railways, from English Country Houses to Great Films and from the USAF in East Anglia to Music inspired by Shakespeare. January brings us a new course to be led by a very local historian: Wendy Barnes from Little Bradley. Her subject is Domesday in East Anglia, with a special emphasis on some villages in this area of West Suffolk and South Cambridgeshire.

The term starts on Wednesday 15th January in the GB Village Hall, and we gather at 10.00am for a 10.15 start, with the session finishing at about noon. Halfway through there is a break for tea or coffee and biscuits. The first week is available as a free taster to see if you like it, and from then the term's cost will be £48.

For more information you can contact Peter Smith on 01440 783278 or Gill Brown on 01223 893012. We hope to see you there!

LINTON AND DISTRICT WEA BRANCH

We have been providing Adult Education in the Linton area for almost 60 years. For our Spring 2014 course we welcome Fiona Lucraft who is going to tell us all about

Reading 19th Century Britain

A wide ranging new course interpreting 19th Century Britain through its diverse writings, with extracts from novelists, journalists, poets, scientists and cultural commentators - based on "Dickens and his Contemporaries".

This should be a first-class series of talks; Fiona is an excellent speaker and a good friend to Linton & District Historical Society, as she has spoken on her other passion the history of recipe books. You are more than welcome to join us; we are an extremely friendly group coming from all the local surrounding villages and some from further afar. You can come along and see if the course is just right for you, with the first two sessions free as a taster; we are confident you will want to join us for the whole session, but if not you can leave without having to pay anything.

The 10 week course will start on Tuesday 14 January at 10am and will cost £45.30, as ever we will have a course visit, and we look forward to you joining us in this exciting new course. To find out more contact Andrew on 01223 892430 or info@lintonwea.org.uk



On 1 January 2014 Cambridge CAMTAD (Campaign for Tackling Acquired Deafness) changed its name to Cambridgeshire Hearing Help. There will be no change to our services.

We now run hearing help sessions in 42 venues in Cambridgeshire. At these drop-in sessions volunteers offer advice on any aspects of hearing loss and maintain NHS hearing aids by distributing batteries, cleaning and "retubing" aids. There is also a service to housebound people and those living in residential care. It is not generally recognised that hearing aids need maintenance every 3 – 6 months when the small plastic tube that links the mould with the mechanical part needs to be replaced to maintain the quality of sound. By keeping hearing aids in good condition with routine maintenance available locally, hearing loss becomes a minor inconvenience not a major barrier to communication. This helps to keep people sociable and makes a significant contribution to their quality of life. We also offer a telephone advice service, talks, training and information on hearing help assistive technology.

Our new website will be

www.cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk

and we can be contacted by e-mail on enquiries@cambridgeshirehearinghelp.org.uk

Our telephone number will remain the same 01223 416141

COMMUNITY LIFELINE SERVICE

Residents are being reminded of a valuable community lifeline service run by South Cambridgeshire District Council. The service provides alarm equipment to help anyone of any age to feel safer, more protected and independent in their own home.

The equipment gives people peace of mind by offering the reassurance of 24-hour emergency assistance at the touch of a button on a pendant or wristband.

When activated, the button raises an alarm and connects the user directly to trained staff who speak to them via a small unit installed close to their telephone. Those staff will instantly know the name, address and health details of the user, raise the relevant help and, where requested, notify friends, family or neighbours. The pendant and wristbands work within a 50 metre radius of the unit so are very effective within properties as well as gardens.

This equipment supports a host of additional telecare technology, including smoke detectors, fall detectors and bed sensors, and cost as little as £20 to install and £4.26 a week.

For more information visit www.scams.gov.uk/community-lifeline-service, email lifelines@scams.gov.uk or call 03450 450 500.

RICHARD III, The King under the car park

The story of the search for England's last Plantagenet King
by Mathew Morris & Richard Buckley

Available from Janet Morris, 21 High Street, T: 290863

Email: jmmorris@jmmorris.plus.com

£8.95 (cash please)

UPDATE FROM SHAPE YOUR PLACE (<http://southcambridgeshire.shapeyourplace.org/>)

Our small team has been very busy in the last quarter meeting with local groups, responding to issues, helping to report on local community events and making your ShapeYourPlace website even more interesting and easy to use. Thanks to your alerts, a number of local issues has been resolved. The railway bridge fence in Great Shelford will be repaired soon and we were glad to hear that the bus stop in Meldreth is to be reinstated to the relief of many local residents.

I would like to thank everyone who got in touch with us recently to raise issues, ask questions and tell us about all the great activities happening in your community. I would also like to use this opportunity to share our answers to some of your questions.

How do I report an issue?

It is easy to report an issue online – all you need to do is to fill in our simple online form in the 'Have Your Say' section.

What happens to issues and ideas after they are submitted?

Issues and ideas posted on the website are passed to the local agency that is best placed to respond. Within 10 working days a response will be posted by Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary or Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. If an issue can be dealt with, it will be tackled as quickly as possible. All issues and ideas are also forwarded to the local County Councillor, District Councillor and Town / Parish Clerk inviting them to join in the conversation.

Are there any examples of how ShapeYourPlace helped communities in other districts?

ShapeYourPlace has some real success stories to tell. Some of the successes are where local people have alerted local services to the issues they face, such as getting pot holes filled, clearing up fly tipping and alerting the police to the dangerous driving on the A141. In Chatteris the site helped to improve the local bus link and to make some necessary changes to the appointment system at a local GP surgery. In Whittlesey ShapeYourPlace is helping the local community to voice their concerns and inform the decision making process on a proposed housing development in the Showfields area.

Please get in touch with me if you have other questions about ShapeYourPlace.

ShapeYourPlace is a website designed to help you improve your neighbourhood. Join the local conversation on <http://southcambridgeshire.shapeyourplace.org/>

Anna Allen
T: 07769304132; email: Anna@ShapeYourPlace

VILLAGE DIRECTORY

The 2014 Village Directory will come out with the February issue of the Village Voice. If you have any corrections, updates, deletions or information you think should be included please send to me by 16 January

Sue Thurston T: 290503. e-mail: mail@suethurston.co.uk

MEADOW SCHOOL NEWS

The School has now had its first HMI visit since our inspection back in July. It was a remarkably positive experience, HMI is confident that the "rapid and decisive action to improve teaching and learning" is now taking place and "there is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and we know what actions need to be taken so that all groups of pupils can make good progress". The full letter has been published on the Ofsted website should anyone be interested in seeing more. This is a huge boost to the school, staff and community at the Meadow who have all worked extremely hard to implement the changes across the whole school.

This half term, the class assembly was hosted by Otter class. In our class assemblies, we invite the parents to come along and the children put on a performance about the topic that they have been learning about during the half term. The pupils in Otter class delivered a fantastic assembly about their theme "Invaders and Settlers" and it was enjoyed by all.

As the Village Voice goes to press, the infants are performing in the annual Christmas production. This year, the play is called "Sparkle" and the children have worked very hard perfecting their lines and dance routines. This is the first performance that our Foundation children have taken part in and they have thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Next week is the last week of what has been a very busy first term. Our juniors are holding a Christmas Carol Concert at the Balsham Church, the infants are having a "make-it afternoon" where the parents can come along and join in and help the children make Christmas decorations, the PTA are holding the annual Christmas school disco and we have a rather lovely Christmas lunch with a "Christmas jumper competition". I am looking forward to seeing what fabulous creations the children come up with! The final week also sees the school bid a fond farewell to Hazel Tofts who retires from the Meadow after too many years to count! Mrs Tofts has been an asset to the school and will be greatly missed by staff, children and parents - many of whom she worked with when they attended the Meadow too! We also say goodbye to Linda Wain who has worked in the school office for over 13 years and is now moving on to pastures new. We would like to thank her for everything that she has done for the Meadow, we will miss her, and we wish her all the best in her next venture.

Looking back over the last term, so many things have happened in our school and the progress that is being made to get the school "back to good and beyond" has been amazing. The staff and the children at the Meadow have been working so hard and it has been wonderful to see how everyone has pulled together to get our school back on track. For all of us at the school, this last term has been such a huge learning curve and now we can see the changes working, it makes all the hard work that is being put in worth it.

On behalf of all of the staff and children at the Meadow school I would like to wish you all a happy New Year.

Nichola Connor, Interim Head Teacher

LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE NEWS

LVC is always a hive of activity and never more so than in the weeks leading up to Christmas. The last half-term brought with it a host of events to enjoy. While our staff and parents are conscious of the activities that they and their children are involved in, a head teacher has a unique perspective on the 'whole' and how each level of enrichment meets the needs of different learners. This is because the head and possibly his or her deputies try to go to everything that time allows, whether it is watching a team compete in a tournament or soaking in the latest concert or dramatic performance. People often ask me whether I feel proud of the children when I see them involved in this way – and the answer is, yes of course – I can't tell you how proud. In many ways this is the best part of my job. It is also the quality and breadth of the different experiences on offer to students outside of the classroom that amazes: our teachers and support staff at the College really do go the extra mile.

In recent weeks we have welcomed back the class of 2013 to their certificate presentation evening (this year our guest of honour was Sir James Paice MP). We have been involved with The School's Shakespeare Festival by performing 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' at The Mumford Theatre in Cambridge, we have taken part in the District Cross Country Finals in addition to numerous rugby, netball and hockey fixtures (the Under-16 rugby team are especially strong this season), we held a 'Children in Need' Bake-off, staged an enterprise competition in association with Dalehead Foods and Waitrose (this year the challenge is to make and market a World Cup burger), we have hosted local pensioners for coffee and carols, given a wonderful Christmas concert in St Mary's Church complete with professional soloists, launched Duke of Edinburgh bronze and The Arts Award with new year groups, entered teams for the National Maths Challenge, been visited by Dr Who and a supersized dalek in the Library and that's on top of the large number of revision clubs that the teachers offer at lunchtime and after school.

I strongly believe that it is breadth of opportunities that make good schools 'great'.

Caroline Derbyshire, Principal



Microchipping will be compulsory for all dog owners in England from 6 April 2016, following an announcement made by the Westminster Government, this has been welcomed by Dogs Trust. The Welsh Government has also announced that microchipping will be compulsory for all dogs in Wales by 1 March 2015

To ensure that microchipping is accessible to all, Dogs Trust in association with Hildersham Parish Council are offering **free microchipping** for dog owners at Hildersham Village Hall on Saturday 18 January from 10am – 3pm. The Dogs Trust want to reach as many dogs and people as possible that would normally not have the opportunity to have this service. This is a great opportunity to get your precious pet microchipped now ahead of 2016.

For more details see www.hildersham.org.uk/parish.htm and www.chipmydog.org.uk

FROM THE (WEST WRATTING) VICARAGE

"He was known as the Kipper. He was two faced and had no guts". A rather harsh judgement visited upon a friend of a friend. It was, I had better make clear, nobody any of you knows, at least I hope not. Being two faced is not regarded as a good thing. Yet it is surprising how many of us are two faced, though in subtle ways. When I was a curate in my first parish, a former incumbent (no names no pack-drill- I will call him Fr X) was revered by many as being so holy and so prayerful, so much so that he never came over to me as being a man I could relate to. I was always grateful to my training vicar for showing me that you could be a priest in the Church of England and a fully paid up member of the human race: not a universal combination. I was fascinated when someone told me that they had met Fr X on holiday and he had been much more unbuttoned, much jollier and generally better company. He asked her on her return not to share that side of him she had witnessed.

Similarly I knew a couple who obviously tried hard to be good disciples, but seemed to exude a sort of sniffiness about any one who didn't come up to their high standards. Until, that is, they played mah-jong. Then I was told all inhibitions were cast aside and they showed a worldliness and a capacity for enjoyment not otherwise on display. My informant said they were so much more likeable. I suggested that they were also probably more Christian, as I think was Fr X on holiday.

It seems to me that one purpose of the Christian life is to try to make sense of the enormous contradictions and ambiguities which go to make up me and indeed everyone else. Certainly the times when I have been happiest in my life when I have felt that all parts of me: my inner being, my physical body and the people and world around me were at one, harmonious. And a religious experience I had a few years ago was a few brief seconds of total peace and harmony, a sense of being at one with God and therefore with everything. That experience was of course pure grace: a gift from God, neither desired nor deserved. I didn't cease to be the jumble of contradictions that most of us are, but somehow they were resolved, albeit briefly. We are, most of us at any rate, two faced to some extent or other.

Actually, it's appropriate to talk about being two faced in the January edition because of course the month is named after Janus, the Roman god of, among other things, doors and transitions, hence the word *janitor*. He is traditionally depicted with two faces, one looking backward and one forward. I ought to have done a piece looking back on 2013 and forward to 2014, but to be honest I thought that could be rather boring. So a good task for two faced January is to acknowledge our own two-facedness, perhaps being grateful for Chesterton's definition of charity as a reverent agnosticism for the complexities of the human soul. Mah-jong, anybody?

John Fellows

PRESS DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 16 January

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