

50p

March 2024

GREETINGS FROM LUDLOW METHODIST CHURCH



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem



The church at Christmas



**ALSO HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS IS -
Kindness, Patience, Love, Enthusiasm,
and a Positive Attitude**

**Don't wait to catch it from others
Be the Carrier**

Stephen Dalton

The answers to December's quiz:

1. Sciatic nerve
2. South America and Antarctica
3. The Old Curiosity Shop
4. Someone Like You
5. Ethiopia
6. Passchendaale
7. Sally Ride
8. As You Like It
9. Finland
10. The evacuation of around 1.5 million people, mainly children, to the relative safety of remote towns and villages in rural areas

Rollercoaster career

1971, the world of finance in turmoil, and we engineers are suffering. I am 46 years old and lose my job twice in six months (senior positions too). I am breadwinner for a wife and three children. Am I afraid? Very.

During the good years we had moved to a larger house, so I had room for a drawing board and plan-file. My wife, Iris, in addition to her normal duties as housewife and mother, set up a table, typed my correspondence, and kept the books. My years of work in the Birmingham Area had given me some useful contacts (and made some friends), so I began to offer my services as a design consultant. Not much doing. It was easier to get an order for a complete machine which I would have to design and supply. Well, why not? I had no workshop, but I knew who did, so we began trading as an engineering company.

Despite a few ups and downs we survived. But the most alarming thing lay ahead. A very important customer in Scotland had run up a huge debt and was not paying it off. At that time, you could fly from Manchester to Dundee in a couple of hours, so I went to see them. Dundee is a small airport, on the bank of the Tay, and as the plane banks over the river you get an exciting view, looking straight down into the water at one point. But if that was a bit scary, it was nothing to compare with what I would hear when I sat with my customer. They themselves were in dire straits, and unable to pay.

At least they were taking steps to deal with the matter, and given time, it should end well, but meanwhile things were alarming. If they failed, so would I. And of course, I too had bills to pay. Unbeknown to me, my principal creditor had already had a crisis meeting with his accountant; if I went down, could he survive? Yes, a worrying time was had by all, until, eventually, it was all sorted, and we could continue.

It is at times like this that one realises what our faith means. "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you". (Ps. 55). Not it, you. And so it was. A time for much prayer and trying to sing with confidence "bright skies will soon be o'er me, where the dark clouds have been". Not to imagine that God would, as it were, wave His hand and all would be well, but to be assured "Best of all, God is with us".

I said to my Dad, "That was a bad time, but we weathered the storm", he replied "We did watch you go white, almost overnight". I hadn't noticed.

Maurice Coleman

British Army Traditions and Customs

A British characteristic is our tendency to make a joke about what should really be a serious issue. This is often misunderstood by our friends and inevitably always by our enemies. Amongst the three Armed Forces this can be a great source of strength, perhaps more so in the army than the others. A soldier's capacity to make light and joke about a situation fraught with danger is well known.

Traditions and customs have remained unchanged for many years and rarely, although not always, pay little heed to modern conventions. They are the backbone of soldier's messes and are guarded zealously.

Traditions sometimes come along by accident, and sometimes they're thrust upon you. It's tradition in the army, and probably in the navy and RAF too, to pass the port to the left at the end of formal dinners (no-one really knows why). Unless you're serving with the Gibraltar Regiment - they pass it to the right! The Governor was their guest at one such dinner and he passed the port decanter to the right, no-one was going to tell him that he was wrong – and so a new tradition was born. A tradition by accident.

The officers of the 85th Foot (Duke of Yorks Light Infantry) saved King George IV from a mob outside a theatre in Brighton. Having proven their loyalty to the Monarch they were given the title 'King's Light Infantry' and excused from drinking the Loyal Toast at dinners. A tradition that their successors continue to this day. A tradition by Royal Decree.

But what about drinking champagne from a chamber pot (hopefully sanitised first)? That is precisely what the successors of the 14th Light Dragoons do at every formal dinner. Following the British victory at the Battle of Vittoria in 1813 (Peninsular War) the Light Dragoons found a solid silver chamber pot belonging to King Joseph of Spain (Napoleon Bonaparte's brother), complete with the arms of Imperial France engraved upon it. At the end of each formal dinner the chamber pot is filled with champagne and passed around for each officer to drink from in turn. As an aside, potteries in Great Britain at this time were producing porcelain chamber pots with a miniature bust of Napoleon set in the middle of the bowl. Bearing in

mind what these chamber pots were designed for, it's not a huge leap to imagine what the British thought of Napoleon.

The habit of taking snuff began in 1702 and soon became 'the thing' for army officers. Many ornamental snuff boxes, very often silver ones, joined the rest of the Regimental silver on display.

Young officers were even given instruction in the correct way to hold the box and to take snuff, often done with much exaggerated formality. A rare and gold snuff box was possessed by the Green Howards. Taken from the coach of Marshal Ney (one of Bonaparte's best Field Marshals). On the lid was a fine miniature of Napoleon, who was supposed to have had one made for each of his Marshals.

In Royal Artillery messes of the 1930s ladies were not allowed in the mess proper, they were confined to Ladies Rooms. Horses on the other hand, well that was a totally different matter and were frequently invited to enter the mess, as were dogs.

The 53rd (Shropshire) Regiment of Foot served as Napoleon's Guard during his exile on St Helena. He became so fond of the officers that he referred to them as 'my redcoats' and gave each one of them a lock of his hair. One of which is held in The Soldier's of Shropshire Museum, Shrewsbury.

Proof, if any were needed, that traditions and customs are timeless is perhaps expressed in several long-standing customs that are still in place and are widely known of.

Piping in the Haggis: All Scottish regiments pipe in the haggis on St Andrew's Day. A small procession of the Pipe-Major playing, the cook with the haggis above his head and the Mess Sergeant carrying the Commanding Officers' dirk on a silver salver will carry out a full circle of the dining tables and then offer the haggis and the dirk to the Commanding Officer who will then pierce it.

Eating of the leek on St David's Day: This is carried out by some Welsh Regiments where the latest joined subaltern (young officer) is expected to eat a complete leek. The first instance of this tradition being recorded is in Boston, Virginia, when even then it was referred to as an ancient custom.

There is nothing to suggest the origins of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers marching with a goat with gilded horns. It was, however, a long standing custom even in 1777. The first Royal goat was presented

by Queen Victoria in 1884 and has subsequently been presented by the sovereign ever since.

Like them or loathe them, military traditions and customs have survived for hundreds of years and the military would be the worse for their loss.

Ron Gittings

'The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.' Often attributed to Oscar Wilde or Kahlil Gibran, but more likely the original was probably a 16th century French theologian.

John Eadie

Shropshire and Marches Circuit Circuit Meetings 2024

- Monday 15 January (forum)
- Monday 4 March (business – Minutes: Sue Taylor)
- Monday 15 April (forum)
- Monday 17 June (business)
- Monday 9 September (business)
- Monday 21 October (forum)
- Monday 2 December (business – Minutes: Sue Taylor)

Meetings will be via the Zoom platform.

Reggie Brown

In my quiz which you will have seen in the December magazine you will have been asked about Operation Pied Piper and the answer concerns evacuees. This has prompted me to write this story about one particular evacuee named Reggie Brown. All our family knew Reggie at various stages of his life and any gaps in our knowledge have been filled with the help of his wife Janet.

I was aged a year and 10 months, my sister was 5 and my brother was 9 when, with mother, we all left West Yorkshire for our destination which was a sleepy little village in East Devon where there were more cows than people. My father arrived earlier in the year for he was due to spend all of WWII in the Lympstone Royal Marine camp. He had found a lovely semi-detached house for us about 2 miles away so, at last, we had somewhere to go.

Within a month or so of us arriving, the village was full of gossip because a large number of evacuees would be turning up from Croydon and accommodation was being sought for each and everyone of them. I don't know how they did it but they were all found homes and our family had the teacher Miss Macfarland, at least that is what my brother and sister called her because they were already at the school, I called her Auntie Rose because she looked like my mother's sister.

Whereas I can imagine the vast majority of the children were upset about leaving their family and friends. Not Reggie, as he looked upon it as a great adventure as he had never left Croydon before. The only times he had ever seen large areas of grass was in the various parks at home. Through the train window he saw fields stretching for miles. He saw cows and sheep and occasional horses, which was something new to him. From time to time he opened the window just to smell the countryside. Wonderful!

When he arrived in the village he couldn't believe his luck to find he would be staying with a farmer and his wife, Bill and Dorothy Havill. Above all Reggie liked the people. The morning after he arrived he saw men going to work greeting each other with loud shouts and laughter. All of them spoke a strange language which took him some weeks to master – but soon he was fluent in the Devon dialect. Bill taught him the crafts of farming and quickly he became a really useful farmer's boy.

On the first Sunday after he arrived Bill and Dorothy Havill took Reggie to the village church. Bill was a bellringer and Dorothy was in the choir.

Reggie wanted to be in the choir after that first visit and eventually, with the help of Dorothy he was accepted. My brother knew him well as they were both in the choir together and Reggie followed my brother as 'top boy'.

It was some considerable time after all the evacuees arrived that Rose Macfarland returned from school looking particularly anxious. Confidentially she told my parents the sad story - the house belonging to Reggie's Mum and Dad in Croydon had taken a direct hit by a German bomb killing them both. Auntie Rose would have to tell Reggie next morning and obviously she was not looking forward to it. She went to the farm early the following morning and although very upset Reggie was not as upset as everyone expected and over the following weeks and months he seemed to get over it quite quickly. Dorothy and Bill Havill must take credit for that because they loved him as if he was their own son. They also made sure he was occupied with doing the things around the farm which he loved.

When VJ Day came Reggie was the only evacuee left in the village but he still had a years schooling to go. After much contemplation he decided to return to Croydon to finish his education. He did his schooling work there but missed the countryside terribly. A few years after schooling National Service beckoned. When he left the RAF, a few years later, he returned to the village involving himself in village life. He was secretary of the Cricket Club. He started a Youth Club. An active member of the Carnival Committee. He started a group of Players which regularly performed in the village hall. He played football, badminton and skittles. Of course, he rejoined the Church Choir.

For all these activities he still thought he should have a better education – he was thinking of university. He didn't want to return to Croydon but nevertheless still thought he could better himself there rather than in Devon. He returned in the early 1960's. Before enrolling into University life he met Janet, his future wife, and together they tried to plan their future. He totally dedicated himself to his studies and ended up with an Honours Degree in English and American Literature together with a post on the academic staff of the University of Kent in Canterbury. Obviously Reggie and Janet made visits to the village from time to time to catch up on village life and gossip but it was well over 20 years before Reggie was to return to the village to live again. He received the sad news that Mr and Mrs Havill were both quite ill and he thought the least he could do was to help in anyway possible and Reggie and Janet returned only to find that Bill and Dorothy died within three weeks of each other.

He learnt that the farm had been willed to him and Reggie decided very quickly to try to put some vitality back into the place. It was a big ask for the farm was in a sorry state. There were many times when he wondered if he had made the right decision.

The work took many years to complete. Reggie threw himself into the work even though he had health issues and, as before, he still got involved with village life. He became a Parish Councillor, Chairman of the History Society. Vice Chairman of the British Legion and Chair of the Village Design Statement (new houses had to be built and his committee had to decide where).

By November 2016 he was quite seriously ill but he still insisted on being a Parade Marshall on Remembrance Sunday. He died the following month. A profound loss to the village but obviously a bigger loss to Janet and their two grown up children.

Geoff Farmery

FUN IN FUND-RAISING GROUP REPORT - 2023

March 31 st	Quiz	131.00*
April 29 th	Teme Spirit (506.00 split)	253.00*
May 13 th	1 st Open Garden	416.15
June 3 rd	2 nd Open Garden	350.50
June 17 th	Rockerfellas/Handbell Ringers	490.00*
July 1 st	3 rd Open Garden	244.70
August 5 th	4 th Open Garden	281.10
October 6 th	Another Quiz	151.50*
October 14 th	Skiffers (200.00 shared)	100.00*
December 2 nd	Celebrate Christmas	1,003.06
		£3,421.01

* These events held in Church will have gift-aid added therefore the final total will be higher.

On behalf of the Group I would like to thank all who contributed in any way to the wonderful total which, once again, was so unexpected at the beginning of the year.

More fund-raising events will be coming up in 2024.

*Maureen Farmery,
Fund-Raising Group.*

Lent Lunches

As a consequence of the covid restrictions , for the last 2 years, just 2 Lent lunches have been held in St Laurence's Church, Ludlow. However they were a great success financially, and equally importantly, in terms of fellowship. Visitors as well as local people sat down together for soup and bread. Over £700 was donated to Christian Aid. This year the plan is to repeat the pattern.

The date is Friday 8th March.

The Methodist team is in action on the 8th. I would be grateful for volunteers to make soup and to help with the lunches on the day.

Whichever team is on duty, all are invited to come and support Christian Aid. With hardship across the world caused by conflict or weather conditions or both, the aid agencies are in greater need than ever for resources to support relief projects on the ground.

Thank you,

**Janet Williams, for the local Christian Aid committee.
Tel 01584 875220 or email: jewilliams53@yahoo.co.uk**

Prayer Spot

Loving God

I see the news and I am afraid.
Violence is spiralling out of control.
I don't know what to think or feel.
The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair
feels very close to hand.
Help me to remember that nothing in all creation
Can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus.
May your perfect love for me cast out my fear
and free me to discern what is mine to do
amidst the chaos of this suffering world.

Amen

Green Pages

A round-up of environmental and climate-change news
including advice about our progress as an Eco-Church

March 2024

Give insects a home!

Like us, invertebrates need somewhere to live and they need food. Messy gardens with some piles of wood and leaves provide shelter and food. However, we are increasingly turning our gardens into tidy outside rooms, leaving little suitable opportunities for our insects.

We can help them in our gardens, by providing suitable insect homes. The advantages are:

- You do not need expensive materials; you can re-use or upcycle materials that you already have
- It can be an attractive and interesting feature in your garden
- If you have children, or grandchildren, in your family, it is a really fun project to get them involved in
- You are taking a small step to helping our wildlife at a time when it is most critical
- Being outside and making things is good for mental health.

Here's how to make insect homes:

1. Choose a site. Different conditions will attract different insects. The site needs to be level and firm. Pallets are ideal for large insect 'hotels' as they have gaps already in them. Create different size nooks and crannies.
2. Use materials such as bark, tubes made of wood or bamboo, larger holes made with tiles or stones, dried leaves and sticks, corrugated cardboard, dried leaves (ie try and mimic a forest floor).
3. Add a roof, use wood, old tiles, old roof felt, anything you can find that will keep it reasonably dry.
4. Solitary bees and other pollinators like sun, so a south facing site is best. Other invertebrates such as woodlice and earwigs prefer shady spots. Have an insect 'home' in each spot.

Care for Creation meetings

The Ludlow ecumenical Care for Creation group last met in February, and the main theme to emerge was that of single-use plastic. We reflected on its dangers to the environment and the need for us all to cut back on its use. At our meeting we also thought about consumerism and the need to cut back on what we buy unnecessarily (e.g. fast fashion) and try to reduce, reuse, recycle, repair and refuse.

'Earth Day' this year is again on 22nd April with the theme 'Planet v Plastics'. Emphasis will be placed on the need to reduce single-use plastics. Look out for more information later. Before then we encourage everyone to join 'The Big Plastic Count', 11-17th March. Please sign up on their website (*there is a link on the front page of our churchwebsite*). From there you can download forms to help you count all the single-use plastic you use during that week. This will provide statistics for the Global Plastics Treaty, later this year.

On Tuesday 12th March at 3.30 pm there will be a meeting to talk about our church's journey towards the Eco Church Gold Award. We have made progress, but we need to do more. To achieve this, as many people as possible need to be involved and to understand what we are aiming for. Gaining a Gold Award needs to be a whole church effort, so please come along to this important meeting.

There is also a Circuit Care for Creation group. We have organised three annual Circuit Away Days, and last month we started to think about what to do this year. The object is to get to know others in our large circuit while also sharing together how we can, more responsibly, care for God's creation. In connection with this, the next circuit open Forum on zoom will be on Monday 15th April at 7.00pm, and the topic may be 'caring for creation'. The Circuit Forums are not just for those who would normally attend the Circuit Meeting, but for a wider gathering of our church congregations to air their views and engage with the rest of the Circuit. The plan is to join the Forum as a group, assembled at Ludlow Methodist Church. In this way more people can be involved. Please look out for more information nearer the time in the church notices.

DEFRA's New Waste Reduction Policy

The UK's 'Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) has unveiled a new waste reduction policy, aimed at significantly reducing waste across the country by 2030:

- to cut total waste generation by 15% from current levels,
- to increase the recycling rate to 75% for municipal waste (up from around 45% currently),
- to slash food waste from farms to households by 50%,
- to phase out landfill usage for all recyclable waste.

DEFRA's announcement comes amid mounting public pressure to take action on issues like single-use plastics, food waste, and problems caused by overflowing landfills. Research shows that the average UK citizen produces over 400kg of waste per year, so there is a clear need for bolder steps to curb waste and promote sustainability. Key measures for new regulations on waste treatment and disposal include:

- Banning recyclable materials from landfills and incinerators by 2025, to make recycling the only option for materials like paper, glass, and certain plastics.
- Introducing mandatory weekly food waste collections for all local authorities, to make it easier for households to reduce a major source of waste.
- Introducing charges for single-use plastics like cutlery, plates, and polystyrene cups.
- Extending producer responsibility for packaging, electronics, and other consumer goods.

These regulations will force businesses and consumers to think harder about waste. A core part of DEFRA's strategy involves placing more responsibility for waste reduction on manufacturers, importers, and retailers. This shifts the financial burden of waste management from taxpayers alone onto businesses. It creates an incentive for companies to minimise waste from the design stage, rather than producing hard-to-recycle packaging without accountability.

Finally, DEFRA's policy commits significant resources for promotional campaigns to raise public awareness of waste and recycling. DEFRA's targets stand a greater chance of being met if the public understands the environmental imperatives and practical steps for reducing waste.

Zero Hour Campaign

This is a 42,000 person-strong grassroots organisation working to build support for the **Climate and Ecology Bill** by persuading MPs and politicians at all levels of government to endorse the proposed legislation. The bill, which is currently before the House of Commons, would ensure that the UK Government:

- reduces greenhouse gas emissions in line with the global carbon budget of 1.5°C,
- reverses the damage to the natural world by 2030,
- establishes a climate and nature Citizens' Assembly to recommend measures for inclusion across all government strategies.

The bill was returned to Westminster in May 2023 by (Labour's) Olivia Blake MP, which brought an increased number of Labour MPs to the campaign, all calling for a joined-up plan to address the nature and climate crises. Collectively 180 MPs and Peers from every major political party now back the CE Bill. To mark World Environment Day in 2023 the campaign handed in a 18,000-strong petition at No.10 calling on Rishi Sunak to bring in urgent measures to halt and reverse nature loss.

Emails, tweets, and letters are important, but why not catch your MP's attention by sending them a paper bird, frog or orchid? Find out more about this fun origami action at [Zerohour.uk/origamiaction/](https://zerohour.uk/origamiaction/).

This year we are being encouraged to sign a new petition specific to the parliamentary candidates in South Shropshire. This can be found at

<https://action.zerohour.uk/south-shropshire> and could be more important than ever as we head towards a general election

If you want to know more go to zerohour.uk The list of MPs supporting the Bill shows that very few Conservatives have signed up – an opportunity to contact our local MPs to lobby them for support.



The Green Pages of the Ludlow Methodist Church monthly magazine are brought to you by the Caring for Creation Group. For more information please contact Elizabeth Wright.

A summary of the Ludlow Food Bank Annual Report for 2023 compiled by Ruth Davies.

Showing God's love to people in crisis.

If you know of someone we could help get them to contact us via a professional such as Connexus, Ludlow Foyer, Citizens Advice, GP, a Church, Hands Together, the Domestic Abuse Team, Social worker or school. We don't check on each applicant's circumstances; this has been done by those who refer people to us.

In 2023 we gave food to 9% of the population of Ludlow because we gave out 669 food parcels, which would feed 1015 different individuals and fill about 6 500 supermarket bags with food, sanitary items, toilet rolls and nappies and even dental kits. (In 2022 we gave out 789 parcels.) Generally, demand is increasing; in 2008 we gave out 50, in 2015 222, and in 2020 560 parcels. The numbers are slightly down because we have tried to give out fewer repeats, and the Open Table and Hands Together Community Fridge schemes have helped some people.

Thank you for your prayer and donations of money, food or time. We can only give to our clients because you give to us. We can only give to our clients because you give to us.

In 2023 the largest group needing help were single parent families (166), then single men (156) and then 142 two-parent families. We have fed 551 children, (the figures vary between 66 and 90 each month.) We have also fed 182 cats and 208 dogs. Often people are more concerned about food for a pet than for themselves and have even given the animal food donated for them.

We do not pay any staff, or rent to Ludlow Baptist Church for the use of their premises, but we have spent over £21 000 on vouchers for local shops, almost £26 000 for groceries, and almost £4,600 for fuel poverty payments, making a total of over £51 000 this year.

The most common request for a parcel is from working people whose wages do not cover their bills. This is a real change; in the past the main reason was delays in benefit payment. Other reasons can include being a victim of theft, being homeless, ill health, losing a job or suffering domestic abuse. We also helped 12 Ukrainian refugees. We have helped 97 people aged 16-24, 312 aged 25-34, 230 45-64 and 30 aged 65+.

We are a 'Referral Only' food bank; which means applicants have to have their appeal supported by a professional such as a social prescriber, social worker, church, the Job Centre, Hands Together, the Foyer, Connexus or CAB.

80 % of those we have helped live in the town, though we have helped people in Bitterley, Bucknell, Clee Hill, Clun, Craven Arms and Leominster. Some of these places have their own food bank which may not open every day of the week, whereas we are open 2 hours each day, Monday-Friday.

We are very grateful for the support of local supermarkets and shops acting as collecting points, including Aldi, Tesco, Myriad Organics, One Stop, Applegreen, Blue Cross, (pet food) Sainsbury's, Spar and Teme Leisure, and the Library.

Everyone, including babies, receives a voucher for use in local butchers and greengrocers for £5.00 and £2.50 for the bakers. This gives people dignity and choice. At Christmas we also gave a Deli voucher for £5 for treats.

We have a team of volunteers who collect items from shops and bring them to the food banks. We have also been greatly helped by Moor Park and Ludlow CE Schools and many groups who make donations of money and produce, especially at Christmas and Harvest.

We manage the Fuel Poverty Fund which 'tops up' people's energy cards or keys. The money for this comes from pensioners who have donated all or part of their "Winter Fuel Allowance." This helped 173 people at a cost of £4 600. If you would like to donate to some of your winter fuel payment this fund the details are below.

Ludlow is not just your street, it's also home to real people in real need. THANK YOU for your prayerful support and for putting an extra item in your shopping to leave in one of the collecting points around town or in the church vestibule.

Fuel Poverty Fund Sort code 40-30-30, account number 01274554, the account is in the name of Ludlow Baptist Church and please mark the back of your cheque 'fuel poverty fund'.



Children at Junior Church making nativity scenes in egg boxes, decorating different types of Christmas tree decorations, card making, Christmas pictures to colour, crosswords, wordsearches and more.

Cathy Pritchard

Parental permission was obtained before these photographs were published

Andrew Newton's

Dreamers

(How one man's vision helped to change the lives of the people of Hereford)

A Concert Performance by
Teme Spirit Choir and Band

Narration Recorded
by Jules Hudson

at
SALVATION ARMY, HEREFORD

Saturday March 16th

At 7pm

Tickets: £7.50 (U16 - FREE)

Tel: 01432 264543
or 07484 870036

Also available to buy at the door

For further details contact Pip Hollins

Three kings, several saints and a monk.

Final part: St. Cuthbert and his travels.

When Ron and I visited Durham in September, we were delighted that Cuthbert 'was in'! On both previous occasions he wasn't there – the shrine was being refurbished or the coffin had been removed for research at the university. So, who was Cuthbert and why is he revered to such an extent?

Cuthbert was born in about AD634. Nothing is known of Cuthbert's family, although traditionally young second and subsequent sons who had no inheritance were given to monasteries. For Cuthbert, early experiences became understood as miracles. For example, when Cuthbert became lame as a child with an infected knee, his friends carried him outside to lie in the sunshine. A wealthy man on horseback approached him, asking for alms and sustenance. Cuthbert responded that he would help, gladly, but he could not stand. The stranger examined his knee, recommending a wheat/milk poultice remedy. His friends believed the stranger was an angel in disguise, and that the cure was miraculous. Although this was standard medication for infections during this era, we should appreciate the reality of life then, and people's mentality. It was a time of fear of the unexplained, especially anything supernatural. Suggestions exist that Cuthbert had an extraordinarily perceptive character, with an affinity for birds and animals, similar to St. Francis much later.

Cuthbert began his calling at Melrose Abbey, taking long missionary journeys, often on horse-back. By then, he was a trained teacher, preaching with eloquence, demonstrating his vision and faith. Following the Synod of Whitby in 664, when those supporting the Ionian view lost their case, Cuthbert, and his abbot Eata, moved to Lindisfarne. Cuthbert's role was mission and administration of the monastery. His fame as a healer, the rapt devotion when saying the mass and his miracles sometimes attracted envious criticism from his fellow brothers. Now desiring more privacy to devote himself to prayer, in 676 he persuaded his superiors to allow his withdrawal to one of the small Farne Islands. He lived a solitary life for many years, relishing an austerity of mind and body. He wanted the life of a hermit, on an island lacking water, crops or trees, frequently being visited by 'evil spirits' in a location ill-suited for human habitation. Some brothers helped to build a small dwelling with a protective rampart. They dug a well, though the ground was hard & rocky. A crop of wheat failed the

first year, to be replaced with barley that flourished - interpreted as a further sign of Cuthbert's holiness. Yet this fame attracted a disadvantage. For all his desire to be solitary, many visitors (including the king) made the nine-mile boat trip to commune with him. This high regard brought its own pressure to accept the bishopric at Lindisfarne, although later, at the age of 52, he resigned and retreated again to his beloved island. He died on 20 March 687, having directed his burial should be there too. With foresight, he requested that, should there be a need to remove his bones from the grave, they 'went wherever they could'.

Miracles began almost as soon afterwards. A boy afflicted with a demon was cured by a particle of earth that had touched some of the water used to wash Cuthbert's body. Yet the most recorded miracle – the one that established Cuthbert's saintliness for hundreds of years, was when the coffin was opened. Normally, burials were left undisturbed for around a decade. It was traditional to remove the body then to wash the bones. However, for Cuthbert it was discovered that his body was not only intact, but also well preserved after 11 years. It was as if he was still alive and just sleeping. His clothing was clean and 'undefiled', looking like new. To a modern mind, the lack of corruption is explained by the composition of the soil or dryness of the site. To those in C7, it was interpreted as an undisputed sign of holiness.

His 'Life' was written shortly after death. Lindisfarne became a place of peace and pilgrimage, benefiting from a devoted community, patronage and its royal family connections (after all King Oswald had been the abbey's founder). However, by 750, church and royal politics had shifted, and the king and archbishop of York lay siege to the abbey, taking the then bishop prisoner. Subsequent annals record how the major Northumbrian churches were 'mired in the cycle of violence'.

Cuthbert rested in his tomb until 7 June 793. This was the day that rewrote Anglo-Saxon allegiances – the day the Vikings launched the first of many raiding parties at a defenceless Christian monastery. The Vikings sacked the abbey, paying no heed to the reverence shown to this Holy Island. For them, Christianity was irrelevant. The attraction was the wealth – valuables of gold and jewels, and slaves from the brotherhood and abbey community. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 793 says 'the ravages of these heathen men

miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne, with plunder and slaughter'.

Did Cuthbert escape this devastation? Yes. The monks fled from several attacks and when they returned everything was either stolen or destroyed, except Cuthbert's tomb. This was another sign of his holiness. Recollecting Cuthbert's dying wish for the brothers to take him with them, that is what happened. They travelled for many years across northern England and Ireland, eventually finding a resting place in the Roman town of Chester-le-Street. Here he stayed for 110 years, attracting vast amounts of wealth for the church. Yet, St. Cuthbert was still not content, and revealed in a vision to the monks that had carried him so far and for so long, that his ultimate desire was Dunholme – modern Durham.

And there you have it – full circle, from St. Aidan on Lindisfarne to St. Cuthbert in his cathedral.

BMG.

Sources:

James Graham-Campbell, the Viking World, 2013.

C.J.Stranks, The Life and Death of St. Cuthbert, 1987.

J F Webb (trans.) The Age of Bede, 2004.

Adult: A person who has stopped growing at both ends but is still growing in the middle.

Beauty Parlour: A place where women curl up and dye.

Red Meat:

'You shouldn't eat red meat'

'I like red meat'

'You shouldn't eat red meat'

'My father lived to be 99'

'Did he eat red meat?'

'Yes, and he minded his own business!'

'Lenten Valentines'

During February both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day fell on the same day! The link between the two can be summed up in terms of the nature of real love! Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, focuses on learning to love God more, as we give Him space in our lives. This is what Jesus found when He was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. (Luke 4:1-13).

Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread. Yet loving God and His word comes before satisfying physical desires.

Satan tempted Jesus to worship him. However, worshipping God is an expression of loving God and serving Him.

Finally, He was tempted to put God to the test, by jumping off the Temple. Real love for God does not put Him to the test, but wants to obey Him.

Lent also teaches us how to live out the love of God in practical ways, as we follow Jesus in the way of the Cross. We see this clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Saint Valentine.

Valentine was a Christian who demonstrated the importance of sharing God's love with others. We know little about him, except that he was a priest who lived in the 3rd Century AD and that he was martyred on 14th February. Emperor Claudius felt that soldiers in the Roman Army were distracted from their duty by their wives, and so had attempted to outlaw marriage. It is believed that Valentine married couples in secret, which is why today we celebrate our love for one another on his day.

In trying to understand the meaning of her revelations from God, Julian of Norwich found:

'What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was His meaning.'

- Still water and still religion freeze the quickest. - *Anon*
- Some Christians are not only like salt that has lost its savour, but like pepper that has lost its pep. - *Albert George Butzer*
- Christianity is the total commitment of all I know of me to all I know of Jesus Christ. - *William Temple*
- Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity. - *E H Chapin*