



Under the Downs



3 Country Churches Nestling Under the Downs

View From the Rectory

Christmas and New Year are times for hopes and dreams. Maybe there are particular presents we are hoping for, maybe it's the prospect of meeting again those we haven't seen in a long time, and perhaps there are great plans that we hope will unfold as the new year progresses. Maybe it is a deep longing for a particular event to come to pass and for many, just a simple hope that the coming year will be better than the last.

Mary and Joseph too, as they set out on a long journey on that very first Christmas, would have been in just the same situation. They too were longing for a particular event to come to pass, the birth of their child, the Christ Child, and with the hope that this birth would, in the coming years, bring hope to all the people they knew who were living under the oppression of Roman rule.

And there were plenty of dreams involved in this story too. Joseph is told

in a dream that it is perfectly right for him to marry Mary, even though she is already expecting a baby: the wise men discovered Jesus through a vision, and then were warned in a dream not to tell King Herod that they had found the baby, and Joseph was warned in another dream to take his family to Egypt where they would be safe. There are more dreams to be discovered in the Christmas story as told by St Luke and St Matthew.

Our dreams and hopes are waiting to be fulfilled too, and like those famous figures of the Christmas story, we need to take action to start them on their way.

What are your dreams? What will you do as a first step?

Every blessing to you and your families at this Christmas time.

Linda

What's Christingle?

First of all, it's a Christmas celebration for all the family.

We sing traditional Christmas Carols, and hear the Christmas story.

And then we come to the Christingle itself, a decorated orange with lots of meaning, another tradition which started somewhere in Eastern Europe about two centuries ago.

It has a wonderful story, all about Christmas presents, attached to it, and we tell that story too.

So come along to St Catherine's Cocking at 2.30pm on Christmas Eve to hear both the Christmas stories and receive a Christingle.

The collection at this service will be donated to the Children's Society.



December 2017 - January 2018

Merry Christmas!

We wish you all a really blessed Christmas time, and a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.



Carol Singing in Heyshott

During the week before Christmas, out and about in Heyshott during the evening, you may well come across some carol singers.

Over several evenings a group (usually different people on the various evenings) comes together to sing the familiar carols, with a focus on a different part of the village each evening.

We begin on Sunday 17th December, gathering at St James Church at 6.30pm.

The final evening is in the Unicorn, starting at 8pm.

For more information, especially about the days in between, contact Nick Sherwin.

All collections donated to the Children's Society.



Cocking Village Lunch Club

The Bluebell may be closed, but the Lunch Club goes on! Sue is kindly providing Christmas Lunch at the Moonlight Tearooms, on Wednesday 6 December at 12.30pm. Cost for this special lunch will be £9.50 per head, including drinks. Please contact Glynis Mancini if you are planning to come.

Children's Party

The Cocking Village Hall Committee holds a party for children every year and this year has extended an invitation to all our three parishes to take advantage of this event. The date is Sunday 10 December at the Village Hall starting at 2.00pm. The afternoon contains games, as well as crafts, followed by tea and then a visit from Father Christmas. The afternoon is free of charge and all we ask is that the child is sent with a wrapped present with their name at a maximum cost of £5. Grandchildren are welcome. Please contact Gwen Miles [01243 539454](tel:01243539454) to register a place.

Sing-Along-a-Christmas

This is on Tuesday 12 December at Cocking Village Hall starting 6.30pm. Not only we will be singing Carols, but also festive songs as well as listening to a variety of stories. We finish the evening with a Christmas Quiz. There is no charge for the evening and you can enjoy mulled wine and home made mince pies.



Light looked down

Light looked down and beheld darkness:
'Thither will I go,' said Light.
Peace looked down and beheld war:
'Thither will I go,' said Peace.
Love looked down and beheld hatred:
'Thither will I go,' said Love.
So came light and shone,
So came peace and gave rest,
So came Love and brought life,
And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Laurence Housman

St Catherine's Christmas Charity

This year we will be supporting the Children's Air Ambulance Service which we hope our families will not have to use, but is in many cases a life saver for those who do. Look out for the Red Bucket which we use to collect your donations - this year we are arranging a Christmas Draw where the first prize will be a Hamper worth £100 with items that will be of use at the festive time.



Midhurst Garden Club

Monday 11 December

For the Christmas meeting the Midhurst Garden Club looks forward to being entertained by The Dowager Lady Crabtree, a comedy character performed by a female impersonator, Paul James in the style of Hinge and Bracket. Her comedy talk "Glad to be Grey" is a celebration of maturity and proof that old age is to be enjoyed rather than endured. With clean, gentle humour, reminiscences and no offensive language, Lady Crabtree brings merriment to any occasion.

Come along and enjoy an hilarious evening together with Prosecco and Festive nibbles.

Time: 7.00pm for 7.30pm. Members £1.00 Visitors/Guests very welcome £5.00.

Venue: The South Downs Memorial Hall, North Street, Midhurst.

For more information about the Club please contact Denise Skinner 01730 814194, askinner3@sky.com or check our website midhurstgardenclub.co.uk

Burn's Lunch

Thursday 25th January at 12.30pm in Cocking Village Hall. Yes it's a lunch, rather than the conventional supper, as winter evenings are a bit dark and dreary!

There is no charge for the event and all that is asked for is a donation to cover the costs.

We are hoping the same Chef who cooked our meal at the Harvest lunch will be preparing the Haggis.

Please put this date in your diary, and let David Imlach know if you will be attending.

Wake Me up When It's Over

by Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust

Well that was a scary year wasn't it? Nuclear threats, freak storms and headlines filled with hate. Never before in my life have I felt such a strong urge to just curl up in a ball and go to sleep for a very, very long time. This defeatist attitude is a way of life for the hazel dormouse who each year scrawls the words 'do not disturb' across its calendar for November, December, January, February, March and April and turns in for a long, long nap.



The feeling that your future is quickly becoming uncertain and dangerous is one which we can now all relate to. For the dormouse it's an annual event. The onset of colder weather each autumn signals that the dormouse diet of flowers, fruit, seeds, insects and nuts will soon vanish. So each winter instead of struggling to survive it simply shuts down and sleeps. Dormice are nocturnal, feeding at night amongst trees and bushes. In October they can double in weight as they stock up on food before hard times arrive. Which reminds me, I need to pick up a few trolleys full of tinned goods next time I'm in Tesco.

When they have sufficiently stuffed their cute little faces these rotund rodents descend to a ground-floor dormitory, a tightly woven nest under moss and leaves, and become dormant. Heart-rate and breathing reduce by over 90% and body temperature is dropped to just a few degrees above freezing. This means dormice don't need much energy to stay alive and valuable fat reserves are burnt very slowly. Not many British mammals actually hibernate. Sure, badgers and squirrels enter a deep sleep for longer periods but they're not hibernating – they're merely in 'stand by' mode and can reawaken quickly. Full hibernation requires a complete shutdown, pulling the power plug (almost) completely out of the wall. Of our British mammals just dormice, hedgehogs and the bats hibernate.

Yet it isn't just Britain's longest lie-in that has earned the dormouse its sleepy reputation. Even after it has woken up in May the dormouse will readily hit the 'snooze' button and drop back into a torpid semi-hibernation as a way of avoiding any hassle. Not much food available yet? Back to sleep. Too wet to go out and find food? Back to sleep. Simply can't be bothered? Back to sleep. Sleep seems like an easy alternative to life's problems but hibernation and torpor have a high price; if a predator finds you you're too tired to wake up and run away.

So as our world shuts down around us and compassion, respect and hope get stripped away we can't just shut down and forget about it like the dormouse. We can't let 'em catch us sleeping. We have to stay wide awake and vigilant, ready to stand up and make the world around us a better place. Let's hope that when that sleepy ol' dormouse wakes up again in 2018 the world will be a little bit brighter. For everyone.



January

The snow has melted now,
Uncovered on the lawn
The holly that we threw
Out when the year was done.
The crimson berries glow
Brilliant against the green,
And on a sculptured bough
Hard, black as ebony,
A robin-redbreast flings
Into the winter sky
His little sparks of song
Like promises of Spring.

Douglas Gibson



The Christmas Season in Our Churches

What's on:

Sunday 3rd December	3pm	Advent Carol Service	St Catherine Cocking
Sunday 10th December	3pm	Carol Service	St Mary Bepton (no morning service at Bepton)
Tuesday 12th December	6.30pm	Sing-along-a-Christmas	Cocking Village Hall
Sunday 17th December onwards		Carols in Heyshott	
Sunday 24th December	10am	Joint Communion Service	St Mary Bepton
	2.30pm	Christingle Service	St Catherine Cocking
	4.30pm	Crib Service	St James Heyshott
	8pm	Carols at the Unicorn	The Unicorn, Heyshott
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass	St Catherine Cocking
Monday 25th December	9:30am	Christmas Day Communion	St Catherine Cocking
	9.30am	Christmas Day Communion	St Mary Bepton
	11.15pm	Christmas Day Communion	St James Heyshott
Sunday 31st December	10am	Joint Communion Service	St Catherine Cocking



Church Service Times

There is a fifth Sunday in December: this month our joint Benefice service is at St Catherine's, Cocking at 10am

This is the usual pattern, but occasionally there are changes - please check the church noticeboards. This is especially important at festival times such as Christmas and Easter



St Mary Bepton

11.15am 1st Sunday of the month Matins BCP
2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays Matins with Holy Communion BCP

St Catherine of Siena Cocking

9.30am Every Sunday
1st Sunday of the month Family Communion CW
2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays Holy Communion CW

St James Heyshott

11.15am 1st Sunday of the month Family Communion CW
9.30am 2nd Sunday of the month Holy Communion BCP
9.30am 3rd Sunday of the month Matins BCP
11.15am 4th Sunday of the month Holy Communion CW
6.00pm 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays Evensong BCP
3rd Sunday Compline

On a 5th Sunday of the month, there is a joint service at 10.00 am at one of our churches - please check the notice boards or our magazine.
CW - Common Worship is the modern language service BCP - Book of Common Prayer is the traditional service