

YOUR

JANUARY 2025

ALMHOUSE

MAGAZINE

2025

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Contents

*Welcome to Your
Almshouse
Magazine*

THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

Christmas Lunch **4**

Epiphany Sunday **11**

Residents' Survey
Feedback **14**

Armchair Travel
Cuba **16**

Art Corner
Melanie Stapelkamp **17**

REGULAR ARTICLES

Past Events **4-8**

Forthcoming
Events **8-11**

Local News, Events
& Information **18-19**

Entertainment **20-21**

Mind and Body **22**

Fun and Games
24-26



Farewell

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to:

Pat Platt RIP
Hickey's Almshouses

Your Words and Photos!

Contribute to our Next Issue

If you would like to contribute to our next issue, the deadline is **Friday 17th January**.

As a guide on word count, a half page article is ideally about 170 words. Give the article to your Scheme Manager, or email to c.richards@richmondcharities.org.uk

Photo Credits:

Contents Page: *Egyptian Goose* by Juliet Ames-Lewis

Back cover: *Winter Sun in Bushy Park* by Juliet Ames-Lewis

Editorial Committee & Content:

Juliet Ames-Lewis
Lorraine Bradley
Rebecca Evans
Debbie Flaherty
Chantal Richards
Derrick Thompson
& Mike Townsin.

Magazine Design:

Chantal Richards
& Eden Richards



This magazine is recyclable.
Please feel free to share your magazine with others.

Dates for Your Diary

Monday 6th January

Zumba with Clare
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 8

Monday 6th January



Nativi-tea and Christingle Afternoon
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 9

Tuesday 7th January

Mindfulness Sessions for Residents
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 9

Tuesday 14th January



Food Glorious Food
Pauline's House

Details on page 9

Wednesday 15th January



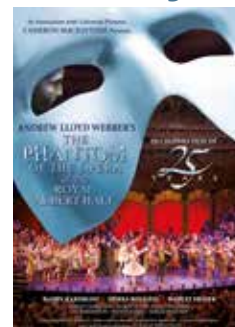
Film Club - Thelma
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 10

Thursday 23rd January



Burns' Supper
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 9

Wednesday 29th January



Film Club Special - Phantom of the Opera
Hickey's Chapel
Details on page 10

Forthcoming Out and About Days

Tuesday 14th January: Keeping Time: Clocks by Boulle from France, in the time of Louis XIV. at The Wallace Collection Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN

Tuesday 11th February: Orchids of Peru at Kew Gardens:

Please book with your Scheme Manager as places are limited. We meet at Richmond Station at 10am on the day.

Annual Christmas Lunch

at The Richmond Hill Hotel

by David Baker

I have just been to my first Christmas Lunch at the Richmond Hill Hotel courtesy of The Richmond Charities.

I didn't quite know what to expect, but thought it might be a sociable affair, with a chance for people to catch up on events of the past year whilst enjoying a hearty festive meal. This was the case, but so much more.

On arrival, we were all greeted by the amazing team that organised this event. Aperitifs were offered on silver trays by friendly hotel staff. Then people began to be seated at the tables spread around the spacious room, which were decorated with yuletide wreaths and banquet style layout.

A Christmas three course meal with wine followed, and everyone began to settle into relax mode. Nothing was rushed, and in between courses there was a good opportunity to wander and chat to the team and new friends.

Then, after pudding, people seemed to huddle together, and as I looked around, I was reminded of an antiquarian bookshop I know. All the books, like these people, were together under one roof. Some were upright, others leaning slightly, but all with their own unique story to tell. Here was real history!

As the chatter and laughter then grew in volume, so did the music, and we were serenaded with Christmas classics, then 50s smooch, followed by 70s pop hits. Then the dancing started!!

I now know that this wasn't just a celebration of Christmas — it was a celebration of Life itself.





Out and About Visit: Review of The Royal Pharmaceutical Society

by Richard Yardley

We arrived at Tower Hill underground station on the District line, we stopped for a moment to look at the Tower of London and London Bridge, then walked on passing the Royal Mint Building (which is now empty and the Chinese would like to move the embassy there from Portland Place). On to Pret in the Moretown development which is on the east side of St. Katharine Docks.

After enjoying a refreshment break we walked back to the pharmaceutical museum.

If you were sick in the 1800s, who would you turn to? Back then, anyone could set a stall and sell you whatever medicines they liked. Drugs were completely unregulated and unrestricted. As a patient, you wouldn't know if you were getting the right drug, a fake drug or something that would poison you.

In April 1841 The Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain was founded. In February 1843, the society was granted a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria. The word 'Royal' was used from 1988 when Queen Elizabeth II agreed that the title 'Royal' should be granted to the Pharmaceutical Society.

This museum was very well laid out with lots of jars and bottles to look at. The white bear is an 18th century idea of using bear grease rubbed on their heads to stop hair loss.

We all returned home on the District line back to Richmond; no one was lost to the crocodile.



Out and About: Review of Kew Sparkle

by Richard Yardley



Kew Sparkle is now in its 17th year, held on the first Friday of December.

The event also raises funds for local charities — this year supporting Skylarks.

There was a funfair with spinning teacups, a pirate ship and choirs providing Christmas music. There were too many food stalls! We had a cup of something in the local Italian coffee shop. Sadly, this year, there were no animals due to the coming storm I guess. Still a nice time was had by all.

www.skylarks.charity

Christmas Carol Concert

by Chantal Richards

A truly festive and warming evening at this year's angel themed Christmas Carol concert. The beautiful chapel was resplendent with fairy lights, paper angels and a superb Christmas tree. There wasn't a spare seat in the house as we held our song sheets and flickering battery candles. We were joined by the Mayor Councillor Richard Pyne and so many residents, staff and trustees.

There was a merry mix of carols and readings by Nigel and Gwen Davis, David Thomas, Sheila Walker and Margaret Goddard. The choir was magnificent and enormously therapeutic reminding us of the importance and nostalgia of Christmas. A collection was made for The Children's Society raising £206.75.



Review of The Christmas Craft Afternoon Tea

by Debbie Flaherty

Well, what a great start to the festive season and so good to see so many residents in the Chapel for what turned out to be a very successful afternoon.

The effort and love put into the Christmas crafts by the residents was very special. A big thank you to all those who spent time making such lovely things.

The Ukulele group played Christmas classics and residents joined in for a festive singsong.

All that with good food and drink (planned by Jo and Linda) made for a lovely afternoon.



Feeding the Birds and Foxes

by **Juliet Ames-Lewis**

Please may I remind all residents of what it states in the Residents' Handbook which is that residents are not allowed to put food out for birds or animals (including foxes) either on the ground or in feeders on any of our almshouse estates.

Review of The Salvation Army Christmas Carol Service

by **Margaret Goddard**

On 1st December nine intrepid explorers led by Derrick and Jan made our way through the wilds of Middlesex to the Salvation Army centre in Staines.



On our arrival we were given a warm welcome, seated in comfortable chairs and supplied with mince pies and mulled wine.

Thereafter we were enthralled. Bands played, choirs sang, stars twinkled on the ceiling, and we joined in lots of carols.

The theme was 'Stars' and we were all given a small wicker-woven star. At the front five stars were lit in sequence to represent Isaiah's prophecy describing the expected "Messiah: Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace".

At the end a small child danced up the aisle, touched a switch and the manger in front of her lit up with sparkling stars!

An enchanting beginning to the Advent season of preparation for the birth of Jesus.

Zumba With Clare

by **Linda Prendergast**

Great News for 2025! Clare will be running another 6-week course starting on Monday 6th January.

What is Zumba?

Zumba's most well-known and popular program is its namesake class, 'Zumba'. This dance class features high and low-intensity intervals that help improve cardiovascular fitness while also enhancing balance, coordination, agility and, to some degree, strength through the application of beginner-accessible choreography.

Classes typically consist of Latin-inspired songs, starting with a slower warm-up song, building intensity throughout the workout, and ending with a cool-down song.

Even if you're not a strong dancer, the choreography is repetitive and designed to be built upon, so most people will catch on to the moves as they go.



You don't need any special dance skills to succeed in Zumba classes but those that have natural rhythm may pick up on the moves faster. Still no one is keeping score, so just dance, let go, and have fun.

All dates will be published in the monthly events leaflet.

There's no need to book, just turn up!



Nativi-Tea and Christingle Afternoon

 **Monday 6th**
January, 3pm
Hickey's Chapel



Come and view a variety of Nativity Sets, have a cup of tea (or coffee) and some cake, hear the story of the Christingle

and make a Christingle to take home.

Donations will be taken for The Children's Society, the largest non-government provider of children's services in the United Kingdom.

Food Glorious Food



The next Food Glorious Food session will be on Tuesday 14th January at Pauline's house, 3 Hickey's.

Time: 11am - 1pm.

She will be cooking a risotto.

Up-and-Coming Mindfulness sessions for The Richmond Charities' Residents

by **Linda Prendergast**

New sessions begin on: Tuesday 7th January 11am at Hickey's Chapel.

Discover the power of mindfulness in our new sessions designed especially for the The Richmond Charities' residents' community.

These calming, welcoming sessions are all about finding moments of peace and connection in our busy lives. From mindful breathing exercises to the soothing practice of mindful tea drinking, you'll learn simple techniques to bring calm and clarity into your day.

No prior experience is needed—these sessions are open to everyone, no matter your background or ability.

Come along, connect with others, and enjoy a little time just for you. We'd love to see you there!



Burns' Supper

with a Scottish Bagpiper and the Traditional Address to the Haggis!

Thursday 23rd January
Hickey's Chapel
4pm for 4.30pm food service.

Cock-a-leekie Soup
Haggis, Neeps and Tatties
Oatcakes and Scottish Cheddar
Scottish Drinks!

Wear something Tartan!

Ticket Only (free) Event

Chaplain's Chat

by **Derrick Thompson**

You may be reading this month's magazine thinking that Christmas has been and gone, but from the Church's perspective it has only just begun! Christmas starts on Christmas Day, continues with the arrival of the Wise Men at Epiphany (6th January – see Margaret's article on page 11) and does not conclude until the Presentation of Christ at the Temple (also known as Candlemas) this year on 2nd February! So, Happy Christmas everyone, and all good wishes for 2025!

Blessings!

Chapel Schedule

January 2025

Sunday 5th January <i>Epiphany Sunday</i>	10.30am Holy Communion <i>Followed by refreshments</i>
Sunday 12th January	10.30am Holy Communion Led by Revd Nicholas Darby
Sunday 19th January	10.30am Holy Communion
Sunday 26th January	10.30am Holy Communion Preacher: Hugh Dunlop

Thursday Fellowship recommences on Thursday 30th January at 2pm.

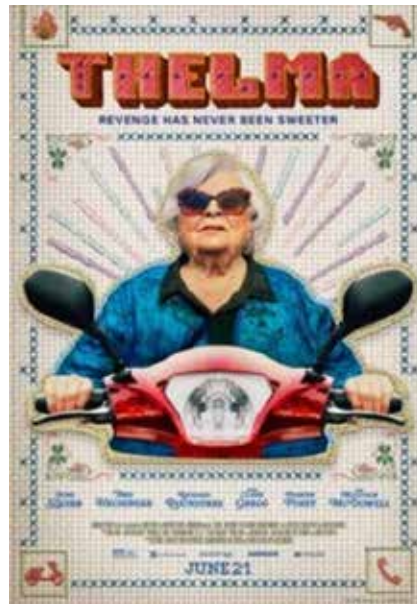
All are welcome to join us.

Morning Prayer, Tuesdays at 10am.
Evening Prayer, Thursdays at 4.30pm.

For more information email Chaplain Derrick on:
d.thompson@richmondcharities.org.uk

Film Club

Wednesday 15th January
at 2pm,
Hickey's Chapel



Thelma

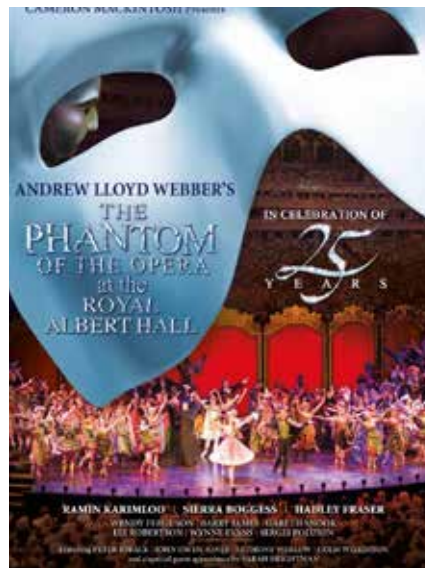
Cast:
June Squibb,
Richard Roundtree, and
Fred Herchinger.

Director: Josh Margolin
Rating: 12A.
Runtime:
1h 37m

Refreshments during the interval.

Film Club Special

Wednesday 29th January
at 3.30pm,
Hickey's Chapel



Phantom of the Opera

Filmed at the Royal Albert Hall, this stunning performance brings the show to a bigger stage and celebrates its role as one of the biggest shows in theatre history, with appearances by

the original cast and some of the show's most notable Phantoms, including John Owen-Jones and Colm Wilkinson. Starring Ramin Karimloo and Sierra Boggess.

Rating: PG
Runtime: 2h 17m

Buffet and drinks during the interval.

Epiphany Sunday

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

by Margaret Goddard

According to the Bible how many kings came to visit the infant Jesus?

Answer: None!

The Bible specifies neither the number nor that they were kings.

So why do we sing about it?

Well, the three is fairly obvious — there were three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were costly gifts — probably only kings could afford them. So the “wise men” became kings, and tradition gave them names — Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.



Kew Garden's Christmas Lights



But what became of the gifts? Traditionally they have been given symbolic meanings: gold for a king; frankincense for a deity; myrrh for suffering and death. But Mary, Joseph and Jesus were about to become refugees as they fled to Egypt: they wouldn't want to carry any excess weight.

What do refugees need? Well, firstly they would need some money. Emergency transport is costly, whether it be a donkey or a camel in one century or a Jeep or Land Rover in another. And gold is a universal currency.

Secondly clean water. Drinkable water is a first priority. In Roman times used wine jars were cleaned with a solution of frankincense before being filled with new wine, implying a palatable disinfectant.

Thirdly, some insect repellent. As myrrh was used in grave clothes and sepulchres it is quite conceivable that flies and other small insects were allergic to its bitter odour.

Is it too much to think that a loving God would supply the needs of the Holy Family before they were even aware of them?

You may have seen the symbols '20 + C + M + B + 25' written in chalk around the lintels and doors of houses. Chalking doors on Epiphany, the day on which Christians remember the visit of the wise men to the Infant Jesus, is an old tradition which has been revived and is becoming more widespread. The chalk is a symbol of hope and is used to invite God into the home.

The letters have two meanings: firstly, they are the initials of the traditional names of the wise men who came seeking Jesus in His first home in Bethlehem: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar — and are sometimes followed with the initials OPN,— ora pro nobis (pray for us). The crosses are obvious Christian symbols, and the numbers indicate the year. Secondly, the letters also suggest the Latin phrase, *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*: “May Christ bless the house.”

Festivals of Faith

A New Column from
Derrick Thompson



We are starting a new column this month to help us be aware of the different religious festivals residents may be celebrating each month.

On January 7th Rastafarians and some Eastern Orthodox churches will be celebrating Christmas!

January 14th is *Pongal*, a Hindu harvest festival and the Buddhist New Year in Mahayana traditions.

January 17th is *Guru Gobind Singh Gurburab*, a Sikh festival that celebrates the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs' 10th master and teacher.

The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses

From dilapidated garages to 5 new almshouses in 33 months!

by Mick Tinson

Back in February 2022, I was first informed by Juliet of an exciting possible project which would transform the site of 17 dilapidated garages behind Church Estate. Clive Chapman Architects and the team had designed a clever little development that would squeeze 5 Passivhaus properties onto what was a small site.

After many months of revising the plans, applications, and neighbour and resident consultations, planning consent was finally granted in January 2023. As with any permitted build, this approval came with a multitude of conditions which set the next phase of this project. Numerous tests and further alterations to the proposed development, together with the careful selection of contractors, meant we could finally start the build in Autumn 2023.

On 28 September 2023 we held a *Breaking the Ground Ceremony* with guest Mollie King, daughter of a former Trustee, the late Steve King, to mark the start of this exciting project. From early November 2023, Buxton, our selected building contractor, moved in and did what they do best: portacabins were stacked to create office and welfare facilities, hoarding went up and the machinery arrived to carefully remove the garages and reveal the full size of the site for the first time.

Over the next couple of months, the site was cleared of all debris and the all-important groundworks began which included drilling a series of boreholes to a depth of 126 metres in which the pipework for the ground source heat pumps would be connected.

By March 2024, all the ground works were complete, and the large crane arrived to very delicately place the pre-constructed panels onto their supports. By May, all the buildings had been erected and the roof works to make them watertight could begin, together with the surrounding brickwork.

By September, the internal works had transformed empty shells into modern, stylish properties with all the clever technology required for accessible living. Following numerous tests, checks, and snags, we finally took possession of the completed properties on 25 November 2024 and held an open event on 26 November for residents, staff, trustees, neighbours, the Council and the wider project team to come and see the transformation. Three new residents and two existing residents from other estates moved in at the start of December.





Residents' Survey Feedback

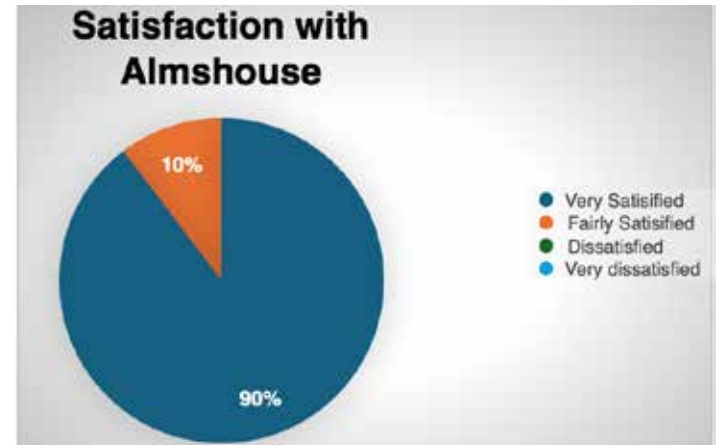
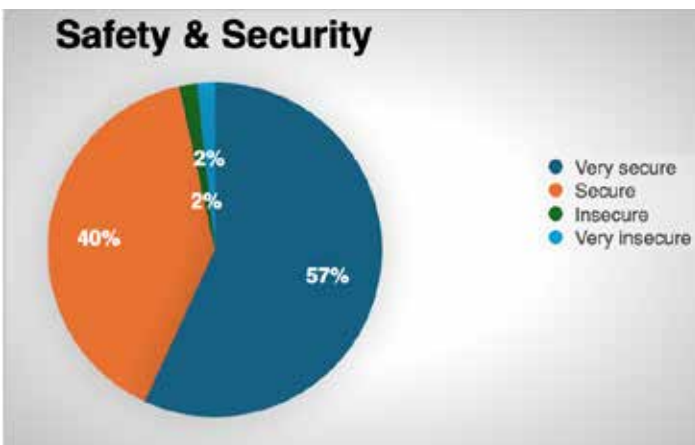
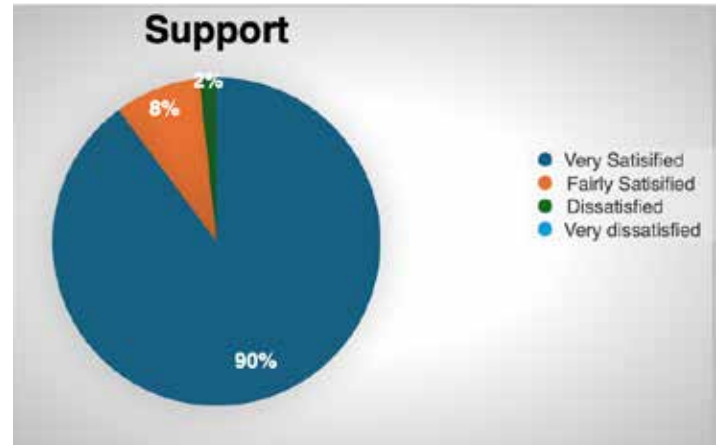
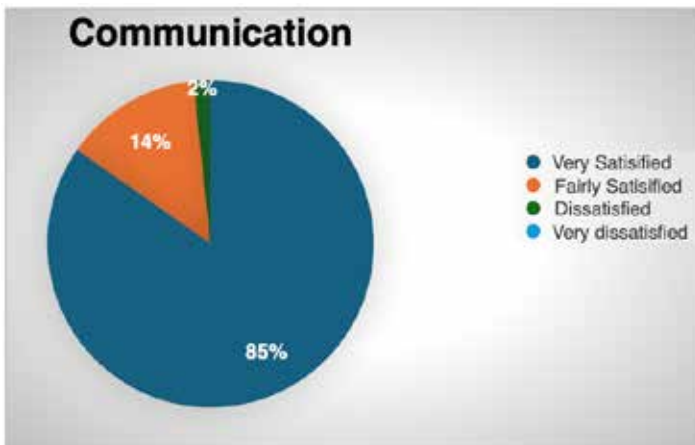
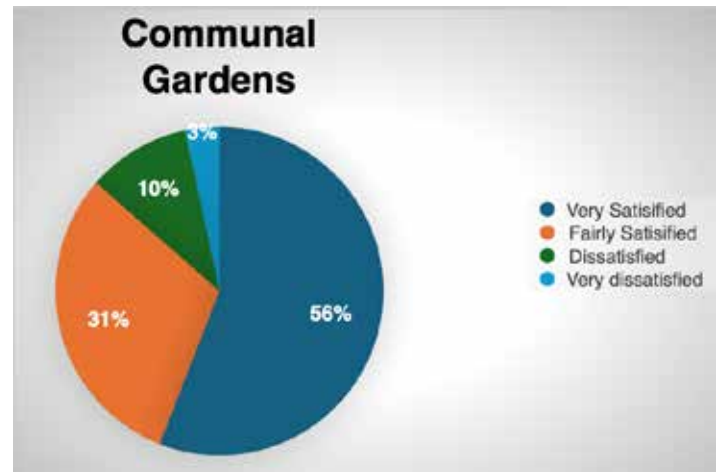
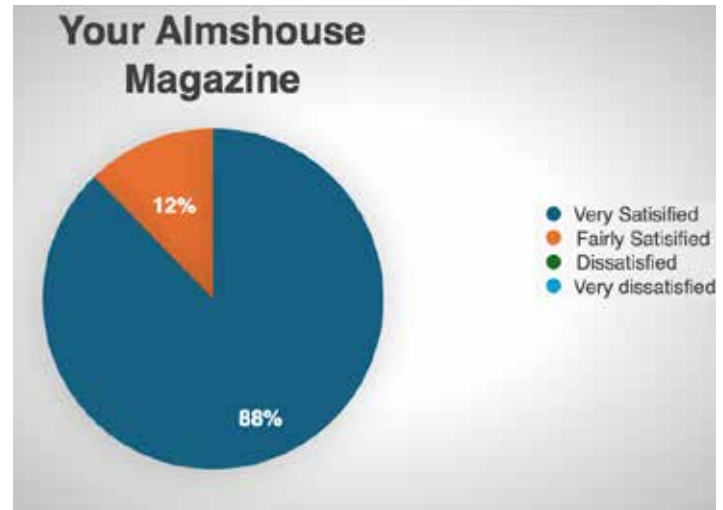
by Juliet Ames-Lewis

Thank you to all of you who completed our 2024 Residents' Survey back in the autumn.

We received 60 completed surveys, a response rate of 38% of all residents across our estates. Below are graphs showing the satisfaction levels for each of the questions asked in the survey. We are pleased overall with the satisfaction levels. There were also many comments included by residents, many of them positive (and it is really lovely to get such positive feedback from residents) but also some comments about improvements which could be made.

With these actionable points, we will be working on them in the coming weeks and months and where appropriate we will feedback action either to individuals or to residents at particular estates, where there were 'estate specific' issues raised.

Thank you to you all for your support for the charity, for me and for my staff team.



Getting To Know You

with Valerie Keene

Where did you grow up?

Richmond, Petersham and Ham.

As a child, what did you want to be? A ballerina.

What is your favourite music/song from your teenage years and what does it remind you of? Big Band music — my dancing days.

What would you choose to give a 5-minute talk on? Children with learning difficulties.

Describe your 'happy place'.

Manning Place with my family and friends.

If you were Prime Minister for the day, what would you do? Give more to pensioners.

If you could travel back in time, where would you go?

1960 when my children were young.

What words of wisdom would you pass on to the younger generation? Honesty.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words? A very lucky person!

Is there anything you've recently watched on TV or at the cinema which you would recommend? *Who Do You Think You Are?*



*Next showing:
Monday 6th
January at
4.15pm - every
day till Friday 10th
January on BBC2*

If you were an animal, what would you be?
A cat.

Can't get through the day or weekend without? A phone call from my family.

Who is your celebrity crush? Martin Shaw.

What is your guiltiest pleasure? Chocolate.

The Importance of Security

by Roxanne Gent

As we start the new year, it's a good time to remind ourselves about the simple but important steps to keep our homes safe and secure.



Remember to lock all doors and windows when leaving your home and

double-check

everything is locked and shut before going to bed. Even when you're at home, keeping doors locked is best practice. Unfortunately, scamming and burglary are on the rise so we always recommend being mindful and vigilant of all security issues.

The Richmond Charities will always advise residents in advance of any contractors due to enter your property to carry out works, so if in doubt, always call your Scheme Manager.

Whilst we strive to keep our community as safe as possible, we don't have patrolled grounds so it is always important to take personal responsibility, stay alert and keep your home safe.

If you have any security concerns, please discuss them with your Scheme Manager.

Armchair Travel

Welcome to our new column featuring unusual trips to fascinating destinations. Or even just sharing your holiday photos to allow us all to travel from our armchairs! This month we feature Ian's trip to Cuba.

Havana, Cuba

by Ian Heath

Havana, the capital, is a vibrant city bursting with music, dancing and laughter, along with the iconic American cars. It contains stunning buildings, the second largest cemetery in the world (1,000,000 + interred) and the tank which Castro operated to fire upon a U.S. warship in 1961.

The Beatles and their music were banned for years, but are now celebrated with an annual 'Beatles Week' and the John Lennon Park.

There appear to be no supermarkets or food shops, but I came across an outlet selling only bags of sweets and another offering nothing but washing powder. To change money and to buy obligatory wifi/internet cards means hours of queueing.

Out of town Varadero which boasts of the 'best beach in the world' on which I spent a few days chilling. I saw my first baseball game and I visited the museum of the *War Against Bandits* (yes really!).

This is a beautiful island with beautiful people!



Art Corner

by Melanie Stapelkamp

As we were all confined to barracks during the Covid lockdown I decided to do a painting a day to keep myself occupied. I started painting everything in sight, ornaments, holiday photos, my lunch, jewellery and views from my window, even my feet! And landed up filling 9 books!



Advisory

Keeping Warm

by Mike Townsin

The energy price cap – the maximum that energy suppliers can charge – goes up this month, just as the weather is set to get colder; understandably, then, many will turn to hot water bottles, portable heaters* and electric blankets to supplement the central heating. So here are some tips for keeping warm safely when using these devices.

**Paraffin, Calor gas, halogen or similar portable heaters are not permitted to be used in almshouses as they are dangerous. If they were to fall over, they will scorch, burn or possibly ignite the surface they fall onto due to the amount of heat they produce. They are also very bright and may irritate your eyes. The Charity does have a few safe portable heaters for residents to use in an emergency. If you use one, you must ensure that it is not switched on for longer than one hour at a time, and then it must be turned off for an hour to allow it to cool down.*

Hot water bottles: the most common causes of hot-water bottle related injuries include using boiling water, overfilling the bottle, and using bottles that are old and

damaged. Let the kettle cool down before filling the bottle, as boiling water can damage it – and you if you spill any. Don't

fill it more than two-thirds full, and don't put it straight on your skin. Bottles perish over time so make sure yours isn't too old. Hot water bottles should be replaced every 2-3 years. If you are unsure about the age of yours, you can check by looking for the daisy wheel imprint on its neck or body. This number indicates the year it was manufactured (see picture in first column).



Portable electric heaters: whatever brand of heater you choose, get it from a reputable retailer, keep it well-maintained and dust-free and aim for a three-metre (9 feet) distance between it and other objects. Don't use flammable cleaning products or aerosols, nearby; don't leave the heaters unattended for long periods or on overnight; never plug them into extension leads; never dry clothes on them; keep them well away from fabrics and combustibles which can ignite if left too close – and beware trailing wires.

The *Independent* newspaper has just done a review of the best heaters, with prices starting at £25. [Google: independent/ best electric heaters.](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/technology/best-electric-heaters)

Electric blankets: always unplug your blanket before you get into bed, and replace it if it is soiled or worn – especially if wires or scorch marks are visible. If you use emollient creams for skin conditions, don't let them soak into the blanket as they will make the material more flammable. Don't use it with a hot water bottle, or if you have wet hands or feet, or if you have an air-flow pressure relief mattress. Store it flat or rolled up to protect the wiring – don't fold it.



Local News and Events

This month's round-up of local news and events that are relevant to you.



Live music at The Fox. Every Weekend! The Fox Pub, 39 Church Street, Twickenham, TW1 3NR

Open Gaming Meetup

Whether you are a board game enthusiast or new to the scene, come and join us for a new monthly open gaming event and have fun, meet new people and try a new game or two. Choose from the dozens of games available or bring along your favourite to share.

Sessions run from 10am to 4pm on the following Saturdays each month:

First Saturday -
Whitton Library
Second Saturday -
Twickenham Library
Third Saturday -
Richmond Old Town Hall, Whittaker Ellis Suite

This event is free and no booking is required. Please contact library@richmond.gov.uk for more information.



A Ripple in Time Orleans House Gallery until 23rd February 2025. Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm. Free Entry. A Ripple in Time invites us to reflect on our shared past and contemplate the threads that connect us through the philosophy of Dub. Artist Gary Stewart spent four months researching in the Richmond Borough Art Collection. He describes his archival exploration as an 'excavation' intertwining history and modernity.

Open Mic at The Fox and Duck, Richmond Join us from 8pm every Friday for the grooviest night in Petersham! Hosted by the exceptional Tim West, this night offers a night of free music, poetry, spoken word, originals, comedy and all your rock favourites! Free. 194 Petersham Rd. Twickenham TW9 7AD



Lunar New Year Event: Twickenham 26th January 1pm-4pm. The 2025 Lunar New Year Celebration across Twickenham on Sunday 26th January. Join the Dragon parade at Twickenham Green at 1pm for the dragon dance and music. The parade will continue down Heath Road, King Street and London Road.

Free-to-use toilets. People visiting high streets in Richmond upon Thames can take advantage of over 70 free-to-use toilets, as we expands our pioneering scheme, the first of its kind in London, which first launched in 2004. This website will help you locate nearest public toilet: www.richmond.gov.uk/services/roads_and_transport/toilets/find_a_toilet



Rotary clubs in Kew, Kyiv and Kharkiv have been working in partnership to assist the education of Ukrainian children. This year, they launched a STEM project to help rebuild Ukraine. The charity's first project for schools in Ukraine, launched in January 2023 and raised £100,000 to help Ukrainian children whose schooling has been disrupted by damaged schools.

Shooting Star Tree Collection. While we offer free Christmas tree collections from Monday 6 to Friday 17 January 2025, you may consider letting Shooting Star Children's Hospices collect your Christmas tree for a minimum suggested donation.



And the Good News is...

Curated by Mike Townsin

While back, a young female otter appeared in the sea near Billy Mail's house on Shetland. He went to see how close he could get to her and watched as she ate a crab. "Then" he says, "she turned and looked me in the eye, and I immediately knew something was wrong". Molly – as he named her – was emaciated and seemed to have been orphaned. Anxious to save Molly's life he began feeding her fish and made her a bed from coiled rope. Their bond is now the subject of a *National Geographic* documentary that charts Molly's growing independence: her health improved, and she learned to fend for herself. Mail had always felt the "pain and loss" of never having had children, but his wife Susan says it has been "lovely" seeing him nurturing Molly.

Billy and Molly: An Otter Love Story is streaming on Disney+



Credit: Charles Hamilton James.
Permission: National Geographic/Disney

On This Day...

19th January 1915 — Britain was bombed for the first time by Zeppelins over Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

22nd January 1970 — The first Jumbo jet took off from JFK International in New York to land at London, Heathrow.

29th January 1978 — Sweden becomes the first country to ban aerosol sprays due to their alleged effect on the ozone layer.

29th January 1596 — English sea captain Sir Francis Drake was buried at sea off the coast of Panama after he died of dysentery.

Miscellany

Curated by
Mike Townsin

- The Queen wouldn't reveal her favourite food in case she never got served anything else.
- Vrano is Russian for lying even when everyone knows that's what you're doing.
- 80% of 'Close Door' buttons in lifts are just for show: most doors are on a timer.
- Ancient Egyptians mummified their cats and gave them mummified mice to torment in the afterlife.
- Honesty boxes with photos of eyes on the wall next to them produce more money.
- King George VI's wedding was not broadcast on the radio in case people listened without removing their hats.
- Poltergeist is German for 'noisy ghost'.
- The world's first Christian nation was Armenia.
- Different tennis balls are used for men's and women's matches: the men's are fluffier to slow them down.
- SWIPERS is a retail-industry acronym for Seemingly Well-Intentioned Patrons Engaging in Routine Shoplifting.

Wit and Wisdom

Curated by Mike Townsin

Ideology is always the enemy of truth. *Janice Turner, journalist*

There is strength in calm. *Angela Merkel*

Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor. *James Baldwin, US civil rights activist*

Deadlines may be vital, but so is procrastination. I'll tell you why...soon. *Imogen West-Knights, journalist*

It's never a good idea to provoke people who own tractors. *Emma Duncan, journalist*

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. *Arthur C. Clarke*

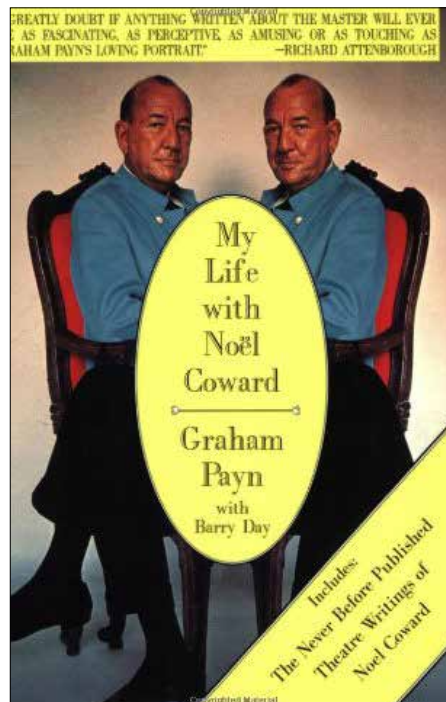
Be most slow to believe what we most wish should be true. *Samuel Pepys*

We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven. God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low. *Desmond Tutu*

To like and dislike the same things, that is indeed true friendship. *Sallust, Roman historian*

Page Turners

Book Review by Mike Townsin



My Life with Noël Coward by Graham Payn

This review is for you of a certain age...and anyone else interested in the history of the theatre.

In 1996, at a friend's dinner party, I found myself in conversation with the author of this book who, it transpired, had been the lifelong companion and best

friend of Noël Coward – hence the age dig above! Then in his late '70s, Graham had just published the story of his life with Coward between the 1930s and early 70s which, even for many of Coward's closest friends, provided missing chapters in the great man's life; to quote Lauren Bacall, "Graham Payn knew Noël Coward better than anyone".

It was fascinating to hear at first hand some of the stories related in this book, and it felt briefly like being in the company of the man himself: no-one was as privy to Coward's doubts and dreams as Graham Payn – which are recounted in often comic, sometimes tragic, name-dropping detail.

The anecdotes, together with Coward's own incisive and witty comments on the theatre and many of its famous dramatis personae, will remind readers of his wonderful songs and lyrics – *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, *Mad about the Boy* – and classic plays, *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Brief Encounter*. Not to mention his many performances in films, including *The Italian Job* and *Our Man in Havana*.

A vivid, highly recommended memoir.

PS: I have two hard back copies: one signed and a spare, the latter about to be donated to our library.

Recipe Corner

Delicious Green Vegetable Salad

by Heather Shipley



Ingredients

300g asparagus tips, sliced sideways into small spears

200g French beans, trimmed and halved

300g broad beans (fresh or frozen)

50g baby spinach leaves

1 shallot, peeled and thinly sliced

2 tbsp olive oil

A little lemon juice

½ tsp salt

1 tsp nigella seeds (optional)

Method

- Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Blanch asparagus for 3 minutes. Lift with a slotted spoon and straight into cold water.

- Add the beans to the boiling water, blanch for 5 minutes. Then add them to the asparagus bowl.

- Drain and dry asparagus and beans with clean kitchen towel and place in a bowl.

- In the same hot water, blanch the broad beans for 2 minutes. Drain and refresh in cold water. Remove the skins of the beans by pressing each bean gently between thumb and forefinger.

- Put all the greens in a large bowl and add ½ teaspoon of salt.

- Add the rest of the ingredients: spinach, sliced shallot, olive oil, lemon juice and seeds.

Serve at once. A delicious and healthy accompaniment to any meal.

Debbie's Life Hacks

by Debbie Flaherty

- Use nail polish to identify different keys.

- Freeze grapes to chill your drink without it getting watered down. Add to sparkling water and spritzers.



- Put a wooden spoon across a boiling pot of water to keep it from boiling over.

- Wrap your bananas in tinfoil to make them last longer.

- To stop spiders from coming inside spray a mixture water and peppermint oil.

Small Changes

To Make Your Meals

More Nutritious

Add a spoonful of honey to yoghurt to improve its probiotic powers.

Yoghurt is known to provide beneficial probiotic bacteria that promote digestive health and has been linked to better mood and cognition. But adding a tablespoon of honey — particularly if it is clover-derived — to natural unsweetened yoghurt could boost its probiotic powers. The honey helps the beneficial bacteria to survive their journey through the digestive system, according to two recent studies in *The Journal of Nutrition*.

Your Photos

If you would like to share your seasonal or local photos, please send them on WhatsApp to Becky Evans **07386 667185** or Derrick Thompson **07796 619697**



Photo credits (clockwise): *Squirrels in the tree at Hickey's* by Poppy Hillman, *Mandarin Duck* at the Isabella Plantation by Gwen Davis, *Robin in the Reeds* by Louisa Allard, *Winter Sunlight* at Orleans House and a *Foggy Morning* by Juliet Ames-Lewis, *Green Parakeets Kissing* by Mick Tinson and *Little Owl* by Mick Tinson.



Who Am I? (Member of Staff)

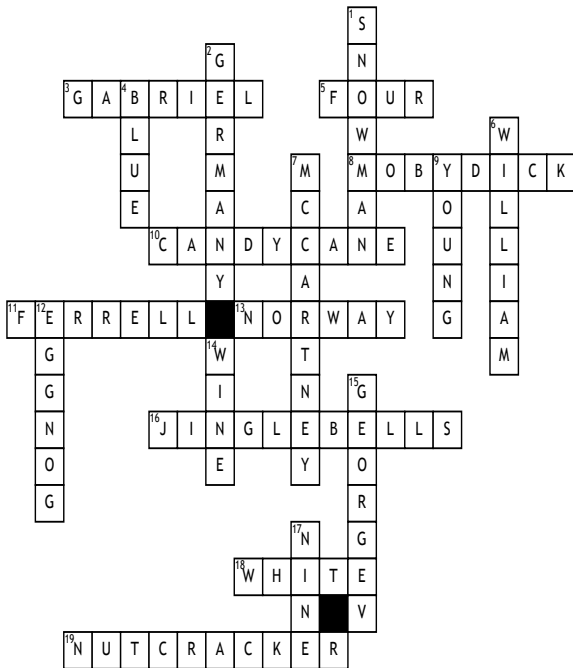
Solve the cryptic clues to identify this member of staff.

1. I was born in Germany, yet speak Spanish, French and English (just about).
2. I had an 18 month honeymoon, missing our return flights home to keep on travelling; working at a banana farm in Humpty Doo and the Melbourne Cup along the way for funds.
3. I have had to take one of my children to A&E after she got an umbrella handle stuck in her mouth.
4. I once went on a camping safari in Namibia and the guide forgot the tent poles; meaning we had to sleep alfresco in the National Park with the roar of lions in the distance.

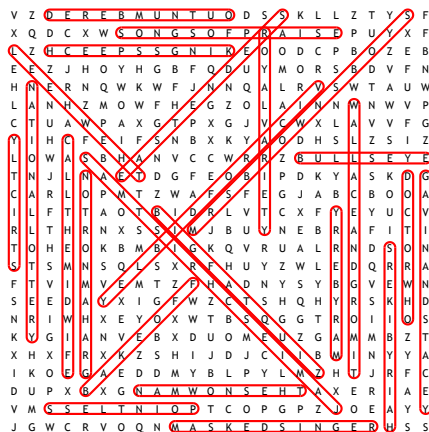
My guess is:.....

Answer in next month's issue!

December Christmas Crossword Answers



Wordsearch Answers December



Who Am I?
Answer for December is *James Dorey*.

Competition Winners

Thank you to everyone who sent in entries for the crossword and wordsearch in our December edition.

Picked at random, our £10 M&S voucher winners this month are:

Marilyn Edwards — Crossword

Connie Yorke — Wordsearch

Congratulations!



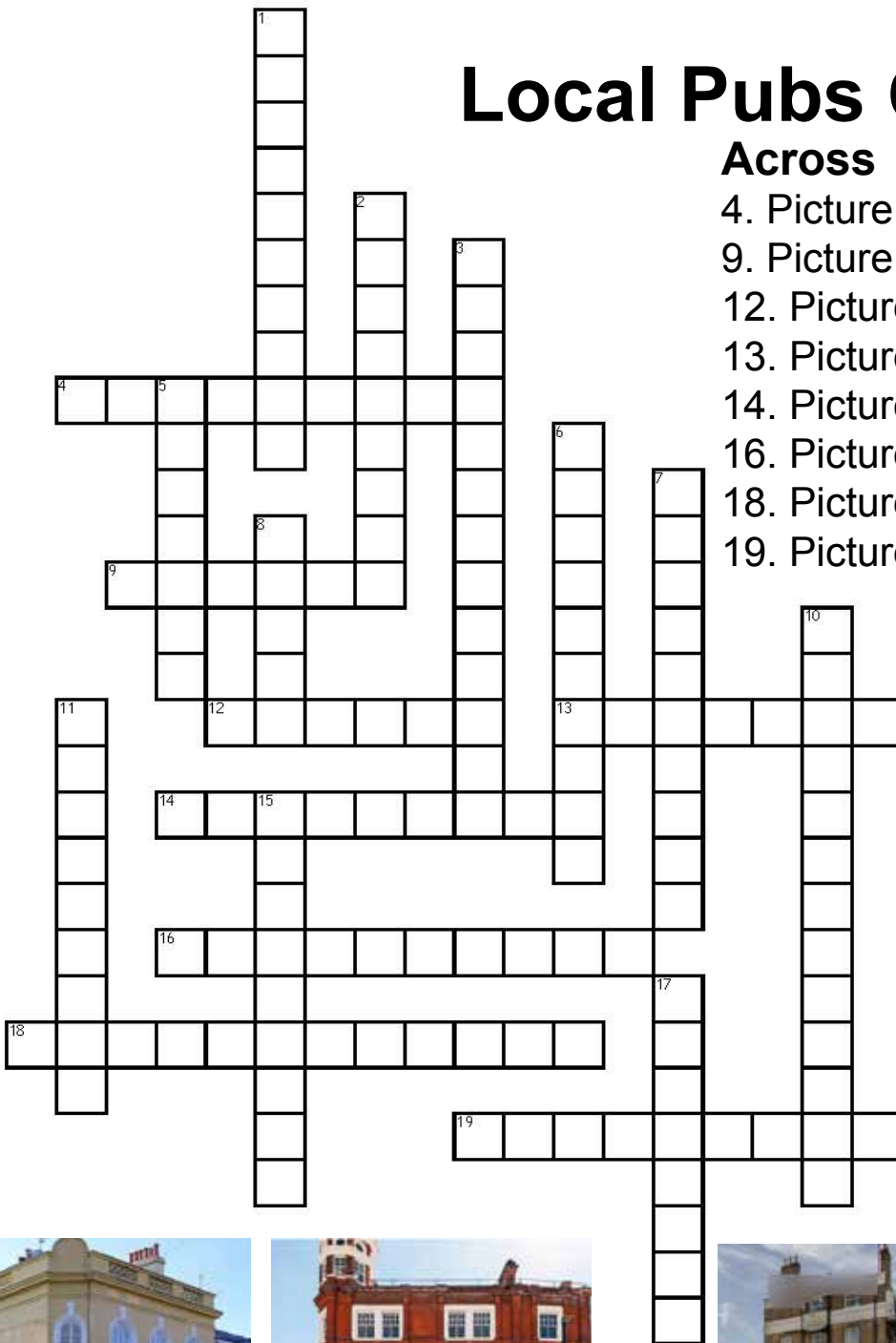
Local Pubs Crossword

Across

- 4. Picture 18
- 9. Picture 7
- 12. Picture 4
- 13. Picture 12
- 14. Picture 1
- 16. Picture 9
- 18. Picture 2
- 19. Picture 8

Down

- 1. Picture 15
- 2. Picture 17
- 3. Picture 10
- 5. Picture 5
- 6. Picture 16
- 7. Picture 3
- 8. Picture 11
- 10. Picture 13
- 11. Picture 19
- 15. Picture 14
- 17. Picture 6



Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Fill in the crossword. Please submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box before Friday 17th January. Name:

Countries Beginning with S

P N A D U S H T U O S C Q S S F M X B H E M Z J
 X L E D H E J I E C Y X A S E R Z L T O Q T O E
 Z E X X R W I N K Q D U D S R T A P N G K S O F
 F A V U S V L M H B D N O A B Q N E L O L M D V
 F U N G X Z L V E I A U G I I N S E A D H C R R
 V N D G J A H S A L T T K C A H O C C G H O U Y
 X F R W G Q Y R S H V W C U O Q U Y S N W J Y A
 V U L E O R A I K P I D Z L Q V T H R Q I H M X
 T V N W I B N O W A W Y O T V N H L I J G V D H
 F E X A I O R Z E Q S K T S H F A N L S B T T Z
 S G H A M E A P N C H E T G K B F T A Y Y Z N S
 F F V O A S B D R D E A Y C L Z R B N Q W G Y S
 K E L G P F Q L D Z T D P C F A I B K C M V S W
 D O N U G V Y H L N T E T V H M C I A G H T P I
 S E L O W L S A N M A R I N O E A A O M A S A T
 D M W Y E T G W T N E N T Q P W L D W M O K I Z
 T A A V A L F N S L I X L V R S R L V Y B H N E
 F N N V I O A F L B S I N G A P O R E F G D B R
 E I E N N X X R H I N E D E W S B G J S R M I L
 D R Y B A Y U X R F O M C V G V S O M A L I A A
 K U N X W D I J Z E S N C Z S D U J V O D S H N
 B S Y Z Y V U B S L I Q X C K N D P U H K K V D
 C N C H I D Q S Z Y V S Y Y T M Y U X W V O S Y
 L S L O V E N I A L D T N W A I K A V O L S Z T

Syria

Sudan

South Korea

Slovenia

Seychelles

San Marino

Switzerland

Sri Lanka

South Africa

Slovakia

Serbia

Samoa

Sweden

Spain

Somalia

Singapore

Senegal

St Vincent

Suriname

South Sudan

Solomon Islands

Sierra Leone

Saudi Arabia

St Lucia

Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Find all 24 words and submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box **before Friday 17th January.** Name: _____

Poetry Corner

by Nigel Davis

The month of January takes its name from the Latin word *janua*, meaning threshold or hearth. It is linked also to the Roman god named Janus, the god of the hearth, looking both into the house and out of the house simultaneously. Under the very ancient Roman calendar the first month of the year was in fact not January but March — hence we still, rather misleadingly, have the names September, October and November, being the seventh, eighth and ninth months of the ancient year — though not, of course, of the more modern year. But the Romans then altered the calendar to add two extra months and so it was that January became the first, threshold, month of the calendar year.

This piece, usually known as *The Gate of the Year*, was written by Minnie Louise Haskings (1875-1957). She was a remarkable person. She went as a Methodist missionary to India, before returning to England when she became a lecturer in sociology in London.

The prologue — a kind of beautiful prose poetry — was in fact added after she had written the actual poem, which was entitled *God Knows*. This prologue has since become famous and was a reading at the funeral service of the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. It is in consequence sometimes viewed as a funeral piece; but it certainly was not written with that in mind.

I personally particularly like the reference to the Hand of God. In the Bible, that is usually a reference to the power and might of God (although football fans no doubt will also link it to the infamous Maradona goal against England in the 1986 World Cup!). But here it is the hand of a loving God, a hand which the traveller in life can clutch, secure in the knowledge that they will be guided to their destination and not be allowed to stumble or fall.

As to the poem, it has, I think, a most beautiful and moving simplicity. Many people nowadays have no religious faith (or at least think they have no religious faith). But surely anyone reading this poem cannot fail to be moved by the serene certainty of faith that it demonstrates.

Do read the whole piece out aloud to yourself — or, better still, to others also. You will find it is well worth it.

The Gate of the Year

by Minnie Louise Haskings

And I said to the man who stood
at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light, that I may tread safely
into the unknown.” And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put
your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light,
and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand
of God, trod gladly into the night. And
He led me towards the hills and the
breaking of the day in the lone East.

So heart be still:

What need our little life

Our human life to know,

If God hath comprehension?

In all the dizzy strife

Of things both high and low

God hideth His intention.

God knows. His will is best.

The stretch of years

Which wind ahead, so dim

To our imperfect vision,

Are clear to God. Our fears

Are premature: In Him

All time hath full provision.

Then rest; until

God moves to lift the veil

From our impatient eyes,

When, as the sweeter features

Of Life's stern face we hail,

Fair beyond all surmise,

God's thought around His creatures.

Our mind shall fill.

