

ALKHAM MONTHLY NEWSLETTER and magazine

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No. 370 December 2024

Non-profit &
delivered free
to the Parish

Funded by adverts and independent of the Parish Council



CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS - So it's that time again, village Christmas lights will be on Saturday 7th December, please come along for a sing song and chat with Santa. We are going to then follow this with a party in the village hall. So, get your glad rags on and come along for some fun, music and dancing. We are looking to do sharing platters again and everyone bring their own drinks. Finally, there will be a raffle, this will pay for the hire of the

hall and any remaining monies will go to support village hall improvements. Hopefully, you can help with donating raffle prizes. One last thing if you could contact me, just ideas of numbers and what you might like to bring along for sharing on the night. Looking forward to seeing you all. Further updates next month. **Graham West** graham.west28@hotmail.com.

Please do contact Graham as there was a limited response to the October article ...

For those new to the village the Christmas tree is at the top of the village green adjacent to the Valley Road and the bus shelter and this is where people congregate to see the lights turned on at 5.30pm and see Santa coming down Slip Lane to hand out festive goodies. It is a Christmas tradition which has been held every December for times immemorial.

BURNS NIGHT - I am organising a Burns Night supper at the village hall on the 25th of January 2025. Tickets are £15.00 which will include a three-course traditional Burns Supper and a dram. Vegetarians will be catered for i.e. vegetarian haggis. Menu as follows: Starter smoked fish pots with fresh bread; Main haggis, neeps and tatties with a whisky sauce; Dessert cranachan and a dram of whisky. There will not be a bar so guests can bring their own drinks. I am hoping that there will be a piper and some Scottish Country Dancing to finish the evening. Anyone interested should contact me on 07789 690786 or at graham.bissett@talk21.com

POPPY APPEAL - I'd like to thank everyone in Alkham and Ewell Minnis, and their visitors, who donated a record breaking £870.51 to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. You have been very generous. The money will go to service men, women and veterans and their families when they need support. My thanks again go to my collectors, Shirley, Larry, Helen, Beverley and George and Debbie. Also thanks go to the Marquis of Granby, Alkham Garden Centre and Tea Rooms and Southern Equestrian for having collecting tins. **Rachel Fountain**

JOB ADVERT: Site Manager at Capel-le-Ferne Primary School - We are looking for a Site Manager to join our village school due to our current site manager moving to a new role closer to his home. We are ideally looking for someone who lives locally and is looking for a position that could offer flexibility to fit in around other commitments. The role will involve some grounds work, day to day maintenance and school improvements work such as painting. If you think this could be a role you are interested in, please call the school for further information. The school phone number is 01303 251353.



BILLY HOLLIS BEM

Congratulations to Billy Hollis on being awarded one of only four British Empire Medals awarded in Kent this year. Billy has lived in Alkham for over thirty years and has a long list of volunteering and community care. He was Chaplain at Canterbury Cathedral and Dover Port Authority; had long service with English Heritage at Dover and Walmer Castles; five years as Assistant Launch Leader with RNLI; Chaplain to several Kent prisons and young offender's institutions. For several years he completed the London to Brighton Cycle run for the British Heart Foundation and the Annual Church Ride for Orchid the Male Cancer Fund and much more! Billy, shown here with wife Mary, was presented with the medal earlier this month.



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14th December

will be outside the village hall 5-6.30pm

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FILM NIGHT

Alkham Village Hall 7.30pm

28th January

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

Jim Broadbent Penelope Wilton

No film in December

Free entry but £4 donation appreciated

ST NICHOLAS AND SINTERKLAAS - Long before the symbol of Father Christmas emerged in England, the separate legend of Sinterklaas was gaining ground in Europe. The origins of Sinterklaas can be found in the stories of St Nicholas, a 4th-century Greek bishop from Myra, now in modern-day Turkey. St Nicholas was credited with a wide variety of miracles. One was when he met a poor man who was on the brink of selling his own daughters into slavery. Under the cover of darkness, the saint anonymously threw three



bags of gold down the chimney to provide dowries for the girls. The gold landed in their stockings, which were drying by the fire. St Nicholas's fame spread throughout medieval Europe after his relics were 'rescued' from Myra and taken to Italy in 1087. Over time, tales of his gold-giving exploits gave rise to a tradition of leaving gifts for children on the night before 6 December - which was St Nicholas's Day. In the Netherlands, special markets sprang up to sell toys and treats for the occasion, and St Nicholas, or 'Sinterklaas' impersonators dressed in red bishops' costumes to delight the crowds. Tradition had it that, in his quest to deliver presents, St Nicholas would enter houses by passing through locked doors or descending down chimneys to leave gifts in shoes and stockings. Much like the English Father Christmas, Sinterklaas came under attack during and after the Reformation, with Protestants keen to move away from veneration of the saints. The baby Jesus was promoted as a more appropriate giver of gifts - known in Germany as *das Christkindl*, later Anglicised as 'Kris Kringle'. St Nicholas markets were banned - as were biscuits baked in the shape of the bishop. But it's clear that popular traditions survived. **English Heritage (edit)**

WASTE - A local Alkham resident sent an interesting article in the 'i' about using human waste as fertiliser which is called Bisolid in which liquids are separated from solids during wastewater treatment, and the solids are treated chemically and physically. About 3.5 million tonnes are processed and spread each year (170,000 truckloads) and with the wind in the wrong direction can cause quite a stink. However, there is concern that it is polluting the land and the crops but the Environment Agency say they are committed to the safe use of sludge and work with Defra to improve the regulatory framework, but Defra say they there is a lack of ministerial steer. In 2020 the Environment Agency (EA) committed to regulating and testing sewage sludge from water treatment plants and septic tanks by 2023. This would have included testing for microplastics and forever chemicals before water companies sold sludge to farmers as fertilizer. However, in 2023 the EA had not published an update and had abandoned the commitment to meet the 2023 deadline. **editor**

ALKHAM PARISH COUNCIL - The green spaces working group put together a work party to tidy the village green, including trimming low branches and building a dead hedge. Southern Water have started work on the repairs to the sewage system along the Alkham Valley Road. They've informed us that when this section is done there will be further work which will be completed by the end of December and that there should be no need for tankers over the winter. The highways working group have had positive discussions with relevant parties about the next attempts to control the speed of traffic on the valley road.

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THE DOVER FASTRACK may have an effect on Alkham by diverting traffic to the A2. Fastrack is a new electric bus service from Whitfield to Dover which is scheduled to open to buses on the 17th



of November but has been opened to pedestrians and cyclists in October. We have cycled along the route and it is an impressive single lane road from Guston to Whitfield, through the business park to the Tesco roundabout and then crossing the A2 with a new bridge. It was built to connect the large housing developments at Whitfield to Dover Priory station with several bus stops along the way. There is a link from the Fastrack to a new roundabout on the A256 and this could be good news for Alkham as drivers might find it more convenient to access the M20 via the A2 by going down Jubilee Way and up the A20 dual carriageway rather than face the congestion at the Whitfield roundabout and link to the Alkham Valley road at River. Photo shows path/cycle track and road. **Editor**



A PICTURE has hung in the old shop on Slip Lane for at least 20 years. It was painted in 1962 by M Cooper and gives a view over the (Old) Post Office from the churchyard. It is quite naïve and inaccurate in parts and about 500mm x 450mm and if anyone would like it for free, please email brianwimsett@hotmail.com.

VILLAGE HALL FUNDRAISING - A very successful morning tea & raffle was recently held to raise money to spend on improvements to the Alkham Village Hall. The hall is a charity and whilst general maintenance & running costs are covered by rental income & half the proceeds of the village fete, the management committee receives no other funding so must generate money via fundraising efforts in order to carry out improvements. The morning tea was well attended &, together with the raffle, raised £1,360.50. This will pay for the changes to the hall entrance which are well under way. A very big thank you to those local businesses that donated raffle prizes - The Marquis of Granby, Chunnel Group (John & Anne Huggins), The Alkham Garden Centre & a food hamper provided by the committee. Their very generous support allowed us to raise £700 in the raffle alone. The raffle was drawn on the morning by committee chairman Phil Clements and the lucky winners were all village residents: £100 Marquis voucher Abby Smalley (Chalksole Cottage); Lunch for 2 at Garden Centre Margaret Danstead; Chunnel Group wine pack Georgina & John Nicol; Hamper John & Pauline Philby. We were very appreciative of all those who gave donations, made cakes for the morning tea and/or worked hard on the day running stalls & serving cuppas. And finally thank you to the residents of Alkham for supporting this drive so generously. **Sue Koo & Irene Barnard**

ALKHAM W.I. - Thank you to everyone who came to the pamper evening, it was so nice to see you all. Our next meeting will be on the 10th of December which will be our Christmas dinner at the Marquis. From all of us at Alkham W.I. we would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. There will be late night shopping on the 5th of December at Southern Equestrian Supplies with mulled wine mince pies. **Debbie Griggs**





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Wednesday Valley Voices 7.30pm to 9.00pm

Friday Pilates 10am to 11am

Other events in the village hall

Tuesday 10 W.I. meeting 7.30pm

CHURCH SERVICES

Date	Alkham	Capel	Hougham
Sunday 1st	Prayer 5.00 pm	Eucharist 9.30 am	Eucharist 11.00 am
Sunday 8th	Eucharist 9.30 am	Worship 11.00 am	Carol choice 11.00 am
Saturday 14th	<i>Messy Church, followed by tea 3.00 – 5.00 pm Capel</i>		
Sunday 15th	Worship 11.00 am	Eucharist 9.30 am	Eucharist 11.00 am
Friday 20th	<i>Capel's Carols by Candlelight followed by pies and wine 7.00p.m.</i>		
Sunday 22nd	9 Less/Carols 6.30pm		Eucharist 10.00 am
Tuesday 24th	Crib service 4.30 pm Eucharist 9.00 pm	Crib service 3.00 pm Eucharist 10.30 pm	
CHRISTMAS DAY			Eucharist 9.30 am
Sunday 29th	United Parish Eucharist Capel 10.00 am		

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LOCAL SITES alkham.org alkhamparishcouncil.org.uk

FROM THE VICARAGE - It's the time of year when Christmas cards from friends and family you haven't seen all year start to arrive - something that means 'We're still around - and thinking of you...' Perhaps for some going to Midnight Mass is a bit like that - we might not be at church often, but something's missing from Christmas without it. Before I was ever a priest, I was an altar server. Across the road from the church was a pub, with another within easy staggering distance. By 11.00 on Christmas Eve the church would be full. The choir led carol singing until 11.30, when Midnight Mass began. Some would leave as the carol singing finished, but one year people were still standing in the aisles as Midnight Mass began. Problem: would there be enough bread and wine for everyone who wanted Communion? The Vicar's solution: take one large antique jug full of wine, and consecrate the lot. The problem then was that anything left over at the end had to be consumed. I was roped in to help, which left me over the drink-drive limit, and needing a lift home! We had a different problem last year. No doubt the bells rang as Merrily On High as ever, but here below an outbreak of Covid kept people at home; consequently there were plenty of vacant pews at Midnight Mass. Our solution? Inspired by the example of some other parishes, we are going to try something different this year. The ever-popular Crib Services will happen as usual, but 'Midnight Mass' at Alkham will start at 9.00, probably ending just after 10.00 (in time for Last Orders!) with 'Midnight Mass' at Capel following at 10.30 (so home by midnight!) Why not come and make it part of your Christmas...? **Brian Williams**