



The Dragon

The Online Magazine
of
Saint George's Anglican Chaplaincy
Malaga, Spain

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From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of The Dragon in 2010 – and, indeed, a Happy New Year!

I'm delighted that those of you who were writing regularly for the magazine last year have not given up! We again have a book review and a wine review, three more poems by Harvey Gilman and a further instalment of Peter Saliba's Baltic Sea cruise. The 'Red Dragon' has contributed more recipes, and Adrian Wilkinson concludes his series on the running of the Chaplaincy. So what's new? Trish Byron-Jones has been to see Malaga's Glass Museum (no, I didn't know there was one, either; it opened last year); Jennifer Vernon-Smith has taken to cruising – right out of the Port of Malaga; Jean Roberts tells us about an online prayer circle; and Ged Harrison introduces us to some of her favourite websites. Oh, and John Taylor says it's OK to sing Christmas carols in January!

I'm sure that those of you who have not yet written for The Dragon (a) can write and (b) have things you can write about that would be of interest to others. So let's be hearing from you!!

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of The Dragon, and feel inspired to write for it.

David Harrison

Articles and other contributions—including Letters to the Editor—for this online magazine are warmly invited. As we've said each month: no material, no magazine!! Please send to djharrison@stgeorgemalaga.org

The next edition of The Dragon will be published in early March, for which the deadline for receipt of articles, etc. is 28 February 2010.

Continuing his 'Saint for the Month' series, **Peter Wolfenden** writes about

Two Valentines and a Donne

Strange that the big wide world will take it upon itself to celebrate a saint this month, though maybe most of those buying and sending Valentine cards won't even be aware that that is what they are doing.

Perhaps as well, really, since our knowledge of St Valentine is sketchy to say the least, and probably arises from the confusion of two martyrs who bear the name. Valentine of Terni in Italy was a third century bishop who was taken to Rome during a period of persecution and killed there in 273. His body was taken back to Terni and later a basilica was built in his honour on the Flaminian Way, a road joining Rome to Terni.

At the other end of this road is a basilica to another martyr called Valentine of the third century, a priest of Rome. The church building dedicated to him was completed by Pope Theodosius in the year 629.

Both saints remind us that our present day freedom to worship is a hard won right and we need to remember with thankfulness those who died for their faith in the early day of the church.

But it seems that neither St Valentine had any real connection with hearts and flowers and loving messages until the poet (and priest) John Donne wrote a marriage song for a royal wedding on St Valentine's day in 1632. This song linked the day with love and romance and may well be the original reason for our present rather commercial celebrations. I am not one of those who decry this activity – a great celebration of love seems to me to be a wholesome thing for us to do – for God is Love after all.

Please send your Valentine cards to...

The misunderstood "Immaculate Conception"

By Rosella Parmiter

I was listening to the radio in the car one morning recently when I heard Maurice Boland on Talk Radio Europe (formerly REM) asking for clarification by any Christian of the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Maurice is Jewish, and Irish... which makes me wonder how he could have grown up in Ireland without some notion of the answer to that question!

A few minutes later an American woman called in and gave a somewhat garbled explanation, saying that she had been brought up a Lutheran but was not a practicing church-goer. She made the point that one of the differences was that Roman Catholics believe that Mary remained a virgin all her life, while Protestants believe that Jesus had brothers; and then she said "but they do believe in the Immaculate Conception", making it obvious that she was under the impression that this doctrine refers to the birth of Jesus, which it does not.

The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX (1846--1870) in 1854. It refers to the belief that Mary was born exempt of original sin. This belief was derived from a very ancient tradition, and Pope Pius IX only defined it in dogmatic form.

The feast day of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on 8th December which is a national holiday in Spain. I have often heard people try to relate that date to the birth of Jesus only 17 days later, thus underscoring this confusion!

Many Roman Catholics do not understand this doctrine so it is little wonder that most members of other denominations - let alone non-practicing Christians and those of other religions - share this misunderstanding.

Michael Roberts reviews

Three Classic Spanish White Wines

More than a dozen varieties of white grapes are grown in Spain, but red wines dominate the market place and most tourists ask for Rioja (also available in white of course) or, nowadays, Albalí. There are many gems to be found among the white wines but three are outstanding and are easily available at most outlets.

Rueda, Old Castile

In the eleventh century sherry was considered the finest wine in the world and the new region of Rueda in Old Castile was appointed by King Alfonso VI to make white wine in the sherry style. Things went well right into the nineteenth century when the phylloxera epidemic struck and all the vines were grubbed. By the time the new vines were mature tastes had changed and Rueda went into decline. The grape variety in King Alfonso's day was Verdejo and so it is today 1000 years later! The wine is delicate, crisp and fruity and may be found at most outlets at around €3 per bottle. However, if you have a good bank balance (and don't need to ask the price) try the Rueda Superior, considered to be one of Europe's greatest white wines.

Ribeiro, Galicia (Rias Baixas)

Which is the third best known wine in Spain after Rioja and Jerez? Answer, Ribeiro. An old established wine region, which in the seventeenth century exported to England and Italy, but historically has little of interest. The grape is mainly Freixadura and produces a crisp, easy drinking wine. Low alcohol content in some of the wines may put some buyers off! Lidl supermarkets have an excellent Ribeiro at around €3.

Albarino, Galicia (Rias Baixas)

Not a wine area, but the native vine of Galicia and its most important grape variety producing a fresh, fruity wine when drunk young and changing its character to something more powerful and full bodied after a number of years, so check the vintage before buying

These wines are never cheap (€10 – €20) but examples can be found at around €5 and are well worth a try. I quote John Radford from his excellent book "The New Spain": "Albarino is unquestionably one of the world's finest wines". Quite a statement for a Spanish vino blanco.

THREE POEMS FROM ELMORE

By Harvey Gillman

1

The sloping altar of the hill sends out its gifts
of birch, bamboo, two variegated hollies,
one dense and thick, one slender, black-gold and green.
The morning sun uncovers a fall of apples.
A bush hidden by last evening's descent of darkness
stands at last revealed, burns with a modest flame.

Beech stressed now, subject to the forceful flow
of season after season, scatters its throng of gold,
lets fall its leaves where the young deer hunts for food.
They will say in long books, skilfully composed,
this is but the life and death of things, the way they are.
And yet light pours through and glories the space between.

2

The birch offers its silver body to the morning sun.
Spirit breaks out like a rose among the thorns.
Birds dazzle. Light falls like water. This tree
tender, vulnerable, daring, its leaves white almost,
offers itself to slowly passing clouds, the sky
in blue slumber. The cool grass waits
for the passing of shadows. We also pass.
We also as the shadows are. We also offer flesh,
tenderness, daring, slumber and wake,
make our offerings to sky and earth. We also
like water shall be received in cool
and in passing.

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THREE POEMS FROM ELMORE

By Harvey Gillman

3

The bell has summoned the brothers and guests to mass.
This morning I watch the wet slope.
They are reading the psalms with both halves of their heart.
I watch.
It is time for lauds, the time for praise.
The rain trickles from bamboo.
Soon it will be the time for confession.
The black earth shines for rain.
It is time for absolution.
The slender birch bows under the rain.
The gospel proclaims.
Euonymous, golden, green, black, yellow, smoulders in sunlight.
They pray for the world.
A deer bounds across the field.
They offer peace.
The grass lies waiting.
They gather round the altar like leaves driven by the wind.
They receive the body and the blood
as the rich earth receives rain and sun and light and heat and
winter blasts.

Thanksgiving. Go, the harvest is ended.
On the branches a bird whose song I do not recognise
announces salvation. I am here. I am here.

Trish Byron-Jones writes about

A visit to Malaga's Glass Museum

Yet another wet and dull day, surely I can't be suffering from SAD in Malaga? Then two kind friends phoned and proposed a visit to the Museo del Vidrio y Cristal de Malaga.



Oh, what a surprise! It is a magical place to visit in any weather and quite the best museum we've visited in years. Where to start? The Museo is housed in a lovely old casona – a gracious 18th century house, possibly built for a prosperous merchant – opposite the Church of San Felipe Neri. The current owners cleverly spotted a remnant of decorative work on the house façade similar to that on the church and over the last nine years have carried out the most sympathetic restoration. The result is an elegant and beautiful house with several salons, patios and, remarkably, a large garden at the rear of the house.

We were fortunate enough to have one of the founder members of the museum – Ian Phillips – former Dean of St. Thomas's Medical School – as our guide to this treasure trove of a building. The character of an 18th century house has been retained with the help of local craftsmen who have carried out the restoration of the barrelled ceilings, stone floors, tiled staircases and carved wooden doors... resulting in a harmonious series of rooms. Each room houses furniture, rugs, pictures and decorative objects (not only glass) representing "the domestic context of the area". As the brochure says, "the aim is to contribute to the rehabilitation of the old craftsmen's neighbourhood of San Felipe Neri". We walked through a library, dining room and several elegant salons, all obviously loved and lived in.



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A visit to Malaga's Glass Museum

Central to the Museum is the private collection of more than 3000 pieces of glass, dating from several centuries BC up to recent times. Our erudite and stimulating guide talked us through the earliest examples of hollow glass production – where a shaped core of compacted clay and dung was dipped into molten glass and then the mould was turned so that the molten glass adhered to it. Whilst still soft, the glass covered mould could then be rolled onto a slab of stone in order to smooth or decorate it. Amazing. We saw some beautiful examples of this technique.

Then there were early glazed pots and vases and examples of blowing glass inside moulds which enabled Roman craftsmen to produce a greater variety of shapes. We admired the Venetian Murano glass where local quartz pebbles were ground into a fine clear sand combined with soda ash. The glass was tinted by adding a natural colouring which was ground and melted with the glass.

We admired stained glass windows, including some comparatively modern British examples, cameo glass from the late nineteenth century and, of more recent origin, work by the celebrated craftsmen from the Art Nouveau period, including such famous names as Rene Lalique, Emile Galle and the American Tiffany. We marvelled at the cut glass, whereby glass is cut with a diamond saw or copper wheels embedded with abrasives then polished to give the gleaming facets, in particular of the Waterford crystal on display.

There was glass from Spain, Italy, France, Germany, the UK and Scandinavia; not only glasses, goblets, vases and stained glass panels but also three exquisite chandeliers. How I coveted the Dining Room chandelier plus the china, the furniture and the paintings...

One visit is clearly not enough and I shall return. But be very careful: you might spot an appealing vase on a market stall, and there starts the collector's obsession – just like the owners of the magnificent Museo del Vidrio y Cristal de Malaga .

Museo del Vidrio y Cristal de Malaga
Plazuela Santisimo de la Sangre, 2
(Formerly Calle Gaona, 20)

95 222 1949

www.museovidrioycristalmalaga.com

Open Tuesday-Sunday 11am—7pm



Ged Harrison invites you to
Learn to Love Your Computer



Weird and Wonderful Websites: a few of the best

I have no pretensions at all to technical knowledge (“The big end’s gone? I wish mine would ...”) but I was an early adopter of the Internet, and love it to bits in spite of its faults – same way I feel about the Dragon Editor, actually (aaaahhh...). So, in order to have companions in my addiction, I plan a series of “Love your Computer” articles for people who “only use it for e-mails” and don’t know their ASCII from their Ethernet...

First: some favourite websites. Everyone knows that the most popular websites are about sex, shopping and celebs. Sadly, my knowledge of Internet porn is limited to the titles I see in my junk mail box... and why, after all these years, have these guys still not realised I don’t actually have a member to enhance? As for celebs, Britney, Paris, Katie and co. are more alien to me than inhabitants of the planet Zog. Shopping - ah now, I do know a bit about shopping, but that’s for a later article...

The sites I want to guide you to today are those that I’ve found particularly useful and/or interesting, and a couple that cheer me up even in the worst weather gloriously sunny Malaga throws at us.

Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) “Does she think we still go to libraries and look things up?” I hear you scream, outraged. However, there are still a few people who don’t automatically consult Wikipedia if they’ve temporarily forgotten, say, the influence of Heidegger on the development of hermeneutics or how many guitars Pete Townshend smashed up (56 actually). So, for these people, I offer this free, web-based encyclopedia project, whose 14 million articles have been written collaboratively by volunteers around the world, and almost all of whose articles can be edited by anyone. Launched in 2001, it is currently the largest and most popular general reference work on the Internet. Half the fun of Wikipedia is looking at the Discussion pages, where articles are critiqued and amended. You’d be amazed how vicious people can become arguing about the Periodic Table of Elements...

Moonpig (www.moonpig.com) I do love Moonpig - and if, like me, you have acquired a large number of in-laws, grandchildren, etc. and suffer from Senior Moments around the remembering of birthdays and the sending of cards to the UK, you will soon love it too! Moonpig (based in the UK – hooray!) has a huge online selection of attractive greetings cards, most of which can be personalised. Write your greetings message, fill in the name and address of the sendee and the lovely people at Moonpig will print it, stamp it and send it by first-class post to the birthday boy or girl—at a price hardly more than buying an ordinary card in a shop.

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Learn to Love Your Computer

TinyURL (<http://tinyurl.com>) A great free service that solves one of Life's Niggling Problems. So... you're sending an email to your friend to tell her about this fabulous unicycle for sale on ebay. You copy the link and paste it into your e-mail and it turns out to be

<http://rover.ebay.com/rover/1/711-53200-19255-type=3&campid=5336224516&toolid=10001&customid=tiny-hp&ext=unicycle&satitle=unicycle>

which, as you can see, your email server doesn't like at all as it's split over several lines and doesn't recognise it as an internet address. Just copy the link, paste into the Tinyurl box and it becomes <http://tinyurl.unicycles> Simple but brilliant!

Snopes (www.snopes.com) As a born sceptic, whenever I receive well-meaning emails from friends telling me that Microsoft will send me a cash reward for helping to test their tracking system, or warning me that a new computer virus will destroy my hard disk, I reach for my favourite b*llsh*t detector, Snopes.com – a wonderful repository of urban legends, scams and hoaxes. The site's owners thoroughly research such communications and mark them as True, False or Undetermined. So let's all do each other a favour, and when we receive something that seems too bad or good to be true check it out on Snopes before forwarding it. Please! (You know who you are...)

Sadly, under the baleful eye of an editor who doesn't recognise True Literature when he sees it, I am being forced to restrict the number of words and so, Loyal Readers, you will both have to wait for my next few choices until March. Except for this one...

i can has cheezburger? (www.icanhascheezburger.com/) If you are the sort of person who could be cured of deep depression by photos of kitties looking cute and doing funny things, accompanied by captions written in strange, ungrammatical English, you might just, like me, become addicted to this site. If not... wel, i don wants 2 be ur frend anyways. KTHXBAI !! (Just Google it...)



Jennifer Vernon-Smith writes about 5 days spent on one of the world's largest passenger ships:

"Voyager of the Seas"



Last October, together with a group of lady friends, I tried cruising for the first time. We took the Royal Caribbean floating city 'Voyager of the Seas' from Malaga to Nice, Corsica and back to Malaga. There are other routes available, but since the cruise is for only 5 days one can't go too far. The wonderful thing from our point of view was that it was just a taxi ride to and from the port. Boarding was fast and efficiently done, which was quite incredible as we were 3500 passengers in all including, we were told, 1900 Spaniards and 800 Brits. Most of the activities, etc. were in English, but with such a large Spanish contingent there was a lot of translating going on by Mauricio, our Mexican tour director.

We were each issued with a plastic card called a Seapass which was used for everything we purchased onboard, although the price we paid for the cruise was all inclusive so one really didn't need the Seapass except for alcohol or purchases in the shops. Even tips were included, although on the last day we were issued with little envelopes that we could use at our discretion. As the maitre d' had been sweet-talked into changing our dinner hour from 6.30 to 9.00 pm, we gave extra tips to him and to our waiters who were wonderful, suggesting wines, different dishes and just generally being charming. As the maitre d' spoke only English, it had been my job to persuade him that we just couldn't possibly eat at 6.30 which is tea time for any self-respecting Spaniard! My friends and I were an international group but I was the only native English speaker - although some of you Brits may choose to disagree!

The ship is, of course, super luxurious with everything that you can imagine, from ice rinks, to rock climbing walls and everything in between. The cabins were ample with good cupboard space, a large dressing table area, sofa and coffee table and huge beds. My roommate was a French friend, Danielle, whom they had taken to be my husband (Daniel). We were led into our cabin to be shown an enormous double bed, which we were to share... Danielle and I have known each other for nearly 40 years, but it was going to be cosy! When our room stewardess realized the error, it was quickly resolved and the two beds were large and very comfortable. We had a private balcony and a decent bathroom with a walk-in shower. As you could have room service 24 hours a day, a cup of tea, with millions of freshly-baked American-style cookies, was available at all hours. All for free.

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"Voyager of the Seas"

The food is their big calling card, I suppose. The main dining room was a four storey affair with crystal chandeliers, balconies and millions of waiters. We were told that there were 77 nationalities among the crew and I am sure that was true. The cafeteria was open 24 hours a day with every kind of food you can imagine but we had breakfast and dinner in the main dining room. The wine list was very international with excellent Chilean and South African wines as well as Californian and, of course, Spanish, French, etc. We tried a new one every night and enjoyed them all.

Every evening there was an extremely professional show: singing, dancing, fabulous costumes and stage production – very Las Vegas, and well worth it. One evening we went to a sort of 'Holiday on Ice' show at the ice rink and I was surprised at how much they managed to get onto a rink that was smaller than a standard hockey rink. You could skate during the day, although I didn't as my companions weren't game.

We took the two day-trip excursions, one in Nice and one on Corsica. The Nice one was enjoyable and interesting. You can pick up Elton John's shack, which is for sale, for a cool €35 million if you're up for it. We visited medieval villages, perfume factories and lots more. It cost €54 a head, lunch not included. On Corsica there was an 8 hour trip which would have taken us all around the island but, luckily as it turned out, we decided to stay in the city and investigate Napoleon's roots. It poured down that day and we just rode on the city mini-bus and wandered around by ourselves - and got totally soaked!

The total price for all this was €450, and we only booked about 3 weeks beforehand. The truly amazing thing is that at the end of all this high living, from Lavender Collection Point to drinking a cup of coffee in my own kitchen was exactly 1 hour and 15 minutes! It is a very easy way to do it, and as it was my first cruise I would call it a total success; I have learnt a few things to do and not to do if I go on another one. However, I would like you all to know that our group won the Trivial Pursuit competition in the bar on the first night out! Our closest rivals were a delightful group of young people from the Canary Islands who didn't know which member of the British Royal family spent £80,000 in one year on lingerie!!!



Tony Eccleston continues his series of book reviews with

Waiting for Columbus

This novel by the Canadian author Thomas Trofimuk found its way into my Spanish collection because it intertwines the story of Christopher Columbus and the king and queen of Spain with that of a man who is washed up in the Straits of Gibraltar. He is taken to a modern mental institution in Seville because he has an unshakeable belief that he is Columbus. Although apparently disconnected from reality he has convincing insights into how Columbus struggled desperately to finance his expedition. Yet these are in tension with the present day efforts to find his true identity and the dark events that preceded his discovery on the beach. Some reviewers have been deeply moved by this account of a man coping with tragedy and loss; others have been put off by the sometimes tedious unraveling of the strands of his life as he gradually begins to conflate the events of the 15th and 21st centuries.

If this were not complicated enough, there is a developing emotional relationship between Columbus and his nurse Consuela, and also an Interpol agent on the trail of a mystery man whom he comes to suspect may be the same as the one in the mental institution.

Needless to say, by the end of the novel the reader finds out the true identity of the man and what caused him to become Columbus. It is an affirmation that life really is worth living and that there is a way through the Valley of the Shadow. I am reminded of what Winston Churchill said, "If you are going through hell, keep going!".

Waiting for Columbus by Thomas Trofimuk

Published by Doubleday in 2009 ISBN-10 0385529136 and ISBN-13 978-0385529136

Help for Haiti

It is a tradition of the St George's Malaga Chaplaincy that the offertories at Christmas carol services are given to charity. By chance no decision had been taken as to which charities should benefit from the 2009 collections at St George's Church and at Competa. So after the Haiti earthquake it was agreed that these should go to the earthquake appeal. Retiring collections were taken at St George's Church on the Sundays after the disaster, Ged Harrison—our soapmaker-in-residence—made and sold at the church several kilos of organic glycerine soap in aid of the appeal, and the other congregations also contributed. A total of €1120 has been raised, and this is being sent to Christian Aid for their work in Haiti.

The Editor

ST. GEORGE'S MALAGA - a brand?

Adrian Wilkinson concludes his series of articles on the business of running St George's Chaplaincy

In this the last of my articles on the business of running the Chaplaincy, before it becomes too boring, and also because I think I may be 'flogging a dead horse', I want to have a look at St. George's - the brand.

Recently there has been a lot on UK television about the takeover of Cadbury's by Kraft. The arguments have swung to and fro about whether the two companies have a common 'fit'. And that is all about branding. When we think of Cadbury we think of a traditional British company of longstanding that produces rich chocolate products. And when we think about Kraft we think about cheese slices!!

So I thought I would have a look at the dictionary definition of the word 'brand' and I came up with

"a particular product/service or a characteristic that identifies a particular producer or supplier"

OK so far, St. George's has a particular service it provides, and it has a number of characteristics that identify what it is & what it does, some of which we have talked about in my earlier articles.

I then read on a little further in my dictionary and came across another definition of the word 'brand'

"an identifying mark made, usually by burning on the skin as proof of ownership"

Now, whilst I am not aware that we go around brandishing hot pieces of metal or wood, and branding people, we do something very similar. At every baptism, the vicar places the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child or person being baptised, and again at confirmation each candidate is marked with the sign of the cross during the service. So against this background, let's have a look at St. George's - the brand.

Branding is essentially about connecting with the public, and to do that we need to recognise what is important to people, and what issues are affecting them & their families. The high-octane bubble of the last decade has burst and what people want right now is honesty, integrity and authenticity. And who better to provide just that as part of their 'brand' than St. George's or the church in general? In creating a 'brand' we have to break through consumer apathy and make it very clear, at a glance, what it is exactly that we represent - how good are we at St. George's at doing that?

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ST. GEORGE'S MALAGA - a brand?

If St. George's were for example a supermarket, which supermarket would you say that it was? Would it be, for example, Somerfield (recently taken over by the Co-op), a supermarket that doesn't really impinge on anyone's consciousness? It sells exactly the same ranges as everywhere else, isn't particularly cheap, but is convenient. You go into it because it is there, not because you're actively seeking it out. Or would you say we are like Waitrose, which is built on quiet trust & consumer confidence that it is delivering long-term quality. Or finally, would you say we are like Aldi or LIDL, pile it high & sell it cheap, but increasingly being used by people who see it as being in touch with the current mood of shoppers, when times are 'tough'.

And then finally, St. George's - the brand, as seen through its logo, often the thing that most people identify with: think only of the McDonalds golden M or the Shell petrol logo which has been going for years in various incarnations.

What do the two logos below say about St. George's Malaga? The first is the current logo, whilst the second is a possible 21st century logo "



But when all is said & done isn't this logo the one that has stood the test of time for all of us?



And now, why not go and settle down with a big box of 'Kraft Dairy Milk' - doesn't quite have the same ring about it does it!!

Jean Roberts tells us about the Competa congregation's

Online Prayer Circle

We now have a circle of Christian friends who pray together every week. In fact we pray every day, but once a week we get together at a pre-arranged time and pray the "prayer for the week" together. When I say "get together" it is a bit different from conventional prayer meetings, in that we don't physically meet in someone's front room once a week. This is an online group!

We are a small congregation here in C mpeta, and we have had suggestions, from within and from without, that it would be a good idea to reduce our services to once a fortnight. We don't have many people and we don't contribute a lot of money in the great scheme of things, so why not cut services by half? The Chaplain did not agree with this and some of the rest of us were not too sure about it either.

We have a very small core group of people who have their homes here and live here permanently but there is also a sizeable group of people who live here but go over to the UK frequently, and another group who live in the UK, have second homes here and are regular and faithful worshippers when they are here. If some of these friends come out for a short visit they would very possibly miss the opportunity of worshipping with us. We are never all here at the same time. If we were we would be a big group. We value our opportunities to worship and praise in this place; we think it is a privilege and, above all, we are sure that the Father values us and very likely has a purpose for us. The task seems to be to try to understand what that purpose is.

The anxiety about small numbers remains an issue, but a friend said "It isn't any use trying to increase the numbers of people coming to church until we ourselves are in a right relationship with God". We know that people stop coming to church when they perceive conflict and we all know people who say "Well, you Christians can't agree with one another" So, the idea for an online prayer circle was born. One friend in the UK said that in her church they had just had visiting speakers who had described this kind of group. I said "What a co-incidence" and she said, "No, it is a God-incidence and we must go with it". So we did. We started in November and the group has grown slowly to a complement of 14 people. We have a new prayer each Monday, which is sent out to all the members of the prayer circle by email. The idea is that we all pray the prayer every day for the week, at a time which suits individuals, but on a Wednesday evening at 6.30 p.m. we all "meet" in prayer, so that we are all praying the same prayer, at the same time once a week. We know for sure that praying the same prayer at the same time together is very powerful and we lean on the promise of our Lord, that where two or three are gathered together in his Name, that he is there with us.

Every member of the circle is invited to write a prayer for the week, send it to me and I then send it out to all the others. We've all been in groups where a very small number of people get to do most of the talking. It just can't be like that in an online group. Nobody dominates or controls.

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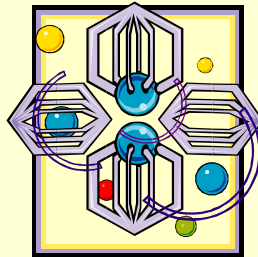
Online Prayer Circle

It started out as a need to pray for the work of Christian worship here in C mpeta, but always within the community of the Anglican Chaplaincy of St. George. Of course, the prayers widened immediately to include matters of local, national and international concern. Now, members of the group write in and ask us all to pray for friends of theirs, or for anything that is of concern. A family here in Competa were made homeless in a house fire at New Year; people we know had huge damage when homes were inundated by rocks and mud in the recent heavy rains and, of course, the victims of the Haiti earthquake have been brought to God in our prayers. We know that we need to give our money to the various appeal funds; we need to do what we can in practical ways to support neighbours and friends in need and sorrow, and we have; but we also need to bring the poor and suffering to him in prayer, to give thanks and praise for our lives, our loves, our pleasures and gifts, to say sorry for the things we have got wrong or neglected and, above all, to remember that

“They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength”

Isaiah Ch. 40 v. 31

If you would like to join us, we would love it. Email jean.mike@telefonica.net I leave with you a prayer written by David Adam, the poet priest of Lindisfarne.



Circle me Lord

Circle me Lord,
Keep protection near
And danger afar.

Circle me Lord,
Keep hope within,
Keep doubt without.

Circle me Lord,
Keep light near,
And darkness afar.

Circle me Lord,
Keep peace within,
Keep evil out.

 David Adam

Mike Roberts replies to Ian Willock's article in the December issue about his SatNav
The Slow Lane? Well, just get us there!

My friend Ian's glowing tribute to his Jayne (Ed: Ian and I both think she is Jane!) in the last edition of "The Dragon" demands a response.

Ian, I have an Olivia! No, these two ladies are not our lovely wives, but our computer navigators along the highways and byways of Europe, and both have played major roles in lessening tensions as we visit unknown places.

Gone are the "Right, turn left here" by which time we hapless drivers have indeed turned right upon the command, incurring heavenward glances from the navigator's seat. Gone are the "No, darling, you have the map upside down" and such comments as "You really do not know your left from your right, do you"?, or even - the favourite - "If you're so clever why don't you navigate. I'm not doing this any more"

With Olivia I have none of this. She is very nicely spoken, never argues, always says please and advises us that we have arrived at our destination. I often wait for her to say (as in airline speak) "For your safety and comfort, kindly remain seated until the car has come to a complete halt. Please take care when opening the passenger door as your passenger may have moved during the journey and may fall out. We wish you a happy day now that you have arrived and thank you for choosing to drive a Toyota, Ford, BMW...", or whatever.

So clever is Olivia that when we took the ferry from Santander to Portsmouth, she calculated that we had travelled 888 kilometres by sea! For the return journey from England I programmed Olivia for a route from the Cotswolds via Plymouth to Madrid. Upon arrival at the port Olivia was lost for words but instead, a message appeared on the screen saying "Caution, ferry ahead". She was warning me that there was no road ahead until Santander. Well, even my former navigator could have told me that!

Happy driving and arrive safely.

More Card Crafting in Competa

Jean Roberts is arranging another card crafting day at her home in Competa, on Tuesday 23 February. The theme this time is to be birthday and/or Easter cards.

The day will run from 10.30 to 4.00; the cost, including materials, will be €7.50. A 'Bring and Share' lunch is part of the day, so participants are asked to take a plate of food to share.

Please contact Jean if you would like to go: 95 255 3325 or jean.mike@telefonica.net

In the Dragons' Den...

This month Barrie Close tells us about himself.

Tell us your name and something about you

My name is Barrie Close. I have been a member of the Anglican Church virtually all my life, singing in a parish church choir until I was 25 years old, then joining Wakefield Cathedral choir for the next 40 years. We still attend the cathedral when we are in the UK and meet up with our old friends there.

How and when did you become a member of the Church here?

My wife (Marlene) and I together with others here in Montesol made enquiries about the Anglican Church locally and joined the congregation at Alhama de Granada and eventually forming a separate mission at Morelada. When difficulties arose with the premises there we joined the congregation at Tapia.

How you are involved in the life of the Chaplaincy now?

Because I can still sing reasonably well I joined the Tapia church choir where the standard is quite high and I enjoy the variety of music we sing - secular as well as Church music under the leadership of John Taylor.

How do you come to be in Spain?

A year before normal retirement, we came to Spain for a month's holiday (after a 30 year absence). After three weeks we went into a local estate agents in Nerja, found this new urbanisation in Montesol, decided on a new villa layout, agreed a price and paid a deposit the last day of our holiday.

What is the best thing about being here?

Although the villa was virtually complete when we moved to Spain, there was still three year's work sorting out the external areas, which is now just about finished. We have made many friends here as we're all at the same stage of work and have been able to help each other on all matters.

Are there things that really annoy you?

I hate the way dogs are dumped or thrown out for other people (often expats!) to take in. The most frustrating thing for us is being 90 km from Tapia so we always seem to be limited for time and not able to be totally involved in church affairs.

"I am really interested in..."

My obvious interest is music, but DIY has become a big interest over the last four years. Having worked for 50 years in the electrical industry in the UK, I am able to help and advise people on electrical problems.

"I wish everyone would..."

We have adapted well to the "laid back" Spanish way of life and often think that other expats should do the same.

Today's Wednesday, this must be Tallinn, Part 4

Sweden 40 years later: the fourth instalment of a light-hearted account of a family 10-day cruise around the Baltic Sea, by Peter Saliba.

My first attempt to hire a taxi to Malmö Airport was, of course, doomed to failure. The driver was of Mediterranean complexion and we struggled to understand one another. In desperation, I turned to a bearded, older male Swede whose vehicle was large enough to accommodate all four of us and our fairly moderate mound of luggage. For the next 50 kilometres, we touched on every possible topic of small talk including the question of immigrants in Sweden. I was told that the latter were particularly thick on the ground in the Skane and that they represented a specific threat to other native, Swedish workers. Space prevents me from explaining that question any further...

At the airport, we collected the huge Volvo station wagon which Charles had hired online from China. I tried to use my Maestro credit card but to no avail. Fortunately, Charles' credit card linked to his account at the Industrial and Commercial Bank in Beijing was accepted. Having stowed everything into it, we headed north up the E6 about 40 Km past Göteborg (Gothenburg) till we reached the turn off for the island of Orust. Thank heavens for emails! We were able to follow Kerstin's detailed directions, thereby reaching her bungalow by about 6.30 p.m. She and Carl-Fredric were waiting to receive us. We hadn't seen one another since meeting in Harrogate in 1977, shortly after Charles' birth!

After settling in - Carmen and I together in a ground floor guest room but the boys being banished to the basement - we were invited by our hosts to go on a fairly strenuous walk around the immediate vicinity. This turned out to be rural with a chilly west wind reminding us how far north we were from Málaga, and at the same time stressing the fact that the Scandinavian autumn had set in.

The following day was a Monday and the last day of August, so Carl had to work but Kerstin devoted all her efforts to escorting us around Orust by car. She took a couple of wrong turnings so we were very happy to be driven, thus avoiding getting hopelessly lost had we been left to our own devices... Our tour involved criss-crossing the island on no less than 4 small ferries. We visited the Helgegrens' new flat in the town of Lysekil. (As I have no idea of how to produce IPA transcription with this QWERTY keyboard, I won't strain my readers' patience trying to explain the Swedish pronunciation of this name!) At lunchtime, we had some of those renowned Scandinavian prawn open sandwiches.

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Today's Wednesday, this must be Tallinn, Part 4

September began with a family trip down to Gothenburg, which is Sweden's second city. Our hostess was busy at the golf club on Orust where she works part time so she couldn't go with us. Paul charmed a local driver into giving us the unused portion of her car park ticket allowing us to park in the open for very few crowns. After a Thai lunch, we all boarded the "Toad" (Paddan) for a view of the city from its canals and river. Some of the bridges over the former were so low, we ran a serious risk of decapitation as our boat slid quickly beneath them. Paul and Charles went off to visit one of Paul's classmates from his university days in London leaving us to visit several outstanding buildings in the city—despite the heat of 25°C! By 7.00 p.m., we noticed that the city centre restaurants were all very crowded so we headed for Gamle Port where we tucked into those typical Swedish meatballs and salmon. By 8.00 p.m. the weather broke and the rain began to bucket down.

(To be continued in Part 5)

Jennifer Vernon-Smith wants to thank everyone for their support of the Christmas Chocolate Campaign for El Comedor de Santo Domingo.

With all your wonderful support - and it was wonderful - €112 was raised and spent to buy chocolates, candy canes, chocolate bars, Christmas figures, Smarties and all sorts of treats for the children's bags. Ged and David donated lovely Christmas bags, and with all the chocolates and goodies that you sent in plus those purchased I was able to make up 37 really super bags. We also gave a tin of Cadbury's Roses and a box of chocolates to the kitchen staff at the *Comedor*, who are all volunteers. Warmest thanks to all of you for being so great.



And the milk fund is doing splendidly. As of January 10th, when I am writing this, €1455 has been taken in and just over €1000 spent. It's running at around €200 a month with contributions from all four congregations. Let's keep the ball rolling. It's such a tiny bit from each of us but the whole is worthwhile and really appreciated.

A Light to Lighten the Gentiles

John Taylor explains that it's not odd to sing Christmas carols in January

'How odd that you're doing your Algaidas carol service on January 4th, when Christmas is all over!' 'Over? It only starts on December 24th.'

'Christmas Eve? Don't be daft. The build-up starts in October. By Boxing Day everybody's literally fed up to the back teeth with turkey and mince pies.'

In the background of this conversation I can faintly hear mi compañero José muttering '¿Que diablos es un minzpai?' The Algaidas congregation is mostly Spanish, and for Spaniards not only is Christmas not over, it won't even get into full swing until Los Reyes clatter down the village street on their ponies, pelting a cowering population with the hardest and most indigestible boiled sweets Día can devise. And even in England, cathedrals and diehard parish churches will scandalize their secular neighbours by ding-donging merrily well into the New Year. Didn't Archbishop Rowan also ring the bell when he noted that even the government implicitly endorses the vision of us Christians as a gang of eccentric and possibly subversive nutters?

What is this British obsession with 'getting it over with'? Why, year after year, do we tame little donkeys let ourselves be halter-led by Messrs Marcus and Spencius, sutlers to the secular society? (Did they have a branch in first century Bethlehem?) By 27th December in the UK the Christmas decorations will have disappeared from the shops, Easter bunnies will be coyly appearing and any householder who keeps a Christmas tree up until Twelfth Night will be regarded as distinctly potty. In 1981, when Richard was a baby, Val and I kept the forty day Great Feast of Christmas in a 16th Century Cambridgeshire fen cottage resolutely festooned with holly and ivy right up to Candlemas. Friends, including church folk, assured us that it was 'unlucky', almost, in fact, as 'unlucky' as singing carols out of season.

'Right,' we said. 'Let's just see if Baby Jesus blasts us with a lightning bolt or sends us a plague of warts for keeping his crib on the sideboard throughout Epiphany.'

Candlemas, the feast of Christ's Presentation in the Temple, when Simeon and Anna, devout orthodox Jews, hailed this working-class child not only as the Glory of Israel but also, surprisingly, as a Light to Lighten the Gentiles. When Richard's son, our first grandchild, was born just over a year ago, Peter Wolfenden teased me for quoting 'Unto us a child is born'. No presumptuous parallel was intended (though of course there IS a parallel). Neither is it intended now, when I write that our Joseph was baptized at the concelebrated High Mass at Bedford Parish Church on the Feast of Candlemas, 1 February 2009 when the choir sang Johannes Eccard's great motet:

When to the temple Mary went,
And brought the Holy Child,
Him did the aged Simeon see,
As it had been revealed.
He took up Jesus in his arms
And blessing God he said:
In peace I now depart, my Saviour having seen,
The Hope of Israel, the Light of men.

Help now thy servants, gracious Lord,
That we may ever be
As once the faithful Simeon was,
Rejoicing but in Thee;
And when we must from earth departure take,
May gently fall asleep and with Thee wake.

Red Dragon's Healthy Winter Warmers

Two seasonal recipes from **J B-J**

After yours truly had his quadruple heart by-pass operation five years ago, Trish and I wondered if we would have to amend our long standing Mediterranean diet. The answer was of course NO, but further advice was to join the British Heart Foundation which would give us much information about healthy food and eating, with recipes available in leaflet, booklet and monthly magazine form.

So, with February's cooler temperatures on us, inner warming food is the order of the day (or night), and I recommend these recipes for your delectation and delight. (And there is a prize for anyone who can remember which comedian used that expression!)

Meatball Curry.(for serving 4)

500g lean minced lamb or beef
500g chopped tomatoes
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 Tbsp tomato puree
1 tsp crushed garlic
1 tsp olive oil
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp ginger, crushed
½ tsp ground black pepper
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp garam masala
1 egg
75 ml water, if necessary

Or buy 12 uncooked meatballs at market/butcher.

1. Mix the meat, garlic, half the onions, the pepper, garam masala and egg.
2. Shape the meat mixture into 24 small balls.
3. Line the bottom of the grill tray with foil and place the meat balls on the grill tray. This will allow the fat to drain off while cooking.
4. Grill under a medium heat for 10-15 min or until nicely browned.
5. In a Warm pan add the olive oil, cumin seeds and the remaining onions. Cook until the onions are soft and then stir in the ginger.
6. Add the chopped tomatoes, tomato puree and turmeric. Cook for 10 min.
7. Add the meat balls, reduce the heat and simmer for 20 min. Add up to 75 ml of water if necessary.

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Red Dragon's Healthy Winter Warmers

Sweet Potato Curry with Spinach and Chick Peas. (Serves 4 as a main course)

500g sweet potato, peeled and cut into small chunks
4 tsp olive oil
1 large onion
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 level tsp chilli powder
2 thumbs fresh root ginger, peeled and finely chopped
2 tsp curry powder
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp turmeric
500 g tin of chopped tomatoes
200 ml vegetable stock
430 tin/jar chick peas, rinsed and drained
230 g baby spinach leaves, rinsed and drained
2 Tbsp chopped fresh coriander (optional)

1. Cook the sweet potato chunks in a pan of boiling water for about 7 min or until tender; drain well.
2. Heat oil in a non-stick saucepan. Add onion; cook gently for about 5 min or until softened. Add garlic, chilli powder and ginger; cook gently for 3 min, stirring occasionally. Stir in the other ground spices; cook for 1 min, stirring.
3. Stir in tomatoes, stock, chick peas and sweet potato. Bring to the boil; reduce heat and simmer for 5 min, stirring occasionally. Stir in spinach, cover and cook gently for 2 – 3 min or until spinach wilts. Stir in coriander, if using.

Although Malaga has virtually no Indian restaurants, the spices used in these recipes are available on the market spice stalls

Coming next month:
Mike Smith's adventures travelling on the Old Patagonian Express



And finally...
Lent in the Chaplaincy: What's on?

Ash Wednesday, 17 February:

Holy Communion with imposition of Ashes

10.30 am in St George's Church; 6.00 pm at Puente don Manuel

“Bible People”

A Lenten course of four sessions. Each session will begin with a simple Holy Communion service and be followed by a talk and discussion about one of the key players in the Bible. No previous experience is necessary! Each session will last about 1 1/2 hours. Each one will ‘stand alone’, so you can come to just one session or to all.

At St George's: Tuesdays 2, 9, 16, 23 March at 11.00 am

At Puente don Manuel: Thursdays at 4.00 pm; start date to be announced

“Aspects of Prayer”

A teaching session on various approaches and ideas to help develop a prayer life. Not just for the holy!!

Tuesday 9 March at Puente don Manuel, 2.30-6.00 pm. Further details next month.

“Worship Matters 2”

A further session examining what we do when we worship. This will be of special importance for those who are called upon to lead worship in our churches from time to time, but all are welcome.

Tuesday 23 March at Puente don Manuel, 2.30-6.00 pm. Further details next month.