



Greetings from the Chair

It is once again my pleasure to convey to you Christmas Greetings on behalf of myself and my colleagues on the committee.

It is hard to believe that December has come around so quickly, but as we all know this is the way it is in retirement. Therefore it is so important to enjoy and maximise time to the full.

We do hope that Chiswell Green u3a helps you to fulfil this. Group activities have successfully continued; trips and events have been keenly supported; our meetings have been well attended with approximately 160 in attendance; and a steady influx of new members has ensured our membership to be a very manageable figure of just under 400.

A special mention must go to those of you who volunteer in a broad range of roles. You are truly appreciated and your efforts help make Chiswell Green u3a rather special.

So on behalf of the committee may I wish all members a very Happy Christmas and very best wishes for 2026.

Tony Jackson

This year our Xmas raffle donation is going to The Salvation Army. The following, by Wan Gi Lee (Corps Officer of the St Albans Salvation Army), describes some of their work.

The Christmas season is at the heart of the community work at St Albans Salvation Army, as it is a time to put Christian love into action. Each year, the Corps supports families and children in need within the community. We work closely with partners such as social services, the local council, and schools to identify children living in poverty and financially struggling families.

Last year, we prepared and delivered toys and food gifts to over 300 children in more than 100 families, including those at a local shelter for single mothers. This community relief mission has been ongoing for many years, and this year we expect the need to be even greater. We typically allocate around £5,000 in addition to public donations for this vital Christmas effort. Your support and donations will be deeply appreciated.

Our community work continues year-round, aiming to support people in need—homeless individuals, refugees, the elderly, and young people alike. For our homeless friends, we provide evening community meals five days a week, serving an average of 30 people each day. We also offer a welcoming space for Ukrainian fellowship groups, along with refugees from other countries.

For elderly members of the community, we host the Cameo Club and provide ongoing day-to-day support. Young people are supported through our weekly Marijuana Anonymous (MA) group.

THANK YOU

On behalf of the Needles & Pins Group, I would like to say a big thank you to CGu3a for your generosity. Our third Xmas sale and the raffle of the quilt we made, were a great success and enabled us to contribute a substantial sum to the Christmas charity.

It's a win/win situation; we enjoyed making the items, you bought them because you like them, and the charity benefits. Thank you.

Needles & Pins Group

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☆ **REMINDER** ☆
☆ **due to a bank holiday** ☆
☆ **the next monthly** ☆
☆ **meeting will be on** ☆
☆ **8th January 2026** ☆
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

*Merry Christmas and
a very happy New Year to everyone*

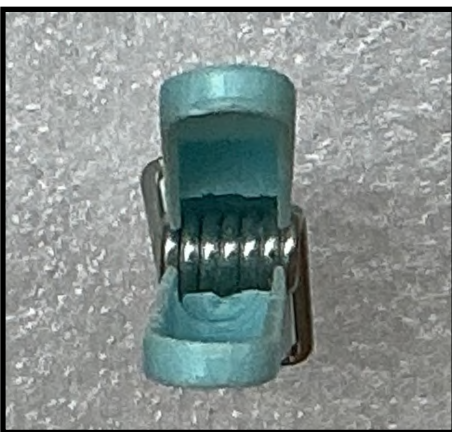
PUZZLE PAGE

(all answers on the back page)

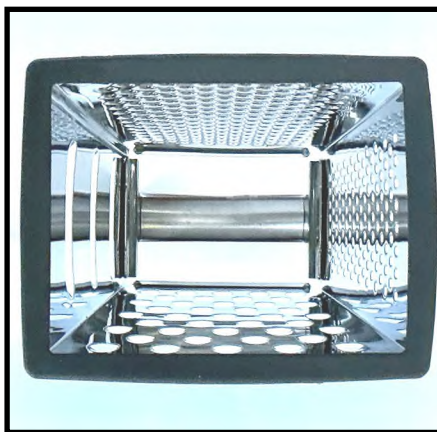
TWENTY QUESTIONS — what do you know about Yuletide?

1. The game "*Cluedo*"; when was it first marketed?
2. In the film "*Home Alone*", where are the McCallisters going on holiday when they leave Kevin behind?
3. Which country did eggnog come from?
4. How many Scrabble points is the word "Christmas"?
5. According to the song, what did my true love give to me on the eighth day of Christmas?
6. What is the colour of mistletoe berries?
7. What is the name of the last ghost that visits Scrooge in "*A Christmas Carol*"?
8. Which famous scientist was born on Christmas Day?
9. Mince pies used to contain real minced meat; true or false?
10. Who originally sang "*Santa Baby*"?
11. Which saint's day is celebrated on the 26th December?
12. In the film, "*It's A Wonderful Life*", what happened every time a bell rang?
13. What is the Italian Christmas dinner called?
14. Which Christmas song contains the lyric "*Everyone dancing merrily in the new old-fashioned way.*"?
15. What are "pigs in blankets" called in Scotland?
16. Three of Santa's reindeers' names begin with the letter "D." What are those names?
17. How many gifts in total were given in "The Twelve Days of Christmas" song?
18. This holiday treat was originally designed to resemble a shepherd's staff. What is it?
19. What year was the first Christmas card created?
20. Which two actresses play the lead roles in the film "*The Holiday*"?

PICTURE QUIZ — identify these everyday objects



1



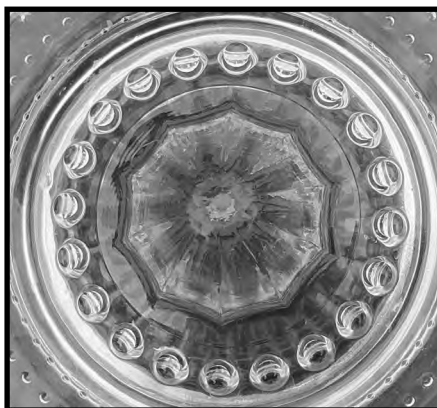
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3



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Merry Christmas to all

WINGS & WHEELS GROUP

Wings and Wheels visited the Museum of Berkshire Aviation near Reading. We had a very enjoyable visit here, which has fascinating collection of aircraft, exhibits and artefacts together with friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable volunteers. This museum provides an ample opportunity to learn about aviation in Berkshire.

The museum is not the largest museum you will ever visit, but it is absolutely packed inside the old hanger with aircraft and significant numbers of exhibits. The aircraft are fitted in like a jigsaw which must have been an amazing task of planning. Covering the iconic local manufacturers, Fairey, Miles and Handley Page, it is sited on the edge of the former Woodley Airfield. Unique aircrafts on display include Miles Martinet, Miles Student and Fairey Jet Gyrodyne. There are items from flying helmets, models and equipment up to an example of a Chevaline warhead from a Polaris missile which were carried on Royal Navy Resolution class submarines. Many component parts were made by local companies like Sperry Gyroscope and M.L. Aviation.

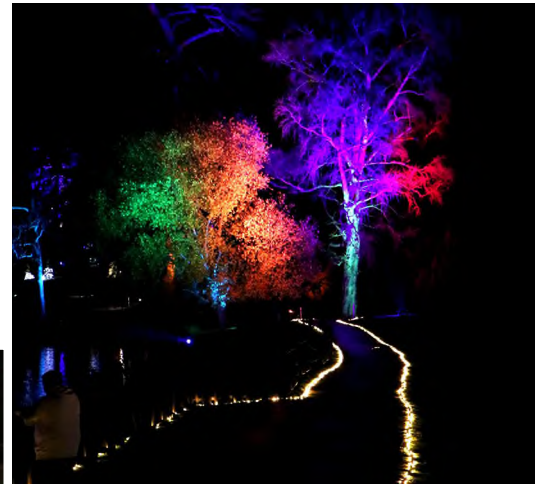
Possibly the star of the show was Handley Page Herald, which was flown by Prince Philip during his 1962 tour of 11 South American Countries. His coat of arms are engraved into a glass panel inside the aircraft and our group is pictured outside. An excellent day out.



Alan Potter



It was reported that it took five men, five days to attached the lighting to this tree shown on the left



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2026 *further information is available on our website*

FEBRUARY 11th — Golden Oldies — waiting list

MARCH 25th — Barnum — waiting list

APRIL 28th — Beaulieu — details to follow

MAY 9th — Mill at Sonning — places available

JUNE — there will be NO trip this month

JULY 1st — Thames River Cruise — details to follow

AUGUST 27th — Peacocks Auction House — details to follow

SEPTEMBER — as yet no trip planned

OCTOBER — as yet no trip planned

NOVEMBER — as yet no trip planned

MENDING CHRISTMAS by Ann Traynor

IT was not going to be the same.

Jenny could not avoid the frenzied approach of Christmas. Bright lights, gaudy displays and jangling music. Even the penetrating silence of home was better than this.

It had not always been that way. Christmas had always been joyous. She had loved the busy preparations. Even the seductive consumerism, the ringing tills.

In his late 50s Martin still worked long hours in the City. Glorifying their home with a tree and tasteful decorations was up to her. She delighted in making the house festive before Martin got home, weary from the crowded train journey.

It happened in August during a summer heatwave. The evening meal was in the oven. Martin would be home in less than an hour.

The phone call came. A voice telling her Martin had collapsed at the station. An ambulance was called. Too late. He passed away at 6.43pm. A massive heart attack.

They would never sit down to that evening meal. They would never eat together again. Jenny's life changed forever. Weeks and months passed in a blur. Now there was the explosion of Christmas. It had always been just the two of them. No children - just them.

This year Jenny did not bother with the festive wreath on the front door or the impressive tree in the hallway. The house was left unadorned.

Jenny just wanted Christmas to be over.

Cards arrived. Jenny left them piled unopened on the hall table. Some were addressed to both her and Martin. Not everyone knew what had happened in the summer. The house was too quiet. Jenny could not bear to turn on the TV. Every channel was immersed in Christmas jolliness.

She decided to go to bed early. Curl up with a book. Shut the world out.

The doorbell rang insistently. Reluctantly she opened the door.

It was Mary O'Mahoney. This year it was Mary's turn to host the "drinks with neighbours". Quite a few were already at her house.

In the months since "it" had happened some neighbours had tried to reach out to Jenny while others did not know how to react and ignored her instead.

However, right now Mrs O'Mahoney was not going to take no for an answer. Half an hour later Jenny found herself on Mrs O'Mahoney's doorstep. Martin should have been with her, but that was never going to happen again. In the chattering of the evening neighbours, who had assumed Jenny would spend Christmas Day with some relative or other, realised this was not the case. Mrs O'Mahoney then made it quite clear to Jenny that she would be coming to them.

On the day itself, embroiled in the laughter and joy of that large Irish family, Jenny began to heal. It was early days. Her grief had a long way to go, but there was some sense now that she would get through.

Some sense that Christmas had brought hope.

ANSWERS TO PAGE TWO PUZZLES

1. Clothes peg; 2. Grater; 3. Whisk; 4. Cocktail sticks; 5. Lemon squeezer; 6. E27 light bulb.
PICTURE QUIZ
19. 1843; 20. Kate Winslet and Cameron Diaz.
16. Dancer, Dasher and Donner; 17. 364; 18. Candy canes; 14. "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree"; 15. Killed pigs; 12. An angel got his wings; 13. A feast of seven fishes; 8. Sir Isaac Newton; 9. True; 10. Eartha Kitt; 11. St Stephen; 11. 1949; 2. Paris; 3. England; 4. 16; 5. Eight maids a-milking; 6. White; 7. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come; 8. Sir Isaac Newton; 9. True; 10. Eartha Kitt; 11. St Stephen; 12. An angel got his wings; 13. A feast of seven fishes; 14. "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree"; 15. Killed pigs; 16. Dancer, Dasher and Donner; 17. 364; 18. Candy canes; 19. 1843; 20. Kate Winslet and Cameron Diaz.

TWENTY QUESTIONS



**PLEASE HELP THE RNIB
RAISE FUNDS TO SUPPORT
BLIND AND PARTIALLY
SIGHTED PEOPLE, THEIR
FAMILIES AND CARERS**

**Please bring all your used stamps to the meetings
and these will be collected by Adrian Wilson**

Thank you

...and finally

A Muscovite married couple were out shopping one day and having a disagreement about an inconsequential matter, as married couples do, as to whether it was raining or snowing.

Wife to husband "I tell you it is snowing. Why do you always have to disagree with me".

Husband to wife "I'm telling you it is raining. Why don't you listen to what I say".

This sniping went on and on until they met a high ranking Commissar in the Politburo whose name was Rudolph Stravinski, and they decided to ask him to settle the argument.

After some deliberation the Commissar agreed with the husband, much to the wife's annoyance. The husband turned to his wife, put his hands on her shoulders and looked deeply into her eyes and said –

"Rudolph the red knows rain dear".

Ivor Tolstorey