



Middleham Herald



Christmas Edition, December 2020



This Middleham Herald has been produced and distributed in line with current Royal Mail delivery measures. If you would prefer to receive future editions by e-mail, please contact the Town Clerk with both your e-mail and postal addresses.

From the Mayor

Our Christmas lights and tree look lovely as ever and remind us that Christmas is just round the corner

Many thanks to Councillor Simon Wheeler who kindly puts up our tree and gives the lights an overhaul every year. Sadly, we missed our carols round the tree with mulled wine and mince pies this year hopefully we will be able to resume next year.

Although for many of us our Christmas celebrations will be different this year, we can see some light at the end of the tunnel with the development of a vaccine which hopefully in the New Year will become available to all who want it.

Many Thanks to all members of our community who have volunteered this year to help anyone in need during the difficult days and thanks to all Town Councillors who

do all they can to make Middleham a great place to live.

Happy Christmas!!

Councillor Sue Fairhurst, Mayor

Volunteering in Middleham

A big thank you to everyone who has helped other members of our community, whether officially through our volunteering scheme or informally just by helping a neighbour out. Even the most modest tasks or chats have made a big difference to so many of us. Thank you all for helping and for being willing to help.

If you need help, don't be shy, even or especially over the Christmas period, just get in touch - in confidence - with me, with either of the Vicars or with Councillor Nigel Hopper – our details are at the end of this Herald. You can find further details of local businesses and organisations offering help and local services on our website:

<https://middlehamtowncouncil.co.uk/getting-help/>

Councillor Honor Byford, Deputy Mayor

Middlehams Telephone Box

In recent times, many rural communities have lost their public phone and each year BT proposes that certain phones are removed where few or, occasionally, no calls have been made. Proposed closures are always consulted upon and, so far, Middleham's phone box has not come under threat. Although little used, it is a vital service in case mobile phone signals are not available during an emergency, for example when the nearby defibrillator is required. Middleham's phone box is a real feature of the Market Place and is actually a Listed Building. Cllr Nigel Hopper recently cleaned the inside – it was a Halloween Horror encroached upon by weeds and draped in cobwebs! It is now clean and tidy and smells much better! Thank you, Nigel. The Clerk will contact BT to request that the missing glazing panel is replaced.

It would be good to try to prevent the box ever becoming so untidy again. Is anyone willing to be a guardian to 'adopt' the phone box, popping in every couple weeks to check the line still works, remove the weeds and generally keep our phone box looking nice? If you think you would like to help, please contact me or Cllr Hopper.

Council Office hours over Christmas – New Year

The Clerk's Office will close at 4pm on Tuesday 23 December 2020 and re-open at 9am on Tuesday 5th January 2021. During that period, you may send an email to office@middlehamtowncouncil.co.uk as the Clerk will have access to emails, although only on an occasional basis. Urgent matters, such as needing Covid support, problems with flooding, reporting any damage to Council land and property (etc...I wasn't sure what else to put) may be raised with Town Councillors on the following numbers:

Councillor Susan Fairhurst: 01969 622993

Councillor Honor Byford: 01969 625304

Councillor Martin Cade: 01969 622090

Councillor Lorna Skelton: 07793 673240

Councillor Simon Wheeler: 07753 543589

Councillor Nigel Hopper: 07594 814524

Councillor Greg Fortune: 07521 626743

Council Meetings during restrictions

Until we entered lockdown, by law council meetings could only be held as physical, face to face meetings. When these were no longer possible, central government changed the law to enable councils to meet virtually. In Middleham, after the last meeting in the Key Centre in February, the first virtual meeting was held in June and have continued, as usual, on the final Wednesday

of each month, other than August and December. The Town Council uses Zoom which enables members of the public to attend, either using their computer or by telephone. Full details of how to join are shown on the Notice of Meetings which are published on the noticeboards and the Council's website. Residents and the press are entitled to be present at all Council meetings, apart from occasions when certain private matters are discussed, and this remains the case with the virtual meetings. As before, at the start of each meeting there is a period of up to 15 minutes when the public may ask questions and make statements.

If you wish to be present at future meetings, but are unsure of the process, please contact the Clerk office@middlehamtowncouncil.co.uk or call David on 07531 580499. If you wish to raise an issue at meetings but do not wish to take part online or by phone, please contact the Clerk or our Councillors whose details are shown on the website and noticeboards.

The change in the law about virtual meetings applies until May 2021. Depending on how restrictions are lifted as the vaccines are rolled out, that period may or may not be extended. The Town Council feels that there are some advantages of virtual meetings and it may, if the rules allow, be possible to have

some 'hybrid' meetings where some participants are in the same room together and others attend online or by telephone. We are researching how we can achieve this.

One way and wrong way traffic on St Alkelda's/The Springs

The road between St Alkelda's and The Springs is one-way, uphill only for safety reasons, because it is a blind bend on the way downhill. There have been too many incidents of drivers taking a short cut by driving the wrong way through the one-way system. With such limited visibility on this bend, so close to the children's play parks and where a footpath crosses the road, this is dangerous and worrying for many who walk there.

The Town Council raised residents' concerns with the Highway Authority, NYCC. We have now been advised that they will make the following changes:

Advance Warning. There is an existing 'No Through Road' sign at the junction of The Springs with Park Lane. To give a better warning to drivers an extra sign plate will be added advising of the following 'No Access to A6108'.

'NO ENTRY' Signs. The existing roundels will be replaced with larger signs.

Road Markings. The words 'NO ENTRY' will be painted on the carriageway beside the signs to give additional emphasis.

Regarding timescales, NYCC has commenced its formal approval and purchase processes. For the signs, this may take up to three months. We are now in the wrong time of year to be applying paint to the roads so the painted markings will probably be done in the Spring.

Councillors feel that this is a good outcome, which we hope will make a difference. In the meantime, if you witness anyone going the wrong way from The Springs into St Alkeldas, please continue to report vehicles, either by registration number or company name with time and date and the Clerk will forward this information to the vehicle owners / operators. Some success has been achieved with drivers employers from resident's reports.

David Keep, Town Clerk



A Middleham Herald Carol Service.

At our Carols and Brass carol service at St Alkelda's each year, we have a selection of Christmas readings and poetry, as well as some traditional Christmas carols. In the

absence of this service this year, here are a few offerings so that we have a small flavour:

I count the days to Christmas, by Lois Rock

I count the days to Christmas
and I watch the evening sky.

I want to see the angels
as to Bethlehem they fly.

I'm watching for the wise men
and the royal shining star.

Please may I travel with them?
Is the stable very far?

I count the days to Christmas
as we shop and bake and clean.
The lights and tinsel sparkle,
and yet deep inside I dream
that as we tell the story
of Lord Jesus and his birth,
the things of every day will fade
as heaven comes to earth.



Luke 2: Mary and Joseph make their way to Bethlehem for a census.

'While they were there, the time came for [Mary] to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn'.



“A Very Special Time of Year” by G Phinn

(who gives permission to use his material for carol services.)

A frazzled vicar tries to explain the Christmas story to a group of children, who are more interested in what their Christmas presents will be:

'Children! Children!' exclaimed the vicar, raising a hand like a crossing patrol warden stopping cars. 'Christmas is not just about presents, you know. It's really a celebration of a birthday. It's about the birth of a very special baby.'

'I know what it were called,' said a small wiry boy.

The vicar interlaced his long fingers just beneath his chin in an attitude of a child praying and smiled. 'I'm very glad to hear it,' he said in that solicitous and kindly tone often possessed by those of the cloth.

'It were called Wayne,' the child told him.

'Wayne? Certainly not! What a thought!' cried the vicar in mock horror.

'It were!' cried the boy, undeterred. 'Babby were called Wayne.'

'No, it wasn't called Wayne,' said the vicar, his jaw tightening and his voice quavering a little. He bit his lip momentarily. The poor man imagined that speaking to a group of

small children about Christmas would be an easy enough task but he was now regretting he had ever agreed to visit the school that morning. 'The baby was called Jesus,' the vicar told him, slowly and deliberately.

'It were Wayne,' persisted the child, nodding vigorously.

'Jesus!' snapped the vicar.

'Wayne,' repeated the child. 'I know, 'cos we all sang about it in assembly: 'A Wayne in a manger, no crib for a bed,'



Open Pantry

We keep some food stocks in our parish 'Open Pantry' which are available so if you find yourself in need of food in an emergency. Please text 07796988302. This is a discreet service.

Collecting for local foodbank

We have been alerted to the growing need that foodbanks are experiencing and so have put a collection point in Middleham. It's a big plastic box in Revs Liz and Jeff's front garden – Applegarth House, Leyburn Road, Middleham DL8 4PL - please put tins and dry goods in the box, and they will be transported to the Store House Food bank in Richmond. Thank you so much.

Christmas Services:

Friday December 18th 6.30pm Lessons and Carols - Thornton Steward green (outdoors).

Bring a torch!

Sunday December 20th 10.30am Methodist

Sunday service in Coverdale Memorial Hall, Carlton

Sunday December 20th 2.30pm Lessons and

Carols - Coverham Churchyard (outdoors)

Christmas Eve 7.30pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion - East Witton church

Christmas Day 10am Christmas Day Family Communion - Middleham church

Please bring a mask to each service, even outdoors. Social distancing will be in place.

Prayers - As a church community we continue to hold the whole parish in our prayers. If you would like us to pray for something specific please contact Liz or Jeff (confidentially) - either jervaulxliz@gmail.com or jervaulxjeff@gmail.com or phone 01969 326069

Weddings and Funerals

Weddings continue to be permitted up to a maximum of 15 people attending.

Funerals can take place with up to a maximum of 30 people attending, but may be less, depending on the size of the church/crematorium, and the ability to suitably socially distance.

Burial/ interment of ashes services are possible, with a maximum of 15 people in attendance.

Funeral directors have updated information

The Bridge Magazine

Is now largely a monthly email edition.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact jervaulxliz@gmail.com

If you do not have access to email, and would like a paper copy, please send your name and address to:

Liz Moody, Applegarth House, Leyburn, Middleham DL8 4PL by 5th January 2021

Please note - the next edition is in February (no Bridge in January)

Rectory: 01969 326069 or **Liz,** 07796988302

Jeff, 07443581463

Racing Welfare

Racing Welfare provides a wide range of advice and guidance services, all of which are completely confidential and non-judgmental. Support is available for physical and mental health, bereavement, careers advice, housing, money advice, illness, addiction, relationships and retirement.

All of Racing Welfare's services are accessible 24hrs a day online at

www.racingwelfare.co.uk

Racing's Support Line: 0800 6300 443

Careers Advice and Training Service:

www.cats-racingwelfare.co.uk

Gail Burton-Pye, Welfare Officer, Racing Welfare, tel 07788184140

MSCWA – Middleham Sports and Wellbeing Association

We will be holding our AGM (via Zoom) on Thursday 17th December, so we will have more information about our plans for 2021 soon!

Richard Fletcher, Secretary MSCWA

Our main contacts are:

Community Garden-contact Nigel or Amanda 07594 814524

Messy boots-Kathy Wheeler 07866 132787

Cricket-Richard Sanderson 01969 625365

5 a side football/Senior

Football/Rounders/Golf-Nigel.



Pinkers Pond Tree Planting

It is hoped tree planting will take place in January. If you would like to get involved please email lwbagroup@gmail.com

Many thanks,

Elise and Kayleigh

The Origins of Christmas and Midwinter Feasts

The celebration of the Winter Solstice (also known as Yule) is one of the oldest winter

celebrations in the world. Ancient people around the world were hunter-gatherers and spent most of their time outdoors. The seasons and weather played an important part in their lives. Because of this many ancient people had a great reverence for, and even worshipped the sun. The Norsemen of Northern Europe saw the sun as a wheel that changed the seasons. It was from the word for this wheel, “houl”, that the word yule is thought to have come. At mid-winter the Norsemen lit bonfires, told stories and drank sweet ale.

The ancient Romans also held a festival to celebrate the rebirth of the year. Saturnalia ran for seven days from the 17th of December. It was a time when the ordinary rules were turned upside down. Men dressed as women and masters dressed as servants. The festival also involved decorating houses with greenery, lighting candles, holding processions and giving presents.

The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year (21st December) and was celebrated in Britain long before the arrival of Christianity. The Druids (Celtic priests) would cut the mistletoe that grew on the oak tree and give it as a blessing. Oak trees were seen as sacred and the winter fruit of the mistletoe was a symbol of life in the dark winter months.



It was also the Druids who began the tradition of the yule log. The Celts thought that the sun stood still for twelve days in the middle of winter and during this time a log was lit to conquer the darkness, banish evil spirits and bring luck for the coming year.

In our agrarian society, midwinter was used to mark and guide activities such as the slaughtering of animals, the sowing of crops and the monitoring of winter reserves of food, all vital to ensure the preservation and continuance of human life. Only the strongest animals could be kept through the winter; the rest had to be slaughtered in November and their meat preserved. Mead and wine made at the end of summer had fermented and was also ready to drink. So by midwinter, there was food to feast on. Protecting fragile life until it can be “reborn” by the sun is the basis for our customs of bringing evergreenery, yule logs and trees into the house. People believed that the spirit of summer, life and growth went to shelter in the evergreen bushes and trees in winter – and that by cutting them and bringing them inside they were being offered shelter until the spring.



The yule log (which these days probably most people think of as a chocolate cake) was the largest log – or even whole tree trunk – to be brought into the house and burned during the 12-day celebration of midwinter in Scandinavia and Germany from the early 900s.

And the archetypal figure of Father Christmas also originated from the prehistoric forests of the north, characterising wild, natural life at midwinter, and grew into the ill-tempered elf Pelznickel, whom German settlers took with them to America. He became amalgamated with the character of the Norse god Odin, who rode an eight-legged horse across the winter skies, and the kindly Saint Nicholas. We now have a gift-giving magical entity flying in a sleigh drawn by eight reindeer.



Candles, fairy lights, and lanterns reflect the importance of creating warmth and light and encouraging the return of the sun.

Midwinter is a solar event that symbolises the rebirth and continuation of life. Its relevance is without borders, creed, beliefs or practices. Many of these customs are still

followed today. They have been incorporated into the Christian and secular celebrations of Christmas.



And now for a Christmas quiz!

1. What date is St Stephen's Day?
2. In Charles Dickens' novel, 'A Christmas Carol', who was Scrooge's dead business partner?
3. The song, 'White Christmas' was first performed in which 1942 film?
4. London's Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is traditionally given to us by which country?
5. In the song, 'The 12 Days of Christmas', what did my true love give me on the seventh day?
6. Which Christmas carol includes the line, 'To save us all from Satan's power'?
7. What colour are the berries of the mistletoe plant?
8. What Christmas item was invented by London baker, Tom Smith, in 1847?
9. In which modern country is St Nicholas's birthplace?
10. From which country does the poinsettia plant originate?
11. Which monarch delivered the first Royal Christmas Day Message?
12. Which country is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition?
13. What happened in the 1914 Christmas Day truce during the First World War?
14. In which year was the first Christmas card (as we know them today) sent?
15. In what type of building was the baby Jesus born?
16. What time is the Queen's speech traditionally broadcast?

17. What gifts did The Three Wise Men give Jesus on his birthday?
18. Who was crowned King of England on Christmas Day in 1066?
19. Which country traditionally plays the Boxing Day Test Match every year?
20. Which plant-based Christmas tradition was started by servants in Victorian Britain?



For Quiz Answers, see end of this Herald

Mobile Post Office in Middleham

Stops near the Jubilee Fountain:

Monday 11.00 – 12.00

Tuesday 09.30 – 10.30

Thursday 11.00 – 12.00

Friday 10.00 – 11.00



Who to contact for help or if you are worried for yourself or someone else:

The Town Clerk, David Keep, is working from home, contact him by e-mail:

office@middlehamtowncouncil.co.uk

or tel 07531 580499. This is David's home mobile and he is happy to be contacted outside normal hours.

Councillor Honor Byford, 01969 625304 or 07849 918215. shbyford@yahoo.co.uk

Councillor Nigel Hopper, 07594 814524, hoppenn@gmail.com

St Marys & St Alkelda's Church,

Reverends Liz Moody and Jeff Payne

01969 326069 or Liz, 07796 988302

Jeff, 07443 581463

Racing Welfare

Gail Burton-Pye, 07788 184140,

gburtonpye@racingwelfare.co.uk

The Middleham Key Centre office is open, Monday – Thursday mornings 9.00 – 2.00. You can email us on office@middlehamkey.co.uk or ring our number 01969 624002 and leave a message outside of opening hours. Alternatively, you can ring Pam on 07772 736006 or Lesley on 01969 622615

Christmas Quiz Answers:

1. *26th December*
2. *Jacob Marley*
3. *'Holiday Inn'*
4. *Norway*
5. *Seven swans a-swimming (PLUS 6 geese a-laying, 5 gold rings, 4 calling birds, 3 French hens, 2 Turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree)*
6. *God rest ye merry gentlemen*
7. *White*
8. *Christmas cracker*
9. *Turkey*
10. *Mexico*
11. *George V*
12. *Germany*
13. *The troops on both sides sang carols together, shared drinks and some played football together*
14. *1843 by Henry Cole*
15. *Possibly a stable, or the courtyard or out-building of an inn*
16. *At 3pm on Christmas Day*
17. *Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh*
18. *William the Conqueror*
19. *Australia*
20. *Standing under the mistletoe*