JANUARY FREE

marston times

PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS

ARE WE DOWN — HEARTED ?

Not long ago I was startled to see a headline after the main news on T.V., which ran 'GOOD NEWS'.

The announcer explained that as the news in the main headlines had been so depressing, they had gone out of their way to look out some 'good news'. Then followed story after story of people who had performed unexpected acts of kindness which really warmed one's heart.

Tonight one saw the town of Haslemere putting up Union Jacks everywhere, just to show that Britain may be 'down', but is certainly not 'out'.

Now it doesn't need a lot of research to discover that the plight of the homeless in Oxford, quite apart from the rest of the country, is pretty appalling. There are also sections of the community who deserve a much more realistic pay packet if it is to be called a 'living wage'. We've taken too many people for granted for far too long.

Yet there are many things for which we ought to put the flags up: teachers who give of their very best for the children in their care; hospitals and nursing services which minister to our needs; voluntary workers who run our youth clubs; willing souls who provide a weekly programme for our Over 60's Clubs.

You could make a very long list of these kind of people, and we ought to be more than grateful to them and for them.

There are also the people who do a lot of kindnesses behind the scenes, like the family who sent a gift to be given to someone in need ...the money they had saved through not sending Christmas cards; or the person who rang up to say: "My husband has been chopping up some firewood, and he's done two extra bags for some old person if they'd like it;" or the young man who calls in on an elderly relative on his way to school each morning to see if she needs anything.

It is still true that 'Love makes the world go round', and perhaps if things get a little bit tougher in the days ahead we may come to make a re-appraisal of the things that really matter in life ... kindness and caring, unselfishness and sharing.

This morning I was talking to a shop assistant who had been out to a party organised by the firm's boss. Did she have a good time? Most certainly! But the two things which had left their mark upon her were these; firstly, that they had all been invited to the boss's home for the party, and secondly the wide smile of the coloured boy who greeted them at the door, dressed in his vivid yellow pyjamas. You see" she told me "I discovered that my boss's wife fostered children, and this laddie had arrived that day, and was so happy with the family."

Yes, happiness is infectious, just as downheartedness is contagious. Are you down-hearted? Perhaps its time you began to play the "glad game" and begin the New Year by counting your blessings.

Paul N. Rimmer

Vicar.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

Sunday Services

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

10.00 a.m. Parish Communion

6.30 p.m. Evensong

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HARLOW SCHOOL

The Harlow Association held an 'Open Forum Meeting on the 29th November, when Mr. Day, Deputy Director of Education for the new Oxfordshire, Mr. Weir, Chairman Designate of the New Oxfordshire and County Councillor for this area and Ald. Cooper, Chairman of Oxfordshire Education Committee and Governor of The Harlow School, answered parents questions. The question which had aroused most concern among the parents was that of single sex schools. Both Mr. Day and Mr. Weir said that they would express the parents' almost unanimous concern about single sex schools at a meeting to be held early in January. Parents put their own personal problems that this would cause in their own families. Mr. Day said that if these parents approached the Education Authority with their problems, their children might be able to go to the school of the parent's choice if parents were prepared to make any necessary travelling arrangements.

Both Mr. day and Mr. Weir promised to do all they could to help make a smooth changeover for the children of this area. There had in the past been too many changes in this area and it was hoped that this would be the last for many years and a stable situation would be established.

The continuity of certain subjects was raised: for instance Milham Ford study one type of mathematics and Oxford School another. This would mean that one of the sexes from the Harlow School would have to forget completely what they had learnt and start again.

Another question was whether the 'die' was so cast that the Harlow School could not become an 11-16 school. Although this had support from the parents, the speakers said that it was no longer possible to condider this.

NEXT MONTH

From next month the Marston Times is starting an occasional series of articles about organisations which, though not based in, or confined to, the village, nevertheless are of interest to people who live in Marston. The articles will try to do two things: describe what the organisations do to help Marston people and, often, say how Marston can help them.

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BROWNIE GUIDES

BROWNIE GUIDES DIAMOND JUBILEE

It is 60 years in May 1974 since the youngest section of the guide movement started. They were originally called Rosebuds, but it soon became obvious that this was not a suitable name for these lively 7-10 year olds. It was B. P. who suggested Brownies - the little people who do good turns by stealth particularily in the homes.

1974 therefore will be a great year for us. It is hoped to have grand revels in May for all Oxford City brownies organised by the University Guide-Scout Club.

We in Old Marston are starting early with a special outing during the Christmas holidays. We go to London for a morning's sight-seeing followed by a visit to the Royal Festival Hall to see "The Nutcracker". A colourful and beautiful start to the year.

CRISIS

None of us can ignore the present crisis in the country and, as the Vicar makes clear, it is all the more important for us to help each other. Marston has no formal 'good neighbours' scheme, but that does not mean we need ignore other people.

The aged are perhaps most at risk: cold is physically more serious for them, rising prices hit pensions and travel difficulties make it hard for families to visit them. The Social Services Department can often help, and anyone who needs help, or knows someone else who needs it, should get in touch with the Area Director at The Moors, Kidlington.

Others, though, may also need help for all the same reasons so don't just think of the obvious people: all of us need heat, light, lifts and the encouragement of other people's interest.

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E DUCATION

CO-EDUCATION

You will see from the report on the meeting at the Harlow School that many of the parents who went to it were very worried that, when the new system of comprehensive education is introduced in 1975-6, they will not have a choice of sending their children to co-educational schools.

THE ORIGINAL PROPOSALS

For anyone not familiar with the proposals, it has been decided that St. Nicholas Primary School will become a first school for children from 5-9 and that the Harlow School will become a middle school for children from 9-13. At 13 children would transfer to an upper school. When this was first dicussed, it was proposed that all the upper schools in the Oxford area would be mixed, and that Harlow children might be able to go either to the Cheney School or Milham Ford or Oxford School at the age of 13. Milham Ford and Oxford School, which are at present single sex schools, would become co-educational. It would also have been possible for children to be considered for some of the other upper schools, especially the Peers School at Littlemore so that younger children could join their older brothers and sisters if parents wanted them to. There was some opposition in Marston to the idea of the Harlow School being a middle school but it was made quite clear at the meeting that there was no likelihood of that decision being changed.

NEW SITUATION

The change which has led to the present parental worries is that the Secretary of State for Education has decided that Milham Ford School and Oxford School should remain as single sex schools. The County Council has therefore been faced with the decision of the Secretary of State that two of its upper schools will be single sex. The idea of this is to give parents a chance of choosing between a mixed or single sex upper school. But what worried Marston parents at the meeting was that it appeared that the appropriate upper schools for Marston children were Milham Ford and Oxford School-the two single-sex schools. There was no mention of a mixed upper school for the area except that if any parent in the area preferred a co-educational school the Council would try to meet their wishes if a place in a mixed school was available after priority had been given to children who lived nearer that school.

FREE CHOICE

No decisions have been taken but it is, for instance, possible that geographical links between schools and their neighbourhoods could be relaxed somewhat to give all parents in the Oxford area a choice of single sex or co-educational schools. In other words any parent could express a preference which the authority would try to meet as far as possible. This would have the effect on Marston parents of allowing those who prefer a mixed school to choose one. Only if some schools become either over-crowded or under-populated would geographical proximity outweigh parental preference. Such a policy would help those parents in other parts of Oxford who prefer a single sex school because they could opt for Milham Ford or Oxford School which under present proposals would have to give priority to Marston area children.

OPTIMISM

This is only one possible way of dealing with a very complicated problem, but certainly parents' wishes are being sympathetically considered and the Education Authority are optimistic that a solution will be found. Anyone wanting to make their views known should write to the Chief Education Officer at County Hall, Oxford.

ST NICHOLAS SCHOOL

You may have seen in the paper some weeks ago that the Managers of St. Nicholas School were worried about falling numbers. It is likely that within the next five years the annual intake will fall from 80 - 100 to about 30 - 50. Also, when St. Nicholas looses the 9 - 11 year olds to the Harlow School, the numbers will drop still further.

NURSERY EDUCATION

This sounds disastrous, and indeed many people are worried about it, but it could have some good effects. At present the school uses some temporary accommodation which could be taken out of use when the numbers drop. More important is the possibility of accommodation for nursery classes for 3 - 5 year olds which Marston might get in the not too distant future if government spending cuts are not too severe. Finally, fewer children might mean smaller classes though obviously a smaller school would have less teachers.

All these problems are to be discussed at a meeting between the heads of the schools concerned and officials of the Education Department early next term.

WANTED – Bell Ringers

ST. NICHOLAS SOCIETY OF BELL - RINGERS

The Society has need of new members, especially adults. If you are aged 11 or over and would like to learn to ring Church (and hand) bells, come along to the belfry any Sunday or on Fridays at 7.45 p.m. The ringers would be pleased to see you and explain what is going on. If you feel that bellringing is not for you, nobody will be offended.

Once you have learnt to ring, you can visit towers in the Oxford area or go further afield either by yourself or by coming on the Society's day, week-end or week outings. However, there is no obligation to ring anywhere else but Marston. Bellringing may also be combined with photography, local history, art and visits to various parts of the British Isles. Many of the towers visited on week-end or week tours are situated in areas not usually visited by holiday-makers.

The Society would also be pleased to welcome any former ringers. Don't worry about being out of practice - it's like riding a bike: one soon gets back into the swing!

SPONSORED WALK

The 43rd Oxford Scout Group would like to thank all those who sponsored their walk: it raised over £100 for their funds. They would also like to thank all those scouts, cubs and parents who took part.

EVENTS

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

This year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be from 18th to 25th January. Each year during this week there is a service in the Marston area for people from all the churches in the area. This year the service will be at St. Nicholas' church on Thursday 24th January at 7.30 p.m.

MARSTON WIVES

On Wednesday January 9th at 7.45 p.m. in the Church Hall Mrs. Council will talk to the Marston Wives about 'Yoga and Health'.

The meeting on January 23rd will be about 'The Art of Crochet'. The speaker will be Mrs. Rathbone.

Marston W.I.

The January meeting of the W.I. will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday 8th in the Church Hall. Mrs. D. Cardy will give a talk (with slides) on 'Cruising in the Mediterranean

KNEELERS

Mrs. Harlow has kindly presented the Church with 24 kneelers and a St. George's flag. She asked for the flag not to have the Diocesan Arms which have been described as 'three lady dons giving a viva to a bull'.

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