



“HAPPY CHRISTMAS” from all who bring THE GOSSIP TREE to you. The Gossip Tree Committee and the Christmas Chimes team wish everyone in the parish health and happiness for Christmas 2021 and for the coming New Year.

This years Christmas Chimes was kindly sponsored by Fontmell Magna Parish Council

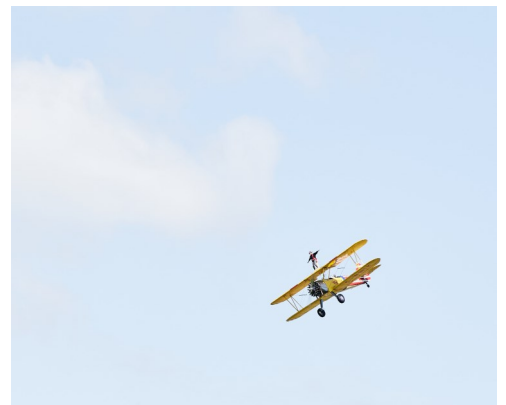
Welcome to The Chimes 2021, especially to the 15 or more households who have moved into the parish in the last twelve months. We hope you all enjoy this review of just a few of the very best things that have happened in and around Fontmell Magna and Dorset during 2021. And please read a strange tale, try a Christmas recipe, enjoy a quiz or tell some jokes which may or may not be funny, depending on how old you are.

First, a conversation about bravery: As Sian says later, Fontmell Magna is home to some remarkable people.

Mary-Anne Jones speaks here of a Wing Walk in memory of Ruby, eighteen.

Why wing walking rather than any other terrifying experience?

While away in North Cornwall for the New Year in 2020 (the year my eighteen old niece Ruby died) I decided, after a few drinks on New Year’s Eve, to dive into the Atlantic sea naked on New Year’s Day for charity. Once I’d mentioned my idea, a Just Giving page was quickly set up (before I could change my mind) and money started coming in. I woke up on New Year’s Day with a bit of a sore head and a vague memory of what I had promised. Once I got over the embarrassment (there were many more people on that beach than I expected), I thought of Ruby and how she’d laugh at what I was doing, and dived in. I raised over £1,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust (the charity I supported at that time) which made me so happy ... and it was a great way to shake off a hangover! This spurred me on to do something bigger and more daring for charity. In the spring I set about thinking what I would do to raise money for my niece’s charity ‘Live Kindly Live Loudly’ connected to Children’s Cancer and Leukemia Group (CCLG) that my sister Emma set up. One day while walking my dogs on Fontmell Down, a plane flew above that had just taken off from Compton Abbas Airfield and I thought about the Wing Walking I had witnessed a few years ago. Perhaps I could do this for Ruby’s charity? “I hate flying, no way would I ever do this, what a stupid idea” I thought to myself then spent the rest of my dog walk thinking about the courage my niece was forced to find when going through gruesome cancer treatment – the most intensive there is. I looked up into the sky, which I remember being very blue and said out loud “I’m going to do it Ruby!”.



How did you prepare for the walk?

I made sure I didn’t research online about it too much, I knew if I did, that I’d probably come across some horror story and chicken out. I’m the person that has historically, had to take medication to get on plane or more recently, a very large glass of wine! What was I thinking??? Thankfully I was very lucky to chat to a lovely lady in the village called Eileen, she reached out when she saw my post on the Nextdoor site. Eileen did a wing walk a few years ago so we met in the village tearooms and had a chat – she told her story, showed me pictures of her special day and totally put me at my ease.

What was it like? how robust were the straps? was it cold?

I wasn't cold at all – it can be chilly up there so perhaps adrenalin kept me warm! I had absolute faith in the harness and it was nice to have something to perch my bottom on which made me feel more secure. What the team didn't warn me of was having a runny nose because of the wind speed (about a 100 miles per hour). I was worried the pilot was behind me! I was up there for about 10 minutes but it felt like half that time.

What did you think of as you took off and landed?

I hadn't slept much in the days leading up to the wing walk but I had a great crowd of supporters and knowing the amount of money already raised helped tremendously with keeping my mind of my nervousness. The weather was perfect, a blue sky and no wind, and as I took off I remembered Eileen's words of advice "just enjoy it". I put my arms out like I was flying and as I went up all I could think of was Ruby and smile. The views were so spectacular and I saw my supporters at the airfield waving frantically which was so lovely and it did make me feel proud of myself. I also saw people waving to me who were walking on the Downs below and I just thought that was brilliant – I wish I could have found them afterwards to tell them how seeing them has made me feel so uplifted. I truly enjoyed the experience – I felt free, brave and proud but when the wheels touched the ground I felt a huge relief, I had survived something I never thought I'd do in a million years, and I raised a lot of money.

Do you know how the money you raised will be used?

I raised £6881 for my niece's fund 'Live Kindly Live Loudly' for CCLG. My sister kindly donated the cost of the wing walk which was about £400 so all this money will go towards funding research into a kinder more effective treatment for children with cancer. The cancer Ruby had was very aggressive, she endured the most gruelling treatment which included intensive chemotherapy, full body radiation and a stem cell transplant. Ruby died 10 months after diagnosis and spent most of this time in hospital which was made even harder for her and her family because we were in Lock-down. CCLG were supportive throughout and I was proud to receive a certificate from them showing the amount of money I raised which I proudly stuck to my fridge. An everyday reminder to think of Ruby, be kind, be brave and raise more money.

What publicity did you have? Were there any surprise donations?

Apart from posting on Nextdoor, I spoke on the local radio 'This is Alfred'. At first I actually ignored the request to speak on the show as I hate public speaking but again I thought of finding the courage within and just did it!! I'm thankful Keri Jones of 'This is Alfred' was brilliant at editing my interview.

I was overwhelmed by the support I received – not just donations but messages of support and of personal stories relating to loved ones who had also passed away from cancer. There were two very generous donations, one was anonymous and the other from a total stranger who lives locally. When this happens it really does restore your faith in how kind and generous people can be. It makes me want to do the same and to raise more money for Ruby's charity fund.

What next?

I think I'm going to do something that keeps my feet firmly on the ground, that doesn't give me sleepless nights and won't make my mum and dad sick with worry. I'm thinking I'd quite like to organise a fun ticketed event where people get something in return for supporting CCLG. I'll be brainstorming in the new year.

From flying high to digging below the surface: Whilst Fontmell Magna is intrigued by the exploration at **Springhead** (partly aided by the community) at Winterbourne Abbas a project to remove electricity pylons from the protected landscape has led to the discovery of a Roman settlement as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age finds and dating back 6,000 years. The oldest artifacts, flint tools and pottery, were from about 4,000BC . A bone textile comb is thought to be from the iron age. 'There is a report on the Springhead dig in the January 22 edition of the Gossip Tree and and webinars hosted by the National Grid called Digging for Dorset on the work at Winterbourne are available on www.dorsetnationalgrid.co.uk'

A 1000-year-old piece of artwork on constant display, 180 ft tall with other notable features, revealed some of the secrets of his past this year. Research by the National Trust shows that the **Cerne Abbas Giant** was probably the figure of some ridicule in 1600's when a naughty Dorset landowner removed the trousers he is thought to have worn and importantly, the belt holding them up. One possible contender for this act of graffiti was Denzil Holles, 1st Baronet Holles, who owned the land in the 1650's. The Trust's senior archaeologist speculates that Holles may have engaged a flamboyant politician, Thomas Freke, to doctor the figure a bit. Freke was known as the Great Freke. That denigration wouldn't happen in 2021 surely.

What do you call an old snowman? Water

What do you call Santa's little helpers? Subordinate Clauses

Alone Together by Peter Mole

In "normal" times the Art Group meet every Tuesday afternoon with 12 or 15 of us producing a wide variety of masterpieces. Like golf, and many hobbies, painting and drawing are solitary, individual activities where being part of a lively club adds an extra dimension of enjoyment as we warmly and constructively criticize and encourage each other.

Along came the first lockdown and we were unable to meet at a time when maintaining relationships with each other became increasingly valuable. Fortunately, our tutor Martin dusted off some of his old teaching material and set us a number of projects to do at home. These not only involved drawing and painting but also investigating various famous artists to help us hone our skills. We were all working at home but able to share our efforts on our screens and bridge the potential loneliness.

As the third lockdown arrived in the dismal early months of this year Barry Roberts and Lisa brought our attention to the countrywide **Great Big Art Exhibition** being organized by Firstsite an energetic Art Gallery based in Colchester. They were encouraging artists across the nation to display artwork of any kind including sculpture and pottery in windows, to share with neighbours taking their daily exercise. Supported by leading celebrity artists, themes (animals, portraits, colour etc.) were changed every three weeks or so and the Art Group were invited to use the windows of the Village Hall to display our creations.



Over three months or so we were able to mount a rolling exhibition at the Hall and join other villagers displaying work in their front windows at home. This was a wonderful motivation for us to create new work and show off to our neighbours. We received so much praise and positive feedback but perhaps most of all it reinforced that we were all, as a club and a community, choosing art as one means of dealing with the isolation together.

Now we have our fingers crossed for our planned exhibition in the Village Hall on 13 March. The Village Hall team have worked hard and professionally to support us over the last 18 months so we will be exhibiting at home!

Keeping Christmas by Henry Van Dyke

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people?

and to remember what other people have done for you;

to ignore what the world owes you,

and to think what you owe the world ...

and to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe,

and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness –

are you willing to do these things even for a day?

Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world –

Stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death –

And that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the

Image and brightness of Eternal Love?

Then you can keep Christmas

And if you can keep it for a day, why not always? But you can't keep it on your own.

The Compost Corner Quiz supplied by Alison Main

1. In the Language of Flowers holly means?

a) Fortitude b) Foresight c) Frankness d) Forsaken

2. It's a good idea to remove hellebore leaves to prevent

a) slugs b) squirrels c) mice hiding under them and eating the flowers

3. Mistletoe is only found in Northern Europe –

true or false

4. Which grass has a variety called "Frosted Curfs"?

a) Phalaris b) Carex c) Miscanthus d) Pennisetum

5. The flowers of Silene 'Rose Angel' are

a) pink b) yellow c) white d) red

6. What is the Latin name for the Snowdrop windflower?

a) Arabis Caucasia b) Anemone sylvestris c) Aquilegia vulgaris

7. The Christmas Cactus originally came from

a) China b) Brazil c) India d) Costa Rica

8. What flower has a variety called 'Ice Follies'?

a) crocus b) snowdrop c) narcissus d) hyacinth

The Friendship Garden One Year Birthday by Sian Highnam

On **November 16th, 2020**, we had our first meeting with the Social Prescribing Lead and then Practice Manager to discuss the viability of creating a garden for social prescribing on the plot of land behind the Surgery, next to the Village Hall. With the green light given, the idea was conveyed to the parish via the trustees and club representatives on the Village Hall, emails to all club chairs, a document in the Gossip Tree and a separate flyer via The Gossip Tree. The idea was launched to the community.

With no funds, local businesses were approached for specific donations— ranging from beds, compost, soil, wheelbarrows, compost bins, plants, tubs, irrigation system, branding, jars, manpower and financial contributions.

We started with a bare field and over several months, with the fantastic support of villagers and businesses, the garden started to take shape. In **January** the beds were made and placed on site. **February** was the month for collecting soil from Peter and Sue and filling the beds with the help of so many people. Simultaneously, seeds were being grown by friends and people in the parish.



In **March**, the donated irrigation system was installed ready for the first plants to go into the garden and around the village in **March** and **April**. We had our mass plant out in **May**, when the garden was filled with young flowers, grown from seed over the cold months. All our stakeholders were involved— Fontmell Under Fives planted bee friendly plants, St Andrew's school grew sunflowers, flowers went to the pub and Ric and Jan sold plants for funds from the shop. Eddie and Katherine from Springhead made and planted beds for us and we had benches to sit on and reflect in the garden, donated by businesses and friends. The weekly garden update goes out to 72 people— all of whom have had some part to play in the garden.

In **May** as the opening drew near, we welcomed florists from Kingston Maurward College who ran a wonderful flower demonstration at a sold-out event, raising extra funds for the garden.

June was our grand opening – a happy day where all the volunteers and villagers were able to enjoy the blooms. Live music and dancing entertained us and we welcomed the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, who opened the garden. Local people made cakes, served tea, manned barbeques and the bar, sold flowers, plants and jewellery from stalls and raised a huge amount of money from our grand raffle.

From **June** to **September** we held weekly pop-up cafes, where jars of posies were available. Over the summer holiday, we celebrated National Play Day with fantastic food, bouquets and smiles— the garden was a wonderful backdrop. In **October**, we welcomed St Andrew's School to Hello Yellow Day – a day to recognise mental health in children. The whole school planted daffodils, which will welcome us to the Village Hall next Spring. Fontmell Under Fives have planted golden tulips and we have welcomed four year 12 students from Claysmore School who come to garden every Friday morning. They have planted crocuses around the Village Hall. Since **September**, the beds have been gradually cleared and replanted with next year in mind, each bed to recognise and represent our wonderful village clubs with a definite link to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. There are some exciting ideas and we will have blooms to enjoy over the Winter months. A library of donated books has been set up in the Village Hall by Barbara— with a fantastic selection of gardening books.

Next year we will have blooms to represent the clubs and seeds will be distributed again for planting from January/February. Our community lunches are now in full swing and will continue until March when we look forward to starting our pop-up cafes once more from late spring.

It is hard to believe all this has happened within a year. The response from the parish has been truly extraordinary and we are now blessed with a beautiful space which gives an opportunity for us to gather to work together in the garden and enjoy a cuppa and a chat!

From a personal point of view, It is without doubt one of the most fulfilling projects I have had the joy of experiencing and I have made so many new friends. I would like to give heartfelt thanks to all the Village Hall Committee who have been so unstintingly supportive of every aspect of the project and to everyone in the village and beyond who have been involved in so many different ways – we live in a remarkable village with remarkable people.

Thank you very much.



And it's not just gardens that Dorset people have been caring for:

Seagrass is valuable – it's a wave diffuser, stopping the beach and cliffs from being eroded and it is a highly effective carbon sink. Seagrass meadows are home to rare seahorses and grow in Studland Bay or try to. Up to 350 boats moor each day in the summer, dragging heavy anchors and chains across the delicate beds increasing the vulnerability of the sea horses. After years of campaigning the Seahorse Trust, despite some nasty and aggressive opposition, have been successful in installing eco-moorings which keep the chain from dragging across the sea floor, preserving the beds and seahorse habitat.

The hollow **Remedy Oak**, an acorn in Tudor times and a boundary marker tree, stands near the junction of the Horton Road, Cranborne with the B3081. It got its name after it was touched by Edward VI who bestowed on it healing properties - apparently. In its life it has been set alight (local children lit faggots stacked round it), spilt open by lightning and been driven into by a lorry transporting sheep. This year it suffered a "large limb failure". Happily, it is being nurtured by Dorset County arboriculturists who have cleared ivy and braced it so that it signals its story to another generation to appreciate.

Why does Santa have three gardens? So he can ho, ho, ho!

I stood in my garden one morning wondering where the sun had gone, then it dawned on me.

My neighbour saw me kneeling down, working on my garden and asked what I was doing. "I'm putting all my plants in order" I replied, "Goodness I don't know how you find the time". "It's easy, its right next to sage" I explained.

Woman in a Green Shawl by local writer Barkley Johnson (who also writes for This is Alfred)

The walk up Gupples Lane is occasionally enough to appreciate the difference a few metres can make as to whether snow settles or doesn't. A friend was recalling 1985 when she lived near Kits Hill, and a heavy fall of snow covered most of Southern England. I asked her if she'd ever heard of the 'girl in a green shawl' who appeared at Christmas whenever it snowed.

'Not every time,' she replied and knew the story. She said she had known someone in Fontmell who on Christmas Eve 1978 answered her front door to a fair-haired young woman wearing a light cotton frock and a pink cardigan. She had no hat but wore a long green shawl covering her head and wrapped around her, even so it was thought she must have been freezing. The young woman asked, 'Have you seen my daughter? Please tell me where my Mary is.' That's all she'd say, over and over again.

When invited in from the cold, the young woman backed away down the path. As she turned away and left, it was realised the young woman had nothing on her feet. She was looked for, but had vanished. The police were informed but as no child had been reported missing, nothing was done.

Each winter brought flurries of snow but nothing like that of 78, until 85. By then the young woman had been forgotten, until a similar report appeared in the local paper. This time she'd appeared in Bedchester, then in 1993 she appeared in Hartgrove, and Fontmell Hill in 2010, always looking for her daughter Mary, and always disappearing without trace.

'27, 63, 78, 85, 93 and 2010. Every year on Christmas Eve when snow lay on the ground, at some doorway the young woman appeared looking for her daughter, Mary.

An earlier record of snowfall in 1916 reported nothing concerning a 'woman in a green shawl'. There was however, a report of a fire in an isolated cottage which no longer exists. The mother had been rescued but the daughter, a two year old called Mary, had not. The mother had run back into the building to find her but had perished in the flames.

If a fall of snow lays on the ground during a Christmas Eve and there's a knock at your door, it's likely to be that restless spirit concealed within a green shawl looking for Mary her small daughter. You may be tempted to invite her in, but see first if she has left any footprints. If not and she accepts your kind offer you will never be rid of her.

Even more elusive than the Woman in a Green Shawl is the **pine marten** discovered by conservationists in the New Forest (not Dorset, but near enough) using 30 hidden wildlife cameras. Pine Martens are cat sized, sleep in dens high up in trees and only come out at night to hunt. They are native to the New Forest and play an important role in the eco system of woodland, possibly helping to contain non-native grey squirrels. Previously they had only been thought to have survived in the north of England but the cameras have shown evidence of a possible established population which is a welcome and exciting discovery.

Most unwelcome were four non-native men (from Essex, Cambridge and Hertfordshire) arrested for **hare coursing and damaging property** near Blandford in August. After an armed chase by police and police helicopter their vehicle was seized together with their dogs and a suspected air rifle. Police comment was that "We'll look to prevent, pursue and convict those that target rural communities". A good use of the helicopter.

What goes Oh! Oh! Oh! ?

Father Christmas walking backwards

Why does Father Christmas slide down the chimney?

Because it soots him

Knock knock, Who's there? Donut, Donut who?

Donut open till Christmas

What kind of bike does Santa ride?

a holly Davidson

What does December have, that other months don't?

The letter d

These delicious homemade sweets make a perfect edible gift for friends and family...or you could just save them for yourself!! From Graham Eames

SALTED CARAMELS



INGREDIENTS

70g unsalted butter, plus extra for the tin

½ tsp vanilla extract

150g golden syrup

flavourless oil, for the knife

200ml double cream

150g golden granulated sugar

1 heaped tsp flaky sea salt

You will need

sugar thermometer or digital probe

STEP 1

Butter and line the base and sides of a 20 x 30cm tin with baking parchment.

STEP 2

Pour the cream into a [saucepan](#) along with the butter and vanilla, then bring to a simmer. Swirl the pan to melt the butter, then remove from the heat.

STEP 3

In a separate pan, melt the sugar and golden syrup together, stirring occasionally. Once the sugar granules have dissolved, bring to the boil and cook until the temperature reaches 155C on a sugar thermometer. Remove from the heat and swiftly [whisk](#) through the cream mixture. Return to the heat and cook until the mixture reaches 127C, constantly whisking so it doesn't catch.

STEP 4

Pour the caramel into the tin, tilting so it reaches the corners. Leave to set for 15 mins, then sprinkle with the salt. Leave to cool completely at room temperature (preferably overnight). Cut into squares using a very sharp, slightly oiled knife, then wrap each one in a square of baking parchment.

Answers to the Compost Corner quiz: 1. Foresight 2. Mice 3. False – also found in South Asia, Australia and America 4. Carex 5. Pink 6. Anemone sylvestris 7. Brazil 8. Narcissus