



# The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



#6 2020

The church magazine  
for St Mary the Virgin,  
Sixpenny Handley  
with Gussage St Andrew  
and St Rumbold's,  
Pentridge

## Who's who?

### Vicar

Revd Canon Richard Hancock  
The Vicarage  
Sixpenny Handley  
01725 552 182

### Curate

Rev Paul Skinner  
01725 552 785

### Churchwardens

St Mary's with  
Gussage St Andrew

Sue Curtis 552 397

St Rumbold's, Pentridge

Mary Ferguson 552 222

Jane King 552 231

## Church Services for Christmas and the New Year

Due to COVID-19 restrictions we are only able to offer limited church services. This will mean that many of the traditional Christmas services we love will not be possible this year. At the present time we are offering a 10am weekly Sunday Service at either St Mary's Handley or St Rumbold's Pentridge which are also broadcast live online. If the National Lockdown continues or is reinstated these services will only take place online. St Andrew's Gussage sadly remains closed as COVID restrictions would not allow worship to happen safely in the building. This is being reviewed regularly and as restrictions are lifted we will endeavour to adapt the service provision. However both St Mary's Handley and St Rumbold's Pentridge remain open for private prayer and reflection. This Christmas our churches will be specially decorated to give us some Christmas cheer.



Please join us  
**LIVE DAILY 10 am  
BROADCASTS**

on Facebook or  
watch later on YouTube  
with this link:

[www.facebook.com/  
St-Marys-Church-  
Sixpenny-Handley-  
558498850977107](https://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-Church-Sixpenny-Handley-558498850977107)

### December 2020

**Sunday 6th — Advent 2**

10 am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

**Sunday 13th — Advent 3**

10 am Morning Worship in St Mary's

**Sunday 20th — Advent 4**

10 am Said Matins, St Rumbold's

**\*Thursday 24th — Christmas Eve**

6:30 pm Holy Communion, St Mary's

**\*Friday 25th — Christmas Day**

10 am Said Holy Communion, St Mary's

11:15 am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

**Sunday 27th** 10 am Said Holy Communion, St Mary's

*\*In order to control social distancing at Christmas Communion Services we would ask that people only attend one of the three services either Christmas Eve or one of the two services on Christmas day*

### January 2021

**Sunday 3rd — Epiphany Sunday**

10 am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

**Sunday 10th — Epiphany 1**

10 am Morning Worship, St Mary's

**Sunday 17th — Epiphany 2**

10 am Said Matins, St Rumbold's

**Sunday 24th — Epiphany 3**

10 am Said Holy Communion, St Mary's

**Sunday 31st — Candlemas [The  
Presentation of Christ in the Temple]**

10 am Benefice Service, St Mary's



Despite COVID this year's **Woozel Hunt** will go ahead in a socially distanced manner, subject to any lockdown restrictions. We will ask family groups to keep 2m apart from one another. There will also be no mulled wine in church after, but we would encourage people to bring their own tipple and snacks. So come and join the fun as we hunt the mythical Woozel to protect our mince pies. An ancient treaty going back to 1630, or about half past four, given by Lord Blakeney's ancestors, allows the Woozel to be hunted one day a year on the Feast of Stephen.

Hunting the Woozel is an eccentric affair. Once a Woozel nest is found they are bated with fresh mince pies often placed in a festively decorated fishing net. Young children then lure the Woozel out by telling it Christmas Cracker jokes collected from the day before. However, there are those who want to ban the hunt and they can often be found at such events waving 'Save the Woozel' placards, shaking rattles which frightens the Woozel back into its' nest.

**Lord Blakeney** Hunt Master

## Boxing Day 6H

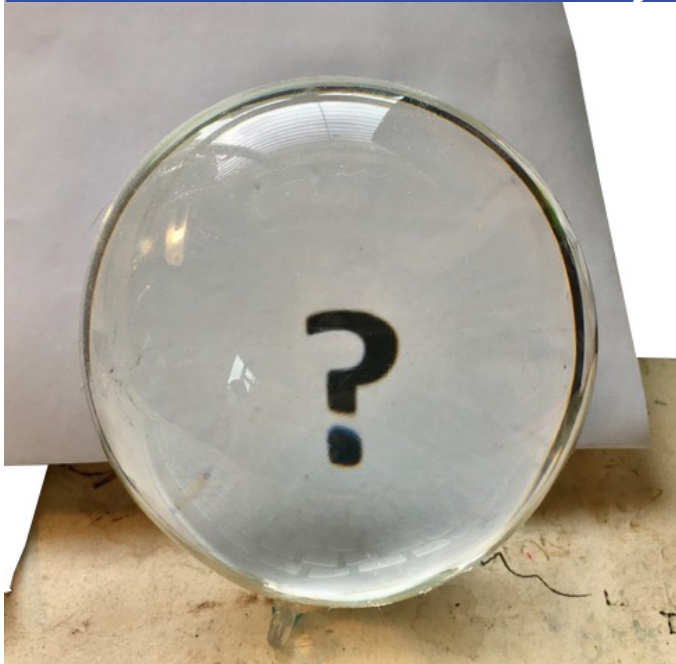
If you would like to join the hunt or be a hunt protester meet outside  
**St Mary's Church at 10:30 am.**

Flamboyant hunting dress is encouraged.

The hunt will last about an hour and finish back at St Mary's. Prizes for the best joke, Woozel net and hunting attire. A great way to get the family some fresh air, walk off the Christmas food and raise our spirits.

## What will Christmas be like this year?

DIARY OF A COUNTRY PARSON



In the vicarage study I have a weird and wonderful collection of eccentric objects I have collected over the years. One item is a crystal ball I found in a junk shop some years ago. I thought it would make an interesting prop for photography and by placing it in front of a camera lens you can get some great effects as it bends light and images.

I recently wondered if it could be of help in answering the question “What will Christmas be like this year?” Though clergy aren’t supposed to dabble in this kind of thing I popped it on my desk and stared at it hard. I noticed that it was magnifying the text of a page on my desk and right bang in the middle was a large question mark. It seemed as either my crystal ball was faulty or it like the rest of us just didn’t know the answer to this question.

We have all been living in a huge state of flux for months and the certainty of the traditions of Christmas has maybe given us something to hold onto. However now Christmas is only a few weeks away we all realize that what we have known and loved before will not be possible this year, even with the promise of a vaccine round the corner. However all is not lost we just need to go back to the beginning.

We have over the years and in our own lifetime developed a myth about Christmas, fed by stories and traditions of sugar plum fairies, tinsel and coloured lights and John Lewis adverts. If we open our Bibles to either the Gospel of Matthew or Luke and look at the real story we will find none of this but a world in flux and turmoil, with our key characters living in a state of huge uncertainty.

It begins with something sure and fixed, a proposed family wedding. A young girl Mary is betrothed to a local carpenter Joseph. The families would have been planning this for years. Like many of our couples expecting to have their dream wedding this year, their plans were turned upside down.

Mary is visited by an angel who tells her she is going to have a child, but not just any child, the son of the living God,

the Messiah. When Mary tells this to Joseph the wedding is OFF! The disgrace this would bring on him and his family would be too much, so he plans to call it off quietly to avoid embarrassment to both families. However, he too, is visited by an angel and the enormity of the situation becomes clear, so he takes Mary for his wife.

The political situation in the area is tense to say the least. The Roman occupying army needs taxes to fund its expansion, so a census is ordered. Mary is heavily pregnant, and the baby is due at any time, but they are forced to travel to Joseph’s home town of Bethlehem. When they arrive the town is in chaos. All the inns are full and the long journey from Nazareth has induced Mary into labour. All that can be found is a cave or barn in which animals are kept but at least it is warm and dry.

Meanwhile back at Herod’s palace, rumours are circulating about the birth of a new King that will challenge his power base, (even though he is just a puppet king to the Roman Empire). Travelers from the East confirm this to Herod and he wants the potential threat to his power base annihilated. He issues a horrific order, that all first born children are to be killed.

Mary and Joseph’s plan, to return to Nazareth and bring up their new baby quietly, are dashed. They have no other choice but to flee, and like all refugees, they leave with only what they can carry, making a perilous journey with an infant to Egypt.

When you read the Christmas story like this it is far removed from HO HO HOs and Christmas cheer. We know how the story ends, but if we didn’t at this point we would be asking ourselves, did they make it? It conjures up the images of refugees we see today fleeing war and looking for a safe place to bring up their families.

However as we read the Gospel we see signs that though chaos and calamity may seem to reign, God is actually in control. Amidst the mayhem, shepherds (often seen as outcasts at that time) receive a message from angels that God is in charge and not to lose heart. A new light is coming into the world which the darkness will never overcome.

So though we may not be able to have a traditional Christmas we can give thanks and have faith that, despite all the calamity we are facing God is there for us. Emmanuel “God with us”. What’s more is that we have a God who has lived the earthly life we have with its joys and heart ache. Even though toward the end of the story when it seems that the chaos and darkness has won the day as Jesus dies on the cross, God has actually won the victory because Jesus rises to establish a new Kingdom. What we need to do is to look beyond the media circus, the constant flow of negative messages, the haters and the evil and see the light and hope of that first Christmas traveling through time and eternity shedding its light on us here in 2020. It’s there if you look.

**Happy Christmas and may God bless you all.**  
**Canon Richard Hancock.**