

## **BENSON BULLETING REPORT – DEC/JAN 2019**

*Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.*

*(Tennyson – In Memoriam)*

When I was a but a slip of a boy, a teacher reading an extract from 'A Christmas Carol' was as traditional a part of the last day of Christmas term as singing carols at Assembly. Truth be told, I've always had a sneaking admiration for Ebenezer Scrooge.

Every year, as one searches the sea of gift wrap and tangle of ribbon and Sellotape for the umpteenth time for a pair of scissors, it's these words that always come back to my mind: "If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!"

So, bearing in mind the capacity of the festive season to consume our personal reserves of goodwill, it is important to remember to get the season off on the right foot. What better start is there than the Society Christmas Party?

It will take place on Friday December 7th at the Benson Parish Hall. We welcome friends and visitors to join the fun and there will be plenty of good cheer on offer from the bar. The supper price remains at £4. There is always a wonderful raffle with a cornucopia of prizes which you never know may successfully resolve some Christmas present conundrum or offer a glittering reward for your own well-kept Christmases past. This year's entertainment by James Mitchell and Oliver James offers a medley of songs from the musicals which hopefully will keep the right feet tapping.

Last month's talk by George Verdon gave us a vivid impression of Southern India. It felt as if we were travelling with George and Barbara on their amazing train journey along the Blue Mountain Railway. I very much wanted to do the same trip by the end of the talk. George also touched upon the history as well as the culture, architecture and scenery of this part of the sub-continent with its long Christian tradition.

After the supper there was a vigorous discussion on the current development in the school in which a range of differing opinions were aired. As our chair David McGill explained this is to be the first of what it is hoped will be a regular slot in the meetings for members of the society to discuss a matter of local or village interest.

With Christmas in view please remember the various books on Village past and present that you can obtain via the Bensington Society Web site: [www.bensington-society.com](http://www.bensington-society.com) The Web Page will shortly be updated with the full program of talks and outings for next year.

However, as we are swapping our diaries over for the new year here are some highlights from the early part of next year's programme. David Greenway OBE gives his postponed talk on "Britain's Airborne Early Warning System" after the AGM on January 25th. On Friday February 22nd local astronomer Gordon Rogers is our speaker: "The Sky at Night with a Laugh"; on March 29th Prof Glenn Richardson will talk on Thomas Cardinal Wolsey; and after Easter on April 26th Chris Haddon from Loddon Brewery will provide us with a talk that will include ale if not necessarily cakes!

Christmas despite its worst excesses at its best reawakens the child in all of us. The season's message of hope and goodwill to all in every age owns its ancient power. It resonates in the bleakest of winters and most troubled of times. This year's centennial of War's end in 1918 reminded us of our debt to those who fought and the many who died but we should also remember how those terrible losses overshadowed that first Christmas after the Armistice:

*Ring out the grief that saps the mind  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.*

On behalf of the Bensington Society I wish you all the merriest of Christmases and a New Year that rings out with hope of better times to come...