

Miscellany

*“Miscellaneous pieces brought together
to form a volume”* (OED 1615)

*“The volume containing such miscellaneous
pieces”* (OED 1638)

... which is exactly what this is; a collection or collation* of bits and pieces, penned over time as messages of thanks, celebration or entertainment.

They span three decades from 1990s to the present, and have been discovered in all manner of places and by a host of friends; to whom are offered, “Many thanks”.

(* Latin: collatus, ‘to bring together’)

THE P.C.C. HARVEST HYMN - By the Council Wurzels

Verse 1. We are the P.C.C.; see
Important folk are we;
We come to meetings to discuss
Church facts concerning you and us.
We spend a full three hours
Seated on hard backed chairs
And when we've sorted personal ones
We chat on church affairs.

Chorus All the Parish' problems,
That never more can wait,
We'll solve the lot, when we are roused
From our soporific state.

Verse 2. There is the Church Hall kitchen
And then the old rood screen;
The awful Ladies lavatr'y
That never should be seen.
The rusting churchyard gates are proof
That thousands must be spent
On these, and holes in the church roof
Ur heavenward we are sent.

Chorus

Verse 3. The mowing of the churchyard
Is now an annual slog;
And what is worse (Besides this work)
We've now the problem of the curates dog.
And lest it's natural instincts
Should make us loop the loop,
We'll have a parish whip-round
To fit a poppa scoop.

Chorus

Verse 4. Attendance at the meetings
Is closed to most abuse;
But a fiver to Joe Pike will buy
A very good excuse!
For Keith must bake his pa. try
And Jim must feed the ~~tirens~~; tunns;
And curates always like their beer
From bars and not from tins.

Chorus

Verse 5. Some subjects for discussion
We cannot talk about;
For Barbara's typed adgendas
Discreetly leave them out.
We cannot muse on Evelyns legs
Or Len Ringroses socks,
Or ask to sell the organ
For jazz, pophymns and rock.

Chorus

quite

Verse 6. The Choir's always a problem
The Vicars heard to say;
They sing and drink on Friday nights
And sometimes on Sunday.
But what about the music list
It's the middle of the month,
We've sung Hymns a dozen times
But it's only down for once.

Chorus

Verse 7. We must soon have a meeting
About the church's staff;
It's time we changed the servers
For nice girls from the WAFB.
The ringers and church wardens
Will all be nice girls too,
And the organist we'll swap for one
With a bust of forty two.

Chorus

Come ye lucky people, come,
Now you have a well-filled tum.
Di, the melon did regare,
With her tender loving care.
Keith and Grace and Susan too
Did produce the hearty stew.
But our thanks with you must lie,
For the tarts and apple pie.

Those of you who've come to view
May have noticed something new
Having swooped our Rural Dean
For a vicar with a wife called Jean.
When Bill came, we wondered what
He would make of his new lot,
But we're pleased that we can say
We all think he's earned his pay.

True to say he's doing fine,
From next week he's changed the time
Evensong's at 6 o'clock,
Hope he's told Joe and Jim Cock.
Coming soon we'll have Rite A,
After that we'll wait and pray
For the most amazing news,
He has promised new choir pews.

Now the time you've waited for
As we choirmen take the floor.
This is the only thing we'll sing
Before the curate has his fling.
Chris comes next in solo voice,
Then the vicar has his choice.
To conclude we'll all aspire
To keep up with Patrick Squire.

Tune A & M R 442 (2)

Chorus: All men bright and dutiful,
All women short and tall,
All our children young and old,
'Good-bye now' from us all.

1. The choirboys love his sermons,
It gives them time to play.
The choirmen want new choir stalls;
They might get them one day.

Chorus:
2. The servers all like acting,
The Vicar takes the lead,
Keith Robinson directs them,
Of him they take no heed.

Chorus:
3. We have a Mothers' Union,
The Vicar goes there too,
Although he's not a member,
He says a prayer or two.

Chorus:
4. The Sunday School is thriving,
But they are sometimes late ~
To join the congregation.
The Vicar has to wait.

Chorus:
5. The cleaners and the sidesmen ~
Are lead by Jim and Joe.
The Vicar has the last word,
So Stanley had to go.

Chorus:
6. Now Peter is our curate,
But he'll be going soon.
Des Foote is taking over,
If he can sing in tune.

Chorus
7. We've left some people out. But ~
the reason why you're here,
Is to say 'Good-bye' to David,
So sing out loud and clear -

Chorus:

Tune EH 489

1. This is a sad occasion ,
For Holy Trinity.
We say 'Good-bye' to David,
Dilys and Family.
We are all going to miss them,
But they're not far away.
They're only going to Winsley,
Which is two miles away.
2. He's guided us with wisdom,
Through series one, two three,
Through Spearhead and through Impact,
Missions and Unity.
Mid toil and tribulation,
He's chaired the P C C,
And now that we've agreed it,
He uses A S B.
3. The vic'rage is enormous
And difficult to heat.
The garden too extensive
For one ham to keep neat.
We hope his new surroundings,
Will suit: and also meet ,
The standards Father Matthews ,
Will find at Woolley Street.
4. Now he's been made a Canon
And Rural Dean as well,
It seems the sky's the limit,
A Bishop? Who can tell.
But now he's off to Winsley,
His duties to perform.
His new flock will be happy,
But we are all forlor.

AN ODE TO MICHAEL FORD

On the Occasion of his

52nd Birthday

Mike was born into Class 39.
Caused the Second World War at the time.
 And ever since then
 He's developed a yen
To constantly step out of line.

In the choir at St Paul's, Michael sang.
His treble voice beautifully rang.
 But his one claim to fame
 -Rightly he got the blame-
His stink bombs had more than a tang.

Now later his vision expands.
He clutches at life with both hands.
 He climbs every mountain
 And fords every stream,
In Cyprus and France and such lands.

There's a story concerning you, Heafy?
And the Irish lanes emerald and leafy.
 The Mercedes-Benz
 Was no good on bends.
They drove into a bog, rather peaty.

He's surrounded by funny men, who-
In public places tell jokes - often blue.
 And Sir Bernard's a friend.
 Where will it all end?
Please not at the Royal Variety "Do".

When he moved to North Leigh from the smoke,
The church people thought, "What a bloke.
Wants a home with a view,
Starter housing won't do.
How's he going to get on with us folk?"

There's the Vicar and Graham and Liz.
There good for a laugh, quite a fizz.
But Sylvia and Ted
Were raised from the dead-
By the P.C.C. letters of his.

I won't bore you all, but one tells-
Of Ted Patching and how he rings bells-
On Fridays - and other days -
Little attention pays.
Making Mike and Young Sarah's life hell.

Then there's Sylvia - Old Thunder Thighs.
Gets right up Mike's nose, telling lies.
Should the vicar retire
She'll be without choir.
Tell the Bishop now. Oh! how time flies.

This middle aged man named Mike Ford
Who spends some time going abroad
Thinks a villa in France,
When he has half a chance,
Is what he would like to afford.

He can't stay in hotels anymore
From them he's nicked goodies galore.
So he bought his own place
To avoid losing face.
Now others nick goods from his store.

Now Sarah, you put up with a lot,
Having chosen to live with this clot.
You pay all his bills.
I just hope that his will's-
Going to leave you the whole bloody lot.

But there'll be a small aftermath,
His body beneath the church path.
Where he sees the size
Of the legs and the thighs
That St Mary's young ladies have got.

We gathered here, friends to wish Mike,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, and so if you like,
Now we've wined and we've dined,
It is time that we lined-
Up to wish Mike and Sarah, "Good night."

An Ode to Mike Ford:

- on the sad occasion of his failure to win the National Lottery despite having drawn four of the correct numbers which would have netted him the princely sum of £65-00 sterling. This day of Our Lord Saturday 7th January 1995

(Sung to the tune of Austria	Ancient and Modern (Standard)	292
	Ancient and Modern (Revised)	257
	English Hymnal	393
	Hymns for Church and School	227
	Methodist Hymn Book	228
	New English Hymnal	362
	Oxford Hymn Book	278
	Songs of Praise	238
	The Hymnal 1982	522)

Life presents a dismal picture,
Dark and dreary as a tomb.
Michael slaves at weaving carpets
On his own Ford Holdings' loom.
When four numbers in the lottery
Might have overflowed his cup,
Neil forgot to buy the ticket -
Now he knows his number's up!

Last night

We went out in the dark
To meet with other folk,
And Number three son, Mark,
At Ramsden's "Royal Oak".

Now Mike and Sarah booked-
a table for F..Ford.
Food beautifully cooked,
Wine carelessly..ly poured.

Mike's joke I still don't get!
And mine they said they knew!
We laughed of course, and yet-
they were the only two.

So finally we left,
In alcoholic fuzz
Of photograph bereft.
We hope the accompanying one
will give you both a bit of a buzz.

Tune: quam dilecta
(how delicious)



BISHOPRICK of NOR'LYE

This is to certify

MICHAEL FORD

has been invested as a

RIGHT IRREVERAND

This 24th day of April 1993 anno domini

Cream Teas on an English Lawn

29 June 1996 - North Leigh

There were cream teas at the bottom of our garden -
Or The Coach House if you want to be precise -
In aid of our St. Mary's, North Leigh, Organ.
And the weather - often nasty - turned out nice.

The occasion was a visit of "Prebendals",
Who were singing Mass and Choral Evensong.
For years Sue called them "The Premenstrals"
"Cos they do it once a month and they're all a bit mental"

It all began at supper in The Royal Oak,
When the men arranged a breakfast planning call.
- Trouble was that Mike had got the time wrong,
And Howard didn't remember it at all.

Sarah slaved away at all the preparations,
And as always, never flustered, kept her cool.
Mike and Howard did the heavy work of humping-
Mugs and chairs from church and tables from the school

But of course there was luncheon at The Woodman
"Need to stop and take account of where we're at"
Something missing from the cut and thrust and parry,
Sue was working on her own at WOC and VAT!*

Dawned the day of the event,
Rather cold and overcast.
All the thought and time and planning,
Cream teas on the lawn at last.

Roy let Debbie join the "Do"
And the preparation prattlings.
Brought a promise of donations
From the Lady Rattle-ings.

"Prebs" sang heartily at Eucharist
Only five to hear their sound.
But the lunch served in the garage
(Was) Worth a lot more than three pound.

Choral Evensong was better,
Netted £40 for funds
But the punters couldn't wait for-
Strawberry jam and tea and scuns!*

Barbara helped and so did Mary
Tables laid in Coach House comfort.
Teas devoured with thanks and friendship.
No-one moaned about the fact that teas were
supposed to have been served on the Old Vicarage lawn and as
such contravened the Trade Descriptions Act. Thank God!

Then began the clearing up job
Tying up all the loose ends.
But that final drink was best,
With Mike and Sarah, dearest friends

Fancy Dress

Did I tell you the one about Fred?
To a fancy dress party was head (ing)
His leaf was too small
To cover it all
So he went as a fuel pump instead.

25th November 2000

Downward Christian Doubters

Downward Christian doubters

Off to join the hoard.

With the thought of laughter,

Know we won't be bored.

Two Johns and a Gina,

Aitch and Susie too.

What we laughed and talked about,

I haven't got a clue.

CHORUS Drinks and conversation

Seated at the board.

Friends of all and sundry,

Mike and Sarah Ford.

11th May 2008

Phil's Song

CHORUS All girls bright and beautiful,
All women short and tall,
Nurses wise and wonderful,
Phil Anslow loves them all.

VERSE 1 He trained to be a doctor
At University.
He chose Clare College, Cambridge,
With some alacrity.

CHORUS
VERSE 2 He gained a post at Oxford,
As - consultant neuro-radiologist. *said*
He bought a house called Sherwood,
And joined the lucky list.

CHORUS
VERSE 3 He sang with ^{MS} Mike and ^{MH} Howard,
And Bruce at Midnight Mass.
Remember "do"s together,
No reason Phil let pass.

CHORUS
VERSE 4 He used to do bee-keeping,
He also flew a plane.
He has a boat called "Tessler" -
He learned to scan the brain.

CHORUS
VERSE 5 Phil's been a great collector,
Two wives and several brats.
There've been two homes in Corn Street, ~~_____~~
And cars and dogs and cats.

CHORUS
VERSE 6 Liz is his wife, and mother -
Of James - a lovely lad.
She is a judge of order,
And Phil, that can't be bad. *said*

CHORUS

90 Years Young

(to be read with great difficulty)

Elsie was 90 on Monday,
And Sarah had organised lunch,
It turned out a wonderful fun-day.
Let me tell you the ten in the bunch.

Elsie was chief guest of honour
Of Michael and Sarah of course,
Dame Wyn, with his usual bonho-
mie, made us laugh till we were hoarse.

Carol said, "Just 'tis a piece
of nibbles and main course and pud."
Sue and Howard had only just landed,
But agreed it was all pretty good.

Elsie's three friends of long standing,
Were Barbara, Pat and Jo-an.
*(well see if you can do better.
I can't, but may be you can.)*

There was wine, there was laughter and speeches,
Stories and mem'ries and jokes.
Then coffee and choc'lates and ... which is
the signal for "*Gents light your smokes.*"

So that's it dear friends one and all,
You agree we all had a ball.
Perhaps before next year's all gone,
We could do it when E's 91!

24th November 2004 H.B.

All girls bright and beautiful

Chorus
(All) All girls bright and beautiful,
Love choirmen short or tall.
All girls wise and wonderful,
We choirmen love them all.

Verse 1.
(All) Each little pub that opens,
And little birds that bring -
A little more excitement,
Improve the way we sing.

Chorus
(All)

Verse 2.
(All) We three friends sang at Christmas,
In 1989.
We joined the choir for Midnight,
To swell the tenor line.

Chorus
(All)

Verse 3.
(H & P) Mike was a Royal School treble,
Now wears so many hats,
He lays down magic carpets,
A friend of Water Rats.

Chorus
(All)

Verse 4.
(H & M) When Philip isn't singing,
He'll take you for a scan.
Or if you need an X-ray,
Doc Anslow is your man.

Chorus
(All)

Verse 5.
(All) John Wilson's on the keyboard,
He was that Christmas too.
Though how he earns his living
We haven't got a clue.

Chorus
(All)

Verse 6.
(M & P) We've come to sing at Howard-
And Susan's wedding "Do".
We've really quite enjoyed it.
We hope that you have too.

Chorus
(All)

The Boot

Last night we had another meal
With Sarah and Mike Ford
Mike, I have to say, kept yawning,
But I don't think he was bored.

We met at 7.15 or so,
At a country pub, "The Boot"
The food and drink were excellent,
The waitresses were cute.

We talked about the family,
We talked about *the* car.
It had been Sarah's God-Dad's
And hadn't driven far.

Sarah saw our service book,
With tears in her eye,
She said, "My dears it's lovely,
No one's eye'll be dry"

They're ready for their visit
To Sue and Howard's "Do"
What Mike'll do as compere,
We haven't got a clue!

We left at nearly midnight!
"We do have lovely friends".
We drove home very carefully,
Negotiating bends!

Well I'll leave the car behind now
And exercise my legs.
It's nearly time for breakfast -
Bacon, toast and eggs.

20th September 2003

The Wedding

Oh Sarah, just where do I start?
This message is straight from the heart.
Last evening just shows
Which way the wind blows.
Mike is, and lets go, an old fart.

Oh what a day it has been.
What lovely friends we have seen.
It's nice to relax,
No 'phoning, no fax.
Just stories, both clean and obscene.

But the object was Katie and Mark.
We all had a bit of a lark.
Moving the tables
Was easier than labels!
When the Merc got us back, it was dark.

We all went to encourage Phil.
At the end of the day, pays the bill.
"What's the connection
'Twixt birth and conception?"
He delivered with humour and will!

But the thing which bold Sue and me over,
Was the fact of *our* "do" in October.
Mike and Sarah *will* come
And join in *our* fun.
With Mike as MC, we're in clover.

The Morning after Last Night

I can't remember when
I last took up my pen,
To write another, early morning letter.
At Long Hanb'rough's *Hand & Shears*,
We had an evening full of tears,
Reminiscing, fellowship and fun.

Mike, it's over 20 years,
Since I met you on the stairs
And asked you, "What 're you doing here?"
With that usual smiling face,
You said, "I own this place"
And from thence we are the very best of friends.

Sarah may be called his *treasure*,
But my word, she's got his measure,
Organising Michael must be hard.
It's very hand-in-glove,
I think it's, "They're in love"
Any way, they're wonderful together.

"*Live a day at a time.*
Is a mantra of mine."
Says Sue, who acts as our model.
And her favourite book,
(You might take a look)
"*Feel the Fear, and Do It Anyway*"

There was also John and Liz.
They added to the fizz,
Which bubbled on from seven till half past one!
We remembered John as vicar,
(We were all a little quicker)
And Liz sang in St. Mary's choir with me.

We talked of Bruce and Pat,
The church, and this and that.
And Mike kept up his fund of jokes and stories.
There were others kept from view,
Roy and Wyn and Elsie too,
(How did she know I follow Rupert Bear?)

Well I must look at the time,
And end my little rhyme.
Or I'll miss our friends' departure from North Leigh.
Thank you Lord for friends,
Who would go to any ends,
To share that friendship, fellowship and fun.

17th May 2003

Happy Birthday Sarah!

Sarah is the subject of this ditty.
Sue and I thought it was such a pity,
But we really didn't know
You'd been and had a go.
And we think you're very brave and rather gritty.

"Happy Birthday" Sarah dear,
I'm brushing back a tear
When I think of all the fun we often share.
Just last night,
We came home tight
- Well we thought it only right -
But with real friends, you never need to care.

What's it feel like to be fifty?
- We see you're just as nifty -
When the rest of us have left that age behind.
Have you thoughts of being thrifty?
Do you look at others shifty?
Or are you being cruel to be kind?

This is getting rather silly.
"Who's a silly Billy?"
So I hope you'll wear a smile and grant me pardon.
Enjoy life every day,
And Mike in every way!
And this glorious sunny morning in your garden.

Cheers

Verses for Mercies

8.50am
13-01-01

Since last evening, ev'ryone knows,
Howard Brayton writes poems not prose.
You're expecting a rhyme
And I haven't much time.
I can't hang around - so here goes.

There was Gerry and Lindsey and Ross
Related, and gathered because -
With Howard and Sue
Occasions are few,
"A rolling stone gathers no moss"

So Sarah and Michael - how kind -
Invited us all to be dined.
There was salmon and chicken
Three puds - finger lickin'
A cheese board and coffee and wine.

Well the company gelled, as it should.
(After op'ning a present of wood -
Sarah said it was cold -
Got a heart of pure gold)
Michael hosted, as only he could.

Conversation delights to enthrall.
Last night we were having a ball.
 Victorian art,
 A mechanical fart
And condoms. We covered it all.

Poor Ross, consigned to the wagon,
Whilst the rest imbibed wine by the flagon.
 I just hope he forgives
 How the rest of us lives.
When he's over the pills, he can tag on.

Enough of this cant, puerile lot o'-
waffle. (We're off to climes hotter)
 I hope it amuses
 The saints and the muses.
I'm back to my book, "Harry Potter". 9.17am

48 Cadogan Lane

We're frightf'ly house - no garden,
At number 48.
We've even got a garage,
But we haven't got a gate.

Refrain And we like it, we like it,
 It's awf'ly nice to be
 Two simple North Leigh people
 With a yen for G & T.

The fridge and dish washer are hid
Behind a beech facade.
The mini, tele, front door bell
With alarm system, stands guard.

Last Tuesday, Si and Howard
Called in to celebrate
Si's marriage proposal
To Jo, the fortunate.

"I'm coming. I'm coming.
She just could not say 'No',
I hear that all her friends are calling,
'Good for Jo'"

Refrain

A Good Millennium

I wish you a Good Millennium,
I wish you a Good Millennium,
I wish you a Good New Cent'ry
And a Happy New Year.

Good tidings I bring,
To you and your kin.
I wish you a Good Millennium,
And a Happy New Year.

Now bring me a glass of red wine,
Now bring me a glass of red wine,
*Or bring me a glass of **white** wine,*
But bring it out here.

Good tidings I bring,
To you and your kin,
I wish you a Good New Cent'ry,
And a Happy New Year.

And I won't go until I've got some.
I won't go until I've got some.
No I won't go until I've got some.
So bring some out now.

I wish you a Good Millennium,
I wish you a Good Millennium,
I wish you a Good New Cent'ry,
And a Happy New Year.

1st January 2000

First Footing for the Millennium

I've put my first foot forward now,
To wish you all the best.
So here's a lump of coal, my friends,
To celebrate this fest.

*For old Mike Ford, our friend,
And dearest Sarah too,
I raise my glass to toast you both.
Mike and Sarah, here's to you.*

*1st January 2000
First footing by Howard Brayton
At The Old Vicarage, North Leigh*

The Sixth of December

On the sixth day of December
Mike and Sarah rang to ask,
If Howard and Sue were able
To undertake a task.

The task - at such short notice -
To join them for some beers,
A country pub at Freeland
The well-known "Hand and Shears".

There was someone due to visit
To view the Brayton's pad,
But still they wouldn't miss-
The chance to join the lass and lad.

So join they did at half past one.
Popadums and wine.
Then on to sausages and soup.
Sue's soup was far from fine.

A rubber band was floating-
Near the bottom of the lot.
We're not quite sure what tune it played,
But Bobby Vee t'was not!

Mine host insisted that he paid-
For things beyond his ken.
Mike thought it quite a good idea.
We could do it all again!

So Sue is on to something now,
- Carry a pack of rubbers.
If the scam continues to work out,
We'll all be old aged clubbers.

From Howard & Sue Brayton with very many thanks
- looking forward to the next time!

90 Years Young

(to be read with great difficulty)

Elsie was 90 on Monday,
And Sarah had organised lunch,
It turned out a wonderful fun-day.
Let me tell you the ten in the bunch.

Elsie was chief guest of honour
Of Michael and Sarah of course,
Dame Wyn, with his usual bonho-
mie, made us laugh till we were hoarse.

Carol said, "Just 'tis a piece
of nibbles and main course and pud."
Sue and Howard had only just landed,
But agreed it was all pretty good.

Elsie's three friends of long standing,
Were Barbara, Pat and Jo-an.
*(well see if you can do better.
I can't, but may be you can.)*

There was wine, there was laughter and speeches,
Stories and mem'ries and jokes.
Then coffee and choc'lates and ... which is
the signal for "*Gents light your smokes.*"

So that's it dear friends one and all,
You agree we all had a ball.
Perhaps before next year's all gone,
We could do it when E's 91!

24th November 2004 H.B.

BLENHEM - a blank verse

At the wheel of the Merc. was the chauffeur
Waiter, wine bibber, raconteur
All-round egg-head - Michael Ford.

Through the mist of a winter's eve
Drove the elegant four
To the crucible of Churchill History.
To the steps of the elegant House of Blenheim.

Through the entrance to the Hall of Peace
The gas log fire, drinks and conversation
Absorbing feelings of a bygone age.

The dour figure of the Duke of Marlborough
Supported by his guests
Heath and Hesselstine, Soames and Jay
"We shall live to fight another day".

Souter tickled Willy's organ
Vierne, Vidor, Elgar's notes
Followed by a teenage wonder
Played superbly Chopin's works.

Had a problem with the opera
And the female singing voice
What a pity bass and tenors
Hadn't sung in their parts straight.

Then the Duchess and her draw(er)s
Duke had problems with his eyesight
Ford and Brayton didn't win them
But the prize was Edward Heath
Spoke with humour, love and praise
Of his friend and mentor, Winston.

Wilson, Keppel and Bettye? acted
As the furniture removers
Shifting scenes and sets and trophies
For the audience's relief.

Then the closing of the evening
Pomp and "Ceremony" One
Land of Hope and Glory (Crosby)
Land of Ford and Sarah Clarke
Land of Sue and Howard Brayton

What a pity Elgar didn't
Like the words of Bainton's poem

Back to Stately home in North Leigh
Supper by an open fire
Prawns and hot-pot, mousse and cheese
All washed down with Wine and coffee

We mingled with the mighty
Through the corridors of powers
But the lasting evening's memories
Will always be of loving friends.

(Apologies to those whose names are forever remembered but incorrectly spelt)

Howard Brayton
16 March 1996

In Memoriam

Brimsworth honoured Charlie Chester,
With a bun fight in a tent.

Michael, Sarah, Wyn and Carol,
Now they're back, are glad they went.
Then came round the time for supper,
Howard and Sue had planned to leave.
Once again persuaded otherwise,
At the prospect did not grieve.

So began another evening,
Of good food and company.
Wyn's received his well earned MBE
Carol too her own JP.

Mike received a special present
From his special friend in Wyn.
A very large collage of Delfont,
Will take pride of place for him.

The Ballad of Kensall Green

All people that in Paddington,
Believe that they no bad thing done,
Now try to keep their pencils clean,
Lest they end up in Kensall Green.

You might have guessed, they've problems too.
No funds or space. What should they do?
First map the area with care;
The length and breadth and corpse depth there!

When that is safely underway,
Let your imagination play:
To stop it slipping into debt,
We'll site it on the internet.

Then sell a range of merchandise:
A book of worthy merchants. Nice!
And others, photograph and word,
To celebrate the "good" interred.

So there you have it Mr Ford.
We hope you'll take it all on board.
It's just to show despite the drink,
We still retain the power to think!

To: Sarah, Howard, Mike and Sue.
We all enjoy an evening "Do".
The lads can eye the girls again,
To which the girls reply, "Ah Men"!

(Tune "Old Hundredth" - NEH 334)

Kensal Green

Last week, had a day out in London,
It was spent in a cemetery! Found-
It's the dead centre of Kensal Green,
Or the Kensal Green underground.

There are many famed people at Kensal,
Enjoying their own well-earned rest.
I'll mention a few if I may now,
But I've never heard of the rest.

There's Trollope, invented the post-box.
And Thackeray, "Ledger with rails."
Rattigan, Lewis and Brunel.
Wilkie Collins and Blondin, all males.

To get a real feel of the area,
Acres of peace in the smoke,
Just call at the white building opposite,
And ask for the grey suited-bloke.

Up the road is the William the Fourth pub,
A unprepossessing place, But-
The food that they serve is quite special,
Cooked by a cook that's no mut.

Well that was our day out in London.
But on the way home we got lost.
But as we were going to Banbury,
It was done, at no extra cost.

Home, Sweet Home

Lord Ford of the Brewery was welcomed last night,
By a placard proclaiming the pun.
I wonder now what am I to say of the scene
Which included his grandson and son.
Sarah looked cool in a summery dress.
The bishop was due for a smoke.
But soon they were ba-ck, without too much fla-ck,
For Michael his pipe up to stoke.
Home, home, glorious home,
Nothing quite like it when ceasing to roam.
But all was not right in the garden last night,
'Cos Someone had cut down their schumacher tree.

A jolly good night of it was had by the Four,
of Sarah and Howard and Sue.
Oh yes, and the Bishop Ford came along for the fun,
And he was first in through the door-
Of the "Handle & Shears", Because it appears,
"The Royal Oak" at Ramsden was full.
H had a bang-bang
(In more ways the one man!)
We all ate and drank and talked bull.
Friend(ship), friend(ship), glorious friend(ship)
Just let your hair down, no need to pretend.
A meal in a pub, or good home-made grub.
Let's drink a toast to our glorious friend(ship).

“Reunion 20th July 2001”

Mike presents a cheerful picture,
Imitations of a Goon.

Sarah is a happy mixture,
Cook and hostess, what a boon.

Bruce and Pat were there,
What a jolly pair.

Sue, my love, my other half.

John and Liz on hols from Huntingdon,
Made up the eight for dinner.

What a laugh!

Mike told lies about his kidneys
Shaped like Sarah's table top.

Bruce decided good behaviour
At a “do” like this, would flop.

Tony Blair is our tip for leadership
of the Tories' rank and files.

Could not mention Jeffrey Archer's case.

What was left Michaels's jokes and
All round smiles

Tune “Austria”
“H” 21st July 2001

Expectation

What do we make of things expected?
Some find solace and order.
Some find boredom and unfulfilment.

What do we make of the unexpected?
Some fear the unknown.
Some relish the adventure.

Thanks uninvited
Letters unsolicited.

A work of art,
Unexpectedly presented.

Drinks with friends,
Unexpectedly invited.

“Blessed is the man who expects nothing,
for he shall never be disappointed.”

(Alexander Pope 1688-1744)

Last Sunday I was doubly blessed.

Here We are Again!

I danced this morning when woke up late,
The radio said, "It's 25 to eight."
I shot out of bed, and I made the tea,
Then drove to College, "as busy as a bee."

Refrain

*Well now it's good to be alive,
"Busy as a bee", escaping from the hive.
Never let the grass grow underneath your feet.
Stay in the kitchen and enjoy the heat.*

If you've ever been invited for an evening meal,
Mike and Sarah always make you feel -
There's very little difference twix a light supper,
A full blown dinner and a good cuppa.

Refrain

Last night we went again, and met with John and Liz.
The evening went, as always, with a fizz.
Sarah served a three course meal to suit a king,
And Mike, as always, filled the glasses to the brim.

Refrain

John and Liz were really full of beans.
Come to Oxford to meet old Rural Deans.
They both looked well, despite their crash.
To stay in the Coach House was something rash.

Refrain

August Bank Holiday

It's August Bank Holiday. Time-
For a chat and a laugh and a rhyme.
The Royal Oak's the place
To show off your face
In an atmosphere almost sublime.

Last night was another event
For *the foursome* on pleasure hell bent.
For Elsie from Hove,
Her first time; by Jove,
And her last before homeward she's sent.

She's a dab hand at cards; so I'm told.
Plays with three packs - now that's bold!
She and Michael place bets,
But have no regrets,
'Cos onto their money they hold.

There was salmon and scrambling eggs,
And smokies from Scotland. That begs:
What is the fish
That makes up this dish?
A red herring on its last legs?

Paying's a problem for Mike.
He has to have fun. He's a tike.
He wrote out the cheque
In a language like Czech.
As much as to say, "On yer bike".

Back in the old Honda bus.
Sarah made coffee for us.
Howard was caught
Drinking old Vintage port.
But we still arrived home without fuss.

That's the end of *this* latest piece.
It's a part of our lives. Bit like Nice.
It's a labour of love.
It's a gift from above.
I'll continue, I guess without cease!

Homecoming

Sarah and Michael Ford
At Heathrow appear.

Off for an evening meal
At the "*Hand and Shear(s)*"

After the food, the wine,
After the wine, the fun.

This is the way of things,
'Til the evening's done.

Ford's now a crusty cod
And a randy sod.

So we welcome back home
Our two dear friends.

(Paraphrased from... and to be sung to the tune of... "*Glad that I live, am I!*")

The Mighty Missibe/Missile/Missal

She was only the Archdeacon's daughter
When Ross Collins decided to court her.
He jumped out of bed
In the papal pants, red
When father brought tea in and caught
her.

Ross and Lindsay are great. I just knew it.
No-one could say that we blew it.
I haven't a clue
What the duo will do.
I just want to be there when they do it.

Thank for the Memory - of last night!

O God, my help in ages past
I crave a further boon.
I can write the words of this,
But what was Lindsay's tune?

Michael was rather puffed last night.
The Merc. was left at home.
Sarah made the old man walk.
You should have heard him moan.

We all know that the priest-in-charge-
of the kitchen, now could-
Produce the most amazing meal,
From Ross's frozen fud.

Ross will have to make a stand
Against this gift of Sue's.
Lindsay has acquired a taste
For condoms flavoured booze.

A box of chocolate naughty bits,
Sue found in town by chance.
Belgian nipples they may be,
But isn't Bre(a)st in France?

Ode to Church Cottage

“Better late than never”

That’s what I always say.

Keep the blighters guessing

- hope this’ll make your day! (Tune NEH 282)

- - - o O o - - -

I didn’t wake up till gone ten;
No thoughts of a poem by then.

But here is a clue,

It’s the best I can do,

The rest’s up to you. Do y’ ken?

- - - o O o - - -

Mike’s got *Jo-Jo* at the bottom of *his* garden,
But Bob’s helicopter crew is on the ball.
If Sarah’s time should prove to be a hard un,
Plainclothes Fletcher will appear behind the wall.

- - - o O o - - -

There’s a moral to this tale, if you can find it.
It’s watch your front - or better *her* behind.
If you can’t be good, you’d better please be careful,
‘cos the law may be an ass, but it ain’t blind!

- - - o O o - - -

Faith in the Resurrection

Romeo and Juliet
Graham and Elizabeth
Tragic losses all.

But what price Christianity?
Let's test the power of faith.
They rejoice to be together.
We keep alight their wraith.

It's *us* who feel the pain, not *them*,
Though *they* will miss *us* too;
Death's just a fact of life, you know,
We'll all meet up again.

So - "*Thanks for the memory*"
of our thoughts in The Royal Oak.
Of death and life on the same continuum.
God too enjoyed the joke!

FORD

Saturday 28th December 1996

“Our Ford had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life”
(Aldous Huxley 1894- 1963)

“A year ago Ford was unknown throughout America. Now he’s unknown throughout the world”
(Anon Guardian 1974)

“He’s a very nice fellow, but that’s not enough, gentlemen. So’s my Uncle Fred”
(Hubert Humphrey)

“Ford is a nice guy, but he played too much football with his helmet off”
(Lyndon Baines Johnson)

“If Ford can get away with this list of issues...and be elected on it, then I’m going to call the dictator of Uganda, Mr Amin, and tell him to start giving speeches on airport safety”
(Walter Mondale)

“It troubles me that Ford played centre on the football team. That means he can only consider options from twenty yards in either direction; and that he has spent a good deal of his life looking at the world upside down through his legs”
(Martin Peretz - New Republic)

On the other hand.....

“I am a mushroom; on whom the dew of heaven drops now and then”

“We can drink till all look blue”

(John Ford 1586-1639)

“Keep the home fires burning, while your hearts are yearning.
Though your lads are far away, they dream of home.
There’s a silver lining through the dark clouds shining.
Turn the dark cloud inside out, till the boys come home”

(Lena Ford 1916?)

For Sarah.....

“There is a lady sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind.
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die”

(Thomas Ford 1580-1648)

Thanks for the Memory!

*Come let us join our cheerful song
With Mike and Sarah Clarke..
We joined them for a drink last night,
And boy, we had a lark!*

*We only went round for a drink,
But, Sarah bless her heart,
Served up a cold collation, and -
George (Uncle) played his part.*

*He's guest of honour - Uncle George -
He's clearly on a winner!
He used to be a publican,
But now he's just a sinner!*

*He waited on us hand and foot.
But smoke, he couldn't hack it.
He wore a knitted jumper, but
He dreamt of his Green Jacket.*

*Mike, banished for his dirty habit,
Sat in the ingle-nook.
Elaborate preparations made
You'd think he wrote the book!*

*We talked of those whose race is run:
We talked of those still running.
We talked of those who'd made the break;
And those who lacked the cunning.*

*We talked of this and that and it.
The world was put to right.
Then Sue drove Howard home gain,
A bright and starlit night.*

Ode on the occasion a dear friend's birthday, being the same age as mine for the period of six weeks or so, and in recognition that we cannot be with him on account of the fact that we are in Portugal, much to the jealous wishes of himself and Sarah, but that's their decision 'cos the apartment next to ours is vacant and they know it. So tough.

Ford is sagacious in business,
And thrifty without being mean.
You might not be able to fathom him,
If you're skint, he'd give his last bean.

He's a wonderful lover and father.
Of his children he's jealously proud.
He's the boss in the house and at work. Though-
he's not at his ease in a crowd.

He travels to exotic places.
Enjoys all the pleasures in town.
He's a gourmet of food. And his tastes in-
white wine are compared to the Crown.

-after Katina (1981) Park Lane Publishers

A paraphrase in celebration of the coming of (middle/old) age of a dear friend, with whom my wife and I have spent many a happy and forgettable evening, supping, swigging, laughing, joking, yarning, generally enjoying ourselves to the utmost before deciding that the least intoxicated amongst us needed to drive the most intoxicated amongst us - home.

**We've know Mike for nine years or more now.
It seems like a life time; and yet-
invited by archtype East Enders,
Inimitable Chris Ward and Bet.**

**There've been many exciting ocasions
We've shared with the rascal and Co.
With Sarah and Roy Hudd and Debbie,
And lords with their ladies in tow.**

**You may have a showy exterior,
Deep down you're a softy at heart.
Sue and I love you both. And we wish you,
"Happy Birthday" you randy old fart.**

**Never in the field of human conflagration
Was so much said by so few to so many.**



Happy Birthday and up yours.

Winnie

“A RATLING GOOD DO”

Mike and Sarah have done it again!
They rang up on October the ten.
 “Would you join us, you two,
 for a ‘bit of a do’
In Park Lane - cross the park from Big Ben?”

The event was the Queen Ratling’s Ball
To be held in Dorchesters great hall.
 The Queen was our Debbie,
 with Roy at the ready.
We were honoured to answer the call.

Mike drove us to town in the Merc.
Cursing the rain; and the berk-
 who invented the Hangar Lane
 Gyratory aqua plane.
All dressed up, he made the plan work.

We arrived at the Dorchester’s door.
Up and down steps to the floor.
 We met Debbie and Roy
 -who, not being coy-
Seemed pleased with the party they saw.

Other guests: Rona and Hugh,
(Hugh too’s had ‘a bit of a do’)
 And Hazel and John.
 Neil and Debbie had gone.
Sipped drinks awaiting their cue.

The event had a Lancashire theme,
With hot-pot and rock - no ice-cream!
And waving and singing,
And past ratlings bringing-
Accolades fit for the Queen.

“Speaker” Boothroyd was Debbie’s chief guest.
A tiller girl, who would have guessed?
Celebrities all
Were having a ball
With bingo and lottery quests.

After dancing, the cabaret started.
Sue and *Howard*, alas, early departed.
Mark and Charlotte did right,
Arrived at midnight
And off and away they were carted.

Mike and Sarah are *the* perfect hosts.
So we’ll drink a series of toasts:
To friendship and fun,
And all that you’ve done.

NOW: Faxing is quicker than post!

X *Howard*
21/10/96

The Last Weekend in July

Thanks God, for super weekends,
Praising You along with our friends.
For weddings and love,
And grace from above,
And promise of worlds without ends.

John and Mary were blessed once again,
With family and friends do y' ken.
The music they chose
Meant the choir couldn't doze,
Since they hadn't been given the gen.

Now *for* Bruce and Pat's Golden Wedding
To St. Mary's the family's heading.
They all take a turn,
Read or play what you learn.
Then off for a week - with your bedding.

But first there was drinking and food.
And speeches, and toasts. Bruce the dude!
Friends from 50 years back,
Who were still on the track
And I might say were still in the mood!

Then came the first time at Mike's.
Sue and Howard were right off their bikes!
They needed a snooze
To sleep off the booze.
With coffee and chocs and the likes.

The next was the day of the Lord
When John Wilson had found the Lost Chord.

“Seated one day...”

There’s no other way
And certainly no time to be bored.

Bishop Richard blessed our new organ
- not approved of by Revd. John Morgan.

But Howard and John,
Chose to press on.

The conclusion was almost foregone.

Peter Irving composed a new anthem,
(In Solihull, Bootle or Grantham)

“Let Your Due Feet”

Was the name of the beat.

And the choir’s own rendition was hanthom (said with a lisp)

In the Turner Hall, folk were in ranks,
More drink and more food and more thanks.

Then second time round

Mike and Sarah were found

Serving guests on the croquet lawn banks.

All too soon it was Evensong time
Mike tells me the sound was sublime.

(Well we do what we can
To humour the man.)

The number in church? - 59!

But just when we thought "It's the end",
Came the third call from Mike that weekend.
So we drank in the sun,
And talked of the fun
We had had. *Now's* the end.

Mike and Sarah are lovers we know.
Sue and Howard too, feel that deep glow.
And Lindsay and Ross,
Both know who's boss.
Or will do when "lump" gives a show.

So I end where I started today.
With a prayer and a "Thought for the Day"
"If it's love that is bound
To make worlds go round
Then *sure* God is Love; all the way."

Howard 28/7/97

OH D' to the WEED

You've heard of the song, "The lost chord"
I can tell you his name is Mike Ford.
 With his own - in a sense -
 Secular type of incense,
He has a hot line to the Lord.

He's kind of a joke of a bloke,
With pipe or cigar - poke or stoke,
 But one has to admit,
 When the fan hits the shit,
He call always call out, "Holy smoke!"

The Godfather - *part IV*

From Eastbourne came Godfather John,
For a weekend of "fresh air and fun"
 On Friday to go
 On a car-ride to Stow
But on Thursday to sup with someone

Sarah laid on a spread that was great
For a span we were all overweight!
 The ginger and cream
 Came out of a dream
The remainder went home on a plate

Discussions ranged farther and wide
But Howard and Mike could have cried!
 Education and Telly
 Were given the Welly
The Irish were also decried

It comes of a lifetime of reading
Combined with a background of breeding
 No telly: all books
 No wife - he still cooks
And a garden which saves on the weeding

At the end of it all we still smile
With friends, good food , for a while
 After all, life's a mystery
 The present is history
So add this now to my file!

COME HONDA*

Michael and all angels gathered,
Round the festive board to dine.
Then Wyn Calvin – Widow Twankey
Called in for a glass of wine.
Sarah dined us,
Michael wined us,
Fed us till we want no more.
Then at midnight
we were shown the door.

* Roughly translated into the Welsh language as: Cwm Rhondda

HEIGH ON! - WHY NOT?

Mike and Sarah have done it again!
(Though Sarah was in the slow lane)
Hugh's lovely wife, Rhona,
Asked Howard to 'phone her -
Re their cottage. "It's just down the lane."

Hugh is high in the temporal stakes,
Though he's spiritually made some mistakes.
His seat in the Lords
May have lost him the chords -
He could play on his organ. The rake!

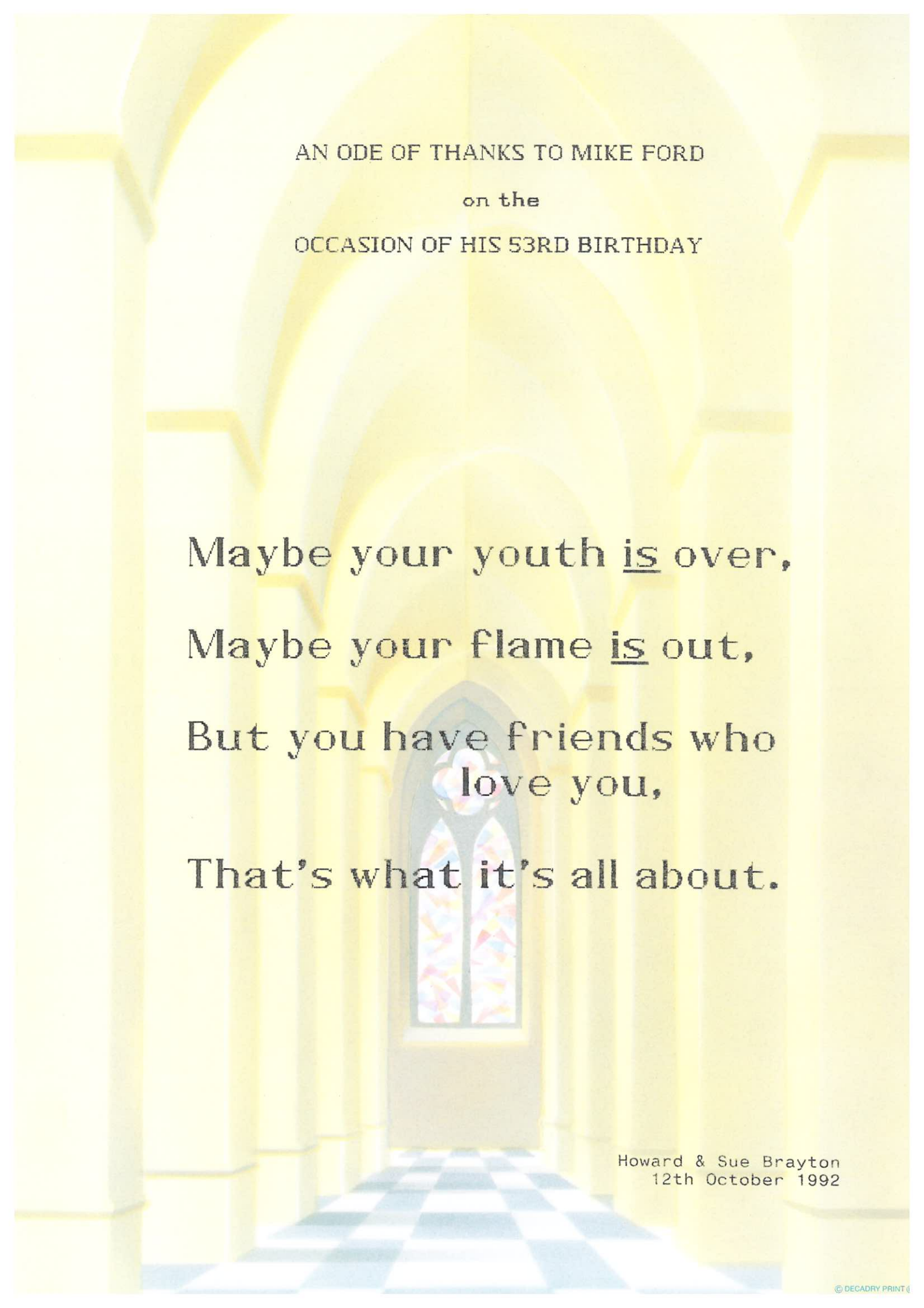
Dr Muirhead was with the O.U.
When Rhona would call out, "Oh Hugh,
I've had B.B.C.
I'm bored, can't you see?
An antiques shop would be just the clue"

Now Hugh was just over the eight,
But Mike thought, "It's far from too late.
Two pints and a drug -
To combat a bug -
Aren't likely to alter your fate!"

When the vicar retires to the sea
And Mike has been brought to his knee:
When we're all round the bend
And the world's at an end,
Then Hugh can be Lord of North Leigh!

Boom, Boom.

Howard Brayton



AN ODE OF THANKS TO MIKE FORD
on the
OCCASION OF HIS 53RD BIRTHDAY

Maybe your youth is over,
Maybe your flame is out,
But you have friends who
love you,
That's what it's all about.

Howard & Sue Brayton
12th October 1992

The Holy City

Last night I lay a sleeping,
There came a dream so fair,
I sat in pleasant company,
Amongst my dear friends there.
I heard the jokes of dear Mike Ford,
And ever as we laughed,
I thought the voice of angels,
Over all us there did waft.

Viagra, Viagra,
Stand up for goodness sake.
Viagra, Viagra,
How much more can I take?

The Lost Cause

Seated last night at the table,
I was jolly and quite at ease.
As my figures wandered idly,
Over Sarah's knees.
I knew what I was thinking,
And what I was doing then,
I struck that chord of music,
And Sarah cried out, "*Again*"

A Tribute to Elsie

Whoelse (IE)?

There was a young lady called Elsie,
Who had a small son, Michael Ford.
He behaved like a bat out of hell. He's-
Made sure that his Mum's never bored.

But he's nearly 59 years now,
And Elsie can do her own thing.
She's showing an undaunted spirit,
And living her life with a fling.

She's just been to Kensington Palace,
Refusing the regular guide.
It's Sidmouth and Ilfracombe next times.
Elsie just goes for the ride.
You'd think it was time she should Hove too,
But what is life for in the end?
With a lad like Mike Ford for a son, now,
Sat at home she go right round the bend.

Apologies for brevity

In the light of the Wantage Male Choir,
And the amount of the work you require,
The effect of the booze...
I'm sure you'll excuse.
How's it going? Oh please don't enquire.

I'm up now. It's quarter to nine.
But *I'll* have your poster on time.
With the copy you chose,
It's, "Well now, here goes."
And that is the end of the rhyme!

16-08-98

Sue Xmas 2016

Thanks for coming, for cards and presents, and for your love - and for **Christmas dinners** – who's turn next year?

Gervase Phinn - *A Wayne in a Manger* *The Virgin Mary's got Nits*

As co-editor of parish magazine - **Story about Sue's birth** in Witney Way - copies **Sang yesterday**

2 years since Shropshire together snow, Father Christmas, Jonathan master Bake-Off – pizzas, fireworks in the cold and wet ...

Saw **consultant** in November, all hugs and kisses 'Come back next year!' Read citation in Prof. Kevin Talbot's book.

Selling Casa da Musica - reinvention – Peak District, Cornwall, Shropshire, Portugal

As I read less, 43 average 100 but write more, see website.

'**A Hymn for Intercession**' Simon

Sue is now an avid reader, of what genre I know not! Historical, romantic fiction

Sue loves her family - particularly the dogs! No, it's not going to happen! Please keep in regular contact - text, email, photographs, visit often. Tell her what you're doing.

2017 Portugal, Shropshire, Cornwall, Northumberland? Cumbria?

We're blessed having such a wonderful loving family, beautiful grandchildren, the dogs, and a host of friends, and the medical support.

We'll keep taking the **tablets**.

So to Sue, on her **68th birthday**, who is an inspiration to us all, with an image to maintain.

I love you.

Toast "To Sue"

Phil's 60th Birthday

At Phil's 60th Birthday Bash – a couple of years ago, reminded Mark 2:4
'...they couldn't get near for the press.' Notes given to Phil, almost the same.

This could go on a while, so carry on drinking and chatting; Phil would have.

- A little history lesson
- 1952 was a forgettable year - I was in the lower fifth (3rd or year 9) - King George VIth died - Harrow & Wealdstone train crash (102) - Lynton & Lynmouth disaster - Farnborough airshow disaster (DH 110) - Britain detonated its first atomic bomb - USA its first Hydrogen bomb - Smog in London killed 4000 in four days - First helicopter rescue at sea off Yarmouth - And as if that wasn't enough, to top it all, a baby was born in Walsall to Peggy and Jim Anslow, and named him Philip L . The L stood for Leslie, although I understand Philip maintained it actually stood for Loveable!
- Peter Sellers: "You may not know this Sir, but some of our greatest men started life as children."
- Known him for longer than most people in this room – including 3 of his children

A few things that stand out - no memory

- 1983 (32 years ago) Met at The White Hart pub in Stonesfield – N/L nursery skittles – our 5 + Kate and Hannah - & I think Richard
- Watching *all* our children growing up – for me, Clare, my Goddaughter
- (**Digressions - no "i" - after Clare College, where Philip studied or not - second oldest after Peterhouse** called to the bar a couple of years ago (no jokes please) now reduced to a pupil again at Lincoln's Inn. And for Sue, Jenny , *her* God-daughter following Dad into the medical profession.
- Sense of Humour: 1989 Christmas Midnight service – no choir men – followed by a 'a bit of a do' at our house - Silent Night (Mike Ford)
Flanders and Swann – A Transport of Delight
Radley Fireworks concert
- Taking a party of children from St Giles' church in Oxford to Sutton Courtney Nature reserve for a week's camping – he striding off with baby strapped to him.
- New Year's Eve parties, birthdays, any excuse, at Sherwood,

- Early 1990s (Sheldonian) Diagnosing my Sue's condition as neurological - Richard Greenhall took charge PLS
- Falling asleep on a rowing machine and at meals
- Master of ceremonies at wedding to Liz at Studley Priory - **NO Speech**
- 2003 our Silver Wedding in Portugal - showed his thumb
- I could go on talking about my good friend Philip, but I won't.
- Liz's card, Douglas Adams, 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' 'Life, the Universe and Everything the answer 42. What's the question? Maybe he now knows the answer.

So I ask you to raise your glasses and drink a **Toast to: Dr Anslow, Philip, or Phil, Loveable, Doctor, Consultant, Expert Witness, one-time Pilot, some-time Bee-Keeper, Narrow-boat builder, successful plumber, fun-loving Husband, Dad, Grandad, Dear Friend, and general all-round egg-head...**

To Philip; may his soul rest in peace.

A musical tribute to Phil. With Liz on Piano and James & I to sing. NOY a concert performance and without rehearsal.

Sing: A Transport of Delight

Sing: Have some Madeira m' Dear

Sing: The Hippopotamus Song with James – at Phil's funeral.

Paul's 60th Birthday Song

Chorus All sopranos young and old, (sops)
And altos short and tall, (altos)
Bass and tenor voices too, (men)
Love organist St. Paul. (all)

Verse 1 Paul lives in Sutton Courtney,
But works in Oxford town,
Then plays the hymns in Witney,
That's why he wears a frown.

Chorus

Verse 2 Fiona is long suffering,
She'd rather ice her cakes.
But Paul's her one and only,
Accepting what it takes.

Chorus

Verse 3 Paul has two grown up children,
The apples of his eye.
There's Laura teaching children,
Whilst Tennis-Tom's the guy.

Chorus

Verse 4 The choir at Witney's Woodgreen 's -
- A rather motley crew,
Paul has the job as org'nist,
And tells us what to do.

Chorus

Verse 5 We sing at every service,
And special 'Do's as well.
Paul likes to play the great,
He rarely plays the swell.

Chorus

Verse 6 Paul likes a pint of Tribute,
It may two or three.
His haunt on Wednesday evenings,
The friendly Pigeons Three.

Chorus

Verse 7

He also likes his ciggies,
Prefers to roll his own.
Like singing a cappella,
It tends to drop the tone.

Chorus

Verse 8

So now you've managed 60,
We wonder what comes next.
We'd like to make suggestions,
Just listen to this text.

Text (ALL)

Age is an illusion Paul,
Just go with how you feel.
Live for now, and play for us.
Let music calm and heal.

What (I think) I believe

A few random thoughts. Random, because I am still, after years of reading, discussing, and 'wrestling with God', as confused as ever. 'Give me the wings of faith, to rise within the veil, and see ...'

So, what *do* (I think) I believe?

* That there must have been a First Cause or whatever - see attached - a God! The trouble is, I grew up with mental images and Biblical illustrations of God, as an old man with a bushy beard and flowing robes. It takes a deal of mindfulness to rid myself of it. I try to imagine an amorphous, formless, nameless surge of energy.

* And from whence came that surge? ... no idea. But then if I knew, I would be God! That doesn't negate my continued questing.

* The written images of God in the OT don't help either - the vengeful God demanding worship, obeisance and sacrifices, meting out punishment and death to individuals and nations.

- There is no historical, architectural or archaeological evidence for the Israelites' descent into Egypt, their sojourn in the Sinai desert, or their Exodus.
- At the time of the so-called conquest of the Promised Land, Israel was already a province of Egypt, so why were they escaping Egypt into Egypt?
- Similarly the stories of David, Saul, Solomon, are not supported either

So we 'bother' with the myths of the OT, because that is what Jesus as a Jew would have been brought up on?

* The Church too, has much to answer for. Being a church-goer does not equate with Christianity. A Christian is one who tries to follow The Way, the teachings and example of Jesus. It has nothing to do with rituals and ceremony and sacrifice.

* So why do I go to church? It's the way I was brought up. I didn't attend for three years after leaving college, and I found a great gap in my reasoning about life. And I unashamedly admit, that I *love* the ceremony, the liturgy, the architecture, the literature, the music..., I am steeped in it.

* Jesus was a poor Jewish peasant, who believed in the apocalyptic end-time. He was a follower of John the Baptist, (Essenes), but went his own way. He believed he was the Christ, the Messiah, the one who would usher in the Kingdom of God. He never suggested that he *was* God. He and his 12 peasant fishermen friends would eventually have special positions in the new Kingdom. He always referred to 'The One who comes after me'.

* He was crucified for insurrection and rabble rousing, crimes against the state, and for setting himself up in the minds of the populace, that he was the King of the Jews. The Romans tolerated Judaism, and temple worship, provided it was contained. Only Romans could create kings. And if Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, they understood it was his destiny to overthrow the Roman occupation. So was it the Jews who were responsible for Jesus's crucifixion, shouting "Crucify". or the Romans via Pontius Pilate for sentencing him? Jewish execution was by stoning; crucifixion was the ultimate Roman punishment.

* Was it not Jesus's early apostles, disciples, followers who elevated Him to Godship? After some attested to his resurrection, He became God at his resurrection?

* When did Jesus become God? Chronologically, **Paul** believed Him to be divine and born that way, but did not believe He pre-existed. **Mark**, believed He became the Son of God at his baptism by John. **Matthew 3/17** mirrored Ps 2/4, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." **Luke** regarded Jesus as *divine*, at the moment of conception, (hence the added 'accounts' of his virgin birth), and 'God's exalted' at his resurrection. **John** writing later, in Greek not Aramaic, in another Country, and in a sophisticated educated style, uses ancient preliterate myths of the Logos (the Word), to state that Jesus had *always* been God, but came to Earth to put right the things that Eve (Adam) had done wrong. This became the Orthodox line, and the Synoptic versions became heresy.

Hippolytus referred to God the father, Son and Holy Spirit as the **Triad**.

Tertullian coined the term **Trinity**.

Origen suggested the Son was God's pre-existent **Wisdom**.

If one believes in a spirit world, as I fervently do, then it is quite possible that there are levels of divinity, from ordinary folk, through saints, to angels and archangels, as per Greek and Roman beliefs. Jesus was obviously well up on the ladder; divine but *not* God.

* He could well have been perceived as *a* god, as Caesars, Pharaohs and other good and worthy men (sic) were - *gods*, but not *God*.

* What of his miracles and healings? Ancient writings, including the OT, attest to many such events being carried out by others, prophets, priests and kings, and indeed his disciples.

* The virgin-birth? A very common attribute in ancient writings re. great men (sic) Apollonius, Augustus, Melchizedek, Quetzalcoatl, Attis, Buddha, Dionysus, Heracles, Krishna, Osiris ... Not mentioned by Paul, or in Mark or John's gospels. I don't find it important anyway.

Ebonites - that Jesus was adopted by God at his baptism.

Theodotians - Jesus born of Virgin Mary some believed at baptism
some believed at his resurrection

Docetism - completely divine (God) - 'only appeared to be human' - 'yet born of a woman'

1 Epistle of John - 'came in the flesh' - anyone who refutes this is an antichrist

Ignatius - God, but with a real body

Marcionites - descended from heaven as a fully grown man - a phantom in human guise

Gnosticism - creation *not* of God - the world imprisons 'sparks of the Divine' - Jesus came to Earth as a phantom - by a divine being - two entities, a human inhabited temporarily - there was a 'separation' between Jesus and Christ (*cf Pullman*)

When Christian Emperor Constantine elevated Christianity as a recognised and favoured religion, so the controversy of the Trinity and the status of the Son, led to the establishing of the Nicene Creed – the accepted orthodox position.

(So; everyone is entitled to believe what they wish to believe. But I think Ignatius is where the church is. I think it's called faith! And 'faith is a journey, not an arrival' – John Wesley.

As I continue my journey of wrestling with God, what do I currently believe?

- ... that scriptures need interpretation, bearing in mind the time and political situation of the times
- ... there is a First Cause, the creator of all things seen and unseen.
- ... there was a special man, Jesus, born divine, but not God. (*cf Paul*)
- ... that the stories of virgin birth are unnecessary
- ... that we don't know that Jesus is the *only* son of God. But *a* Son of God, as we all are, hence *not* God
- ... that the stories of Jesus' birth, shepherds and wise men are allegorical and hence unnecessary.
- ... that his divinity was recognised at his baptism by John
- ... that his teaching of 'love your neighbour' and 'do to others what you would like them to do to you' - the Golden rule, are as relevant now.
- ... I have no trouble with his miracles and healings; others did the same (interpretation?)
- ... that his trial, and crucifixion are verifiable
- ... I don't understand what is meant by the phrase, '... he died for our sins.' He was *originally* believed to be the Christ, the Messiah, who would bring about salvation for the Jews from Roman occupation. Mind you he had a lot to say about the state of the Jewish religion! That the apocalyptic end-time was near, and that he would rule with his chosen disciples. What has that to do with me in 21st century?
- ... that he 'rose again', whether or not the 'stone was rolled away'.
- ... that he is reunited in the spirit world with God.
- ... you can't have a spiritual first cause (God) without a belief in a spirit world.
- ... that I am *required* to continue my spiritual journey of faith and doubt, and that all this might change as I travel on!

* I can, and I do, read about the vastness of space and the timelessness of time. I have no difficulty with a Big Bang, emanating from a singularity of infinite mass and energy, at the moment time began. I can even perceive of a previous universe contracting to that of the aforementioned singularity.

I have to confess that quarks and string theory and Loop Quantum Gravity are abstract mathematical theories, and *unnecessary* theories, which for me add nothing to my belief or understanding.

The Stanford Encyclopaedia is obviously correct when it states that these questions are ancient. They are indeed as old as man himself. What are philosophy and theology and religion, if not quests for an understanding of life; for the Truth?

The biggest problem I have with all this, is the infinitesimally short length of time that man has been on this planet, compared to the four and a half billion years since its creation, and its obvious eventual extinction, as the Sun is half spent; as we rapidly deplete Earth's resources, and exterminate the species, and before our planet becomes a red giant, then a white dwarf, then a black hole, finally a singularity; the universe will still be expanding and new galaxies emerging. Man is but a 'blink of an eyelid', a very late addition in the universe, and one which will 'soon' disappear, leaving billions of years of Sun and hence Earth, without us. (c.f. Velikovsky – *'Worlds in Collision'*)

So what does the church have to say about God, father, son and Holy Ghost before humankind evolved, or after we have annihilated ourselves or just died out, leaving a silent universe? And how many other inhabited planets have been or will be visited by a Son of God?

What *is* the point of it all, and in particular, humankind? We worship God, Why? If it is ineffable, immanent and all those other manifestations with which we endow it, why would it require or expect adoration, praise and worship?

'What's it all about, Alfie?'

Keep asking the questions, but don't expect an answer - in this world at least!

... on-going!

Howard Brayton
16/01/17 30/01/17 13/02/17 19/02/17

CREDO - que?

LENT 2008

I have always wanted to feel my heart strangely warmed, as John Wesley experienced at Aldersgate Street; but then I feel like Thomas, rebuked by Jesus for not having faith. If I am "justified by faith" and not by my works, then I am not justified, if I have no faith. God alone sees into my heart.

"Give me the wings of faith, to rise within the veil ..." (Watts)

"At present we see only puzzling reflection in a mirror, but one day

we shall see face to face"

(1 Corinthians c13 v12)

Ernst Troeltsch wrote, *"A particularly difficult problem for current religious thought is posed by the connection of faith with historical matters. Religion is understood and experienced as a present religion, as a certainty about God and the eternal world which is apprehended now through inner experience"*

Maybe it is helpful to read the words of Martin Kahler, when he drew a distinction between the historical Jesus as placed in history, and the historic Jesus who *made* history. Albert Schweitzer spent much time searching for the historic Jesus. The "Life of Jesus" movement has failed for me.

"Jesus means something to our world because a powerful spiritual force drives from him and flows through our time also. The fact can neither be disproved nor confirmed by any historical discovery. It is the solid foundation of Christianity" ... "Further we must be prepared to find that the historical personality and life of Jesus, will not be helpful to, but perhaps even a nuisance to religion." "Jesus is absolutely independent of historical knowledge and can only be understood by contact with his spirit, which is still at work in the world." "Jesus as a total historical personality remains a stranger to our time."

So maybe I'm asking the wrong questions (Archbishop Forte).

John Calvin said doubt is a normal part of Christian life, *"When we stress that faith ought to be certain and secure, we do not have in mind a certainty without doubt or a security without any anxiety. Rather, we affirm that believers have a perpetual struggle with their own lack of faith, and are far from possessing a peaceful conscience..."* - wrestling with God.

If theology is "talking about God" and since as Athenagoras pointed out ... *"(the) one God, who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassable, incomprehensible, and without limit..."* who am I to be looking for the invisible, and trying to understand the incomprehensible. Newman pointed out, *"They are in no sense 'conclusions', and imply no process of reasoning."*

“The human mind reaches conclusions on grounds which, though rational, lie outside the limits of strict logic.” Alister McGrath

I do find George Lindbeck helpful, *“The primary knowledge is not about the religion, nor that the religion teaches such and such, but rather how to be religious in such and such ways. Sometimes, explicitly formulated statements of the beliefs or behavioral norms of a religion may be helpful in the learning process, but by no means always. Ritual, prayer and example are normally much more important.”*

My Lenten readings have supported Archbishop Forte’s assertion that it is not the answer I should be seeking, but formulating *true* questions. With the grace of God, I will.

Howard Brayton

Holy Week

March 2008

John Philip McCormack's 80th birthday

- Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate an immense achievement; that of reaching octogenarianhood, or octogenarianism. You may not know this, but currently there are over half a million people aged 90 and over living in the UK, so we'll all get together again in ten years' time.
- The **first hymn** is one which was sung regularly at my alma mater, Kingswood School in Bath: founded by John Wesley for the sons of his itinerant preachers. The last time I sang it was 60-something years ago. Please don't take the words literally! Visualise if you will, a long stark cold Dickensian dormitory with 15 beds on each side radiating out from the walls. A boy who had a birthday, was firstly lashed with wet towels and then further humiliated, as the other boys gathered around his bed and sang:-

The Birthday Song

Why was he born so beautiful?

Why was he born at all?

He's no bloody use to anyone

He's no bloody use at all.

(It has nothing to do with anyone here, it's just that when I was asked to say a few words – I don't do 'a few' – it was further suggested that I sing them. Er, 'No'.)

- For my **sermon**, I take as my text some paraphrased words from the books of the Old Testament of The Bible
 Genesis c25/v25 ‘...and the first came out red. All over like a hairy garment...’
 Genesis c27/v11 ‘And Father said unto them, “What manner of man was he, which came out to meet you?” They answered, “He was an hairy man.”’
 Kings c2/v7&8 ‘And Barbi said to her mother, “Behold John Philip, my brother is an hairy man, and I am a smooth man.”’

- **1938 was not a very good year to remember**

Menacing clouds hung over Europe - the first public air-raid shelter was built beneath Caxton Hall in London - and gas-masks were distributed - the Bren gun was invented in Czechoslovakia - and plastic US infantrymen came onto the market! Incidentally, some of you may be interested to know that the breathalyser was first introduced in 1938.

And just when they thought things couldn't get worse, on this very day 80 years ago, Marian and John McCormack - of Bebington on the north eastern shore of the Wirral peninsular, in Cheshire - delivered a boy-child onto the world stage, named John Philip (JP) - This was both confusing as John was his father's name - and because his horoscope foretold of his eventual marriage to Ann - also a JP.

As I look at little Izzy and at John Philip, I am reminded of the sagacity of the late Peter Sellers, who once famously remarked. *“You may not know this, but some of our greatest men started life as children.”* Sadly, in John Philip's case, this was not to be. But he did achieve the stone, the paper, and the scissors. *(Think about it)*

As a Capricorn, so I'm told, JP is tough, self-disciplined, consistent, resourceful, self-reliant, a methodical planner, who makes to sound financial investments, and eschews extravagance. He will make supreme sacrifices on behalf of his family. And even when things are going well, he still keeps his fingers crossed, and prepares for the worst. Pleasure is the satisfaction of knowing that he is doing his duty, and making full use of his practical abilities.

- Philip and I met some 30 years ago, via our wives Ann and Sue, who worked together at The College. Philip had his office in Two Rivers and we would have the occasional pub lunch together. Later that developed into the regular foursomes we came to enjoy.

We stayed with them at Bournemouth many times, in both apartments. The annual May Music Festival at St Stephen's church became a must, fish and chips, and a walk along the pier!

Philip and Ann stayed with us 15 times in Portugal. Sue and Ann spent the time gossiping. I was always ready with a long list of jobs waiting for Philip to tackle - weeding, strimming, logging, painting, varnishing, making flagpoles, and mending that which was broken ...

The four of us have assumed the habit of taking an annual trip away together, visiting the Brecon Beacons, Canterbury, Cumbria, The Lake District, North Wales, the Yorkshire Dales ...

And day-trips, usually following me singing, like Peterborough, Salisbury, Tewksbury, St George's Windsor ...

We just enjoy being together as **friends**. Not **acquaintances** – those you can relax with and be yourselves, say what you like, do what you like - it's not going anywhere.

- And yet Philip and I have nothing in common, but like opposite poles, we attract.

He is 80	I am not
He is hairy	I am not
He is practical	I am cerebral
He likes to be 'doing'	I like lying in the sun – thinking
He likes a project	I prefer 'poddling'
He has infinite patience	I have none

He's an outdoor gardener	I am an indoor gardener
He shops at Waitrose	I shop at Sainsbury's
He likes meat	I like fish
Actually, he likes burning meat (BBQing)	I don't (It is NOT a man thing)
He just likes eating	I can't be bothered
He likes Scotch	I like gin
He reads the lesson in church	I lead the intercessions
He likes cruises	I don't fancy it one bit
... and so it goes on	

So what **do** we have in common? Well ...

We're both male, married, have children and grandchildren
 We're both the same age in the same year
 We both have adoring attractive wives, who are mothers and grandmothers,
 and whom we love dearly
 We like taking them shopping, and eating out, or staying in and 'flopping'
 We both have extended families of children and grandchildren, which we
 adore, and would do anything for
 We're both looking forward to another grandchild in a few months' time
 We both like strong coffee (with grunt!)
 We're both member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists
 We both understand that each day is a special occasion, so celebrate it,
 don't waste it
 We know we're there for each other

- So Philip, 'Thank you' for your continuing friendship. Where shall we go this year, for our annual get-away?? Northumberland??

- **The final hymn is written antiphonally, for an *a cappella* solo verse and congregational chorus**

Chorus *All girls bright and beautiful,
All children short and tall,
And all we acquaintances,
Love Philip best of all.*

Verse *Bebington was his birthplace
Born just before the war.
Then little sister Barbi
Made numbers up to four.*

Chorus

Verse *John studied rocks in London
Brit. Mus. Nat. Hist, Min, Dep.
Then traded it for paper,
Became a German rep.*

Chorus

Verse *Like me, he has five children.
Grandchildren also five.
In three months' time in March though
A baby boy named ... Clive?*

Chorus

Verse *Let's carry on regardless
Of life's intending fate.
Let's eat and drink; make merry,
Before it's all too late.*

Chorus

AMEN

- I should just like to close, with two quotations.

The first again from The Good Book, Acts c29 v35

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

So Philip and Ann, you are truly and rightly blessed, as you have given us all this wonderful experience, which we will all remember until we meet again at Philip’s 90th.

And from the Casa da Musica Visitors’ Book, dated October 2003, written by Philip, or maybe it was Ann – no matter

“Your family is delightful, you all deserve each other.”

Philip, on behalf of we hangers-on, I can say without hesitation, the same to you.

“Your family is delightful, you all deserve each other.”

And ***“Thank you”*** for including us in your Big Birthday Bash.

Happy Birthday Dear Friend!

LE MANOIR AUX QUAT'SAISONS
Great Milton, Oxfordshire

Saturday 13th January 2018