

The College Christmas



Issue 10

Newsletter

December 2014

Prince of Peace (Hilary M Richardson)

*Happy that first Christmas Day
When the newborn Jesus lay,
Cradled in a manger bare
On a bed of sweet fresh hay.
Bright the star that shone above
Telling of the place where love
Was born that Christmas morning.
Blest was Mary – born to bear –
A prince within that stable bare.*

Believe - Lorna Penfound

In mid-November, I refused to look at the Christmas decorations, presents and 'offers' in the shops – much too early. However, I had to relent, purchase the Christmas cards, and address them in readiness for early posting to friends and family overseas. Once this task is completed, I can settle back and relax. But, NO. The Christmas elves are starting their annual task of nudging the memory of listening to much loved carols, and just waiting for December to retrieve THE TREE and decorations from their summer rest. Then – the making of lists. What to give the children, grandchildren and, indeed, great-grandchildren. Shopping lists of comestibles and ingredients to bake well remembered Christmas fare, and reverting with regularity to memories of a South African Christmas when my children were still babies. And when they were older, chasing them round the kitchen with the intact skeleton of the de-boned turkey. Of re-heating the Christmas

pudding and forgetting to remove the plastic container – Ugh! The joy of Christmas past and the wonderful knowledge that, YES, it is all happening again. Different of course, but quite magical. Why? Because on Christmas Eve when the world is silent, the Christmas message remains one of Hope, Love and Thanks for all our many, many blessings. All we have to do is believe.

Winter & Summer - Shelia Rainey

Some of the best-known poems of Robert Frost were written while he worked his New Hampshire farm, and when this was unsuccessful, he turned to teaching. In 1912 he came to England and became acquainted with other poets, among them Edward Thomas who encouraged him to submit his poetry for publication. Subsequently, two volumes were published. The poets' friendship arose from their mutual love of rural life and similarity in style. Both wrote simply, directly, without affectation, as though chatting to a friend. Their poems sometimes evocative, as in Frost's *The Road Not Taken* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, which is immediately accessible with its simplicity and endearing rhythm. The best known of Edward Thomas's poems is probably *Adlestrop*. They both treasured tranquillity and silence, as in 'The only other sound the sweep, of easy wind and downy flake', and Thomas's 'No whit less still and lonely fair than the high cloudlets in the sky'. In 1914, Frost returned to America where he continued to teach and write. Thomas was killed at Arras in 1917. He was once asked why he wanted to go to war, his reply: he held out a handful of English soil. Thomas is commemorated in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey and by memorial windows in the churches at Steep and at Eastbury in Berkshire.



Whose woods these are I think I know

His house is in the village though,
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.
My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake,
The darkest evening of the year.
He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Yes, I remember Adlestrop

The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June. The steam
hissed, someone cleared his throat,
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw was
Adlestrop - only the name.
And willows, willow-herb and grass,
Meadowsweet and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.
And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and around him, mistier,
And farther, and farther all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

“How does Granny know the words?” - Sarah Chatters

I have fond memories of Christmas as a child. I remember the ritual of decorating the tree, carefully removing the baubles from the storage box, each one a much-loved treasure. My brother and I would hang the decorations, including the chocolate ones, which my mother provided and always seemed to be “accidentally” eaten. Then came the lights. We had a set with shades depicting nursery rhyme characters and every year my father would have to fiddle interminably with the bulbs, as we waited for them to light up. Little things become family traditions. When I had my children, we built our own. As with many mothers today, I had to work and was unable to participate as fully with the Christmas preparations as I would have liked. So, being blessed with a granddaughter, who lives nearby and loves spending time with Nana, I have rediscovered the joy of Christmas through a small child’s eyes. Watching her expression of wonder at the Hungerford Christmas lights going on; her excitement at meeting Father Christmas, the earnestness on her face as she stood as an angel at the nursery school nativity service and the fun we had making gingerbread houses last year makes me almost as excited as a four-year-old about this Christmas. For her, of course, it’s all new. Now at “big school”, she is learning songs for the nativity assembly, which she practices often. When my mother joined in with “Away in a Manger”, Seren turned to me with a puzzled look and asked, “How does Granny know the words?”



Caption competition - for this picture, email or post your suggestions to number 1, by the 20th, and win a festive bottle of plonk. Don’t forget to write your cottage number. (Picture courtesy of Pia)

The College Social Club has purchased a new hostess trolley to replace the old one, which should help with all those wonderful lunches we enjoy thanks to Jennifer. And thanks to monies raised, some of the residents (see front page) enjoyed an outing to Millet’s Garden Centre, and after Christmas gift shopping a cream tea was laid on. Thank you to the organisers – it is very much appreciated.



The ladies at The College would like to wish The Duke & Duchess of Somerset, The Trustees, our Steward Jennifer Parker, our Warden Emma and Grounds-man Ginge, Tony, Mike, John, Kate, and all the other people who do so much for us at The College



A Very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year



Memories- Yvonne Lock

Winter – brr - in Kashmir Valley there will be several feet of snow and Lake Nageen may freeze. Walking in the houseboat on warmer days, I luxuriate in the beauty of my room: the cedar wood, the carved panels on the walls and the openwork carving of animals and flowers; but I rise early lest I miss the most beautiful happening of the morning. I walk through the dining and sitting rooms onto the veranda. The amazing view of the foothills of the Himmalya is ever changing in colour and texture. Soon the sun's pale beams reach out behind the hills. Then, exultantly, a small spot of brilliant light appears, like a diamond in the sky – yes a daytime twinkling star that grows and grows until the whole golden orb is revealed. The sky is blue, the air is warm, the only activity is the darting and plunging of brilliant pygmy and pied kingfishers, the diving and seconds-long disappearance of dab chicks, the soaring and wheeling of kites.

My breakfast is served and visitors on neighbouring houseboats leave on their day's outings, but not before the traders in their shikaras show them their wares: walnut boxes, embroidered shawls, papier-mâché boxes, embroidered leather bags, jackets (all hand-worked) and fresh flowers. Hassan, the ever cheerful and persuasive proprietor of a water-borne grocery shop, plies biscuits and chocolate, soft drinks, cigarettes, nuts, toiletries – or anything else on request. One morning I wanted dried apricots but his were too dry; soft ones were procured, 'For you, memsahib, soft apricots' and then the



bargaining. My favourite and oft repeated story about Hassan is when my friend Jan was buying from him and, excited at a big sale he said 'And tonic water, memsahib?' Without lifting my eyes from my book, I growled 'What's the use of tonic water without gin?' (Kashmir is 'dry'). Conspiratorially, he ran up the steps to the veranda gate and in a whisper said, 'You want gin memsahib? I bring tomorrow.' Next morning he arrived with gin - seven bottles! I was aghast. I thanked him for one; it was awful. As the sun went down so did the gin – down the drain.

~~~~~

## Love Me (Hilary M Richardson)

Love me in the springtime  
When the world is fresh and new.  
Love me in the summer  
When the sky is cornflower blue.  
Love me in the autumn  
When the bright leaves fall  
But Oh! Please love me in the winter  
When I need you most of all.



