

Diary dates for February and March 2011

9 th March	10.00 Ash Wednesday
16 th March	11.00 Julian Meeting – George Dobinson
24 th March	11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study
31 st March	11.00 Lent Bible Study 2



Prayer of the month

Ahr Father 'oo art in 'Eaven,
Let thy name bi shown respect,
Let thy kingdom come abaht-
An' what that wants doin', Lord, let it bi done-
'Were on earth same as up yonder;
Gi'e us each day summat to yet an' sup;
An' let us off, Lord, if we've offended Thee bi doin' owt wrong-
An' 'elp us nut to 'od grudges agen other fowk
If the've done owt to offend us;
An' keep us aht o' t' road o' temptation.
An' aht o' t' clutches of Owd Nick.
Fer it's all thine is t' Kingdom, Lord,
An' all t' Pahr.an' all t' Glooary,
Fer ivver an' ivvfer
Aye! It is that!

The Lord's Prayer in Yorkshire dialect



Prayer focus

The renewed search for the right person to take on the chaplaincy at Christ Church, Brittany.

The Newsletter St Bartholomew's, Dinard



February, 2011

Services

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion (with hymns)

Thursday 10.00 Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.
After the service coffee is served.

Priest-in-charge: The Revd Gareth Randall

For further information concerning baptisms,
marriages or funerals:

☎ 02 99 46 77 00

e-mail : gareth.randall@nordnet.fr

Website : www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk



February 2011

Dear Friends,

Perfect imperfection ?

I believe that God has created the best possible world for us in which to live. My optimism may upset those who feel they could have done a better job than God or criticise him for not doing a better job himself. But I trust in God who by definition is omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent. Since he has the power to and the knowledge how to and the attitude of mind to want to, then why wouldn't he ?

The world in which we live has potential - it is not static. It is dynamic like the weather and changing like the climate and so we can improve or ruin where we live. The earthquake in Haiti 12 months ago is a powerful example of the state of flux which is consequent of living on a living planet.

Similarly, we have potential as people to grow, to develop and to change. We can change for the better or for the worse. We have bodies that grow and then decay. We can be well or ill and because we are all born, we all shall surely die.

The challenge for us all is how best to live the good life. What is the good life ? What principles inform a healthy body in a healthy mind ? For sure, we all have potential but what can we do to try to be the people God intends us to be rather than falling short of the mark and making things less perfect for our presence ?

Father Gareth



Notices

- **Garden Party Committee Meeting** 6th Feb 12.30pm in church – bring a sandwich!
- **Tournebride Monthly Lunch 5th February** at the Relais de Tournebride - a good opportunity for British and French folk to meet. 14€ includes an aperitif, a four course meal, wine and coffee. **Mike Baber** 02 99 73 56 06/annebaber5050@aol.com
- **Soup Lunch** at Diana Wilson's in aid of church funds and the SPA. **Saturday 26th February 11.00am onwards - 6€.**
- **Poppy Appeal 2010** the sum of 9114€ was raised for this from the whole of Brittany.
- **Royal Maundy Service** will be held on 21st April this year at Westminster Abbey. The Queen will invite 85 people from the Abbey community, the Diocese of Sodor and Man and the Diocese in Europe to receive the Royal Maundy money.
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the February Newsletter is **midday on Thursday 24th February**
- **Church Finances for December**
Income: 4097€ Expenditure: 4426€

Readings in church

February 6 5th Sunday before Lent

Isaiah 58 v1 – 9a Psalm 112 p1244
1 Corinthians 2 v1 – 12 Matthew 5 v13 - 20

February 13 4th Sunday before Lent

Deuteronomy 30 v15 – end Psalm 119 v1 – 8 p1251
1 Corinthians 3 v1 – 9 Matthew 5 v21 - 37

February 20 Septuagesima

Deuteronomy 26 v1 – 11 Psalm 119 v33 - 40 p1253
1 Corinthians 3 v10 – 11, 16 – end Matthew 5 v38 - end

February 27 Sexagesima

Genesis 1 - 2v3 Psalm 136 v1 - 9 p1273
Romans 8 v18 - 25 Matthew 6 v25 – 34

Dear Everyone!

Now I'm convalescing, I want to express our sincere thanks for the church's support during my illness, not only to David and Helen Morgan and Father Gareth for their astonishing level of care and help in so many ways, but also members of the congregation, many of whom have been responsible for little kindnesses which have touched our hearts. Thanks for your prayers for my recovery and your support for Victor. He deserves the biggest 'thank you' of the lot for his daily visits to me in hospital, caring for my needs at home and general help, guidance and a warm friendship which it is still my daily privilege to enjoy. Please don't forget us in your prayers. We will certainly remember you in ours.

God Bless,

Barry (Jordan)



Kids see things differently

The 2nd of series of jokes over the next seven months was kindly sent to me by my former vicar, Father Peter Bevan

Opinions - On the first day of school, a Year 1 pupil handed his teacher a note from his mother which read, "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents."

Church Bulletins

The 2nd of a 12 part series from Pam and Chris Rowland

- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping round the house. Bring your husbands.

Notes from the Council - January 27th

Our Council meeting was preceded by our regular, Thursday morning service of Holy Communion – so good to share this dimension of our fellowship before we settled down to business.

As ever, finance was a major part of our deliberations, ironic given St Bartholomew's is a place of spiritual growth but necessary given our duty to act as responsible stewards of our church. In this light, the Moynihan bequest is still to be resolved. David Morgan reported that overall there was a narrowing deficit in our income in Euros but our Sterling account was in a healthy state and money transferred from England made up the deficit.

As ever, maintenance work is being done inside and outside the church, in the garden and in the chaplaincy flat. We are fortunate that our members give freely of their time and effort to carry out necessary work. The responsibility for the maintenance of the English section of the Dinard cemetery has reverted to the Mairie in accordance with fresh French legislation re graveyards. British folk can still be buried in this section but given the space and the demand, French folk can also be buried here in future.

Sadly, Sybil is most unlikely to be able to return to her duties as Reader in church. I suggested and Council approved that in future David Norris would read the gospel each Sunday and that Helen Morgan be given the title of Sacristan to reflect the work she does in the vestry. The possible role of a Co-ordinator of Church Events would be explored at the next meeting.

As ever, the meeting ended as it had begun, in prayer.

Father Gareth

Desert Island Books – 2

There is one book I would place even higher than Robinson Crusoe: The Concise Oxford Dictionary. Not the massive two-volume Shorter Oxford Dictionary: not even the enormous 8-volume complete English Dictionary, both of which I do have; but the Concise Oxford Dictionary is small enough to handle easily.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary contains about 200,000 words; not by any means the complete list of English words, but enough to provide intellectual nourishment for a lifetime's study. The great thing about a dictionary is, as Doctor Samuel Johnson says in his preface: "that one enquiry only gives occasion to another, that book referred to book, that to search was not always to find, and to find was not always to be informed." Have you never looked up a word and then been drawn to another word and then to something else, until the original quest has been forgotten? Truly, the chase is more exciting than the capture.

In choosing one book, one necessarily leaves innumerable other books untouched, but a dictionary does offer countless branches, radiating out from the original idea or word, and there is no end to the search. We might ask: Can the human brain retain such floods of new knowledge? Surely there is a limit to the capacity of one's skull? Even thoughts must take up some space in the brain, so there must be a limit. The great Sherlock Holmes (and who better qualified to speak?) once said: 'I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. It is a mistake to think that that little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent. Depend upon it, there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge, you forget something that you knew before.'

There is, however, a footnote to the pronouncement of the great

St Bartholomew's Book of Cakes

We are currently collecting recipes for a new church recipe book to be published to coincide with next year's Garden Party on 6th August. If you would like to share one of your recipes in what we trust will be a popular publication, then please send it/them (type written if possible) to Doreen Collier St Bartholomew's Church,
6 ave Georges Clemenceau, 35800 Dinard
or doreen.collier@wanadoo.fr.

Please include your name and address so that the editorial team can contact you if necessary.

Closing date: **30th April, 2011**



Grace

The following grace was sent in by the Revd Paul Topham, a former chaplain:

For the food we eat, for those who prepare it
For health to enjoy it and for friends to share it
We thank you, Lord



Central Brittany Journal

February's profile in the Central Brittany Journal features the Brittany Branch of CANCER SUPPORT FRANCE. Do remember to buy your copy, available in supermarkets and newspaper shops (les Presses) throughout our Region, for just 1 euro. CSF provides a great service for English speakers affected by cancer, not only themselves, but families and friends alike.

Lynette Jarvis

Recipe of the month
Leek Bacon & Potatoes Soup

I do this soup many a time in the cold winter months.

- ✓ 1 oz Butter
- ✓ 3 Rashers of Bacon Chopped
- ✓ 1 Onion Chopped
- ✓ 400g Trimmed leeks, sliced and washed
- ✓ 3 Medium Potatoes, peeled and sliced
- ✓ 1.4 litres hot vegetable stock
- ✓ 142 ml pot single cream
- ✓ 4 rashers crisp streaky bacon to serve



- Melt butter in large pan
- Fry the bacon and onion until golden brown
- Tip in the leeks and potatoes
- Stir well than cover and turn down the heat
- Cook gently for 5 mins shaking pan every now and then to make sure that the mixture does not catch.
- Pour in the stock, season and bring to the boil
- Cover and simmer for 20 mins until vegetables are soft
- Leave to cool for a few minuets then blend in a food processor until smooth
- Pour in the cream and stir well
- Taste and season (if necessary)
- Serve scattered with the crispy bacon

Nice served with warm crusty bread.

Victor Pumfrett

Ladies:

*Any remnants of material no longer need,
please pass them on to me re Garden Party*

detective. Medical research has revealed that the human brain, with an average capacity of 1,500 cubic centimetres, contains several thousand million synapses or connections. So there is ample space and to spare for all the raw material that we can absorb in a lifetime.

One further thought: Other objects could be classified as books. What about a gardening catalogue or a railway timetable? One can envisage an enthusiast choosing something like that as his favourite book. To a real aficionado, such a volume would constitute a book par excellence. A photograph album, an atlas, a Who's Who or a First Aid Manual, perhaps Mrs Beaton's cookery Book?

Next month, when Robinson Crusoe has been demoted to number three, and even the Concise Oxford Dictionary has slipped to number two, the new number one will be revealed.

Donald Pankhurst



Carol Service 2010 – the sermon

Given the snow which prevented many folk attending our annual Carol Service and given my sermon was in French, Roger Saxton-Howes suggested I print a translation in the next Newsletter – so I hope you enjoy this small taste of Christmas in January!

My text is taken from Luke 1 and verse 26: 'In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a young girl engaged to a man called Joseph.'

So begins Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. It's a familiar childhood story for us all. But tonight, just a week before Christmas, I want to ask you one simple question: 'Do you believe, do you really believe, in angels?'

We're surrounded by them at this time of year. You can see them on Christmas Cards. I've already had several from England featuring angels: beautiful, serene, winged. You can see them as part of the display decorating shop windows and you can spot them in our stained glass windows here in church. But my question is, 'Can we discern them in our everyday life?'

To Mary, the angel said you are 'highly favoured'. To Joseph, the angel said, 'Don't be afraid to marry Mary.' To the shepherds, the angel said, 'Don't be afraid' because tonight Christ our Saviour will be born in Bethlehem.

Angels are, then, messengers from God. They speak for him and we can hear them if we are listening, if we're paying attention! To convince the terrified shepherds, there was whole host of them praising God and singing, 'Glory to God in the highest
And peace on earth to those he loves.'

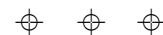
Twice, Joseph met an angel in his dreams. But I want to ask you whether it is possible for us to encounter an angel when we're wide awake?

The 29th September is the feast of St Michael and All Angels. But for us are angels simply the stuff of stories and legends or are they truly part and parcel of our everyday lives and experience?

Father Gareth

shake a lady's hand, but merely take it into his own, and GENTLY hold it. I recently had to withhold the urge to scream a very unholy word indeed as my hand was veritably crushed into temporary distortion by an otherwise well meaning chap just trying to be FRIENDLY, or was he? Perhaps he doesn't like my articles . . .

Lynette Jarvis



**St Bartholomew's Church, Dinard
Lent Bible Course – 2011
Finding God through . . .**

Every Thursday at 11.00 following Holy Communion at 10.30 and followed by a bring-and-share lunch at 12.00

Session 1 **24th March, 2011** **Through silence**
Text Psalm 46 v10; 1 Kings 19 v 1 - 13

Session 2 **31st March, 2011** **Through music**
Text Psalm 150

Session 3 **7th April, 2011** **Through nature**
Text Psalm 19 v1- 6; Genesis 1 v9 - 13

Session 4 **14th April, 2011** **Through the Bible**
Text Psalm 119 v9 - 16

Session 5 **21st April, 2011** **Through prayer**
Text Mark 1 v35



When peace = pain!

ETIQUETTE! The art of behaving politely and considerately towards others, and there's the rub, or should I say, the pain?

FRIENDLINESS! The action of showing kindness to one another, of welcoming others into the group, in this case St Bart's on a Sunday morning.

PEACE! We know what that means, so let's all shake hands on it, and cement the common good.

But hang on a minute, we've already played at being French as we gather around the Font, blocking the doorway as we're given our service books, doing the kissy-kissy palaver, germs and all. Oh how they must love their chance to go forth and multiply, especially in winter, especially when bugs brought back from Blighty join the infiltration battle. So that's 'FRIENDLINESS' dealt with!

I know you've heard about Albert (you know, the one who went to Blackpool to meet Wallace, the lion) Well, what about Arthur! He's the guy who likes nothing better than to invade our ageing bodies, full name 'arthritis' of course. Albert? Arthur? Has she gone 'potters'? (sorry, Harry!)

It's all about THE PEACE. That part of the Service when a public display of kissing couples enters the arena. Do they HAVE to? Do they save all their kisses until they get to Church? Haven't they had time betwixt bed and breakfast? I guess it has its advantages, no time for kissing AND shaking, but isn't that what we're all supposed to do, shake hands with our pew fellows, rather than kiss our bed fellows! At least it stops Old Arthur in his tracks, or does it?

Now Arthur has obviously forgotten all about ETIQUETTE. Poor old chap needs to be reminded that a gentleman should never actually

A sidesman's lot is not a happy one

St Barts is rightly known for the warmth of our welcome and it is our sidesmen who are the first point of contact. Our growth as a church is due in no small measure to their efforts. This affectionately humorous piece parodies what is actually involved.

To be proficient a sidesman (or more correctly sidesperson) you have to be familiar with various duties. Here are the main ones.

A sidesman should be at the church door to greet people as they arrive. If it is wet, cold and miserable, try to keep people outside for as long as possible so they are already unhappy when they come in.

A sidesman should welcome people with a sullen expression saying something like, "Oh not you again" or "Please don't smile – this is a house of God!" When giving out a service booklet and hymn book, be abrupt and glower to make sure that people feel ill-at-ease.

Half way through the service, the sidesmen are responsible for the collection. It is advisable to tread on as many toes as possible walking down the aisles. This is best done by the overweight. Further irritation can be caused simply by withdrawing the collection plate as people try to put their money in causing it to drop inconveniently to the floor. Here a discreet smirk may be helpful. Don't rush. Pausing at the font makes the server and priest wait till you are ready to walk up the aisle.

At the end of the service, the return of the books and booklets is a busy time for the sidesmen. It is the last chance to make a lasting bad impression so do make sure you are suitably contemptuous if anyone accidentally drops a book on the floor.

Finally, over coffee, a sidesman is free to be as objectionable as they can to anyone who may still be left in church. To be a qualified sidesman may take years of practice. Any volunteers?

Bill Hughes, Church Warden and Sidesman

'Heaven – I'm in heaven' 2

In a second of a series of three articles for our Newsletter, Claude François shares with us a moment in his life when he had surprising insights into the nature of heaven.

The second time I went to heaven was in L'Alpe d'Huez

I was skiing with 5 buddies of mine and a reckless ski instructor. The weather was terrible: icy, no visibility. He'd taken us off piste to gain speed. I was loath to go on but, one by one, my friends followed him so I did too.

Not a good idea! I was going too fast without being able to see where I was heading. I made a small turn to try to slow down because by now I was going very, very fast.

And BAAANG I fell into a hole violently striking the side of my hip and my leg. (Later I learnt they were fractured in nine places).

It seemed at first as if I was emerging from a tunnel. Everything was white under me, as if I were on a cloud, kind of flying forward. I was flooded with light though a minute before it had been pitch-black.

And there she was – dressed in a beautiful, pale-blue robe, smelling so sweet. She was smiling at me. I felt profoundly happy. She was my link to God, about to lead me to him. All along, she had been looking after me, the ultimate source of my happiness here on earth.

And it seemed as if I could play back the film my life, the key points, the people I cared about most. It seemed to last about ten minutes.

Saturday morning I met in the Church with Lord Russell of Liverpool. He handed me the Church keys, warned me to be careful with the electric light switches (they were lethal) and left! So, there I was, a recently ordained curate suddenly in charge of a church!

It was not until nine years later that we returned to St. Bartholomew's as I felt I could not impose further upon Elizabeth's generosity. However, during the intervening period we had kept in touch and she told me about the sale of the Church garden and the construction of the *Residence Victor Hugo* and the provision of a flat for the Chaplain. Furthermore, upon the completion of the flat, Elizabeth invited me to come back, along with the family, and in so doing we became the first of many occupants of the Chaplain's flat, which I blessed on the 24th July, 1982.

Both the flat (the furniture, provided by well-wishers of the Church was, shall we say, somewhat eclectic) and the Church are very different today and, in an age when we hear so much of declining Churches, we can rejoice in how St. Bartholomew's has grown over the past decades. Of the original congregation, Ida Beau is, I think, the only one still worshipping with us regularly but to her, Elizabeth Hannay, Madame Devenon, the Pacquements, Lord Russell and all who kept the Church alive during the difficult days following the end of the Second World War, we owe a deep debt of gratitude. For my part, God does indeed move in a mysterious way for you never know where a lie-in might lead – perhaps to retirement in France!

Roger Gilbert.



Lie-in Leads to France !

The article by the Revd. Alan Charters 'Early years in Dinard' led me to reflect upon my own introduction to our Church here – albeit under very different circumstances. It is well known that nearly all my fellow clergy are early risers and in Church, at prayer, to greet the dawn chorus. My metabolism is not quite the same! So it was, that at a Guildford Diocesan Conference, held at Sussex University in September, 1972 I was the last person down for breakfast. There was only one seat free – next to the Bishop – not surprising really, after all, who would want to sit next to a Bishop at breakfast ?

Well, at least he knew who I was and, moreover, something about the family as he enquired whether I had been to France on holiday. I replied, somewhat hesitatingly, that trips to France were somewhat difficult on a Curate's stipend, whereupon he said, 'I might be able to do something about that'.

Shortly afterwards, a letter arrived from Elizabeth Hannay and, as I was to discover later, a letter from Elizabeth was, in itself, something of a minor miracle! In it she offered me the Chaplaincy at St. Bartholomew's for the following July, stating that my wife and I would be lodged courtesy of the *Grande Hotel* and that all meals would be provided. With something of a heavy heart, I replied thanking her for the offer but said, regretfully, that it was not possible for us to accept as it was not just Marie-Pascale and I who would need to come across but there were also our three daughters and mother-in-law! And that, I thought, was that! Not so, a few days later the telephone rang and an authoritative upper class English voice said: 'Come, I've booked you a villa'.

So it was on a Friday in July 1973 we arrived in Dinard and, on the

I didn't know whether I was dead or alive. I really thought I was dead. My mind seemed to be flying free, detached from my body: no sense of space; no sense of time.

In fact, there could have only been a fraction of a second between the impact and when I was brought rudely back to consciousness by an atrocious pain in my hip and my leg.

The pain lasted half an hour on the sled down the slope. Half an hour until after the x ray; half an hour until I got the morphine shot and it felt so good, so very good!

I had a supreme sense of well being. The helicopter ride over the mountains down to Grenoble gave me time to think.

When the morphine shot wore off, I wanted a second.

But then I asked myself 'What is the difference between heaven and heaven on earth?

Not only time and space but also other people and the constraints on us?

And what about our purpose in life?

What is the value of easy pleasure? Even if it is wonderful, where does such pleasure lead?

Claude François



Film Review of the month
'The Voyage of the Dawn Treader' – Michael Apted, 2010

This is the third of the current series of films based on the Chronicles of Narnia, seven books by C S Lewis which I read in the summer of 1969. At the time, I was working in Custom House Library before going to university and I'd just finished 'Lord of the Rings' and was keen to find something equally magical. Like the seventh Harry Potter film, I watched it in French at the cinema in Dinard so some of the dialogue was lost on me. Still, I got the gist and I must admit it made me cry.

Why? Because it is a film about redemption. Essentially it's an optimistic film for the Christian faith in which we believe and which underpins the book and film offers us all the chance to turn over a new leaf and to be the person we are meant to be. The principal characters are confronted by their personal 'demon', their particular weakness, but the most impressive turn-round occurs for Eustace Scrub who seems quite 'obnoxious'. A cousin of Lucy and of Edmund, he is someone of whom Lewis writes at the opening of the book, 'There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it'.

The film is dramatic and comic; fast-moving and reflective. It made me jump and caught my interest from the start with its depiction of Oxford during the Second World War where iron railings are being carted off to aid the war-effort. There is no shortage of special effects; it is visually exciting; and the sound track adds to the drama. I couldn't watch it in 3D owing to the fact of my monocular vision but the 2D version lost none of its impact on me.

It is a good film to watch and I can recommend it without reservation. I may not have been the only one to shed a tear but I'm sure you will enjoy it.

Gareth Randall

One of the most remarkable buildings though is the Cathedral of St Andrew with its carillon of eight bells. Rung by hammers from a keyboard they filled the city with carols for an hour on Christmas Eve before the service. Small in comparison to the buildings that surround it, it has a unique feature that makes it stand out proudly. It is plastered with Madras Chunam, a mixture of egg whites, sugar and broken egg shells and it is brilliant white. It is just large church size seating 350 but has another secret. Expansion in the centre of the city was not allowed as it would spoil the sky line and so in 2005 a New Sanctuary was opened with ultra modern facilities and seating for 880. It is underground adjacent to the old building and has a link to the MRT (Singapore's underground trains) to make it accessible to everyone. Perhaps there is an idea here that we could copy. At the expense of the Chaplain's parking place we could have the entrance to a huge garage under St Barts with a lift up to the church to save the need to walk up that hill.

Geoff and Val Carter



Personal Column

Congratulations to:

Julian Thompson who has been invited by the Queen to receive the Royal Maundy money on 21st April at Westminster Abbey.

The Revd Brian Davies licensed as an Assistant Priest in the Aquitaine Chaplaincy on 21st January. We wish him and his wife Pam every blessing in their new sphere of ministry.

Ronald Frankel MBE awarded La Médaille d'Honneur de la Ville de Dinard also on 21st January.

Postcard from Singapore

Sitting looking out of the window of the giant A380A aircraft at Heathrow with the falling snow getting heavier by the minute we wondered if we would fail to get to Singapore for the second year running. Eventually at 11.40pm, almost 2 hours late we took off, one of the last flights to leave before the airport closed for three days.

It was well worth the wait and all the planning to be reunited with our family and share their new way of life for three weeks. They were experiencing an unusual spell of weather, colder than normal with overnight temperatures down to 23C and virtually no rain. It suited us just fine! Swimming in the outdoor pool was even possible in the evening before dinner and moving around without the umbrella.

No matter where you go in Singapore there is a surprise awaiting. Around every corner in the city there is some new futuristic development but it was the green areas that fascinated us. On Christmas day we walked off the effects of overeating in the rainforest. Here the monkeys, monitor lizards, snakes and terrapins seem to be all around while overhead there were sea eagles and buzzards. A visit to a mango swamp coincided with high tide and so we were disappointed that we did not meet any crocodiles but did see 67 monitor lizards and the children counted 148 tree crabs. In addition there were lots of birds including waders, little egrets and kingfishers.

The compulsory visit to Raffle's Hotel with Singapore Slings and fine food started the first of many city visits. Val really enjoyed shopping in China Town, looking at the Temples and the street markets. There was Orchard Road shopping, Bumboats on the river, Sentosa for entertainment, restaurants, Sky Park to look down on the whole island, and the beach. I could go on all day but this is just a postcard!

Stop smiling

Before I could read books or even T-shirts, I hero-worshipped Supperman. I imagined him flying through the air delivering poor people's dinners. Like a supersonic pizza boy. Though that was *then*, so it was more potato hash than pizzas.

Naturally I wanted to *be* him. So I started running... accelerating... *whooshing* through our back garden carrying some dinner to the old lady who lived across the ginnel. I can't say if I ever took off, but I do remember some of our lupins got gravy over them. We had the only flowers in our street that died of food poisoning, my Dad said. The old lady survived a bit longer - by not answering her door.

Soon I was told about the superfluous *p. It's Super-man - who belongs in comics*, someone helpfully informed me. Not *Supper*-man. I crashed to earth. But not for long.

Superman had amazing powers of mind and body. He was super strong and super clever – not that different from my Uncle Ernie who could do mental arithmetic (in his head!) and who could - and actually *did* one Christmas afternoon – strip to the waist in our front room and tear up the telephone directory with his bare hands and chest. During his prime (I am proud to say) there were no complete copies of the Yellow Pages in any phonebox anywhere in the whole of Salford.

But unlike Uncle Ernie, Superman didn't wear glasses. Superman spurned glasses. Glasses were useful merely as part of his wimpish disguise as Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter. Essentially, they were signs of earthling weakness. If you flew through space wearing glasses – even the very latest bifocals, you could easily mist up or get some Kryptonite scratching your lenses.

Unluckily for me I had just been prescribed my first pair of National Health specs. Ugly, wire-rimmed jobs... thick as milk bottles... hooking behind the ears... little plastic blinkers on the sides... and vital to correct the first of what turned out to be series of physical inadequacies.

So, like my hero, I refused to wear them. I flung them away. I would have crushed them under my heel, except I couldn't see where they'd landed. As it turned out, my Nan picked them up and looked after them for when I emerged from my *keener-than-an-eagle-and-swifter-than-the-speed-of-sound* phase. I still have them.

In the event, the effect on me of being Superman but *without* his far-greater-than-20/20 vision was stratospherically dramatic – well, *tragic*, in a word. Powering through outer space one day, I zoomed straight into a black hole...

I was out on a do-or-die mission – on my way, with ninepence, to rescue some margarine for Auntie Lou. Death-defying because the shop was located at a point of maximum cosmic danger - on the very corner where Salford meets Moss Side.

I was heading into the Unknown. My chin was jutting straight forward - I only had the one in those days – but as ever my eyes were aloft, facing intrepidly into the strong astral wind - it was raining as well, so in addition to the red cloak and blue tights I must have been wearing my school cap...

And, of course, I was sporting that solve-it-all Superman smile.

I was an unstoppable Force for Good -

- Except the road was up -

Wham !!! Bam !!! Yoiks !!! Kerplonk !!!

And I shuffled home - minus Superman's red cloak. Minus Auntie Lou's margarine.

Minus the Special Smile.

Plus wrinkled tights...

Not only had I deliberately *lost* my glasses – that was brought up again... Not only had I dropped Auntie Lou's marge money... But – the symbolism was *implied* if not stated - I had also got black tar on my best wellingtons.

I had to promise Mam three things, no arguments.

One – *Concentrate on being Clark Kent*, she said. You're better doing nice joined-up than saving the universe - and she bought me a new biro and my first narrow-lined exercise book.

Not that joined-up's proved that simple... Well, *ars longa, vita brevis, occasio praeceps, experimentum periculosum, iudicium difficile, isn't it, love?* – as my Auntie Lou would often remark. She was still an ally, despite the Margarine Disaster. Too true, writing isn't exactly *zooming* through the Void.

Two - *Wear your glasses*, Mam insisted. They'll help you see what's there and what's not... Well, yes, I *have* worn my glasses ever since. But then I've had to. And I'm still not *quite* clear what's what.

Three – *And stop smiling all over the place. God knows, there's nothing worse!*

Spot on.

David Norris