

Diary dates for December 2012

6 th December	10.30 Holy Communion 11.00 Bible Study: Christian Basics – Fate v FW 12.00 Bring and Share Lunch
22 nd December	17.00 Carol Service
24 th December	17.00 Crib Service
25 th December	11.00 Christmas Day



Prayer of the month

Je ne sais pas comment prier

I do not know how to pray.
I do not know what to say.
I do not have much time.
So?

This candle I light is:
something of what I have
something of my time
something of myself
that I leave before the Lord.

This light that shines for my prayer
that I continue to offer
even as I leave this place.

A prayer of French origin on lighting a candle from Durham Cathedral



Prayer focus

To reflect on the fact that Jesus the Light of the World is born into the world on Christmas Day and that the darkness of the world is unable to 'comprehend' it.

St Barts Monthly



Christmas 2012

Services

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion (with hymns)

Thursday 10.00 Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.
During the service there is a Sunday School.
After the service coffee is served.

Priest-in-charge: The Revd Gareth Randall

For further information concerning baptisms,
marriages or funerals:

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December, 2012

Dear Friends,

Christmas present

What would be your best Christmas present ever ?

Your answer will tell you a lot about yourself. Win the Lottery; enjoy good health; take a holiday somewhere really nice; enter a fulfilling relationship; find a new opportunity ? Imagination knows no bounds !

Whatever you picture, the word 'present' is ambiguous, having more than one meaning. 'Present' in the context used in the opening paragraph is 'a gift' but it might equally refer to 'the now', to this moment in time.

My favourite joke in the first 'Kung Fu Panda' film is when Master Ugway (I doubt that's the correct spelling) says to Po the Panda of the title: 'The past is history; the future mystery; but the now is a gift - that's why we call it the present.'

And that to my mind is the best Christmas present ever - the understanding that in Jesus Christ, Immanuel, the Word made flesh, God is truly present with us. Jesus is eternally present if we are to believe what the text at the end of Matthew's gospel is telling us - 'I am with you always' (28 v 20).

The extraordinary thing about a timeless God is that at a specific moment in time, Jesus was born, lived, then died but that not only was he with us in the past and will be with us in the future but that he is with us now. His story is not just history, a rich past, but it is also a real future and above all a living presence.

Now is that not the best present or what ?

Father Gareth

Notices

- **Tournebride Monthly Lunch** 1st December at the Relais de Tournebride - a good opportunity for British and French folk to meet. 15€ includes an aperitif, a four course meal, wine and coffee. **Mike Baber** 02 99 73 56 06/annebaber5050@aol.com
- **Charity donations**
In November, £320 was raised for the Royal British Legion by the sale of poppies et al
At our Remembrance Day Service £250 was raised for the work of Headley Court
- **Thanks** to all those involved in the Stew Lunch at Diana Wilson's on 10th November which raised 662€ towards our organ fund
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the January edition of the St Bart's Monthly is **midday on Thursday 27th December**
- **Church Finances for October**
Income: 3,770€ Expenditure 2,788€

* * *

Personal Column

Congratulations:

to Krishna and Annick Valayden on the birth of their sixth grandchild, Chloe Chartier, the first to their daughter, Marina and son-in-law, Tomas;

to John Marshall who was awarded an Honorary BA from the University of Worcester for services to education.

Readings in church

December 2nd ***1st Sunday of Advent***

Jeremiah 33 v14 - 16 Psalm 25 v1 - 9
1 Thessalonians 3 v9 – end Luke 21 v25 - 36

December 9th ***2nd Sunday of Advent***

Malachi 3 v1 - 4 Benedictus
Philippians 1 v3 – 11 Luke 3 v1 - 6

December 16th ***3rd Sunday of Advent***

Isaiah 61 v1 - 4, 8 - end Psalm 146 v4 - end
Philippians 4 v4 - 7 Luke 3 v7 - 18

December 23rd ***4th Sunday of Advent***

Micah 5 v2 - 5a Magnificat
Hebrews 10 v5 - 10 Luke 1 v39 - 45

December 25th ***Christmas Day***

Isaiah 9 v2 - 7 Psalm 96
Titus 2 v11 - 14 Luke 2 v1 - 14

December 30th ***1st Sunday of Christmas***

1 Samuel 2 v18 -20, 26 Psalm 148 v7 - end
Colossians 3 v12 - 17 Luke 2 v41 - end



Ad lib in a children's nativity play.

Innkeeper "Sorry, I have no Room."
Joseph "But my wife is pregnant."
Innkeeper "That's not my fault."
Joseph "No, and it's not my fault either!"

John Marshall

Notes from the Council - November 22nd

Given our meeting was held in late November the Council was well attended but the award for the best reason for absence must surely go to Eric Lambert who was working on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico which rendered his attendance at the meeting a logistical challenge.

Once again David Morgan was able to present an encouraging breakdown of our finances which are in a healthy state despite the onset of winter. Sadly, however, there has still been no progress in resolving the Monahan legacy.

Work to cut back the trees in the church garden had been carried out and further remedial work is planned. Bill and Chris were thanked for their hard work on our behalf.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services would take place here at St Bart's on Tuesday 22nd January at 20.30 and then on Thursday 24th at the same time at St Jean Evangéliste, St Malo.

David Norris clarified the minutes re the Organ and it was confirmed that John Davey should co-ordinate obtaining three comparable quotations from English organ repairers and then submit an assessment of the quotations to the Council for ratification. An upgrade of the speakers on the electronic organ would also be undertaken.

The appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, The Right Revd Justin Welby and the failure to legislate for women bishops was reflected on.

The possibility of the improving the comfort of sitting in the pews was discussed and a decision would be taken next meeting.

Father Gareth

Christmas

The following pastoral letter written by my friend, Father Richard Tillbrook appears in the parish magazine for St Barnabas, Colchester

Why do some people delight in being miserable and spoiling things for others?

Why do people keep moaning that Christmas is too commercialised or that Christmas is just for children, or that Christmas is too expensive or that we shouldn't celebrate Christmas because it offends people of other or no religion and on and on...

Christmas offends others? Nonsense. It seems to me that we all have a choice. I happen to be a Christian as are most people who live in this country, at least by tradition if not by active worship. So, if I want to enjoy myself at Christmas, I will and so should you. Christmas is not only our religious heritage but it is our cultural heritage as well. If people don't want to celebrate, or feel unable to, that is perfectly understandable but we should not scorn those who do.

Too commercial? Well again if I want to spend my money on things in the shop, I will and if I don't, I won't. Who can blame an honest shop keeper for wanting to make a few 'bob' out of the Christmas Festival. We don't moan at Ice Cream sellers for wanting to earn a living when the sun shines, do we? On the contrary, I suspect we'd be very upset if we couldn't buy all the holiday stuff when we want it.

Christmas is for children? Of course, adults like to show their love for their children by giving them lovely presents. Every generation of parents and Grandparents try to do that. It is the way we say, 'I love you'. But don't we adults rather like to receive presents? Don't we feel 'loved' when someone gives us a card or a present? I know I do.

Accommodation required

Liz and Dennis Fenn, friends of the Xueref family, live in Australia and are looking to come to stay in Brittany for a couple of months in April /May 2013.

They would be interested in a house swop or house sit or renting a place to stay.

Are you able to help or interested in such a possibility?

If so please contact them by e mail fennde2@southernphone.com.au



Quotations of the month

A 'Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve.
Middle age is when you're forced to.'
Bill Vaughan - Associated Press

And when you're old?
Perhaps you don't care one way or the other.

A true gift is to be present in the present.

GJR



God's Post-It Notes 9/18

The following was sent to me by Ron Kirk:

Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.

Rules for Reverends 10/11 – Canon Jeremy Fletcher

The following were forwarded to me by my friend, Father Peter Bevan

91. It's only when you're in the pulpit and coughing that you realise you're not sure whether the jug and glass have been there for five years without being changed.
92. Gardening is only therapeutic when your parishioners can't see you doing it. When they do they think you're taking too much time off.
93. Answering machines are superb, but you do need to listen to them.
94. If you need a decent policy for something, ask your friendly Methodists. They've got loads of good ones.
95. No surprise is more pleasant than a letter from the Bishop by return.
96. Never underestimate the power of a nun to get conversations going. Especially on public transport.
97. Fill in attendance numbers carefully, and review them year by year. Some trends take time to make themselves felt.
98. Never handle any cash. If you have to, get a witness.
99. People are very coy and very careful about their giving. Be coy and careful back, but make sure they know they are appreciated.
100. Working harder at this job won't get you any more money. Unless you become a Bishop, a Dean or an Archdeacon. And who wants to be one of them?

* * *

Christmas is too expensive? Not if you live by the rule:- Income £1 expenditure 99p result happiness. Income £1 expenditure £1.01p result misery! I don't think that my friends think any less of me if I can't afford very expensive gifts and you shouldn't need to try to impress them by buying for them things you can't afford. A visit, a card, a phone call and perhaps a small gift out of genuine love and affection is enough. So, Christmas doesn't need to be expensive.

Christmas is a major festival of the Christian and National year. It is a time when we should all do our best to celebrate (accepting that some people are sad because of illness or bereavement at Christmas) and enjoy being with each other. We should think of our friends and relatives near and far and we should thank God for them. That Christmas card may only come once a year and it may be the only communication but it means that someone somewhere was thinking of you...and that makes you special. (Here I also thank God for Postmen!) May I hint here that it is especially nice if you write a personal note in a card – don't just send it with the printed greeting and your name – and do make it clear which 'George' or 'Sue' you are because people may have more than one friend by that name!

Most importantly, of course, we should be grateful for the gift of Christ in the world. Clever people may say that the crib and nativity scenes are not accurate or that the Wise men weren't really Kings or whatever they choose to criticise. BUT I believe in God and I believe that he came to earth as JESUS CHRIST and I believe that the traditions which we enjoy at Christmas bring us closer to each other and closer to God. SO my friends whether or not you come to church...and I hope many of you will want to mark Christmas by coming to sing carols or receiving communion...have a wonderful time and ENJOY yourself. Christmas is for ALL of us and we can be as happy or as miserable as we like...it is up to us! Since I am in my 60s I am classed as a GRUMPY old man... but even I know that we aren't

really grumpy just because we are a little older... we just like to play the part whilst actually being filled with the true spirit of happiness and joy which is CHRISTMAS.

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL

Father Richard



2012

If you were to remember 2012 in a sentence what would you write ?
For me it would have to be:

‘2012 – the year I learnt to swim!’

If you’d like to remember 2012 in a single sentence, then send it to me and I’ll print anonymously or duly attributed as you wish and it will appear in our first edition of the St Bart’s Monthly for January 2013 – the title is now a year old !

Father Gareth



Christmas Fayre

The Christmas Fayre at La Ville Bague was a real success and our thanks go to all those involved but especially to Agnes François for organising the event.

There are still some bargains to be had so if you would like to buy any of the following there is: homemade chutney and marmalade and from M&S: Scottish Shortbread; Welsh Cheddar; Caramels; Toffee; Milk Chocolate Biscuits; Biscuits for tea; Cranberry Sauce; Mince Meat. And frozen double cream (order direct from David Morgan).

- Cover with the stir fry vegetables, pressing down well.
- Top with the remaining nut mixture, press down well and smooth the surface.
- Bake in a preheated oven 180°c (350°f) Gas Mark 4 for 45-60 minutes.
- Turn out carefully on to a serving dish.
- Garnish with slices of lemon and parsley
- Serve with fresh vegetables and potatoes.

Enjoy

Victor Pumfrett



Playing with words 2/4

The following were sent to me by Geoff Scott

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity, I can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns, it was a play on words.

They told me I had type A blood, but it was a Type-O.

A dyslexic man walks into a bra.

PMS jokes aren't funny, period.

Why were the Indians here first? They had reservations.

Class trip to the Coca-Cola factory, I hope there's no pop quiz.

Recipe of the Month Festive Pine Nut Roast

*This makes a delicious vegetarian option for Christmas dinner
or other special occasion served with potatoes and freshly cooked vegetables .*

- ✓ 1 tbsp olive or sunflower oil
- ✓ 1 medium onion finely chopped
- ✓ 4 ozs pine nuts
- ✓ 2 ozs cashew nuts roughly chopped
- ✓ 2 ozs Cheshire cheese grated
- ✓ 4 ozs fresh wholemeal breadcrumbs
- ✓ 1 tbsp fresh chopped parsley or 1 tsp mixed herbs
- ✓ 2 eggs beaten
- ✓ a pinch ground nutmeg
- ✓ salt and ground black pepper.

For the filling

- ✓ 1 large carrot peeled and finely diced
- ✓ 1 small red pepper, deseeded and finely diced
- ✓ 1 courgette fine diced



- Heat the oil in a saucepan.
- Add the onion and gently cook for 5 minutes until soft and golden brown.
- Remove from the heat, drain and turn into a large bowl.
- Add the nuts, grated cheese, breadcrumbs, parsley (or mixed herbs) eggs and seasoning to the onion and mix well.
- Quickly stir-fry the vegetables for the filling in the remaining oil until just soft.
- Place half the nut mixture into a lightly greased and base-lined 2lb loaf tin.

Saint Bartholomew's Church Christmas Carols

Have you heard Bartholomew's Christmas Carols
have you heard the whispering breath of the angel
it was one of the rare joys of life
and all that was beyond was dead

Il n'est pas encore minuit
mais un vent nouveau déferle sur l'herbe
arrachant à l'œil des ténèbres son carcan de nuit

la mer à l'écho joue Debussy

l'air devenu volubile s'insinue dans les fibres profondes
et St Bartholomew's church attentive à la voix du monde
s'emplit d'ouïes

sous l'influx radieux des vitraux ses murs
enceints de la grâce d'un jardin sous les étoiles
conjugent la présence simple de la prière

lorsque porté par la jubilation levante
du jeu de l'orgue en osmose avec les chœurs
résonne à la cime de l'âme
l'instant d'or

transmigration de la lumière à l'intérieur de soi

l'esprit s'est fait don ce soir

Have you heard Bartholomew's Christmas Carols
that night the atmosphere has become magical

Extrait de <<Fragments d'une autre lumière, le signe>>

Solange Dayres Goffinet

Reminiscences

Earlier this week, I read the Daily Telegraph not that I am influenced by the political views of the newspaper simply that it was available 'on-line.'

It was a touch of a button and equally I could look at other publications and consider other viewpoints and opinions. However it was then gone and the good old days with newsprint on your hands was as they say a thing of the past. I did not feel it; I could not touch it; but I could see something that resembled a newspaper. Not quite the same thing.

Also and sadly fading away is the visit to the newsagents early mornings and to witness at first-hand the miscellany of folks on their way to work and their particular choice newspaper wise.

My late Father was a committed Daily Mirror reader livened up on Sundays by another publication! However his earlier years were punctuated by habitual visits on Saturday mornings to the Cymmer Institute where he would sit himself down at a table and read every available newspaper. In those days, they were draped over a sort of small in diameter wooden pole with brass endings and ranged from the Morning Star to the Times.

Choice and to be widely read was a prerequisite of those days for how else could one understand what was going on in the world there was no TV ? Opinions of others were to be respected but not necessarily taken to one's bosom. Indeed contrary views were very much to be encouraged and advanced on a face-to-face basis where of course today we have email and so-called 'Smart Phones' and sometimes are guilty of not engaging one's brain before pushing 'the' button. My Father always preferred balanced arguments on a direct basis and when he could see the whites of the eyes. Times change!

Lindum Svendsen has taught in the same school of which he has been a Head for the past 25 years. An aggressive bully, he imposes his inflexible will on the school – pupils and teachers and parents alike. The clash of wills and world views with Frits is inevitable.

Freddie Svale, a young probationary teacher, is 'cool' with hair longer even than Frits. Taking off his jacket, untucking his shirt, he says to his new class, you can call me Freddie ! An idealistic, pupil-centred teacher, he wants to revolutionise teaching and school organisation.

There is a nice sense of what it might have been like to be a pupil then and there. The rejection of Frits by some of class mates because he's a farmer's son, a country yokel, not like them who live in the town. His friendship with Søren and the growing affection with Iben, a girl in his class. The scene in church is excruciating !

The clash between Frits and his Head comes when the Head punishes the boy excessively, injuring his ear. With different values and procedures then in place, the outworking of the case is suitably dramatic.

Two moments stand out for me in the film. One is the singing by Year 6 of the protest song, 'We will overcome' (hence the name of the film) made all the more effective because it is sung in English with a Danish accent. The other is the end of the film, back in the asylum, shot in silhouette against a French window, where Frits holds out his hand to his dad and simply says, 'Come'.

Watch it if you get chance – this piece of sunshine from Denmark is an antidote to the gloom of winter in Brittany.

Gareth Randall

Film Review of the month
'Drømmen' / 'We will overcome'
Niels Arden Opley - 2006

This month let me recommend a DVD you may not have come across. It was lent to me by my friend, Phil Elgie, and I brought it back from England in November to watch.

Set in Denmark in the summer of 1969, the actors are Danish but the film comes with English subtitles.

Essentially, 'Drømmen' captures the mood and tensions of the time. I was still a teenager then preparing to go to university and I well remember the demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Corporal punishment was still permissible and practised in schools. There was a real growing challenge to authority and the underlying values which informed society.

There are three principal characters: Frits Johansen (Janus Dissing Rathke), a 12-year-old boy; Lindum Svendsen (Bent Mejding), a disciplinarian Head Teacher; Freddie Svale (Anders W Berthelsen), a young teacher of music and Danish. That said, there are a range of other engaging characters who make up this rural community.

The film opens with Frits's father, a farmer, having a nervous breakdown and being taken off to an asylum. His mother, a nurse at the school to which Frits will shortly transfer, has two younger girls and their grandparents live nearby.

Frits, with a mop of blond hair in the style of the Beatles, is a strong-willed, free-thinking boy who is influenced by the climate of the time, not least the example of Dr Martin Luther King, the civil rights leader who was assassinated by a gun man.

Reading was followed by a game of snooker or billiards and then a pint next door before going home to the often asked question 'where have you been' although the answer was always well-rehearsed. My late Mother need not have asked the question.

Ken Ivin



Christmas Carol Anagrams

The following were sent to me by the Banyard boys Val and Geoff's grandsons

- 1 anagram ya wine
- 2 healthily doth envy
- 3 gilded goring rhino hymn
- 4 idle tent yolk
- 5 a garland heels her knights
- 6 a windsock glee song

Answers in the January St Bart's Monthly



Something understood ?

In the middle of a busy day at work, a man receives the following text from his wife: *Windows frozen at home*

So he texts back: *Spray de-icer or use hot water*

And her reply: *Done that but computer still not working*

Ron Kirk

Jesus is better than Santa

Santa lives at the North Pole; Jesus is everywhere.

Santa rides in a sleigh; Jesus walks on the water.

Santa comes but once a year; Jesus is an ever-present help.

Santa fills your stockings; Jesus supplies all your needs.

Santa comes down your chimney uninvited; Jesus stands at your door and knocks.

You have to stand in line to see Santa; Jesus is as close as the mention of His name.

Santa lets you sit on his lap; Jesus lets you rest in His arms.

Santa doesn't know your name; Jesus knew our name before we did.

Santa may make you chuckle but Jesus gives you joy that is your strength.

While Santa puts gifts under your tree Jesus became our gift and died on the tree.

We need to remember who Christmas is all about and putt Christ back in Christmas.

Mike Franks



A pointless joke ?

This cracker of a joke was sent to me by a former colleague at Dame Alice Owen's, John Johnstone:

Did you hear about the acupuncturist who wanted to get money from an HSBC cash machine but couldn't ?

Sadly, he'd forgotten his PIN !

(This joke may needle a purist)



Humour à l'école 1/11

From a dear friend in Potters Bar, Lisa Klein, a parent of pupils who are/were at Dame Alice Owen's School:

Professeur: Que dois-je faire pour répartir 11 pommes de terre entre 7 personnes ?

Elève: Purée de pommes de terre, maître !

(il y a de la logique!)



Reflections

The following were forwarded to me by Peter Campbell

- ✓ Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- ✓ He, who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- ✓ Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- ✓ Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently talented fool.
- ✓ The things that come to those who wait, may be the things left by those who got there first.

receive a “*personalized cheer-yourself-up copy*” of Saga’s latest *Sunny Climbs* brochure – this year featuring zimmer-treks in Nepal. So far, however, *Saga* is reporting a rather disappointing response – which they put down to their clients’ cold fingers resulting from the government’s decision to freeze the winter fuel allowance.

On the other hand, *Dynarod* have offered their own technical expertise to investigate any suspiciously-blocked chimneys, and, for a small extra charge, central-heating systems, too. In turn the Inland Revenue might part-exempt the company from the projected Main Drains & Toilet tax. And should *Dynarod* discover ‘*a foreign body*’ trapped in ‘*an inaccessible high-rise aperture*’, immediate assistance is promised from ABRACADABRA – the Anglesey-based Royal Airforce Command-and-Deploy Air-Borne Rescue Assistance (with heavy-duty winch, stress-counsellor and possibly Prince William), weather permitting.

Finally, if all else fails – and as a measure of the nation’s concern, HM The Queen is reported by trusted Palace insiders to be preparing to revise her Christmas Day Message – retrospectively.

This Message will not *replace* the one already broadcast. Instead it will *become* the Message she actually delivered – exactly as we remember it. In so doing she will be relying upon her subjects’ fundamental Faith, as traditionally defined – of which she herself is the age-old Defender.

True to the magical spirit of Christmas, Her Majesty will have thanked Father Christmas for being with us again, and for filling, if not our stockings this year, then certainly – as ever – our imaginations.

David Norris



Where is Father Christmas ?

- was the question put to the Prime Minister while warming down after his now traditional Xmas Day charity run between Fortnum & Mason and Harrods.

“*I can’t tell you anything,*” he told photographers, as his protection officer motioned him to mount their tandem for the ride back to Chequers.

His reticence arises... not because he’s accused by Adidas of being sponsored by Nike; nor because *Solar Panellists*, a terrorist wing of the Green Movement, have threatened to mark New Year with fireworks on the thatched roofs of two of his second homes... Nor because The Guardian is asking whether his party’s true-blue shell suits as seen at this year’s conference were made for Prada in a UK-aided Bangladeshi sweat-shop...

...But because it’s being suggested in the Daily Mail that the Missing Person in question might well turn out to be “*just one more illegal immigrant*”, in Britain solely for “*bucksbee obesity treatment*”.

And this comes at a time when such claims cannot be confirmed, denied or ignored. The UK Border Agency is presently on strike, demanding an increased Xmas bonus - and a published apology for “*the typical slur*” that they “*have chosen the season of goodwill for industrial inaction*” (Daily Telegraph). Basic UKBA duties are being carried out by recently redundant travel reps. from Thomas Cook, on an unpaid internship basis.

So the question remains: ***Where is he*** ? In past years queries relating to this national treasure – such as returned gifts, requests for *X-Factor* appearances or animal rights issues – have been referred to the

Jolly Holly Xmas Tinsel Co., Industrial Zone, Parson's Nose, Wessex, a Chinese-owned franchise of Disney WorldWide.

Thus it is that the Wessex force has become involved -

- Where the Acting Chief Constable is under pressure. Only last week his boss suspended himself "*in protest at recent developments*", and is now "*somewhere in the Caribbean*", says his wife, the newly-elected Police & Crime Commissioner.

Furthermore, the police's normal press contacts – both of them editors of national dailies, are also unavailable. One is in custody charged with invasion of privacy offences while the other is serving on the official enquiry into media intrusion. Intriguingly, last week the flagship television news programme, *Gimme The Goss* (BBC 2), suggested – based on intercepted e-mails – that when the truth is known, these two editors will be changing places.

Frustratingly, there has been no real progress in the search. No member of the public has called the police on their confidential helpline (999) or visited their Crisis Centre "*at an undisclosed location*". No sightings anywhere in the UK – not even in response to the reward offered by The Sun – "*An Xmas Bird Every Night For A Year – Yule Love It!*".

A teacher returning from a school trip to Ibita claimed in the Daily Star that she saw "*this really ancient geezer*" in an Irish pub over there. He had "*this like big fake beard on him*" and was wearing "*this really gross*" red top and flares. The teacher, Mia Hussey (29), who did not wish to be named, said "*he looked really really p*ssed*" and kept on "*buying the kids sangrias all night*" and "*laughing too much*".

But it was soon established that this was either a well-known benefit-cheat taking a break from Doncaster or an equally well-known

gangland figure taking a break from Belmarsh. "*Neither is a person of interest*" say the police. Today the Daily Express publishes photographs of both these "*loveable scumbags*", pointing out that their whiskers and - given their situation - their laughter, are probably genuine.

As the quest continues, unplanned protest marches – with youngsters in tears and pushchairs, waving their next year's Xmas wish-lists – are happening all over Britain, organised by Tesco in co-operation with every other socially-responsible superstore, plus Harvey Nichols.

These '*Kiddies For Krissie*' demos are being marshalled by all-female shelf-stackers, each with proven child-protection clearance. Parents will be eligible for early entry to the post-Xmas sales, where they can be photographed free with Esther Rantzen (or look-alike) in what would have been Santa's Grotto – on production of a store loyalty card and a token £5.

In addition to an emotional broadcast appeal from Sir Terry Wogan and Jeremy Clarkson singing *Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer*, Rolf Harris has been flown in from Australia to produce a fun-photofit. And Cilla Black's agent has announced that in common with "*a lorra lorra people everywhere*", Miss Black is "*gobsmacked*".

On Saturday there was a spontaneous Mexican wave (*OI SANTER LOL*) at every Premier League soccer match, triggered by David Beckham in person via a multi-screen video-link from Los Angeles.

Saga has declared on their web site that society's hostility to senior citizens is to blame for this year's no-show. "*If you're old, get out of here*" has been their blog's banner headline over Xmas. They're inviting "*all our twilighters*" to log in and upload their experiences of loneliness and over-priced holidays: "*How Fed Up Are You?*". In return they will