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Greetings at the start of another year!

*Rorate coeli desuper!
Hevins distil your balmy shouris
For now is risen the bright day-star
From the rose Mary, flower of flowris*

writes William Dunbar in about 1500.

Again we celebrate our Saviour's birth. We also look forward to this Year of Jubilee, just started since we have reached a quarter-century. Pope

Francis' jubilee prayer asks 'May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.'

In this issue we also look back, to John Green's records of the early parish council (and don't miss his mini-cartoon about meetings!) and a photograph of Nellie with Kevin McHale and Father John Tomblin.

If anyone has photos or reminiscences of St Francis in its first location on Benty Lane, please get in touch with any of the editors.

Jenny King

Bon voyage, Nellie

We said a sad bon voyage to Nellie at Christmas.

Nellie came to the parish as housekeeper for Fr Tomblin when he retired and then remained an active member of the parish for another ten years after he retired. She has moved back to live nearer her family in Barnsley and is very happy. We welcome Fr Andrew Browne who replaced her in the Diocesan House.



(For those who tasted Nellie's pastry, it is a wonderful culinary creation which will live long in our memories and waistlines!) We wish her well.

Jonathan Yewdall

The Green Papers

When Anne and John Green left the parish a few months ago, they left us with many happy memories and a bulky file of papers, representing minutes of the Parish Council between 1986 and 1995. I have been volunteered by the editors of the Chronicle to look at this material and present a few reflections.

The first has to be of admiration of all the hard work put in by the councillors and other members of the parish, many of whom remain active in it to this day, and of gratitude for the ministry of Father Killeen, who was parish priest throughout that time. He celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood in 1996.

John joined the Council at an interesting time. Minutes of the meeting on 13 April 1986, item 5. Church Extension. "Father Killeen had obtained architect's plans for a proposed church extension which would provide seating for an additional 65 persons as well as a small sacristy." The existing church in Benty Lane was simply too small for a congregation which the previous year had numbered 300.

But read on. Minutes of the meeting 21 Sept. 1986. Item 4. Church Extension. "Mr Gerard Young attended the meeting and explained that there was the possibility of a site being made available for a new church adjoining 'The Croft', Sandygate Road, the home of his sister, Miss Marion Young."

From here, things went ahead very rapidly. The decision to build anew was taken on 8 Feb. 1987, 76 per cent of parishioners having supported the proposal. A Building Committee was appointed and visited churches designed by the three shortlisted architects: Richard O'Mahoney (Liverpool), Desmond Williams (Manchester) and Vincent Steinlet (Newcastle-upon Tyne). An extraordinary AGM on 17 May endorsed the appointment of Mr Steinlet. "Kevin Exell

proposed a vote of thanks to the Building Committee."

The detailed work was done by this committee. It would be interesting to see if its minutes, and any technical drawings, have survived. The Council minutes record the main staging posts. At a further AGM in March 1988 the architect presented a model of the building. In October, Dixons of Doncaster were appointed as contractors; the first turf was cut by Miss Young on 30 October; the foundation stone was laid by Bishop Moverley on 25 February 1989; and he consecrated the new church on 1 December 1989. Happily, John Green kept a copy of the order of service.

In December 1987 the "costs of finalisation" of the new church were estimated at £600,000. The final over-run on the contract issued was just 3 per cent. The old church, the hall, and the presbytery on Ringstead Crescent were sold for £115,000. "Anonymous donations of £200,000



have been pledged." The remaining sum was met by fundraising and a loan from the Diocese, to be

repaid over 10 years. And so it was.

There is scope, over time, for several articles arising from these papers, e.g. on Gerard Young, who was clearly the driving force in the building of the church, and his family; on the architect, Mr Steinlet, and his other churches; on the parish finances; and on other items of Council business, such as the relationship with other local churches, and support for the Church's wider mission, which were actively pursued.

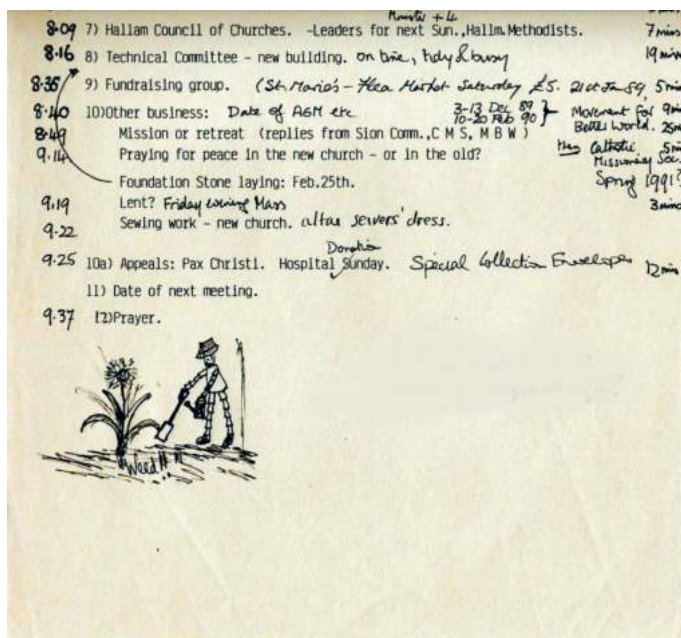
The editors of the Chronicle would be very grateful for recollections of parishioners on any aspect of parish life in the 1980s and 1990s.

They would particularly welcome any photographs.

This leads to the broader question of how the parish should keep its records and – of course – what records it should keep. We need a policy here. The Diocese has recently advertised for an archivist and we should make contact with her or him on appointment.

A final word should perhaps go to the monks and teachers of St Benedict's School, Ealing, who instilled in John Green and myself the importance of keeping accurate records.

Edmund King



Review of the 2024 St Francis Parish Panto

The end of November heralds the St Francis Panto. Oh no it doesn't! (Oh yes it does!). This year the panto was 'Sleeping Beauty versus Goldilocks A Two Bears Mystery' written by Chris Dingle. It was an enormous effort with no less than 22 cast, 14 people behind the scenes and a toy guinea pig! The plot (yes there was one!) was a combination of Goldilocks and the Three Bears (reduced to two bears: Chris Dingle and Bob Levesley sporting a splendid beard), Sleeping Beauty (the Beauty was called Dawn for obvious reasons and played brilliantly by Isabel Ruvinski) and for some reason Robin



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Hood (Sian Evans). She was ably support by her 'Berry' Men (Straw (Joseph Byrne), Elder (Daniel Byrne), Goose (Magnus Bushell) and Canter (Maria Livingston). To understand the names put 'berry'

after each of them). The perennial favourite, the Flying Fairies were back, albeit in younger form (Ethan Dale, Gideon Bushell and Dom Levesley).

Ethan is a star of the future and also sang a splendid 'Singing in the Rain'. The narrator was Dr Know (as in 'do you expect me to talk?') played by Emma Dale.



Richard Bushell was outstanding as the Wicked Fairy. Wearing a bustier, a tutu and a black wig, he acted out of his skin (and nearly out of his costume). S/he was both scary and strangely attractive at the same time (or maybe that was just your reviewer). S/he had a faultless Scottish accent (which they kept even when singing) which puzzled me until later on we learnt they went to fairy school in Glasgow and was known as the 'Wee Kid' Fairy (geddit!) so they weren't bad at all, (or so they claimed but they still wanted 'Ultimate Powerrrr').

The so-called plot involved the Two Bears investigating the theft of porridge, and many jokes about what bears do in the woods, and the spelling rule 'i before e except after c' (albeit an exception (!)_. The chief suspect was Goldilocks (played by Adam Levesley, and wearing a lovely dress). He has natural golden locks, so was a shoe-in for the part, but his hair could obviously be a mane, so he was also a lion, albeit one with a love of porridge. There then followed the theft of wool and tea from Bo Beep (Phoebe Doherty), a mat from Widow Twankey (Becca Faulkner) and her guinea pig and a power pack from the genie (Gene Edison played by Mark Azar). Put together they formed Wool Tea Mat Power or Ultimate Power! Another suspect was Baron Hardup aka Keir Starmer (David Bellamy) and his wife the Baroness (Liz Dingle who was also the stage hand & director). The Baron warned us of hard times ahead in very prime



ministerial tones and how we would have to pay more. However, in the denouement the baddy was revealed to be the heroine, Sleeping Beauty! (with splendid ironic clapping from Isabel when she was exposed). Luckily the world



was saved by a hidden money tree in the basement of the castle (I didn't see that coming) and all ended happily.

The cast was ably supported with great music from Petra Hervey



and Jon Dale. As you can gather by the recurrent surnames, it was a great family affair, which bodes well for the future.

The Panto raised over £2,100 for CAFOD and is a St Francis treasure, although it will take time for your reviewer to get over the joke about the baker with smelly hands (please don't ask).



Anonymous

Photos courtesy of Will Dingle



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