

KENN NEWS & VIEWS

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS ETC.

1 st	Sotoris Pappasolomontos Verity Rogers
5 th	Jerry Naish
7 th	Henry Court
10 th	Louise Hayzen (Pugh) Tom Clark Penny Leiper (Griffin)
15 th	Emma Palmer (Smith)
20 th	Angel Middleton Vincent Stowell
21 st	John Griffin
23 rd	Richard & Avril Gaunt W.A
24 th	John Streat
25 th	HAPPY CHRISTMAS ONE AND ALL
30 th	Clive Golding-Ellis
31 st	HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

Kenn Altar Guild December

Sunday 7th December
Jean Fenwick/Jenny Pascoe/
Wendy Pappasolomontos

Sunday 14th December
Kate Hatcher/Hazel Limage

Sunday 21st December
CAROL SERVICE
Iris Callow/Heather Jenkins

Sunday 28th December
Jo Cheek/Marianna Mackay

John and Grace Griffin, with helpers, will decorate the tree in Church for the Carol Service on Sunday 21st December.

Please can ladies decorate their windows in time for the Carol Service.

Any problems please let Marianna know as soon as possible.

Kenn Church Service of Carols and Lessons

The Service of Carols and Lesson will be held in the Church at 6.00pm on Sunday December 21st. We hope to have the usual huge congregation.

If you would like to join the Choir for this Service (or any other Service) you are very welcome as are any of your friends.

A choir practice has been provisionally arranged for 7.00pm on the previous Thursday evening in the Church. To check please contact the Vicar or a Churchwarden.

Ray Naish 872493
Churchwarden Emeritus

Christingles at Kenn

On Saturday 22 Nov a jolly crew of village and visiting children spent a very efficient hour in the New Room making the Christingles for the Family Service to be held the next day. Folk who could not be at the service took a Christingle home with them, to light the candle and reflect on its meaning in their own homes.

A goodly crowd hove to in church on Sunday 23rd and after a mammoth list of notices (there's a lot going on in Kenn and Yatton Moor) enjoyed a service written by John with a talk from Celia. The Christingles candles were lit, and the sweets consumed without incident. Coffee, biscuits and chat followed.

Julia Bush

PS Many thanks to everyone who made the drinks, washed the cups, vacuumed the carpet etc

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IMPORTANT REMINDER

Calling all colourists!

Hooray, lots of people took colouring sheets home from the Christingle Service.

Please can you make sure they get back to the church by the middle of December.

Either bring them to a service, or Sunday Club, or leave them in the church porch, or leave them at Ray & Jean's house.

Thank you, Julia Bush.

Our Flag

Our flag was flown at half-mast on the 11th November to mark Armistice Day.

It was flown on Thursday 13th November to celebrate the birth of Oliver Hill (9lbs 3 oz) first child for Katy (nee Stowell) and Dave on Wednesday the 12th. Katy and Dave were married at St. John's on the 1st September 2007.

On Thursday 27th November our flag was flown to celebrate the birth on the 24th of the first son of Sian and Alex who live at White Cottage, Kenn Street. George Richard weighed in at just over 8lbs.

Our Church Floodlighting

Sunday 9th November for Remembrance Sunday, which happened to be the birthday of John and Celia's daughter Jane who joined us at 11.00 Communion with her husband Matthew and daughter Abigail, who is almost 3.
Sunday 16th November for Evensong.

Coffee Morning for the Blay Family.

Many thanks to everyone who very generously supported the November Coffee Morning Profits and donations amounted to £85+. I received a letter from Mr Blay at the beginning of October telling me that his youngest son Jerome was in his last stage of education, and it was costing him extra fees for his final project. Here is part of his latest letter to me.

'Dearest Mummy, I thank you for your kind love. Bless you and all the friends. I have paid off all my debts on the school expenses. Mad(ame), I am short of expressing myself to you for your help. Thank you very much, Emmanuel Blay

Caring at Christmas

As in the last few years we will be collecting items for "Caring at Christmas" as administered by The Julian Trust in Bristol. We hope to be able to take a car full of donations to the Trust in the week before they open their doors to the homeless just prior to Christmas.

Last year they served nearly 2000 meals during the week they were open, providing 50 beds and showers.

They need, as always: food, toiletries, bedding (no duvets), and clothes (new underwear, socks, hats, scarves, footwear, coats and warm casual wear for 18-40 year olds).

Donations of money are also very much appreciated, please make cheques payable to "Caring at Christmas".

If you want to learn more their website is www.caringatchristmas.org.uk.

Any donations to Robin and Marianna or please leave in the Church porch if we are not in. They should reach us by Saturday 20th December at the latest. A big thank you to everyone who donates, it is a very worthwhile cause.

Robin and Marianna Mackay (340323)

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CAROLS ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE 2008

Christmas really starts on FRIDAY 19th DECEMBER at 7pm, when we will switch on the Village Green's Christmas Tree lights.

As always we will follow this ceremony by singing Carols round the Tree. This year we are especially glad to welcome back the DUCK LANE BAND who so entertained us 2 years ago.

Mince Pies and Hot Punch will be served to keep the chill away!

Robin & Marianna

PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

There will be a Christmas Tree on the green again this year and the celebratory switch-on will take place on Friday December 19th. Our local musicians will once again lead the carol singing. We hope for a fine evening so that everyone can come along.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 1st December in the Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. All parishioners are very welcome if they wish to attend. There is an opportunity to speak if there is any matter to which you wish to draw the attention of the Parish Council.

Meetings are usually attended by a District Councillor who can often help. Our Community Policeman is always invited and attends if his duties permit.



**Kenn
Women's
Institute**

The annual Flower Arranging Demonstration was much enjoyed by the many people who attended. We were fortunate to have not one, but three expert arrangers to watch and marvel at. Joanna Cheek, who is well known in the village was accompanied by her colleagues Judith and Lucy and they did some magnificent arrangements for us with a very informative commentary.

The evening began with a competition for the best decorative bow – I have to confess that I did not get past first base. There will be no gift-wrapped presents from me this year! At the end all three did an arrangement each using exactly the same materials. It was fascinating to see how different they each were.

Mrs. Pizzichemi gave us a most interesting talk on her life as an artist, her subject matter is mostly the animals and landscapes of Africa. She illustrated her talk with slides of the wildlife that she has seen on her many visits to that continent. Prints and cards of her work are available from local galleries.

At the December meeting we will be letting our hair down and playing Beetle and eating mince pies! If you would like to join us, please do.

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Ann Holtham.

Parish Plan

We have now analysed the results of your inputs to the road safety meeting held in October. The key messages that come out of this and for which actions need to be initiated are:

Throughout the parish excessive speed is seen as an issue. A number of parishioners would like to be involved with the Community Speedwatch initiative and PC Kinsella has been contacted to advise on how to take this forward. We are waiting his reply.

There is a problem with inadequate or lack of footpaths to protect pedestrians particularly on Kenn Road and Kenn Street. Kenn Moor Road, especially the stretch between Kenn Street and Kenn Pier is very dangerous for pedestrians and other non-motorised users..

Increasing volume of traffic and in particular the increase in heavy goods using Kenn Road is a problem.

I stress that the above are just key points from the issues and suggested actions raised at the meeting. Watch this space for further developments.

In December we plan to issue a second questionnaire to further understand the problems, hopes and aspirations that you associate or would like to associate with the parish. Your input is important and is your chance to make the "voice" of the parish heard.

In the meantime if you have something to say regarding the parish plan please email

plan@kenn-village.co.uk or just drop a note through my letterbox at

Downscote, Duck Lane, Kenn, BS21 6TP.

Robert Down.

Parish Plan

CHILDREN - Caroline has requested the return of the Cameras!!!

VILLAGE MARKET

Another successful Market was held in November with yet more variety of goods for sale.

Money was raised for The Children's Society, Pipe Dreams, Children in Need, M.I.N.D. and of course the Village Hall. Thank you for your continued support.

**The next Market is on
December 13th**

Attention Moor News Readers

If you haven't paid your 2008 subscriptions yet, could you let Ray Naish or your distributor have them before Christmas, THANKS

Likewise, if you are not currently receiving a copy of Moor News, and would like to, please contact either Ray or your distributor.

Thank You:

Romilly and Jemima would like to thank everyone who supported their Fundraising Coffee and Cakes – The wonderful sum of £755.28 was raised for:

BBC Children in Need!

Thank you K.K.K.

The letter of thanks from Macmillan Cancer Support following Kenn & Kingston

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Kombine 24.8.8.is on display in the Village Hall Noticeboard.

01275 878782 Jo Batten
01275 871186 Stuart Summerell

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Recycling – your garden gate
8th and 22nd December
6th and 19th January
Green Waste 12th January

Christmas/New Year

Refuse Collections

Monday 22nd December
Wednesday 31st December
Wednesday 7th January
Tuesday 13th January

Kenn Village Hall

7.30pm Monday 1st December

KENN PARISH COUNCIL

Everyone Welcome

Drum and Monkey

Tuesday 2nd December

From 12 noon - Village Lunch
Everyone welcome.

Kenn Village Hall

Wednesday 3rd December

Christmas Tea Party at 3pm.

Clevedon Salerooms

Thursday 4th December

Quarterly Specialist Sale of Antiques,
Fine Art & Collectors' Items

Kenn Village Hall

Wednesday 10th December

Kenn W.I. Meeting at 7.30 pm

**KENN VILLAGE HALL
FRIDAY 12TH DECEMBER**

**KENN'S
CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**REAL ALE
REAL FOOD
REAL MUSIC
Tickets £6**

From: 01934 838357 Sheila Naish

VILLAGE MARKET

KENN VILLAGE HALL

The next Market is on December 13th
10.00 – 12 noon

Kenn Village Green

7.00pm Friday 19th December

Carol Singing
round the Christmas Tree
Mince Pies and Punch

The Willows, Kenn

Saturday 20th December

10.30am

Coffee Morning

Mince Pies and Punch

Tickets £3.50

For Kenn Village Hall and
Clevedon Ladies Evening Group

Kenn Village Hall

Monday 22nd December

Kenn Children's Party

4.30 – 7.00 pm

With NUTTY NOAH

This party is not only for Kenn
Children, but also for the children
and grandchildren of Kenn folk - for
further information contact
Jo Batten on 01275 878782

St John the Evangelist

Sunday 21st 6.00pm

Carol Service

Christmas Eve 3.00pm

Crib Service

Christmas Day 11.00am

Family Communion

Everyone welcome!!!

Drum and Monkey

31st December

New Year's Eve Party

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9.00 pm £10 per ticket

Fax 01275 342050 E-mail

Margaret.john@btinternet.com

Or to Ray at Cloverlea, Kenn Street.

REFLEXOLOGY.



Sue Ellis from Stonelea, Kenn Road (old Post Office) has now qualified as a Reflexologist.

Reflexology works on the principle that every body part, organ and gland has a reflex point in the hands and feet.

A unique method of using fingers and thumbs is applied to these reflex points, resulting in a relaxing and therapeutic treat, which balances body systems and allows self-healing.

Reflexology can help with many common and stress related illnesses, allergies and ailments suffered by all ages, including children.

For more information on Reflexology, book a treatment, **Christmas and occasion gift vouchers**, free 20 minute 'taster' session or to discuss (in the strictest of confidence) Reflexology and a particular condition, please contact Sue on 01275 877822 or 07721 774266.

Margaret's Mutterings

Copy for Kenn News & Views to me at Chaseside please 874077

WHAT'S ON AT THE DRUM!

Kenn Village Lunch

Tuesday 2nd December
from 12.00 noon
Everyone welcome

QUIZ NIGHT

Come, have a meal and make a night of it!

CHRISTMAS OPENING

Christmas Day

Pub open 11.30am-1.30pm
Closed evening.

Boxing Day

Pub open 12 - 4pm
Food 12 - 3pm
Closed evening

New Year's Eve

Closed 4pm re-opens
9pm till late for

New Year's Eve Party

£10 per ticket to include
Large Buffet

Joanne Meredith is our
entertainer - very popular
60's - 70's evening

Admission by Ticket only

N.B. There are still a few dates left for our Christmas Dinner Menu served until Christmas.

PRIVATE ROOM- The
Conservatory

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*Available for parties of up to 30
people*

BIRD NEWS I

Coal Tits have been visiting our bird feeder and they are quite unusual here. Generally Coal Tits are considered to be sedentary but several people have reported them recently, so perhaps there has been an influx.

Certainly Redwings and Fieldfares have arrived on the moors and around Kenn and Yatton in good numbers and I have heard Redwings soft calls at night as they pass overhead on their way south.

A visit to the sea wall produced the spectacle of a juvenile Peregrine Falcon chasing a Turnstone. Twice it seemed as if the falcon must make its capture but the Turnstone escaped and then a second Peregrine arrived and started a mock battle with its congener. A Peregrine was reported to me from West Haven near the Village Hall.

Little Owls were present at Backwell Common and along the Strawberry Line whilst a third called from the direction of Kenn Court as Jill and I came out of church last Sunday evening. It was answered by the hoot of a male Tawny Owl.

However, the amazing Owl news is of an Eagle Owl in Bristol living in the university area of the city. It is probably a fugitive from an aviary but it does not appear to be ringed. (All legal captive birds are required to be close ringed). It has been around for several weeks, often roosting in the same large sycamore in Woodlands Road. When I saw it, it had a very large fat rat in its talons, presumably

being 'kept for later'. It is thought to be feeding on rats and feral pigeons, which suggests that it is not captive bred and it is doing a good service to the City. I believe the local residents

are now more inclined to keep their cats in at night. An Eagle Owl swallows a rat whole!!

Trevor Riddle 01934 835208

BIRD NEWS II

The only bird news I have is that Jeff Naish saw huge flocks of Starlings doing their flying displays and aerobatics over Kenn Moor recently in the middle of the day.

Ray Naish

The Eye

A short story by 10 year old, Molly Cheek (Hartley and Jane Staples' granddaughter)

One dark and stormy night my uncle, a scientist, was working in his laboratory. The storm caused a power cut, so he was working by the light of candles. As a dagger of lightning lashed, the candles suddenly went out!

In the corner of his eye, he thought he could see a glint of an emerald eye blinking at him through the window. He couldn't be sure that he saw it, but when he told me this blood-curdling story, I thought it was scarily real.

The next day, he woke up and went downstairs for a coffee as usual. But when he opened up the coffee tin, the coffee had been replaced with a blue liquid that smelt like it had been going mouldy. "That's funny," he thought. So he got dressed and went to the supermarket to get some more coffee.

When he got back, a picture of an eye was painted on his door in red spray

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paint. "Typical vandals", he said, but he felt a shiver run down his spine. Was this picture related to last night when he first saw the eye?

That night, he lay in bed reading Great Expectations by Charles Dickens. Half an hour later, he put the book down and fell into a deep sleep. He had a dream. A very strange and horrible dream at that; he dreamt that he was being chased by a floating eye. Then he fell into a deep, dark hole. The walls were encrusted with tiny, blinking eyes. He kept falling and falling, and then he realised he was going on forever

He woke up in a cold sweat. It was morning.

"Phew! It was only a dream" he said, breathing out a sigh of relief. It was Tuesday, his day off. He was going to his friend Andrew's house, and then he had to go to London to pick up some dead rainforest beetles for his study. As he walked to his car, he swore that he could see his late wife walking on the pavement, clutching a dark green umbrella with a wooden eye on the end of the handle. He quickly jumped into his car, slammed the door and before you could say "carrots" he was racing to the psychiatrist.

The psychiatrist was a tall, thin man with hair the colour of tangerines. He had black, square glasses and yellow teeth, black and chipped in places. His eyes were the worst part of all. When my uncle told him what he had seen, the psychiatrist laughed a croaky laugh.

"Ah, a common one this is. Lots of people come to me with this. You see, I know all about this. I was the one who sent the eye, made the dream and scared you. I am no human. Watch...."

Oh my uncle watched all right. The psychiatrist's skin turned black and crumbly, his hands turned to claws, blood ran from his mouth, dripping onto the floor and then, the lights went OUT.

My uncle ran for it, screaming. Out of the room, down the blackened corridor, into his car and with a screech of tyres, he was zooming down the road.

Now he has moved to America, because he couldn't risk living in England. The psychiatrist scared him for life.

I never saw him again, but we talk lots over the phone. I wonder if I'll ever see the eye.....

THE END

Joy Say

Former Kenn resident, Joy Say nee Moores has passed away recently aged 89 years.

Joy came to live in Kenn when she was a small girl, when her mother Clara Moores became Postmistress at the Post Office, her father became Sexton of the church.

Joy attended Kenn School during the 1920's. She was the first child to sit for the scholarship, as it was called in those days, she passed the exam. Kenn school was awarded a Shield for Excellence to be held for one year for one hundred per cent pass rate. One scholar took the exam; one scholar passed!

After leaving School Joy worked at Clevedon Telephone Exchange. During the last war Joy married John Say from Clevedon who was in the navy at that time. They continued to live in the Post Office with Mrs Moores where their two children Janet and Robert were born.

When Mrs Moores gave us the Post Office the family moved to Cullompton where they stayed for the rest of their lives.

Joy was a very intelligent person, in the latter part of her life she did a lot of research for people looking into the history of their families.

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Joy held Kenn in great affection, she came back to visit at every opportunity. She loved coming back to the senior residents party at Christmas-time.

Joy was a mine of information on the people who lived in Kenn in the 1920's, 30's and 40's she was in a wonderful position to get to know people: living at the Post Office. In those days everyone in the village visited the Post Office and shop every week at least once to get their groceries and cigarettes and pensions. Joy left Kenn School to go to Weston School in 1931, the same year as I started there.

Ray Naish.

Ps. I have just discovered that at the outbreak of the last war, Joy was asked to fit all the small children in the village with their Gas Masks, including John Griffin.

Kingston School Reunion

Former members of Kingston School, which closed in 1961 held a reunion on Saturday 22nd November.

This was a wonderful occasion. There was a service in the Church which was packed, followed by a get together with a ploughman's lunch followed by a tea in the Village Hall.

Former pupils, together with friends arrived in the village from all over the country. This reunion was held to launch a book on the History of Kingston School.

We hope to hold a reunion of former Kenn School pupils next spring. Watch this space!

Ray Naish

Does anybody care?

I'm often asked to talk about my son. This could be in the form of a passing interest, it could be in a superficial "how are you?" way. It could be to satisfy the needs of someone

who reaches into the depth of your soul in order to then trample on your grief and use your heartache as subject matter to pass their college course, before tossing you to one side once your purpose has been served.

Most favourably, it could be on a professional basis. I have to say that the professional basis is easier to cope with - there are clear boundaries and usually those intelligent enough to ask are actually genuinely interested. They don't patronise by telling you they were only your friend because they "pitied you" - yes Kennites - in 6 years I've only had this said to me once and that was only a few weeks ago in Kenn! It roused a tremendous laugh amongst my real friends who said I was the last person they would ever pity - you have to laugh or you would cry. Sadly it was very telling about how prejudiced some people actually are. It's sad to think of the next generation educating their children to be like this but it's happening all around us.

The fact of the matter is, no matter how scared you are of disability, it could affect you in some way or another. None of us know if we could ever become this way through accident or illness. Nobody is immune to disability, no adult, no child. It could happen to anyone.

Until 6 years ago I shamefully was one of the ignorant many in society, able to turn a blind eye to the hurt and pain that a child and a family go through in order to maintain the perfect "normal" life.

Life changed dramatically for us in the most unsuspecting way possible in 2002. Charles made his entrance into the world, almost born on the Clifton Suspension Bridge. We made it to St Michael's and half an

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hour later he appeared, lifeless, bright purple and totally silent. It was eerie, scary and gut instinct told me that this was not "normal".

It was after being presented to Prince Charles through my work as a journalist early in my pregnancy that the name Charles came to us, so powerful was the honour.

My mind raced back to the nuchal scan - to the result that we were told was so good it was comparable to that of a 14 year old girl, to the comments made by the midwife at BUPA that we had "more chance of winning the lottery than having a Down Syndrome baby". I remember it like it was yesterday.

The total heartache was very raw and painful. My face went numb as if I was on a fairground ride that had gone very wrong. I felt transported outside of my own body as if I was looking in like an observer in someone else's grief. I was certain that this baby had died as he did not move, did not respond, did not cry. Fortunately the midwife who delivered my daughter happened to be the same midwife as for my son. She made the bold decision of telling me within a 15 minute period that my son had been born with Down Syndrome. This is the best way to tell someone that their longed for child has been born with a disability, fast and straight to the point.

The rest is just too painful to write about as it still makes my heart wrench and can make me physically sick at times. It was the fear, the prejudice, the feeling that this was going to be very bad. Within the hour, we had been told he could be adopted if we did not want him - harsh cold black and white facts were tossed at us - that it would ruin our life,

that we should leave him in the hospital and that he might die. We were also informed that he could be prone to leukaemia, that he might have a heart defect, that he would die before we would and that we should make preparations for him in our will. That hour in the labour room, where it should have been filled with love and peace and beauty was trampled over with consultants, with the immediacy and urgency to rush him off to have his heart scanned for any defects. Fortunately we were given the child with no heart problems and for that we are very, very grateful. Life can be extremely tough for the thousands of others who have to cope with this.

The next two weeks were the worst I've encountered in a hospital. My son developed severe jaundice. We have discovered this year after much arguing to get a diagnosis for his "immature wide based gait" that Charles also has cerebral palsy and hemiplegia.

This could be, as we found out this year, as a result of oxygen starvation at birth or stroke, indicators of which could have shown up during those 2 weeks of severe jaundice but were sadly missed.

Charles and I were placed on a ward with drug addicts, queuing up for their fix every day. As a mother who does not drink in pregnancy, who takes no illegal substances, who exercises, who eats well and does it all by the text book, it was shocking to discover that children like my son were in this environment.

It was heart wrenching to watch those one pound in weight babies, addicted to drugs, attached to heart monitors whilst I sat with my grief wondering how Charles had appeared in this world having

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come from a healthy place. At nine pounds in weight, it was so, so sad to see him in the cradles in the nursery next to a baby that weighed the same as a bag of sugar. I put my prejudices to one side and befriended many of the young girls on that ward. Their stories were just as sad and upsetting as you might imagine. Not once did I cast them to one side because their life story was "too intense" or too much to cope with hearing about. My training and 13 years work as a television journalist had prepared me for most horrific tales and fortunately that sort of training does not allow you to become narrow minded.

And so to the bit about what is Down Syndrome? It's an important fact to learn about as Trisomy 21 can affect anyone. I was 31 when Charles was born, too young and not at risk to warrant an amniocentesis. There's no disability in my family but it still happened to me. Trisomy 21 Down Syndrome is the most common.

There is no explanation for why it happens and no reason. People talk about age but all of the mothers who have had children like Charles that I know of, have been in their 20's or early 30's. One friend was 16 when her Down Syndrome baby entered this world.

Down Syndrome is caused by the presence of an extra 21st chromosome. It is named after John Langdon Down, the British doctor who named it that in 1866. Cognitive ability is affected and there is a range of developmental disabilities ranging from mild to severe.

People with Down Syndrome will have many features alike, a simian or single palmar crease across the palm of their hand, an almond shape to their eyes,

called an epicanthic fold, shorter limbs and poor muscle tone. However they will retain family features too. Children like Charles will not learn to reach developmental stages like others. They have to be taught everything and that is everything, from crying, to turning over, to rolling, to crawling, to pointing, to being interested in life, to being interested in toys, in people. The list is endless. When you look at someone with Down Syndrome, there have been hours of love, energy, feelings, emotion, work by many people that have allowed that person to reach their capabilities.

Previous generations neglected these people, thought them too stupid to learn, too useless to be cared for properly. They condemned them to institutions and in so doing made the lives of so many people so utterly wretched and miserable. Friends from my mother's generation (she's 75) admitted that they now felt ashamed to have done this. There are many people in any community who are not intelligent, who are self centred, nasty, who are thoughtless vandals, who wreak havoc on victims. You only have to look in the newspapers for evidence of this every day. Nobody locks them away in institutions for not being perfect, for not fitting in. Sadly society strangles the very vulnerable people that need it to learn from, the families struggling to cope with disability in their homes, by being prejudiced and fearful.

Hypothetically, when did you last try and be genuine about asking about a child like Charles? When did you last offer to sit with the child and play with them to allow the main carer to snatch a couple of hours sleep? It's all very well criticising people for their grief, for their process

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that they have to work through as part of coming to terms with a child's disability, but being bold and brave enough to step outside of your comfort zone is a true test of your personality and I feel is truly Christian.

Recently, again in Kenn, it became apparent that my son was not deemed good enough to mix with some children in the village. Seeing those children and their negative reaction to my son at a party, it was apparent that again the future generation of children are being bred to believe that this is all bad and that they are perfect. I hope that these children don't find themselves in my situation one day and I hope that they do not become ill or have an accident.

It's tremendously upsetting to watch it as a mother and keep smiling to put a face on. The grief is so deeply buried as a result of the constant fact that your child is not like the others and will always struggle, will get bullied and teased and will never be able to get married or have children. Nobody can fully understand what this feels like, how it consumes your every waking hour and how it affects you so deeply. However to be told that, as a friend that person is not "trained" to talk about your "problem" is tantamount to kicking someone very hard in the face with steel capped boots on. Friends are able to understand, to empathise, to help when needed and to just be there with open arms and an honest heart.

Another bug bear that we as parents of disabled children have to endure is to hear the well meaning but patronising phrase, "Down Syndrome people are so loving". They are human beings like you or I, they have feelings and can understand what you are saying or doing to them. They have moods like we

all do, good and bad. To say this to someone in my situation is like saying "all Doctors have a bad bedside manner" or "all teenagers are troublemakers". It's hurtful, patronising and clichéd. When looking at a disabled person, it's always human being first, disability second.

The other myth about being in my situation is that you get a lot of help from the Government. That part is a fallacy. To date we receive no respite care, never have unless we paid for it. That part of our lives had to be filled with Au Pairs living in our home. It's extremely intrusive and a daily reminder that we are not able to function like "normal" (whatever that is) families. After 4 years of using these girls, some excellent, 3 who remain strong family friends after helping us through some dark times, some dreadful, we have reached the point where professional care is now a necessity. At £15 per hour, it doesn't come cheap so don't berate us for having to work long hours, for having to make improvements to our home to make it safe and secure for our child or for finding it tough going most of the time. We do not get any help, so the onus always falls on our shoulders. It's not pleasant for any father or mother to have to work 6 days a week to survive and then to have to deal with round the clock care. There are not many people who could do what we do. When was the last time you as a reader asked someone you knew out for a drink to try and understand what they are going through or at least to offer some brightness in their lives?

Although most people are not genuinely interested in Charles or us or our situation, the reality is that you as a reader of this, will probably need care yourself or have to become

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a carer at some point in your life.

Each day I am battling with authorities - in the past 3 weeks, I have sent 3 letters of 8 pages each in length to explain the help we need, the education he now deserves and other related information. This is a continual process. To write that sort of finite detailed letter takes a lot emotionally out of me. It's physically, mentally and emotionally draining on top of the 24/7 care that's necessary to keep life moving along, with no breaks, no respite and no real help from anyone.

"Too intense", I was told recently by a so-called "friend". Who needs enemies with people like this around. However, what I have learned is that the real friends are the ones who will listen for hours on end, exchanging their life story as well, sharing their life with you and will then still have the intelligence, the energy, the interest to pick up the phone regularly and suggest meeting up just to make sure that you are happy. That is true friendship and for those many people in my life, I am truly grateful for making a dark day a brighter one.

It's too much to reveal the real truths about what we as a family have to cope with as a result of the lack of respite help. It would be 'too intense' and the last thing I really need is to scare anybody away. As a family in our situation we need to feel cared for and supported, to feel that we are still all valued and respected. If you see us on our own at a party because we have to keep a watchful eye on our little boy, make the effort to come over and say hello, make us welcome. With grief, time heals but the wounds are always there, ready to be ripped open by some unsavoury, unfeeling, nasty,

self centred human being. Love and support help to keep that wound sealed and allow us all to move forward slowly step by step. We are not a freaky family because of our circumstances - far from it but it's too easy to judge people without bothering to get to know them.

Charles may not be perfect in some people's eyes but he is a little boy who has enchanted so many lives. From the Au Pair who said he has transformed and shaped her life from a young girl into a beautiful, intelligent woman she now is, to his wonderful support teachers at Yatton Infants school, to the superb and professional headteacher who never gives up and to the many people who have embraced his personality and his genuine, pure and honest love for life. This includes Mrs Redgrave of the famous Bristol school of dancing, who at 91 years old invited Charles into her ballet classes. As a mother to a Down Syndrome girl she has the empathy and understanding to make this a really special relationship. She has touched our lives in a really special and profound way and Charles has discovered a passion for ballet and piano that we never knew existed. The other very special people in his life are Cheryl Rowlands in Portishead, who accepted my son into her mainstream drama classes last term and who has nurtured him so that he has performed on the Somerset Hall stage and who is training him for the next performance after Christmas. She has unearthed an understanding for drama and movement that is so healing and therapeutic for Charles. Clevedon tennis club were also fantastic, Paul has an amazing ability to just get on with it and had Charles hitting many a ball over the nets in the summer. Mrs Burgoyne at Montessori gave Charles that

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start in life he so badly needed - superb environment. And to the childminders who were not prejudiced, May Cox who cared lovingly for Charles as a baby whilst I worked and now Little Farm who have transformed Charles from the boy who never got invited for tea, into the boy who is too busy to be invited for tea. There are some really inspirational, wonderful people amongst us and for those people, I am very grateful.

I am also extremely grateful for my daughter who will grow up as a human being who has depth to her personality, who has a genuine understanding of pain and suffering, who can reach out to help those who truly need it. At just a young age, she already has a lot of life skills sadly lacking in many adults. In so many ways, I am a very fortunate person, not some sad case who needs pitying. I have heat, light, warmth, love and the right family and friends. With all that, how could my life not be enriched. It is those who lack these basics in life whom I feel sorry for.

This month I begin the run up to my book about Charles. I have been asked on many an occasion to write about him and through the wonderful editor and friend Rob Stokes at the Evening Post, who allowed me to share my grief through writing for many years, I have discovered a life long love for it. I'm also contributing to a book about "life stories" - the real things that happen to people to raise money for a children's hospice and continuing some work for some old friends at the Variety Club.

My writing course is starting finally in January at Bristol University. I have also been asked by the Chief Executive at Brainwave Therapy Centre in

Bridgwater to give a presentation to their 60 staff about life with Charles. Following that, a week later we move to the City in London, where I'll be educating and presenting my "story" to hundreds of investors. Scary thought, but at least I know that amongst those audiences there won't be a dry eye in the house or indeed anyone who pities and thereby patronises the challenging but extremely beautiful, innocent child I have been sent.

Fiona

RECIPE CORNER

HOMITY PIE

Measurements are approximate - I use the 'throw it in and see how it tastes' technique!

Makes enough for 8" flan dish.

10oz shortcrust pastry
12oz potatoes
2 cloves garlic - finely chopped
1/2 lb onions - peeled and roughly chopped
1/2lb leeks - washed and sliced
Little veg oil
1oz butter
Fresh parsley and thyme
10oz good cheddar cheese
4 tablespoons milk or cream
Salt and pepper.

Lightly butter flan dish, line with pastry and blind bake.

Boil potatoes until just tender, chop into bite sized pieces.

Saute onions and leeks in veg oil.

In large saucepan mix together potatoes, onions, leeks, garlic, herbs, butter, milk or cream, half the cheese, salt and pepper - heat slowly until cheese has melted.

Fill the flan dish and cover with remaining cheese.

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Bake in pre-heated oven 220c/425f/gas 7
for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

**As served at the Harvest Supper –
recipe from Sue Ellis.**

PARISH OF YATTON MOOR

1st Sunday 7th December

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8am Holy Communion Kenn

8am Holy Communion Claverham

9.30am Parish Communion Yatton

9.30am Holy Communion Cleeve

11am Christingle Service Kingston
Seymour

4pm Christingle Service Claverham

6.30pm Evensong Yatton

2nd Sunday 14th December

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8am Holy Communion Yatton

9.30am Parish Communion Yatton

9.30am Holy Communion Claverham

11am Holy Communion Kenn

3pm Christingle Service Yatton

4pm Christingle Service Cleeve

6pm Evensong Kingston Seymour

3rd Sunday 21st December

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8am Holy Communion Kingston
Seymour

9.30am Holy Communion Yatton

9.30am Holy Communion Cleeve

10.00am Family Nativity Service
Claverham

6pm Carol Service Yatton

6pm Evensong Kenn

7pm Carol Service Cleeve

Wednesday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE

3pm: Crib Service Kenn

4pm: Crib Service Cleeve

4pm: Crib Service Yatton

5pm: Crib Service Kingston

10.00pm: Christmas Communion

Claverham

11.30pm: Midnight Christmas
Communion, Kingston Seymour

11.30pm: Midnight Christmas
Communion, Yatton

11.30pm: Midnight Christmas
Communion, Cleeve

DECEMBER SERVICES 2008

Thursday 25th December

CHRISTMAS DAY

8am Holy Communion Yatton

9.30am Christmas Communion Yatton
with address for Children

10.00am Christmas Family
Communion Cleeve

11.00am Christmas Family
Communion Kingston Seymour

**11.00am Christmas Family
Communion Kenn**

4th Sunday 28th December

HOLY INNOCENTS

(FIRST OF CHRISTMAS)

JOHN APOSTLE & EVANGELIST

8am Holy Communion Claverham

10.00am Holy Communion Yatton

**6pm Ecumenical Patronal Evensong
at Kenn**

MID -WEEK SERVICES

Wednesday 3rd December

11.00 Holy Communion Kingston
Seymour

Wednesday 10th December

7.00 pm Carol Service at Claverham

Monday 15th December

1.45pm Court de Wyck Christmas
Service

Wednesday 17th December

11.00am Holy Communion Kenn

Friday 19th December

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*7.00pm Carol Singing
Kenn Village Green*

Friday 19th December
7.30 pm Carol Service Kingston
Seymour