

St John's Church

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October / November 2023

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Photos from St Johns School



Above & Left: Woodwind instrument workshop

Below: Blessing the book bags



Cover Photo: Amazing Toadstools Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). © Geoffrey Hollis - see Nature Notes for more info

Look around you and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting [John 4.35]

As the time of writing, we're in the middle of 'berry appearance' season. My chocolate brown labrador Molly, and her distant cousin and best friend Maro, are enjoying hoovering up the last of the blackberries on our local dog walk. Everywhere I look, there are red berries popping up on trees and hedgerows.

As a youngster, I had no real interest in blackberries, or indeed any berries. But as I near my 50s (help!), I get really quite excited by the appearance first of thorny stems,

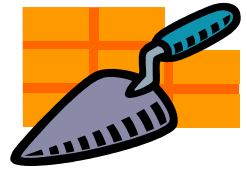


then the emergence of pale pink flowers, which turn into first-formed berries, red and unyielding. Finally - through the warmth of the sun, the soft rain and the rich earth – ripe,



(Continued on page 3)

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juicy blackberries are suddenly everywhere.

Recently, I was fortunate enough to go on a day-long retreat at St Mary's North Mymms. As I wandered around the churchyard picking the last few blackberries out of reach of hungry labradors, it struck me that the gradual appearance and ripening of berries reminded me of my own life experiences.

Choices that have shaped my path over the last 50 years, often began with the quiet stirrings of something new and unknown: a sense of unease or restlessness; an unexpected and disrupting word or invitation from someone; or a surprising surge of energy within me.

When I noticed these stirrings, I'd often ask myself – what's going on? Can I trust these feelings? Where will they lead me?

In our fast-functioning culture we often expect instant answers. It feels indecisive and uncomfortable, not to be able to instantly say – oh that's what I should do next! Especially if

you're like me, and like certainty and to just get on with things.

Perhaps the gradual appearance of the berries might offer me – and all of us - a good reminder that ripening takes its own time. They're a kind of invitation to the grace of waiting and patience. Attentiveness is needed too; there is movement, even if it is not at our pace, and it requires our attention if we are to begin to understand what it is about.

I believe that God is in all this waiting and working; for what is forming here is not only clarity of direction, but the ripening of our whole self, as we gradually become more alive to who God created us to be, and what he's calling us to do with our lives.

So if today you feel incomplete or confused about what is going on within you, or where to go next in life, don't worry – just wait, watch and trust that soon the time will be ripe.

With love, Rev'd Kathryn

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News and People

Talk on Sir Ninian Comper (1864 – 1960) at St Albans Cathedral

Geoffrey Hollis is giving a talk at St Albans Abbey [The talk is also available online. Ed.] on 9th November, on Sir Ninian Comper (1864 – 1960). [The talk is also available online.] He was the creator of the majestic West Window in the Abbey, and the enormous chapel of All Saints in London Colney, Comper was the last great Gothic Revival architect. He made beautiful things in different media – buildings, stained glass, fabrics. For more information and booking see: <https://www.stalbanscathedral.org/Event/sir-ninian-comper>

[Having heard Geoffrey speak on a number of subjects, I can highly recommend going along. Geoffrey's talks are always very informative, entertaining and very well researched. Ed.]

Rev Kate Douglas joined as curate of St John's in September

It was wonderful to welcome Rev Kate to our church community. In this edition you'll find an inspiring poem Kate has chosen and what it means to her.

RIP Florence Weston

We remember with love Florence Weston.

Florence worshipped at Lemsford all her life until recent years when she was not well enough to attend.

Florence was born in the left Lodge to Brocket Hall, opposite the church, 96 years ago, when Sir Charles Nall Cain, (who later became the first Lord Brocket) was living at Brocket Hall.

Sir Charles asked her parents if they would call her Florence, as he and his first wife Florence had no daughters. (The Brocket Chapel was built in memory of his wife).

Florence's funeral is being held at St John's Church on Wednesday 4th October at 11am.

Service of Thanksgiving

You're warmly invited to a Service of Thanksgiving for the lives of those we've loved and lost. This will be held in the Garden of Remembrance at St John's Church, Lemsford on Sunday 29th October 2023 at 4pm. Followed by Tea and Cake in the Annexe. Our previous service, held in June, was a great comfort to many. For details see page 13.

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Sunday Club is back after the summer break. We meet on the second Sunday of each month at 11am during the morning service for a Bible story, craft, games, music, fun and friendship. Children of all ages are welcome.

This term we will be thinking about the wonderful world God created for us to live in (that's October's Club) and in November it's all about being part of God's amazing family. We'd love to welcome you.



All-together worship is on the first Sunday of the month, at 11am. It's a service for all ages and stages of life, with music, readings and prayers.

And then on **Sunday 26th November** [at 4pm] we'll also be holding our first '**together@4**' event – an informal service for anyone and everyone.

It's a light themed party for a dark winter's afternoon looking ahead to Advent and Christmas and the coming of the light – that's Jesus – into our world.



There'll be more information nearer the time, including on our social media e.g, our Whatsapp group & Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsLemsford>



For more information contact joholifield@gmail.com or revkathrynalford@gmail.com

Services

October 2023

- 1st Trinity 17**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am 'All Together'
 Harvest Festival
- 8th Trinity 18**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am HC with Sunday Club
- 15th Trinity 19**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am MP
- 22nd Trinity 20**
 8 am MP (BCP) 11 am HC
- 29th The Last Sunday after Trinity - Bible Sunday**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am HC
- 29th 4pm - Service of Thanksgiving**
 in the Garden of Remembrance, followed by Tea and Cake

November 2023

- 5th The Fourth Sunday before Advent - All Saints Sunday**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am 'All Together'
- 12th The Third Sunday before Advent - Remembrance Sunday**
 8 am MP (BCP) 11 am HC with Sunday Club
- 19th The Second Sunday before Advent**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am MP
- 26th The Sunday next before Advent - Christ the King**
 8 am HC (BCP) 11 am HC

HC Holy Communion; MP Morning Prayer (Matins); BCP Book of Common Prayer; NB Kathryn's day off is Friday each week

Sponsored Bike n' Hike 2023 by Kevin Earl

It snowed on the Monday of the week in which Lucy and I got married. It was April 2000. By the Saturday the weather was hot, sunny and about 20c. I remember it was too hot standing at the main door of St John's while we posed for photos for our photographer. What a strange week of weather we thought, but lucky that we had seen the best of it on our wedding day. Every year since then we always note whether the weather is better or worse than on the day we got married. It has never been as good in all the years since April 2000.

Why am I sharing this memory with you? Well, Lucy and I have taken part in the Sponsored Bike n'hike for the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust since 1999, and have only missed two years. It was Ron Ingamells who dragged us along in 1999 and we just kept going after that. Anyhow, just like our wedding day, we can remember the weather each year that the bike n'hike has run, particularly the wet years (thankfully not too many of those) and the cold years (gloves on in September..), but this year was unique. 33 centigrade was remarkable. I can report that it is actually cooler to be cycling than walking as you can feel the breeze while cycling. We did some of



each this year, cycling from St John's to Hertingfordbury via four churches. Then a long-ish walk to Hertford and around the route to visit all ten churches before the walk back to Hertingfordbury and then the cycle ride back to Welwyn Garden City. It was great to cycle with John Blanch and then to walk with Gina and Paul. A pub lunch in Hertford was also a great rest and a chance for some shade. During the day we saw fewer cyclists and walkers than in some years, so the heat may have kept some people from getting involved this year. It was a lovely day for a wedding though, and we did almost end up in the photos of one wedding in Hertford!

Thank you as ever to all those who sponsored team Lemsford this year, and to Gina, Paul and John for getting involved with us. Kathryn is itching to give it a try next year. It will be sunny and about 23c, with a light breeze. Possibly.

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A New Beginning by Rev'd Kate Douglas

*In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
where your thoughts never think to wander,
this beginning has been quietly forming,
waiting until you were ready to emerge.*

*For a long time it has watched your desire,
feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
noticing how you willed yourself on,
still unable to leave what you had outgrown.*

*It watched you play with the seduction of safety
and the grey promises that sameness whispered,
heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
wondered would you always live like this.*



*Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
and out you stepped onto new ground,
your eyes young again with energy and dream,
a path of plenitude opening before you.*

*Though your destination is not yet clear
you can trust the promise of this opening;
unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
that is at one with your life's desire.*

*Awaken your spirit to adventure;
hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
for your soul senses the world that awaits you.*

For a New Beginning by John O'Donohue

John O'Donohue's words beautifully express what has been happening for me in the time since first exploring my calling to ordained ministry and where I am now: looking back on all that has gone and waiting expectantly for new adventures to begin! It is from this perspective that I can clearly see how God is continuing to form me so that I can join in God's mission to change, shape and save lives. I strongly feel that my ordination as a Priest is a gift from God; a gift

(Continued on page 12)

A New Beginning by - by Rev'd Kate *cont.*

(Continued from page 11)

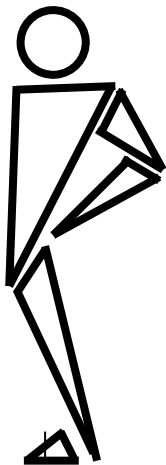
to share with others that they too may have the chance of a new beginning, an opportunity to be born again of water and the Spirit and to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10). The image of this gift is a brightly wrapped box tied with a large ribbon; when opened, the recipient is invited to delve into its contents which illustrate God's love, forgiveness, healing and hope.

A prayer for my ministry in Bishops Hatfield was written by Fr Mychal Judge OFM. A Catholic priest and New York Fire Department Chaplain, Fr Judge died in the 9/11 attacks on New York; his prayer is powerful for me as it places God at the centre of my ministry:

*Dear God, take me where You want me to go,
Let me meet who You want me to meet,
Tell me what You want me to say,
And keep me out of Your way.
Amen.*

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Service of Thanksgiving

in the

Garden of Remembrance

St John's Church, Lemsford

Sunday 29th October 2023 at 4pm

Followed by Tea and Cake in the Annexe



All are warmly invited to come along to a Service of Thanksgiving for the lives of those we've loved and lost. The service will be held outdoors unless the weather is bad (seats will be available).

Our time of reflection, prayer and music, will be followed by a chance to get together for a chat over tea and cakes.

RSVP to Mary Douglas at maryd1003@outlook.com

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You can't have missed all the signs out everywhere for the **Big Macmillan Coffee Morning**. Well, Jackie Spry [right - with husband Brian] had a slightly different spin on it and ran another very successful **Macmillan Afternoon Tea** in the grounds of St John's Church in September. Lots of people came along, including parents and children from St John's School. Some donated cake, some donated money, most ate cake and enjoyed the afternoon. In total Jackie's Macmillan fundraiser has raised £347.45 to date.



What does this organisation do with the money raised by volunteers? There are around 3 million people living with cancer in the UK today, and more than 360,000 are diagnosed every year. Right now, millions of people living with cancer are counting on Macmillan for help with paying bills, going through treatment, or with how they're feeling.

97% of Macmillan's work is funded raised by people like Jackie. Here is a case study, from their website, illustrating one of the many things they do, written by Jerry, diagnosed with mouth cancer in 2014.

"Our specialist Macmillan nurse Sandra was always on hand and we still attend a support group she started 13 years ago. I was in and out of hospital with infections from the osteoradionecrosis and could always ring or email our nurse to get seen in clinic or get advice. My wife also nominated her for an award. Though unsuccessful, it was published in the Royal College of Nurse's journal"

Around 811,000 people received person to person support from one or more of Macmillan Professionals or services.

To find out more about Macmillan - see their website: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/> -

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We have had a lovely start to the new school year. Our group of new Reception children has settled in well and are already coming along to Collective Worship as well as playing with the older children at break and lunch times. Our buddy system of pairing an older child with a much younger one works so well. It is lovely seeing them playing together and looking out for one another.

Our focus values for this half term are Hope and Aspiration which we have explored in Collective Worship at church and in school. We would like our children to be aspirational not only for themselves but for the world around them. We began the school year with Revd Kathryn blessing all our school bags! [see inside front cover.]

We will soon be thinking about Open Days for prospective new children and their families. These are opportunities to look around our school with a view to begin with us in September 2024. Our Open Days are:

Monday 30th October 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday 31st October 1.30 p.m.

Wednesday 1st November 1.30 p.m.

Thursday 2nd November 10.00 a.m.

If you know families with Reception aged children do please tell them about our lovely school and direct



them to our website where they will find details of our Open Days.

We are looking forward to joining you for the **Harvest** All-age service on Sunday 1st October as well coming to St John's Church for our own school Harvest festival on Thursday 5th October.

There are lots of new developments with our school music provision this term. We have a new teacher delivering weekly lessons to each class. We have class 3 about to begin learning the ukelele as well as individual lessons in other instruments continuing. See inside front cover photos from a recent woodwind instrument workshop the children were able to take part in. Looking ahead, dare I say to Christmas, the school choir will be taking part in an evening concert at

(Continued on page 18)

News from St John's School - July 2023 - Continued

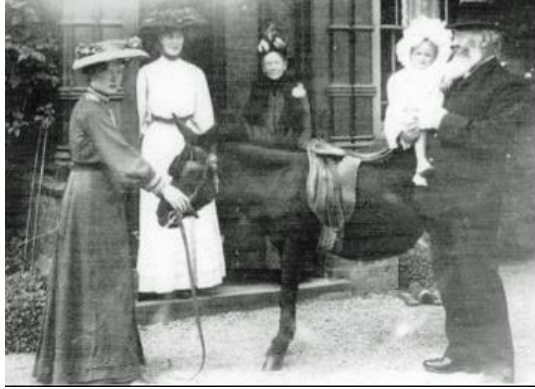
(Continued from page 17)

St John's Church with the Welwyn Garden City Male Voice Choir on Friday 8th December. Do please put the date into your diary – it is such a busy time of year!

Best wishes,

Michelle Boylan

Headteacher at St. John's Church of England School



This issue's 'Then and Now' on the inside back cover is Lemsford House, on Brocket Road, which was built in 1859 as the vicarage for the church of St. John the Evangelist, Lemsford. The church was built in 1859, the year Lemsford became a parish. In 1859 the parish was larger than today as it included Handside, and took in Cromer Hyde (farm), Stanborough, Lemsford Village and Brocket Hall. It was designed, as was the church, by the architect David Brandon (1813-1897). Six vicars lived in the house from 1859 until 1920. Rev. A. Lacock (1859 - 1868), Rev. W. Burnside (1869 - 1872), Rev. J.P.A. Fletcher (1872 - 1877) Rev. W. Bone (1877 - 1891), Rev. F.E. Coggin (1891 - 1905) and Rev. A.E. Ward (1905 - 1920).



L to R Rev Lacock - Rev Burnside - Rev Coggins

No images for Rev Bone or Rev Ward

The group has images of most of the vicars and extensive images of J.P.A. Fletcher. The Rev. John Price Alcock Fletcher was born in 1846 in Bromsgrove, Bromsgrove District, Worcestershire. He died 7 Dec 1916 (aged 69-70) in Burbage, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, Leicestershire. The image of him shown on left hand side is of him in later years at Burbage not Lemsford House. The fact that the windows and chimneys in this image are almost identical to Lemsford House made my original conclusion of it being Lemsford House false.

The archives have various details about some of the vicars. A total of four children were born to Fred and Clara Coggin whilst he was Vicar of St. John's, Lemsford. The first was Maurice Edward Henry, born Oct 11, 1892, followed by Enid, born Nov 1, 1894, then Joan, born Jul 22, 1898, and finally Frederick Leslie, born Feb 11, 1903.

An infamous son Stephen Thomas Ward (19 October 1912 - 3 August 1963) was born in Lemsford House, the second son of Arthur Evelyn Ward, Vicar of Lemsford, and Eileen Esmée. He was an English

(Continued on page 20)



(Continued from page 19)

osteopath and artist who was one of the central figures in the 1963 Profumo affair, a British political scandal which brought about the resignation of John Profumo, the Secretary of State for War, and contributed to the defeat of the Conservative government a year later. Friend of the group Jack Brown has personal memories of Rev Ward: 'My 12-year-old Auntie May was paid a few pennies to look after the Vicars new baby, Stephen Ward of the Profumo fame!'

He also responded to the history article in the last parish magazine: "My own small memories are when in the thirties we would visit my uncle at the Chequers (Chas Brown Landlord, now the Crooked Chimney). We would get the train at Finsbury Park to Hatfield and then a bus that dropped us at the Bull. Often Mum and Dad used to quench their thirst, with me outside with a lemonade and arrowroot biscuit before the walk to Lemsford and then the old zig zag road to the pub."

"I knew about the Cowpers but learnt a lot I did not know - they certainly made an impression on the area. My mother's family owe a lot to the kindness of the Lady Cowper of the 1880s. My uncle Bert, who pumped the organ, became a gardener's boy at Pangshanger and was head gardener in his forties. In about 1912 The Cowpers built a nice pair of semidetached houses at the crossroads at Cole Green, one for my uncle and the other for the head gamekeeper. When Pangshanger folded up my uncle bought it at a very low price. The pair are still there today and must be worth a fortune."

The Rev. F. E. Coggin, vicar from 1892-1905, found the house too small and enlarged it. However, the Rev. A. E. Ward, vicar from 1905-1920, found it too large and expensive to run so a second vicarage, now known as 'Church End', was built further down Brocket Road. The Brocket Estate, which owned the property, rented out Lemsford House to wealthy tenants, the rental income being used to augment the vicar's stipend. From the Baptism Register we know the name of one of the tenants, born September 24, 1937, Hubert Arthur James Butler, son of Charles Hubert Archibald Butler, stockbroker, and Johanne Pemberton of Lemsford House, Lemsford.

When Brocket Hall became a maternity hospital during WW2 some

LLHG - continued

unmarried mothers whose babies were to be put for adoption stayed in Lemsford House until the adoption went through. Between October 17th, 1940 and February 15th, 1948, the baptism of 133 babies born to single mothers giving their address as Lemsford House are recorded in the parish baptism register. The church has no other information about the inhabitants of Lemsford House. Lemsford House closed when Brocket Hall ceased to be a maternity hospital in 1949. We are fortunate to have an article from Julie Summers from 23 September 2016 describing the life of an unmarried mother residing in Lemsford House.

“Brocket Hall closed in November 1949 and the records went to the Royal Northern Hospital in London and when that shut all records were lost perhaps due to a fire. There are photographs of mothers in the Prince Regent Suite sitting up in metal-framed hospital beds knitting white caps for their babies, attended by nurses in crisp white uniforms set against the background of the sumptuous Chinese design hand-painted silk wall-paper chosen by the Prince Regent for the room in which he would entertain Lady Melbourne [see below].



Not so however for those poor girls who found themselves carrying a baby conceived out of wedlock: they belonged to a class of woman to be condemned and whose babies would be taken away immediately after birth. Those whose families could afford to pay would send their daughters to Lemsford House, just outside the gates of Brocket Hall, where they were held until it was time to give birth in the delivery

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

suite in the Hall. Those who could not afford to pay were sent to Brocket Hall and worked below stairs in the kitchens and cellars. They were known as the Brownies. It is not clear from the records how many Brownies worked at Brocket Hall during and after the war, but it would have been scores, if not hundreds. I found it a sad and chilling reminder of society's relatively recent attitude towards illegitimacy. Indeed, when I was growing up in the mid-nineteen seventies and a school friend of mine fell pregnant, she was considered to be 'in disgrace' and her baby was delivered and adopted immediately. But she never returned to school."

Julie Summers is an author, broadcaster and historian whose 2013 book 'Jambusters' was the inspiration for ITV's successful drama series Home Fires. To find out more go to www.juliesummers.co.uk.

Reading Julie's comments about society's attitude towards illegitimacy. I can only agree and remember also in the mid-seventies a neighbour's daughter getting pregnant and when born the baby's grandparents adopted him, so his sister was really his mother. Things are not perfect in society today but at least the generations who followed are more tolerant of unmarried mothers.

When I was lucky enough to be invited to the Brocket Babies reunions at Brocket House, I met many Brocket Babies whose mothers were unmarried and seemed to have made the best of their lives despite their disadvantaged start. Many years ago, I was emailed by a lady from Canada asking for information about Lemsford House. Her story started with her being taken from her mother at birth and being bought



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up by a loving couple. She trained as a nurse and emigrated to Canada and when the adoption law changed, she traced her mother to New Zealand. She was reunited with her birth mother and from conversations and diaries she started to research 'Lemsford' after her mother died and when she typed Lemsford into the search engine, our history website displayed. Contact was made and we invited her to Lemsford. Her tour of the village ended at Lemsford House, and she was invited in by Stefan who bought the house in the 1970s and was the owner at the time. She was very emotional and understood why she was adopted and had found closure.

Lemsford House closed when Brocket Hall ceased to be a maternity hospital in 1949 and the house was divided into five self contained flats. It was sold in 1976 for about £25,000. It has since become a single residence.

The Times February 26, 1976:

“Another former vicarage and a cottage, with about 2 and a half acres of land, which are part of the Brocket Estate, in Hertfordshire, is for sale through Jackson-Stops and staff of London. Known as Lemsford House, it is about two miles from Welwyn Garden City and is divided in to five self-contained flats, each with between two and four rooms and a kitchen and bathroom. It could easily be turned into a large family home. The property is to come to auction next month with a reserve price of £25,000. The cottage, which has three rooms and needs modernisation, will be offered separately if not sold with the house.”

Stefan converted the house back to a family home and lived there for over forty years. The present owners, Nick and Lucy Stephens, have lovingly restored the building with new windows (wooden not plastic), a new grey slate roof and a new boiler replacing an ancient oil heating system. The building looks immaculate, and the grounds are fit for a vicar's tea party. Nick and Lucy kindly agreed to let the group visit the grounds on Thursday 21st September 11.00 to start tour at 11.15 followed by lunch at The Sun.

If you'd like to know more about the history of Lemsford please contact me on info@lemsfordhistory.co.uk you can also use this address to add your email to our distribution list to keep you updated on future events.



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Mushrooms and toadstools appear miraculously each autumn, out of nowhere. Both are fungi; mushrooms are generally edible while toadstools are poisonous. On a walk last October I came across a group of bright red fungi, near a tree, which turned out to be Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). They were covered in white spots, like toads, and like toads they are poisonous - hence toadstools. The Fly bit of its name arose because pieces were often floated in milk, to intoxicate and kill flies attracted by its aroma.

Early man discovered that these toadstools have another interesting property - they are hallucinogenic. This undoubtedly inspired him to include them in his cave paintings. They have influenced artists and writers ever since.

An English specialist in fungi, the magnificently named Mordecai Cubitt Cooke, wrote a book about them in 1860. He described "erroneous impressions of size and distance" becoming "common occurrences" after consuming Fly Agaric, with "a straw lying on the road" turning into "a formidable obstacle". Lewis Carroll possibly referenced this effect in his *Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865. Alice is offered a mushroom by a hookah-smoking caterpillar, and told that "one side will make you grow smaller, and one side will make you grow taller".

Some writers claim that these toadstools have shaped our images of Christmas. In Scandinavia and Siberia it was noticed that reindeers who had grazed on these toadstools became noticeably excited, running in circles and leaping wildly. Men bold enough to drink urine from these drugged



creatures (their kidneys conveniently filtering out the toxins) experienced altered states of consciousness, which was one way to get through long hard winters. When high on reindeer urine they dreamed of weird beings dressed in red and white, the colours of Fly Agaric, who entered into folklore. Eventually these morphed into Santa Claus, who is always dressed in red and white. And it is no surprise that Santa gets about by means of a team of flying reindeer, presumably having a diet of Fly Agaric.

But toadstools have a still more amazing property - they have a mutually beneficial (symbiotic) link with the trees around which they live. The fungi intertwine with the tree's roots, from which they extract carbohydrate to help them grow. In return the tree extracts water and minerals from the fungi which helps it to grow. Isn't nature wonderful!

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God of compassion, May your kingdom come.

The Trussell Trust

And finally These may seem silly at first but they will grow on you.

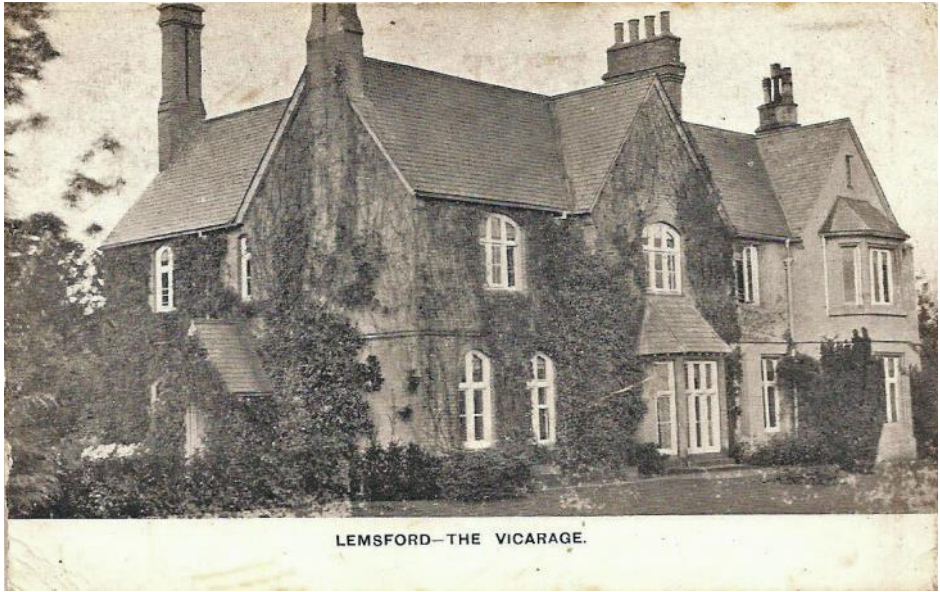
What did the mushrooms sing when they won the cup?
We are the champignons!

How did the mushroom end up on a vacation abroad?
It was a spore of the moment decision!

What did the girl mushroom say to the boy mushroom?
"You seem a fun-gi."



Why was the mushroom arrested?
For stalking.



LEMSFORD—THE VICARAGE.

Above (Then – 1859): The Vicarage for the Church of
St John the Evangelist, Lemsford

Below (Now): ‘Lemsford House’





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