

## THIS AND THAT (227)

A hawfinch foraged and footled contentedly on the Vicarage forecourt for ten minutes last Tuesday. The first we can ever remember seeing. It is the thirty fifth species of bird we have identified in the Vicarage garden. Without trying too hard.

### A beautiful bruiser of a bird

It is an exceedingly handsome bruiser of a bird, notable for a mighty, conical-shaped bill, the colour of pewter. Its Latin name *Coccothraustes* is derived from two Greek words, *kokkos*: seed, and *thrauō*: to break or shatter. Apty. It's bill is powerful enough to crack cherry pips, the deadliest of tooth-chipping fruit stones. Its mighty jaw muscles exert a force equivalent to a load of 100lbs.

### Damned statistics

Authors worry about the number of books they sell. Parsons about the number of folk in their pews. In the latter case inappropriately. The clergy are called to feed their sheep not count them. And yet statistics have dominated my days for the past few weeks.

We have been filling in diocesan attendance forms. It is a tricky business. Among other things we are asked how many folk comprise our 'worshipping community', but what exactly is that? Is it those who attend more than four times, ten times or twelve times a year?

All churches are required to record the number of those attending each service throughout the year. Attendance being one factor taken into account by the Diocese when it assesses "parish share", which is the amount each parish is asked to contribute to diocesan funds.

This being so, parishes are inclined to modesty about Sunday attendances and the size of their worshipping community. Understandably. Tax minimisation is not confined to the likes of Google and Microsoft. It is all but universal. Up until recently it was considered an honourable as well as legitimate sport.

If parish statistical returns coyly understate attendance figures in the hope of minimising "parish share", the statistics that indicate dramatic decline in the Church of England might be marginally brighter than they appear.

### Jewish humour

I love Jewish humour. It's the only serious rival to that of the English. The Jews are even better than we are at laughing at themselves. In a review of *Jews and their Jokes* by Jeremy Dauber, Joseph Epstein concludes that although political correctness is having a deleterious effect on all humour, the Jewish variety is likely to survive. Though only if it remains based on the conviction "that out of the crooked timber of humanity nothing entirely straight can be made, that human nature in all its nuttiness does not change, and that the greatest fool of all... is he who thinks it can."

Jokes about anti-Semites, he maintains, tend to be the richest. Like the one about the drunk at the bar who three times offers to buy drinks for the house, each time excluding from his generosity "my Israelite pal at the end of the bar." When the Jew asks the drunk what he has against him, the drunk answers, "You sank the Titanic." The Jew replies, "I didn't sink the Titanic, an iceberg sank the Titanic." After belching daintily, the drunk responds: "Iceberg, Greenberg, Goldberg—you're all no damn good."

### Noses and domineering or extravagant wives

The film *Gentleman's Agreement* was released in 1947 and widely acclaimed. It is about a journalist who pretends to be a Jew in order to expose anti-Semitism in New York. Nominated for eight Oscars the film won three. For all its merit's the film's moral was wittily dismissed as "never be mean to a Jew because he might turn out to be a gentile."

Favourite topics for Jewish humour are: cosmetic surgery (Dorothy Parker said that Fanny Brice's rhinoplasty was a case of "cutting off her nose to spite her race"); the domineering wife ("when a boy returns home from school to announce that he is to play a Jewish husband in the school play, his mother sends him back to tell the teacher he wants a speaking part"); and the extravagant wife ("A thief stole my wife's purse with all her credit cards. I'm not going after him. He's spending less than she does...")

All Andrew Neaum's weekly articles are at: <http://www.andrewneaum.com/>

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## Benefice Office (at St Nicholas Pilley)

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### TODAY: THIRD SUNDAY of EPIPHANY 21 JAN 2018

**St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley :** 8.00am Holy Communion

**St Mary's South Baddesley:** 9.30pm Holy Communion

**St John's Boldre:** 10.30am Family Service & Children's Club

**St Luke's Sway:** 3.00pm Ecumenical Service for Christian Unity

### For Prayer This Week

World peace and harmony. Orin and Lawrence baptized today

**Prayer requests:** Peter Chitty, Heather Collings-Wells, Janet, Rachel, James, Colin Erne, David, Vanessa and Dominic.

**Rest in Peace:** John Stacey, Tony Phillips, John 'Bugs' Hughes, Kate Roome.

### Activities This Week

Tue 23 Jan - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. Seated exercise to music at St Nicholas' Pilley & refreshment

Tue 23 Jan - 11.30am St John's Funeral, Tony Phillips

Wed 24 Jan - 10.30am Communion St Nicholas' Pilley + coffee

Wed 24 Jan - 11.30am St John's, Funeral, John Stacey

Wed 24 Jan - Bible Study Ph. 07786194282 for venue & time

Thu 25 Jan - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. As on Tuesdays

Thu 25 Jan - 12.00pm St John's Funeral, Kate Roome

### NEXT SUNDAY: FOURTH of EPIPHANY

### AUSTRALIA SUNDAY 28 JAN 2018

**St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley :** 8.00am Holy Communion

**St Mary's South Baddesley:** 9.30pm Matins

**St John's Boldre:** 10.30am Holy Communion & Children's Club

**St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley** 6.30pm Choral Evensong

### Dates for the Diary 2018

Sun 28 Jan - 10.30am St John's - Australia Sunday

Wed 31 Jan - 11.45am St Nicholas' Chapel - Mission Meeting

Mon 12 Feb - 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 1

Wed 14 Feb - 10.30am S Nicholas Chapel-Ash Wed Communion

Mon 19 Feb - 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 2

Mon 26 Feb - 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 3

Fri 2 Mar - Women's World Day Prayer - St Saviour's Brock

Mon 5 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 4

Sun 11 Mar - 10.30 St John's - Mothering Sunday.

Mon 12 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 5

Wed 14 Mar - 12.00pm St Nicholas' Chapel - Organ Recital

Sat 17 Mar - 4.00pm St Nicholas' Chapel - Organ Recital

Mon 19 Mar 4.00pm Vicarage - PCC Meeting

Mon 19 Mar 7.00pm Vicarage - Lent Study 6

Sat 24 Mar -10.30am Lenten Walk from St John's Car Park

### AUSTRALIA DAY AT ST JOHN'S

**Sunday 28 Jan** at 10.30am we hold our **Australia Day Service** to celebrate our links with that fair land. Encourage friends with Australian connections to come along with you.

### WINTER EVENSONGS 6.30pm

At 6.30pm on **28 January 2018** and **25 February 2018**, Boldre Choral Evensong will be held in St Nicholas' Chapel [next door to Boldre Memorial Hall (SO41 5QG)]. This is a lovely building that now has a fine organ. The music will be first rate, the venue warm, the welcome out of this world.

### SIGN UP FOR LENT STUDIES

If you intend coming to our Lent Studies on Monday nights at the Vicarage (7.00pm) sign up before leaving the church, or email the Vicarage.

### CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOXES

St. John's Children's Society boxes raised £804 including £224 from William Gilpin School. Thank you to everyone. If anyone would like a box, please call Pim on 673744