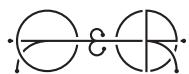


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# THE CHURCH STREET CHRONICLE

Volume 6 Issue 9

## So Here It Is, Merry Christmas!

Welcome to this festive edition of *The Church Street Chronicle*, and the final one for this year (hurray! I hear you shout!) At the time of writing, we are just a week away from the latest national restrictions being lifted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, and the government has announced its “12 rules for Christmas”. Essentially, the rules will be relaxed for a five-day period between the 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> December, allowing for up to three households to form a temporary “Christmas bubble”, and travel restrictions will be lifted to allow people to visit their families anywhere in the UK.

I know for many of you this will come as welcome news, allowing for much needed and long-overdue time to be spent with family and friends.



We don't know what our plans are for this year, but to know that we can meet with parents/parents-in-law, grannies and grandads will be a much-needed boost and provide some semblance of normality for us.

Whatever your plans are for Christmas 2020, I'd like to wish you all a very happy and safe one and wish you all

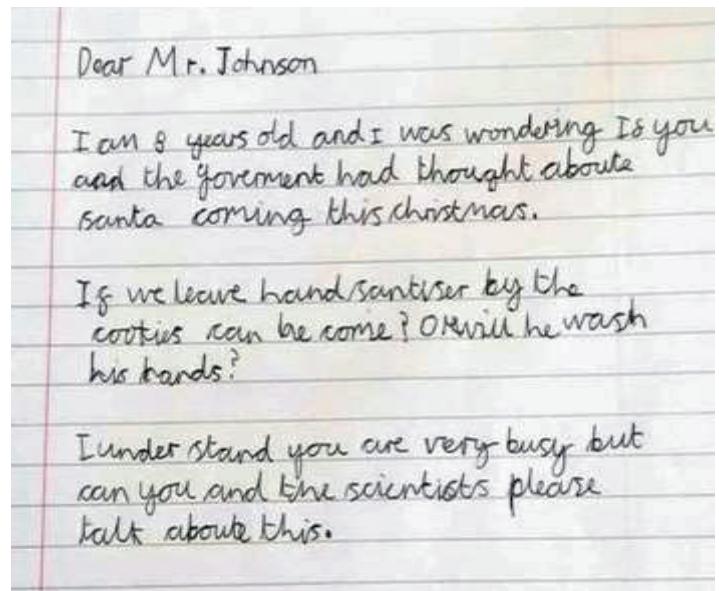
the very best for a happy and healthy New Year.

## Christmas is NOT Cancelled-Official!

Of course, Christmas is really all about the children, and there will be millions of them up and down the country who'll be wondering right now whether or not Christmas will happen this year. Is it worth them getting their 2020 advent calendar, should they bother with the Christmas tree, is there any point in writing to Father Christmas with their wish-list?

Well, an 8-year-old schoolboy named Monti has asked the Prime Minister the question millions of children in the UK are desperately seeking an answer to: Will Santa still be coming this year despite the Coronavirus?

The PM shared the letter from Monti on social media, and wrote back to reassure him, and millions of other children across the UK (and their anxious parents) that he'd “put a call in to the North Pole” and that Father Christmas “is ready and raring to go, as are Rudolph and the other reindeer.”



Fortunately, travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office confirms that people from Finland

(including Lapland) do not have to quarantine when travelling to the UK. The FCO has also confirmed that Father Christmas is exempt from quarantine rules in the same way as aircraft pilots and drivers of goods vehicles are not required to quarantine when travelling to the UK.

So, it's official, Christmas has not been cancelled! Time to crack on everyone, get your Christmas preparations under way. Just remember to leave a bottle of hand-sanitiser by the front door or the fireplace so that Father Christmas can observe good hand hygiene procedures when he visits your house.

## Cummings & Goings (sorry, Gone!)

Regular readers might recall the piece I wrote about Dominic Cummings in a previous edition of these pages (vol 6 issue 5). For those of you unfamiliar with the story (where have you been living for the past 8 months?!) Dom allegedly broke lockdown travel rules earlier in the year by travelling with his family from London to Northumberland to self-isolate. To make matters worse, he then took a 60-mile round trip to Barnard Castle, allegedly to check that his eyesight was up to the minimum standard required for driving.

Needless to say, there was the usual media furore in the weeks following but “Teflon-Dom” managed to weather the storm.

Fast-forward six-months and I’m writing about DC again in these pages. Only this time the Teflon coating has worn-off and he’s been shown the door. After what appears to have been a major break-down in relations between the PM, his long-time Chief Adviser DC, and communications director Lee Cain, Dominic was seen leaving Number 10 for the last time on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

Unlike Lee Cain, who sloped-off via a back door to escape the media on Downing Street, Dom at least had the character (or is it brass neck?) to leave through the front door and face the awaiting cameras and journalists. In typically cliched fashion he left his employer with nothing more than a cardboard box.

And what was in this box? Important plans and schemes to restructure the civil service and Parliament? Maybe it contained years of personal diaries, which in the fullness of time will be published and serialised in the Daily Mail? Could it have contained sheets of idle doodlings, scribbled down on Downing Street headed paper from years of dull

and dreary Cabinet meetings?



Well folks, I can now reveal for the first-time what Dominic was carrying in this unassuming box...



Looks like you’ve got yourself a great selection there Dom!

## Baby News!

Before you get too excited, Karen and I are not expecting another child. Frankly, that’d be ridiculous. Parenthood came late for us, and the thought of having a third child when we’re the wrong side of 45 is terrifying! A teenager, a 10-year old, and a cocker spaniel is more than enough!

But I am very excited to announce that our very own Tina is soon to be an aunty for the second time in the Spring. Tina is already aunty to Norah, who’ll be two on New Year’s Eve, and will become an aunty for the second time to her new nephew in March.

“I can’t believe where the time has gone and it’s crazy to think that Norah will be two this year” said Tina. “She’s beautiful, and such a little lady, she obviously takes after her aunt!” And whilst Tina is obviously thrilled about the imminent arrival of her nephew, she is less pleased with her brother’s timing. “March is a really expensive month because of Birthdays; my birthday is on the 5<sup>th</sup>, my brother’s

is on the 6<sup>th</sup>, my uncle's is on the 7<sup>th</sup> and my mum's is the 11<sup>th</sup>! He really should have planned this better! But what a wonderful Birthday present for us all!"

Congratulations Tina, and of course to your brother Carl and sister-in-law Ellie. This is very happy and exciting news for you all and we look forward to hearing of his safe arrival in the Spring!

## Canine Updates!

Our very own dog whisperer and Dispensing Optician Bhav has welcomed a new arrival to his family this month. Welcome to Zeva, a four-month old Border Collie pup.

"After a few days and lots of different suggestions we decided to call her Zeva, which is Hebrew for wolf." Said Bhav. "She's been a dream so far, we haven't had a single night without sleep, and she's already becoming my little shadow."



Zeva joins Bhav's four other canine friends, and he hopes that when she's older she'll be able to join them and compete at flyball and maybe even make it to the big arena at Crufts.

Congratulations Bhav and Krish, we think you've got yourself a little cutie there!

Regular readers may remember that last year, with your help, we donated £1,000 to Guide Dogs to help sponsor the training of a new guide dog puppy (Volume 5 Issue 6).

Our puppy is called Skye and she has now moved on to guide dog training school. Having completed her initial

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puppy training with her trainer Glyn, Skye has now embarked on the next phase of her development, moving to Redbridge and being housed with new trainer Kim learning to become a fully-fledged guide dog.

She'll be getting used to wearing a harness and learning new skills such as how to avoid obstacles, learning to stop at kerbs, and understanding how to lead someone with a visual impairment. Skye will also continue to be exposed to lots of different environments and experiences to help improve her confidence, including using public transport.

It takes about two years and approximately £45,000 to train a guide dog puppy, so your support sponsoring Skye's training will be invaluable to providing independence and companionship for someone living with a visual impairment.



## 2020 – Our Annus Horribilis?

The year is 1992. The Royal Family has had a tumultuous time. Wracked by scandal including the separation of Charles and Diana, Andrew and Fergie, and Anne and Capt. Mark Phillips, the Royal Family was sunk into deeper despair when fire wreaked havoc as it tore through Windsor Castle, causing millions of pounds worth of damage.

At a speech at London's Guildhall a few days after the fire, to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her accession to the throne, she opened her speech by commenting:

*"1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure...In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an 'Annus Horribilis'"*, literally a "horrible year".

Fast-forward 30-years and I think many of us will be feeling much the same way as the Queen was back then. For many

of us this has been a horrible year. Families have been separated from their loved-ones, people have lost jobs or businesses, employees have had the uncertainty of furlough and whether they will have a job to return to; people have been seriously ill as a result of COVID; globally approximately 1.5 million people have died after contracting coronavirus. Two of this number are from our own extended family.

We've endured the initial lockdown in the Spring, enjoyed something not dissimilar to normality in the Summer, only to return to stricter national restrictions in November. And as Christmas approaches, we're all hoping that we can enjoy some time with our families and friends (safely and responsibly) over the festive period.

But I think it's important that we try not to allow ourselves to be defined by the events of the past year. I don't want to appear flippant, and I take nothing away from the real pain that this pandemic has brought on millions of people, but we should reflect on what has occurred and try to zoom-out and take a more holistic view.

I wrote in these pages in the early part of lockdown about being adaptable, and that humans have an incredible capacity to adapt to change. Now's a good time to reflect on that. Just spend some time thinking about everything that has happened over the past 9 months. The fact that you're reading this newsletter is a strong indication that not only are you still here, but you've adapted to this world we're living in. No doubt about it, it's hard. Adapting to change isn't easy and it can take its toll. But heh! You're still here, and every day that passes means that you're getting better at adapting, you're living the "new normal", staring down the challenges that the pandemic has thrown at you, and you'll continue to adapt.

I also wrote in the same pages that good things will come from this. It may not seem like it now, and for those who are deeply affected by the pandemic and all its consequences this may be difficult to understand or appreciate, but out of every crisis good things can and do occur. This will be no different.

There's an old Persian adage that became Abraham Lincoln's favourite saying:

***"This Too Shall Pass."***

Lincoln chose this phrase because it can be used in any and every situation one could encounter. He was President of the US during perhaps its most volatile and violent era, the Civil War. His great strength was his will, the way that he

was able to resign himself to the onerous task of leading his country through one of its most difficult trials, without giving in to hopelessness or fear. He came to embody the Stoic maxim of "bear and forbear", that is that we should acknowledge the pain but move onwards with our task. Do what you can. Endure what you must. Make the best of it.

We don't choose what happens to us, what era we live in or what difficulties life will throw at us. But we can choose what we make of it and what these tests and challenges will reveal about what we're made of.

So, how will I reflect on 2020? Will I look back in 30-years from now and describe it as an "annus horribilis"?

Well, I would certainly describe it as the most difficult and challenging year of our lives. Anxiety, stress, and tension-levels reached new heights; sleepless nights were plentiful, the business has taken a bruising and we're in no way out of the woods yet.

But through it all I've tried to adapt, to learn, to grow. I've tried to search for the positives in all of this and to be grateful for each and every day that I wake-up in the morning and have my family, friends, and colleagues to be responsible for. I continue to have purpose.

They say a calm sea never makes for a good captain, so I hope that the rough seas that we've navigated together this year will only serve to make us stronger, more resilient, and better able to cope with whatever challenges life will throw at us next.

Yes, it's been a difficult year, and one none of us would have wished for, but I hope that I've made the best of it and am a better person because of it.

So as 2020 nears its end, and a New Year beckons, let us be grateful for the fact that we have endured, we have adapted, we have become more resilient, and let us take comfort in the knowledge that this too shall pass.

Tina, Jason, Bhav, Karen and I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and we look forward to welcoming you again in 2021. Thank you for being with us.

Stay safe and keep well.

P.S We shall be closed from Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December and will reopen on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.