

# ***THE DRAYTONIAN***



**The Magazine of Drayton C of E Junior School**  
**ISSUE 7**

# Hello From The Head-Teacher



For those of us who have been back in school for the last couple of weeks we have certainly had to adapt to this new way of doing things. Had anyone asked me, back in September, about social distancing; singing happy birthday whilst washing your hands; placing children into bubbles and having staggered starts, I would have looked at them with a blank expression.

However I feel we have done extremely well and now take all the above as perfectly normal.

That said, it is sad to think that last week would have been Brancaster week, for all the Year 6 children, and at this time of year whenever I turn a page in my diary, to a new week, I see another end of year event that should have been taking place. Hopefully we can still think of something to mark the end of the year for Year sixes, whilst also following all the guidance.

For those of you not in school, it is great to know that the magazine is still going strong, meaning we can all keep in touch and continue to find out what we have all been up to. So I hope you all enjoy this issue. Can you believe we are now seven issues in? Thank you to all those who have made contributions, and to Mr Silvester for continuing to put it together on top of being back in school full time.

*David Oldham*

Although some of us are back at school, I wanted to continue producing the magazine so that wherever we all are, we're still able to do things together. This issue features lots of work by Year 6 and Key Worker children who are in school and who wanted to write things for those of you still at home. We wanted all of you at home to know that we are all thinking of you and hope that we can welcome you back to school very soon.

**Mr Silvester**

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The next few chapters of this amazing children's story.



# WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL!

**Nyah, Max, Hannah, Thomas, Madison and Tyler from 6F tell us what it is like being back at school.**

Due to Coronavirus our school has been closed since March 20<sup>th</sup>. We have not been able to go to school or see our friends. However, we have been doing home-learning.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, Year 6 were able to come back to school, but Drayton Junior School is very different. We thought we would like to tell you what it has been like going back to school!

## **OUR THOUGHTS BEFORE WE CAME BACK TO SCHOOL**

“When I first came back to school, I felt really worried and scared.” – Madison.

“I thought I wouldn’t have a good time by coming back to school.” – Max

“I was worried that it would be really strict about being close to each other, especially on the playground.” Hana

## **OUR DAY IN SCHOOL**

**9:00:** We arrive at school and line up in small groups (we have 6 children in our group) on the field. Our teachers are Mr Silvester and Miss Worsley. When they arrive, we walk in to the classroom and wash our hands. We have to stay 2 metres apart.



**Everyone running in at the start of the day**

The classroom is very different. Everyone has their own desk and two chairs. One is to sit on, and one is for our bags. All the desks are 2 metres apart. It is nice being in small groups – sometimes it is quieter, but sometimes it is not!



**Making tessellation puzzles in maths**

We might start the day by watching Newsround and catching up on the latest news. Then we do some Maths. This week we have been learning about tessellation. Lessons are quite quiet (sometimes.....).



**Everyone watching Newsround**

**At 10:00** we might have an assembly via Zoom. Each class logs in and we see Mr Oldham on the screen. He mutes us and then we listen to his assembly. 5

of us prefer Zoom assembly, one of us prefers normal assembly. We don't sing songs but we do say a prayer.



**We have assembly in the classroom**

After this we do another lesson – probably English. We are reading the book 'Street Child' about a Victorian orphan. We have also been learning about circuses in Victorian times. Next is break time, but we wash our hands first.



**This is us washing our hands before break time**

**11:00** Each group has a special area of the field or playground. We have breaks at different times to each other so there is enough space for everyone to stay apart. We can only play with the people in our group (groups are also known as bubbles). If we use any equipment (like tennis rackets etc) we have to leave them outside to be cleaned.



**Playing tennis on the field**

**11:15** When we come in, we wash our hands again. Then we do a Topic lesson ; about the Victorians. We have been watching an episode of a series called A Victorian Diary. We really recommend this series to anyone who enjoys History and drama. Nyah says her favourite part was when Susan got run over.

At **12:25**, we wipe down our desks with disinfectant spray and wash our hands. Then, at **12:30**, we go outside for 30 minutes play on the field.



**Wiping the desks before/after lunch**

We come in at **1pm** and wash our hands again. Then we eat lunch in the classroom. We like doing this because we get to watch a film in the classroom and the dinner lady supervises us from outside the room.

**1:30 pm** We start lessons again after washing our hands and disinfecting the desks. We have been doing a lot of Art and craft in the afternoon. On Friday afternoon we do a Zoom quiz with the rest of our class.



**We have to disinfect our desks again!**

We finish at 2:50pm and after washing our hands again, can go home. We have to walk out of the classroom keeping a 2m gap between us. Then we can go with our parents or walk home ourselves if we are allowed. Each class leaves at different times so there are not too many people around at once.

Some of us are sad to go, as we have had a nice day. We are all tired (especially the teachers) after a full day.

### **OUR THOUGHTS AFTER A WEEK IN SCHOOL**

*"The more time I spent at school, the less worried I was."* Madison

*"I have really enjoyed it because it was really fun and laid back."* Nyah

*"I liked it because it was a bit different to normal school."* Thomas

*"I have really enjoyed it, even though I thought I wouldn't."* Max

*"It's more fun than normal school,"* Hana

**We've all enjoyed seeing our friends and teachers again, even though things are different. We hope to see you all back at school soon when it is safe to do so.**

**From**

**Madison P, Nyah C, Hana C, Thomas H, Tyler S and Max W**

**(6F, but also Mr Silvester's 'Bubble')**

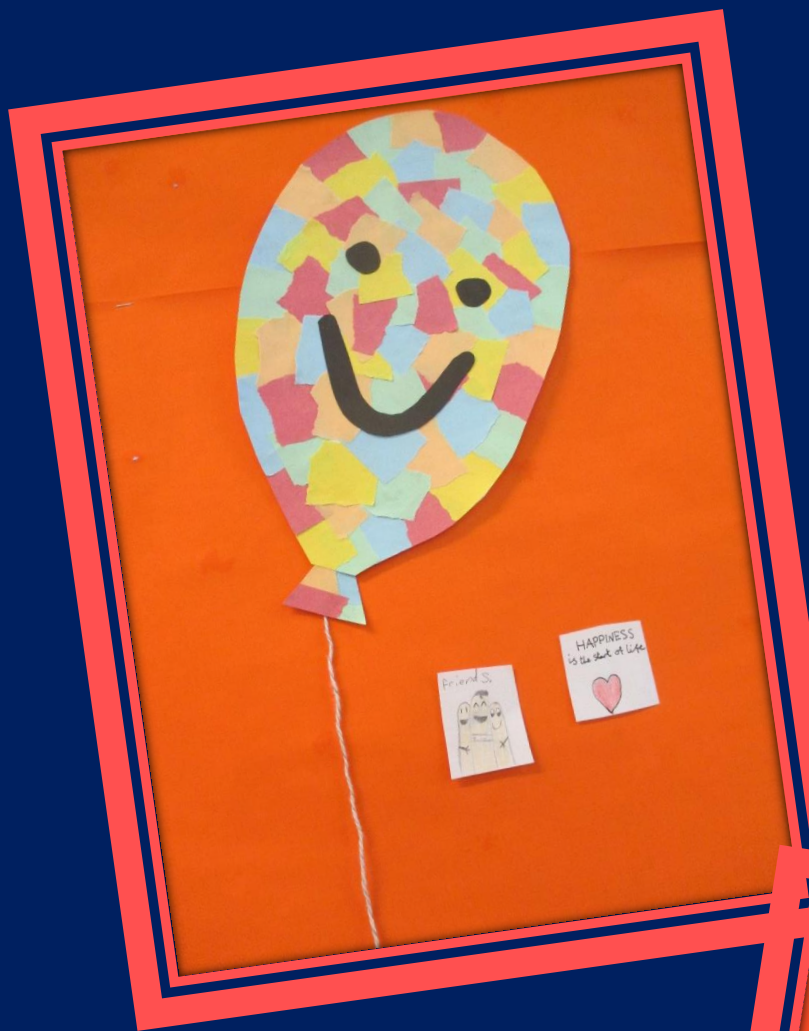


# HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

Returning to school, we were filled with a variety of different emotions: excitement, nervousness, fear, anxiety and trepidation. We thought it would be a good idea to create a 'Wall of Happiness' so whenever we feel unsure or worried, we can look at our uplifting wall display.

Check it out:





We hope you like our art work so far, we will keep adding to our display as time goes on. What would you put on your own Wall of Happiness?

Stay happy everyone,  
From Amber, Charlotte,  
Elodie and Gabriella (6G  
and The Bubble-ettes!)

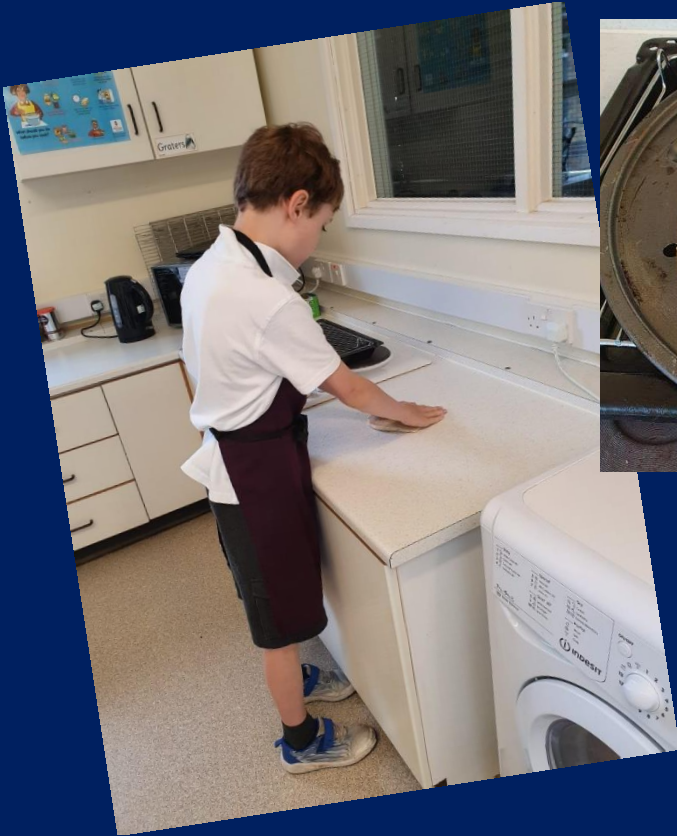


The Bubble-ettes also did a special Zoom assembly for the school. Coached by Miss Leigh they showed the school how to dance to 'Superman' and then got everyone to join in.



# PIZZA POWER!

Mrs Taylor, Ben F and Harry W from 6F have been making pizzas in their 'bubble'. They share the recipe and some photos.

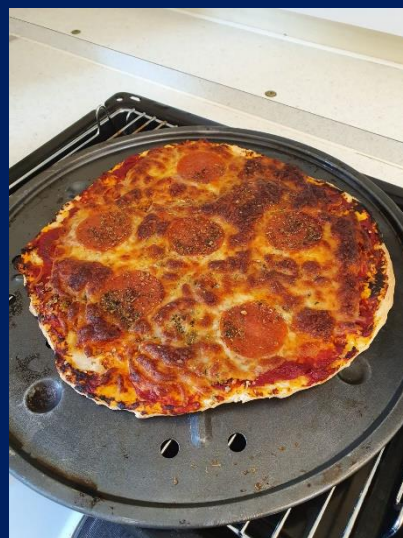


# Pepperoni Pizza



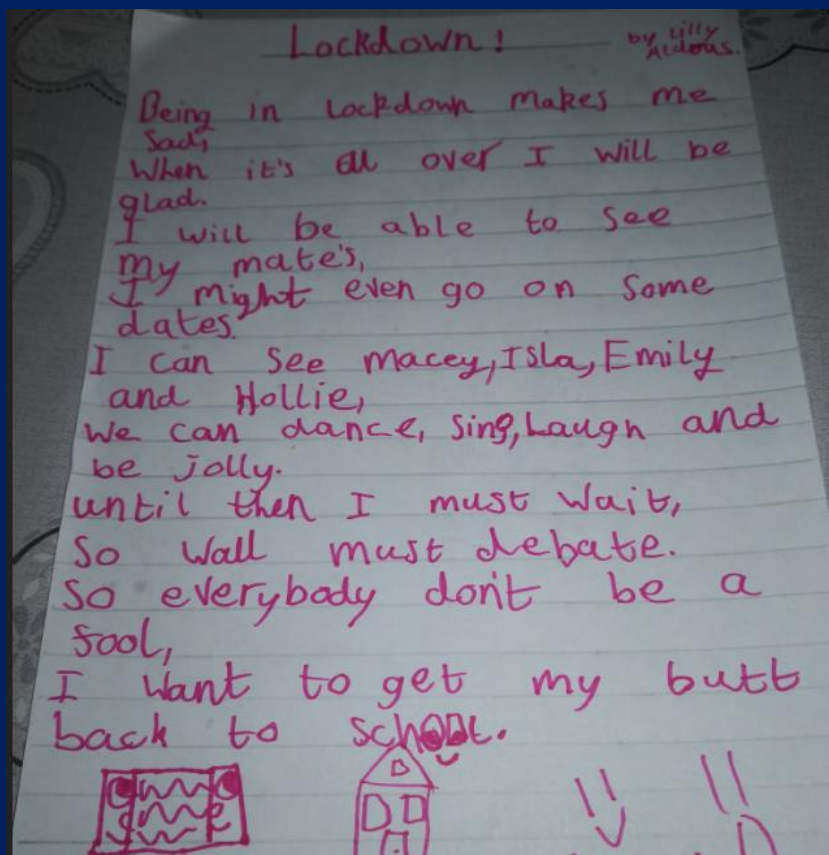
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- *Preheat oven 200c gas mark 7. Lightly oil a pizza tray.*
- *Make the base by adding 100ml of warm water to a pizza base mix.*
- *Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead for about 5 minutes. Using a rolling pin roll out the dough into a rustic round shape but not too thin.*
- *Place the dough onto the greased tray and smooth over the tomato puree with the back of a spoon so it covers the base of your dough. Scatter grated mozzarella cheese and any other toppings of your choice. We used pepperoni and oregano.*
- *Bake for 10-12 minutes until crisp.*



# LOCKDOWN LEARNING

You share what you've been doing at home with us.



Lilly A is keen to get back to school and wrote this great poem, whilst Chloe C (4B) drew this chirpy owl!



Jack and Holly D made these super fish using these instructions

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/AbD3oKMEYdWjbQ5lbWaedqJMFQIQIA8kRZZtDJ12QB MJ-HQ8qCT1IEU/>

During lockdown and homeschooling I discovered "bleach art".

What I had to do first was find an old bit of clothing, then I got a fork and twisted the jumper like I was eating spaghetti. I then had to get some elastic bands and make a pattern, I made stars.

After that I sprayed the jumper with water and then placed the jumper in the bathroom sink and sprayed it with bleach. This made a blobby pattern - the bleach was soaking through. We then turned the jumper over and did it all again.

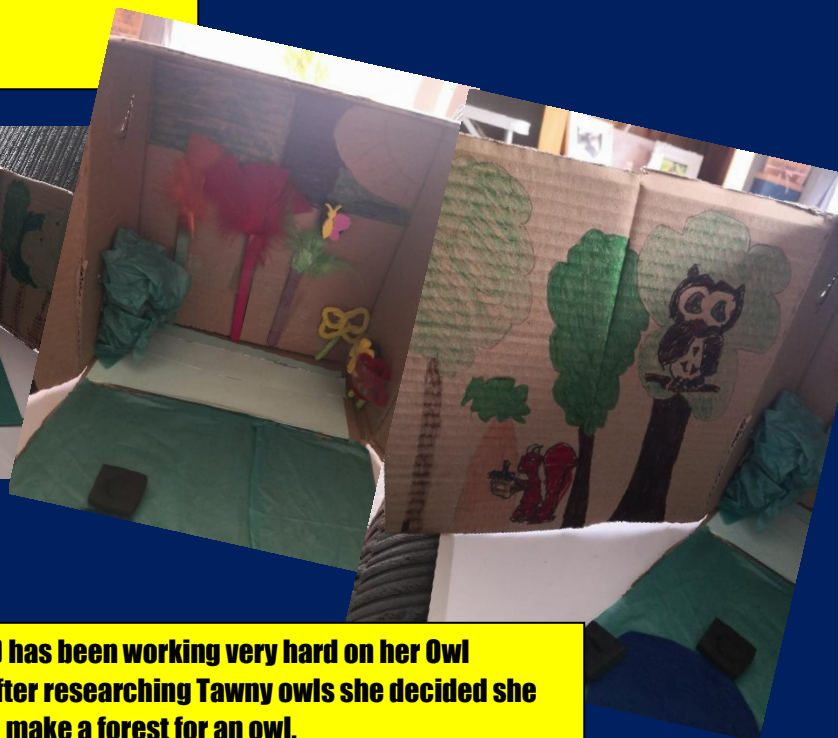
This was really fun to watch and see the colors change.

After waiting a few minutes it was ready to unfold and I had to leave it to dry.

I was very happy with the results and could not wait to be able to wear it. I asked mummy to wash it.

Sorry I didn't take any other pictures of when I was bleaching... I was too excited.

By Ocean Lily D – 4L



**Lilly A (Y4) has been working very hard on her Owl project. After researching Tawny owls she decided she wanted to make a forest for an owl.**

# Mrs. Howell's quiz page.

**HELP!!! Mrs Howell has lost her 'Bubble', can you spot which area of school the boys have escaped to?**

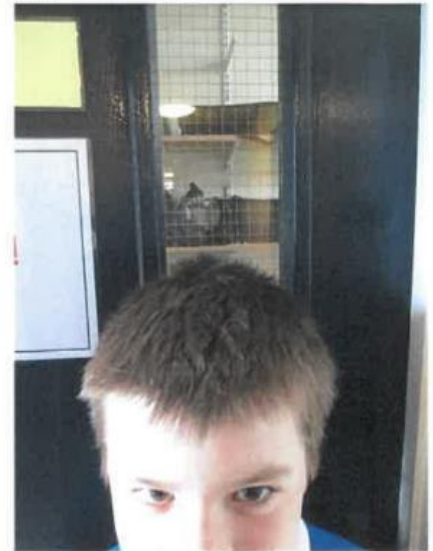
①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥

1) Swimming Pool Corner 2) Cookery Room 3) The Bubble 4) Wild Area 5) Year 3 Door 6) Outside 4L / Mr Richard's Office 7) Library Entrance 8) Trophy Cabinet in Entrance Hall 9) Outside New Mobile 10) Outside 6G 11) Hall 12) Corridor To 5H

ANSWERS

7



8



9



10



11



12





# How to make a Flextangle

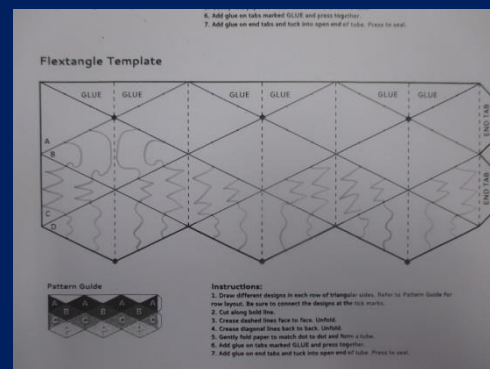
## What you will need:

A pencil, some colouring pens, a flextangle template, scissors and a glue stick or a role of sellotape. Link to template.

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/241505598747467550/>

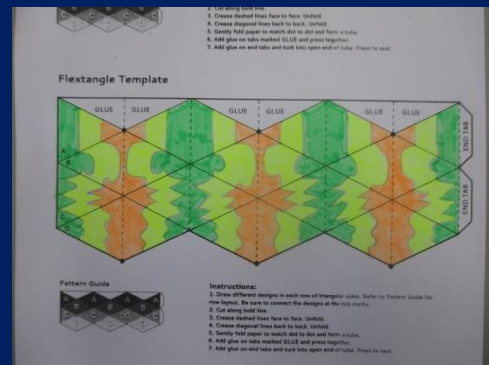
### Step One

Draw a repeating pattern along the bottom of the template. Make it as complicated as you want and then keep doing it on all the layers above it in a repeated pattern like this.



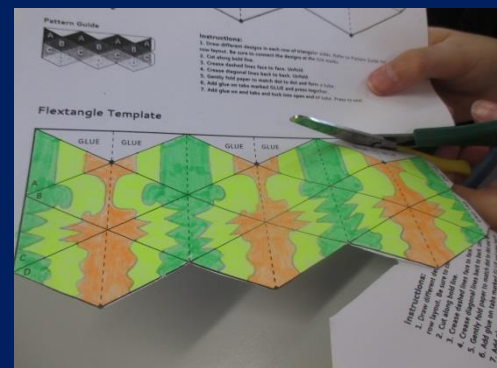
### Step Two

Now it's time to colour. Get three bright colours and start colouring the template in, use a repeating pattern.



### Step Three

Now you have to cut the template out. Cut round the whole shape. Don't cut the end tabs off!



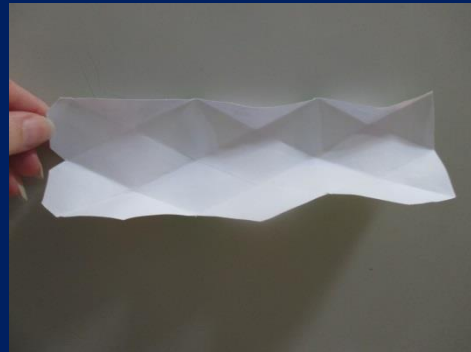
#### **Step Four**

Now you have to fold. Turn it over coloured side down. You have to fold along the diagonal lines.



#### **Step Five**

Now fold the other diagonal lines like this.



#### **Step Six**

Now it is all folded, take the pieces called glue and glue or tape the other side to it.



#### **TOP TIP**

Make sure if you are using tape, to use thin strips.

#### **Step Seven**

Finally, put the end tabs into the other end and glue or tape it together like this.

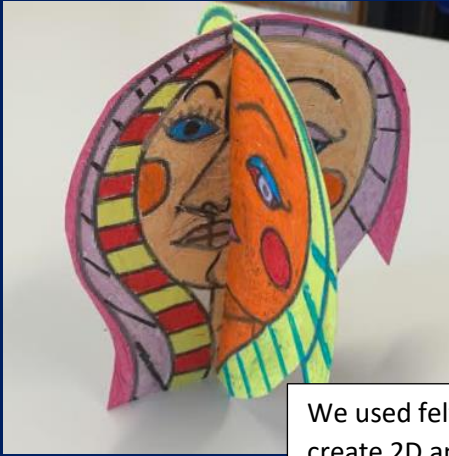


**Congratulations you completed the flexangle. Hope you enjoy!!**

**by Stanley 6G (Mr Tyson/ Mrs Brosche's Bubble)**

# PICASSO

This week the year 3 and 4 key worker children have been learning about Picasso.



We used felt-tips and pastels to create 2D and 3D Picasso inspired faces.



Millie G (4L)

Oscar C (3T)



Amelia H (3I)

Jack B (3I)



Isla B (3H)



# LIFE IN BUBBLE INNES-KNIGHTS

We are enjoying being back in school, even though things are different.

The things we like about being back in school are:

We get to see our friends every day because all of our friends are in our Bubble.

It was getting boring at home.

We get to do fun work at school.

It's good to see the teachers again.

We get to eat our lunch in a small group and not in a loud hall!

The things we still find difficult are:

Social distancing because we want to sit closer together. (Emily R misses having piggy-backs!).

Not being able to play games like 'Duck Duck Goose' and 'It'.



## Victorian Portraits

We had our photographs taken and had to make it into a Victorian style portrait. Mrs Innes and Mrs Knights gave us lovely pretty doilies to make lace collars and bonnets but we were not impressed! We made ourselves into Victorian gentleman instead. We thought that the men were treated much better than the

women and that they looked wealthier so we wanted to see what we would look like as men!

## MATHS

We have done lots of shape work in Maths. Freya and Amelia liked making parabolic shapes – using straight lines to make curves. Emily K liked making patterns with the compass. Evie enjoyed creating her own tessellation.



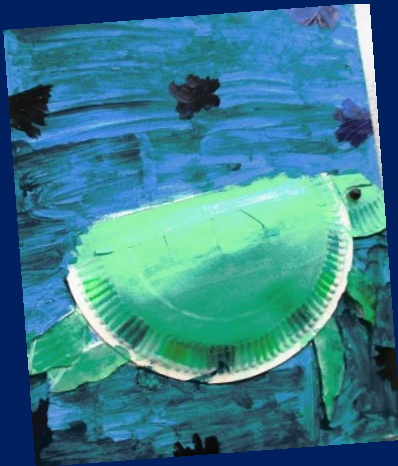
## POTS OF JOY

Mrs Innes told us we were going to make some pencil pots. We asked if we could make them into snack pots instead! So we now all have our own little 'Pots of Joy' on our desk. We can put healthy snacks in them during the week then on Fridays we find some less healthy treats in them when we arrive in the morning! ( Maddie wants to find some Lindt D'Or in hers one week!).



Emily, Amelia, Maddie,  
Freya, Evie and Emily

# TOTALLY TURTLES!



Some of the key worker children made these amazing turtles with Mrs Bond, using just paper plates. They made them to help celebrate World Ocean Day on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June.



# J Club

Hello everybody and welcome to J Club

How many of you have been having picnics during the last few weeks? We've had picnics in our living room, picnics in the garden, and yesterday we went to my daughters house and had a picnic in her garden which was really nice as we were able to see our granddaughters. We made sure we stayed 2 meters apart!

This story is about a massive picnic that Jesus was at and it's called

## The Boy Who Shared His Lunch

You can read this story in Luke 9: 11-17 in the Bible or in a Bible story book

Everywhere that Jesus went, lots of people followed him. They wanted to hear him talk about God and many wanted him to make them well.



Late one afternoon, Jesus disciples came to him and said, "No one lives in this place. Send the people away. They need to find food and places to sleep in the towns and countryside around here."

But Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat."

One of the disciples answered, "Someone would have to work almost a year to buy enough bread for each person here to have only a little piece

Another disciple, Andrew, said, "Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish. But that is not enough for so many people." (there were more than 5000 people there)

Jesus said to his followers, "Tell the people to sit in groups of about 50 people."



So the followers did this, and all the people sat down.

Then Jesus took the five loaves of bread and two fish.

He looked up to heaven and thanked God for the food. Then Jesus divided the food and gave it to the followers to give to the people. All the people ate and were satisfied. And there was much food left. Twelve baskets were filled with pieces of food that were not eaten.

Jesus just smiled and said 'God can do the most amazing things when you trust him'



The boy didn't have a very big lunch did he? and if he'd been out all day too he was probably really hungry. He could have just sat and eaten his bread and fish on his own, but instead he was prepared to give it away and look what happened, 2000 years later we are still talking about him. He might have felt a bit silly offering to share his lunch with such a massive crowd but the little bit that he gave made a massive difference.

Over the last 3 months we've seen lots of people doing small acts of kindness that have made a big difference to others. It's often the small things that people remember most.

Can you think of something kind that somebody has done for you?

Have you done something kind for someone?

What kind and generous thing could you safely do for someone this week? (Please check with your parents/carers)

## Lets Pray

Dear God

Please help us to be thankful for all the good things that we have.

Help us to be kind and generous, like the boy in the story and do what we can even if it's only a little thing.

Thank you that you can do the most amazing things when we trust you

Amen

## J Club Activities

### Play Flap a Fish

Cut out some paper fish shapes, roll up some newspaper and see how fast you can flap your fish across the floor.



Have you tried making bread? There are lots of delicious, easy flatbread recipes you could try (Ask a grownup first)

You could make it into wraps for a picnic.

### Send a Hug

Even though we may be able to see some of our family or friends, we still have to stay 2 meters apart so sadly we're not able to hug them. Why not make a hug out of paper or fabric and send it to them to show how much you love them.

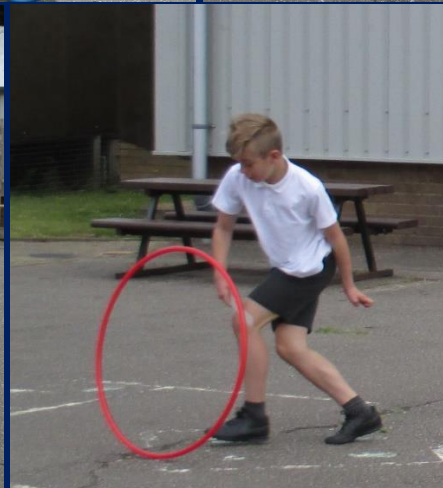
See you all soon, Rachel





# VICTORIAN GAMES

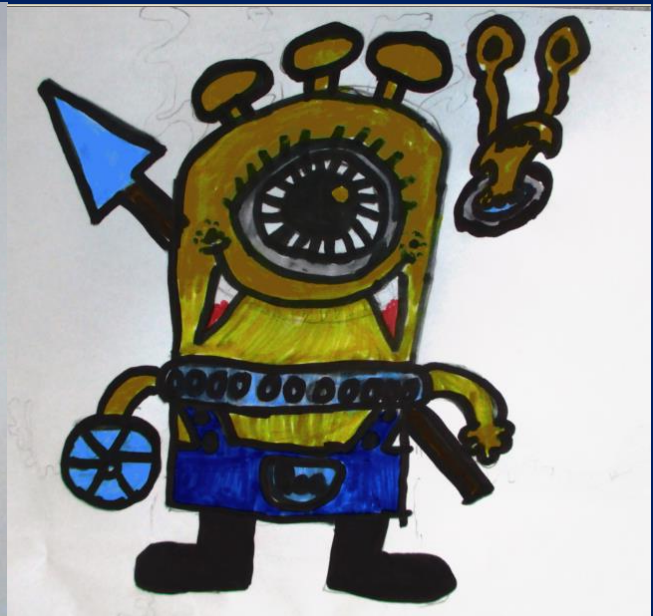
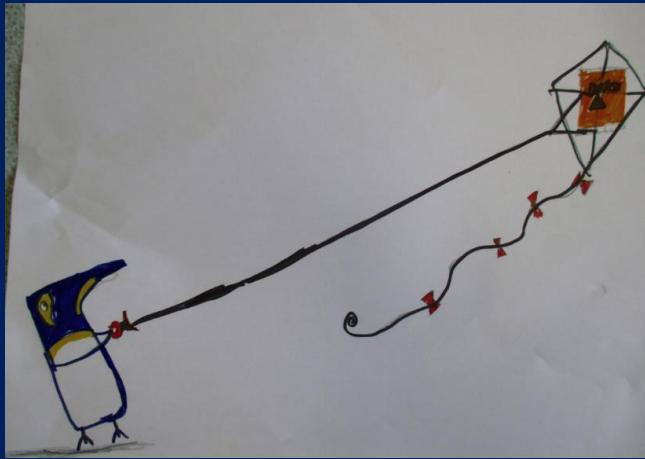
Y6 have been enjoying learning about the Victorians. This week the 6W bubble have been enjoying some Victorian playground games. First we learnt how to play hopscotch. It wasn't as easy as we thought it would be because the pebbles kept bouncing off the target numbers! We also had fun learning how to roll a hoop with a stick - we used rulers instead of sticks and Arthur broke his! Jack was the best hoop roller and won our races. Later we tried some long rope skipping and learnt how to jump in without touching the rope and also learnt a skipping rhyme. These Victorian games are still good fun to play on the playground. The bonus is, they can all be played whilst observing social distancing! Why not try some at home?

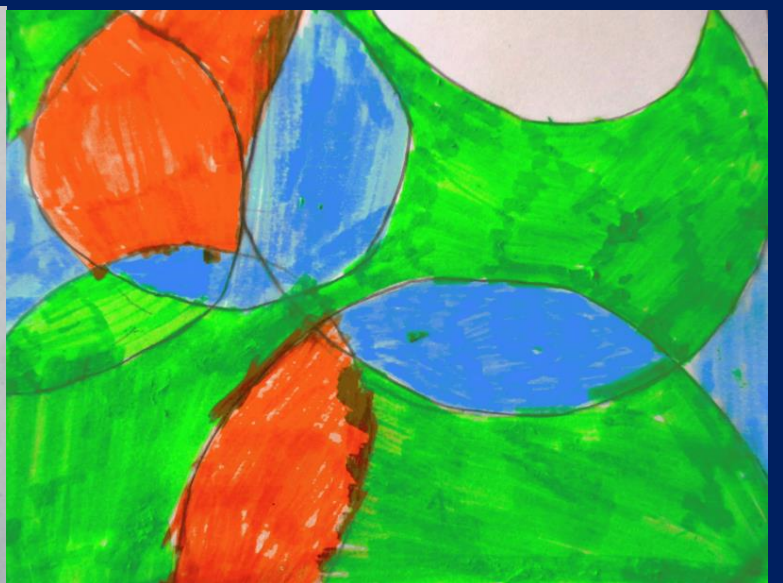
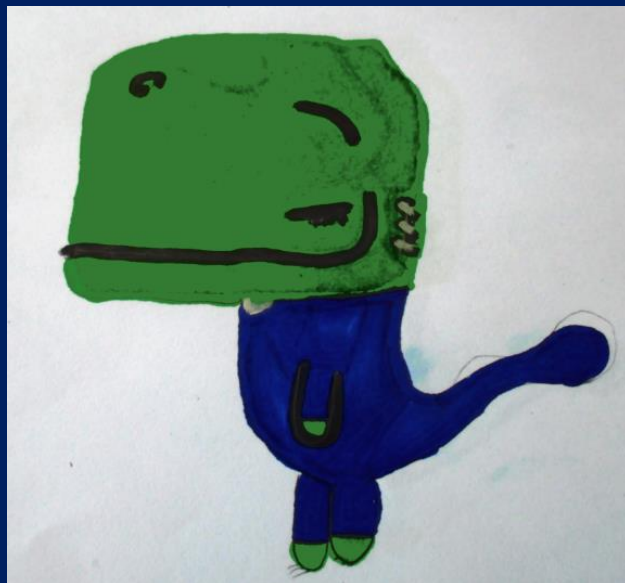
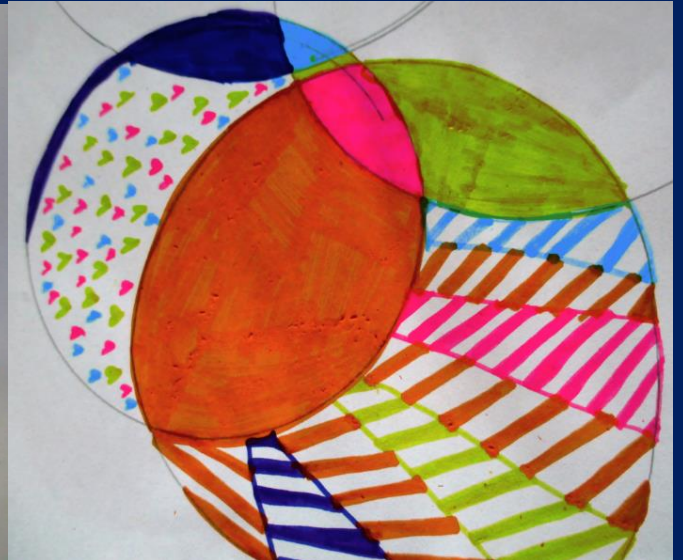
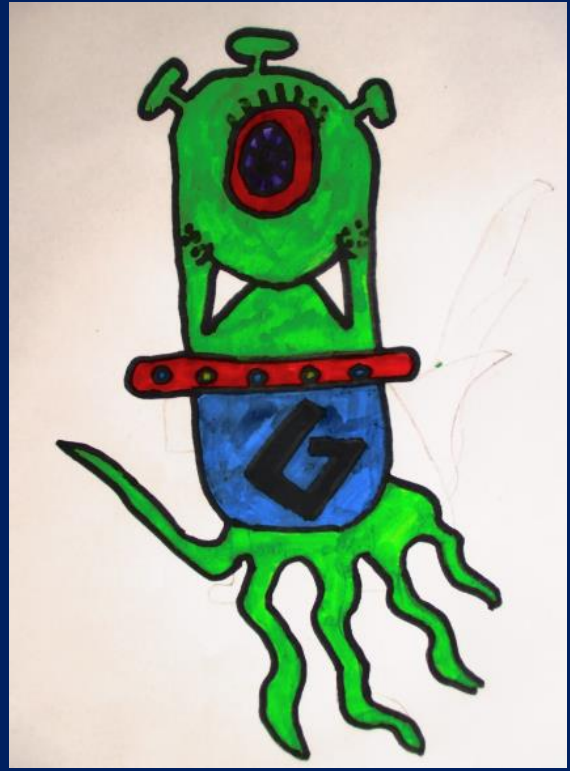


# Y5 KEYWORKER ART

Year 5 keyworker children have been working on their drawing skills in school this week.

Here you can see 'Penguin Blue', aliens and some circle art. We hope you like it.





# A Friend In Need

I would like to tell you about my older friend Bessie who is 92. It is wonderful to have an older friend like I do. Me and Bessie are really good friends - it all started by Kelly the Friend in Deed charity organiser. I went to a Friend in Deed cupcake making session at Badgers Wood and went with Bessie and Dotty. I made 3 cupcakes for Bessie, as she can't see very well. Then we got to know each other and became really good friends.

The residents like me playing my flute when I visit after school. Bessie loves to sing and we both enjoyed singing together when my class came to visit the home to do the intergenerational choir. We performed songs at The Forum just before Christmas. Other memorable moments include making gingerbread together on Christmas Eve, a Halloween party with Bessie and reading her my story that I wrote. For Christmas I made her a card and gave her some presents. One of the presents was a cucumber all wrapped up in Christmas paper! I thought it would make Bessie laugh as we both LOVE cucumber! Luckily she saw the funny side! I am worried about Bessie with the coronavirus outbreak and so I made a card for her to tell her I miss her. When I delivered it to the home, one of the healthcare assistants came out and said would you like to see Bessie through the window and so we had a lovely chat through the window waving and blowing kisses. It made my day!

Being friends with Bessie has taught me so much. I love being with her, having fun and laughing together. She is a very good friend and I love her so much. It would be nice for Drayton Junior pupils to make something for the Badgers Wood residents because they are getting very lonely as no one can visit them. Once this is over, why not go and see them?

By Ruby, 5S



# THE BIG FRIDAY NIGHT QUIZ

On Friday afternoon 6F had 'The Big Friday Afternoon Zoom Quiz' hosted by Mrs Silvester!

All three groups met on Zoom and used their knowledge to compete against each other. There were five rounds – so something for everyone. It was great fun.



The winner, with a score of 22 out of 25, was Katie.

Why not have a go at the quiz yourself

## Round one: Animals

1. What is the largest big cat in the world?
2. How many legs does an octopus have?
3. Yes or no? Is a dolphin a mammal?
4. What is a group of lions called?
5. What are baby goats called?

## Round two: Geography

6. What is the largest country in the world?
7. Where would you find the River Thames?
8. Which country is also known as the Netherlands?
9. In which country would you find the Leaning Tower of Pisa?
10. In which city would you find the Eiffel Tower?

### Round three: Science

11. What is the first name of the famous scientist who gave us Newton's three laws of motion?
12. Earth is located in which galaxy?
13. Which famous scientist introduced the idea of natural selection?
14. Botany is the study of what?
15. Is the sun a star or a planet?

### Round four: Dinosaurs

16. True or false? The name dinosaur means 'terrible lizard'.
17. Which came first, the Jurassic or Triassic Period?
18. Was Diplodocus a carnivore or herbivore?
19. Which dinosaur is thought to have the largest bite of them all?
20. What name do we give to the study of fossils?

### Round five: Books and films

21. What are the names of Harry Potter's parents?
22. What is the name of the Snowman in the film "Frozen"?
23. In which forest did Robin Hood and his Merry Men live?
24. What sort of animal is the video game character Sonic?
25. In "The Jungle Book", what kind of animal is Baloo?

- |                    |                         |               |            |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 18. Herbivore      | 10. Paris               | Round one     | 1. Tiger   |
| 19. T-Rex          | Round three             | 2. Eight      | 3. Yes     |
| 20. Palaeontology  | 11. Issac               | 4. A pride    | 5. Kids    |
| Round five         | 12. The Milky Way       | galaxy        | Round two  |
| 21. Lily and James | 13. Charles Darwin      | 14. Plants    | 6. Russia  |
| Potter             | 14. Plants              | 15. A star    | 7. London  |
| 22. Olaf           | Round four              | 16. True      | 8. Holland |
| 23. Sherwood       | 17. The Triassic Period | 18. Herbivore | 9. Italy   |
| 24. Hedgehog       |                         |               |            |
| 25. Bear           |                         |               |            |

# ON THE BALL!

## Mr Arden's Football Quiz

This week;

How many of the 20 premier league managers can you name?

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1) Arsenal        | 11) Manchester City    |
| 2) Aston Villa    | 12) Manchester United  |
| 3) Bournemouth    | 13) Newcastle United   |
| 4) Brighton       | 14) Norwich City       |
| 5) Burnley        | 15) Sheffield United   |
| 6) Chelsea        | 16) Southampton        |
| 7) Crystal Palace | 17) Tottenham Hotspurs |
| 8) Everton        | 18) Watford            |
| 9) Leicester City | 19) West ham United    |
| 10) Liverpool     | 20) Wolves             |



The answers will be  
in the next issue of  
the magazine!

Last issue answers

- 1) David Silva
- 2) Jürgen Klopp
- 3) Dele Ali
- 4) Paul Pogba
- 5) Tim Krul

# Who Am I?

## *I work at Drayton Junior School*

Although I was born in Norwich, I have also lived in Brighton, Southampton and Chicago.

I live in a house that was once a pub and my next door neighbours are mostly ducks, sheep, hens and horses.

When I was younger I wanted to become an author and my pen name was to be Harriet Jamieson.

My husband and I once went to a McDonalds Drive Thru dressed as Worzel Gummidge and Aunt Sally.

Not all children call me by my "teacher" name. Lots of people know me as Snowy, especially on Thursdays!

I once got locked inside Eaton Park - the whistle we thought was the park keepers 10-minute warning was actually the final lock up whistle. My dad helped me and my siblings climb over the big black iron gates but I was so scared that I wet myself!

I was once hit around the head by a shop lifter who I caught trying to steal drinks on Brighton Station.

I love animals. I got into trouble as a child when I stabbed hundreds of holes in my Wendy House to allow the ladybirds inside to breathe.

I have served dinner to Stephen Fry (and his mum.)

I went to school with an England footballer (& another DJS teacher.)

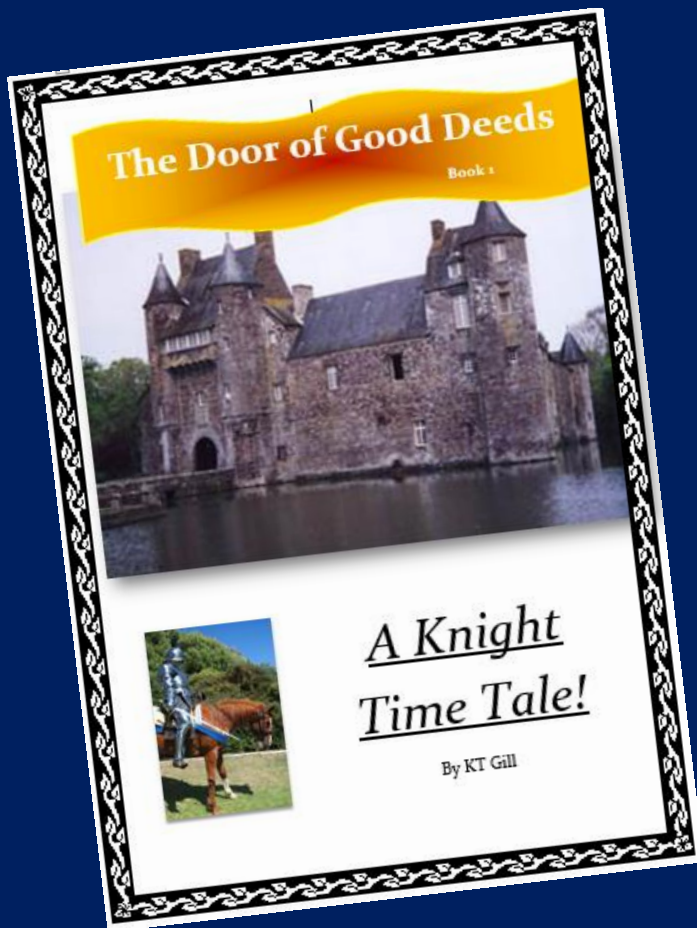
I sat next to Terry Waite on a bus in Gibraltar.

I bonded with Kirstie Allsopp over a Raspberry Bellini.

**Did you guess last issue's Who Am I? –One was Mrs Game and two was Mrs Lambourne**

**Answers next issue**





## MRS GILL WRITES....

*As the Christ's mas festivities get into full swing, Penny and Abi explain all about Santa and nativity plays from their own time..... Will Olivier and his father Lord Evan understand the modern celebration? There is a brand new arrival on a very special day that is to play an important role in their nativity play. Can Oliver continue with his training unnoticed and will he be successful when he faces his first 'knight'?*

*Mrs Gill*

### A Knight Time Tale

By KT Gill

### Chapter 21

Christmas Eve dawned a perfect winter's morning; the air crisp and cold, the sky a bright, crystal blue, clear of any clouds. Just as the girls were stretching their limbs, having woken from their deep slumbers, there was an urgent knock on the chamber's door.

"Penny, Abi?" they heard Oliver's loud whisper.

"What does he want at this unearthly hour?" asked Abi, leaving Penny to hop out of bed to investigate.

Quickly Penny grabbed her robe and hurried over to the door. Opening it she asked, "What is it Oliver? Is everything okay?"

Feeling, somewhat shy, he replied, "Tis a most splendid day, Penny. I must hasten to Merek's for training. Would you both care to accompany me?"

"Oh, yes Oliver, that'd be great," replied Penny enthusiastically before turning to her friend and continuing, "Wouldn't it Abi?"

"Yeah, great!" came the sarcastic reply as she buried herself deeper into her bedcovers.

"Oh don't mind her; we'll see you downstairs in the solar in a few minutes,"

"Splendid!! I'll send word to Will to saddle our horses," said Oliver as he dashed down the stairs, smiling so widely that both Abi and Penny couldn't help but laugh.

"He's so keen to win the tournament, isn't he Pens?" said Abi, as she pulled on her clothes.

"Yes, I hope for his sake he does. His father will be so proud of him. Really, I think Lord Evan is just over protective. I think if Oliver suddenly shows him that he can ride and joust and win... Well, he'll have to accept it, won't he?" mused Penny as she too dressed warmly ready for a day out in the fresh air.

Swiftly the girls descended the stairs and joined Oliver, who was trying to eat but had Lady fussing round him as usual.

"No Lady, thee may not eat the bread! Twill give thee the vapours!!" he was scolding her.

"Here, try this," he continued as he offered her a tasty morsel of meat.

Laughing at the scene, Abi said to Oliver, "She really is the most spoilt dog I know!"

Turning to face the girls, Oliver just gave them a cheeky smile, shrugged his shoulders and patted Lady's head. The girls sat and helped themselves to a hearty breakfast of bread, meat and fruit. Oliver had got used to the girls eating apples and pears raw and had in fact tasted both for himself, admitting that, indeed it was quite pleasant to eat the fruit that way.

Soon the three of them, and Lady, were trotting over the bridge. Now that the orchards and the field beyond were being transformed into the jousting arena, the friends were forced to ride the main track during the day to the village, rather than the manor's own track past the orchards. Oliver and the girls were dressed in their old clothes, hoping that no one would see them and recognise Oliver. So far they had been lucky but each time they rode to the village they were constantly watching for people they knew that might inform Oliver's father of his illicit activities.

As they entered the track leading to the centre of Granston they could see many villagers milling around the village church, St Matthew's.

"I wonder what that's about?" asked Penny looking at Oliver.

"Twill be thy gathering for preparation for this Eve's service," he replied shaking his head. "I had forgotten. How will I reach Merek's home?"

Glancing at each other Penny and Abi first looked anxious, and then as they both had the same idea, they smiled.

"Wait here while we go over and offer to help with the preparations for the service. Once we've all gone inside, you can carry on to Merek's and we'll meet you there later," Penny explained to Oliver who smiled in relief.

"My thanks," he said and pulled Red over to hide behind a small gathering of birch trees to watch.

Penny and Abi kicked on Harmony and Lunar and they trotted happily up to the villagers. As they neared they saw Arthur with his wife Margaret and daughter Gwendolyn (their chambermaid) standing among the group.

"Greetings!" he called as he looked up and recognised them. "Tis a beautiful morn."

Nodding, they dismounted and tied their horses to a tree beside the group. "We were wondering if we could help get the church ready for the service this evening?" asked Abi eagerly.

Margaret looked at her husband, who seemed pleased by the offer, and then replied, "Thee will be most welcome, ladies."

So, with all the villagers, Abi and Penny entered the church. They spent the next hour cleaning the pews (very basic bench seating, nothing like they were used to at home), sweeping the dirt floor and helping to replace old candles in the sconces on the walls. Arthur had the job of mending the wooden alter that had cracked, unfortunately he wasn't such a skilled craftsman as Merek, but after a while he had it looking almost as good as his brother would have done.

Once the church was looking clean and tidy, the villagers began to return to their own homes. As the girls were about to leave, Arthur called them over and introduced them to a very short, squat man. He had no hair on the top of his head but around the sides and back it was dark, curly and bushy. His face was slightly red and he had soft, smiling dark eyes. Although they didn't know who this man was, they instinctively knew him to be honest and kind.

"Abi, Penny, come, meet Bishop John Augustus of Norwich," he introduced them.

"Good day, young ladies. I understand you are staying at the manor with his Lordship and Master Oliver?" Bishop John spoke in a deep voice which echoed slightly around the church. "I shall have the honour of being a guest at the feast this eve. I shalt look forward to seeing thee once more."

Nodding in reply the girls said goodbye to him and Arthur. Once outside the church, with the sun's warmth on their faces, the girls untied their horses.

"Gosh that was hard work wasn't it?" said Abi as she swung up into Lunar's saddle.

"Yes, but hopefully Oliver got to Merek's unnoticed. That makes it worth it!" replied Penny as she led Harmony back to the track and they belatedly continued their journey.

The sun had climbed to its highest winter peak and long shadows were cast over the ground. The cold air stung their nostrils as they breathed deeply while trotting quickly through the village. At a turn in the road before Merek's home a horse charged in front of them at high speed. The rider was pushing his mount hard, urging him to go faster and faster, clods of earth being thrown in all directions in their wake. Lunar, being a younger horse reared in fright, unsure as the wild horse cantered past.

"Ohhhh!" exclaimed Abi, clinging on for dear life.

"Don't panic Abi!" soothed Penny, "Just keep hold of the reins and pull gently."

Abi did as she was told and sure enough Lunar came down steadily on all four hooves, but then she shook her head violently and took off at high speed, luckily in the direction they wanted to go.

"Penny...! What do I do?" called Abi over her shoulder as she sped past her friend.

"It's okay, let her have her head for a moment, then gently rein her in to a trot. You can do it; you're a fine horse rider Abi. Be confident!" encouraged Penny kicking on Harmony to ride along behind Lunar.

After a few terrifying moments, where Lunar charged like a mad thing and Abi desperately hung on, her pace slowed to a gentle trot. Penny cautiously rode up alongside and Harmony gently nuzzled Lunar, who calmed down.

"Phew, thanks Pens. I would have been in a right panic if you'd not been here," said Abi, sighing with relief.

"You did really well Abi; that was brilliant!" answered Penny admiringly. Then turning to look behind them, she continued, "I wonder who that was?"

"Didn't you see him? It was that Hector again, He's a bad penny that one; we'll have to watch out for him, that's for sure!" Abi replied with concern.

Soon afterwards they reached Merek's home and Edith was there at the gate as they arrived, she was surprised to see their shocked faces.

"Pray tell, what troubles thee?" she asked, walking over as they dismounted and tired up their horses.

"Oh, it's nothing really Edith, just Abi's horse was a little spooked, that's all," explained Penny calmly.

"'Twas not Hector riding like the devil?" she enquired and then went on to explain that her son Matthew had seen him beyond the field where Oliver had been practicing moments earlier. He had chased him away with their dogs and Hector had ridden off in quite a bad temper.

"Yes, Edith it was him. He really spooked Abi's horse but Abi was fantastic and came to no harm," said Penny, and then suddenly she asked, "Did Hector see Oliver riding?"

"No, thanks be. Oliver was with Merek putting on his armour. Does fit him well!" replied Edith with satisfaction.

"Oh wow! I'd love to see him in his armour," Abi declared and Edith insisted the girls hurry out to Merek's workshop as they were still in there.

"Hey, Oliver, let's see you in your armour?" they called as they approached. Matthew stepped outside as they came up to the door. He was like a younger version of Will, with the same shock of unruly fair hair.

"Greetings. Go in, Oliver doth look grand," he told them as he headed off to feed the animals in the yard.

"Hiya Oliver. Wow! You look like a proper knight," exclaimed Penny as they saw him standing proudly with Merek. Abi walked over, tapped his breast plate with her knuckle so the metal rang and then reached up to open the visor on his shining helmet.

"Good day to thee, girls," said Merek from behind Oliver. He was seated at his bench, fixing the strap to the back of the shield.

Oliver turned to ask him, "May I take this off Merek? Tis tiresomely weighty,"

Merek laughed and said he could remove it but he would have to strengthen up if he were to be knight. Knights wore their armour for hours at a time, they had to ride into battle and fight long and hard in it too.

After removing the armour, Oliver carefully replaced it on the stand that Merek had made for him.

"My, tis better," he said wiping his moist brow. "'Twas warm with the training before donning my armour!"

The girls said he looked terrific in it. They were sure that all the training would pay off and he would win the tournament.

"I doth not know what hard work it would be," he replied feeling a little uncertain.

"You'll be fine Oliver, how did the training go with the mannequin? Did you manage to hit it?" asked Penny wanting Oliver to tell them how it had gone.

Oliver's smile quickly returned as he recounted his morning's practice. He said that at first he had great trouble with the lance once more and had missed the target on each run. Then suddenly he began to get the balance right again so his attempts were more successful. He said his final run before being summoned by Merek was his best. Matthew, who had been helping him, said he had hit the mannequin with such force that it would need to be repaired.

"Remember, Master Oliver, tis different with a mannequin. In the tournament, your opponents will be charging towards thee," he advised cautiously.

Nodding, Oliver went on asking, "Soon, dost thou think I need a person to charge at me?"

"Verily, 'tis so, Master Oliver but first let us celebrate Christ's Mass," replied Merek, knowing there would be little time to train in the coming days.

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Later, in the early evening after the sun had rested gently, before it sank below the horizon Lord Evan, Oliver and the girls, with an excited Lady chasing her tail, gathered in the courtyard, waiting for Will to harness the cart.

"This year I have declared that the Eve gifts will be placed under your tree. Do you wish to place your offerings there too?" Lord Evan asked the girls.

"Oh, yes please," they both replied.

"Be off with you then, my girls; thee must make haste," he said urging the girls to be quick, then cast a sly wink Oliver's way.

"This is great, isn't it Pens," said Abi as they rushed back up the stairs to their chambers and retrieved the many gifts that they had made for their new friends and 'family'. Soon they returned downstairs and hurried along to the Great Hall. Already underneath were many parcels, wrapped in silks and tied with colourful ribbons.

"Wow, these look so cool," said Abi, "Much better than the paper and bows we have now."

"Yeah, they do, and we can recycle the wrapping... That's very forward thinking isn't it!" said Penny with a bit of a giggle. "Come on, we better get back to the courtyard. We don't want to be late for the service at St. Matthew's."

"Twill be a cold eve, my boy," said Lord Evan as he reached for blankets for Oliver and the girls, then climbed up to the bench and took up the reins that Will offered to him. Oliver helped the girls up into the back, passed them their blanket and then climbed up to sit beside his father. Once everyone had settled, Lord Evan clicked the reins and the horses set off to the church for the Christ's Mass Eve service.

Abi and Penny were no strangers to the local church, having attended weekly services with Oliver and his father, but just as back at home, in their own time, Christmas made everything just that little bit more exciting and special. They said as much to Oliver and Lord Evan as they made the short journey.

"Verily it is so," said the Lord as they trundled along. "'Tis a time of much rejoicing; Christ's Mass is a time for giving thanks to all my workers on the estate. I shalt look forward to taking their boxes to them the day after the morrow."

"Oh, you mean Boxing Day," said Abi, looking at Penny realising where the name for December 26<sup>th</sup> came from.

"'Tis that what thee calls it, hey?" smiled Lord Evan as they reached the church.

Already, many villagers lined the small winding path in the graveyard, respectfully removing their warm, winter hats as Lord Evan and Oliver walked passed. Lord Evan greeted each person in turn, by their name, and thanked them for their loyal support.

Once inside the church, Penny and Abi looked in amazement at the beautiful glow from the candles lighting the stained glass windows. Holly branches with crimson berries decorated the walls.

Lord Evan and Oliver took their usual seats at the front, near the alter and indicated that Abi and Penny should sit in the front row pews. The villagers filed in afterwards and took their seats too.

Bishop John began the service, giving thanks for a year with no plague, pestilence or famine. They then prayed for the coming year, hoping again, for good health and good harvests. Many more prayers and speeches were said, with a reading, from the large decorative bible, about the baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

Afterwards on the journey home, in the darkened landscape, Oliver asked the girls if the service had been different to the ones that they went to in modern times.

"Well, yes, really; I think the main difference is that we always have a nativity, don't you think so Pens?" asked Abi, remembering the usual services she had been to with her family.

"Yes, when I was at school in London, we always had a nativity play at our local church, St. Cuthbert's. When I was in the infant's school I played an angel one year and then the next I was Mary" she replied, smiling at the memory. Her mother had sat for hours sewing her outfits each December.

"Hey, maybe we could do a little nativity play tomorrow Oliver?" asked Abi, full of enthusiasm.

"Splendid idea!" exclaimed Lord Evan, overhearing the conversation, "but tonight we feast!"

"Three cheers for that!" replied Abi as the others in the wagon burst out laughing.

As they returned across the bridge into the courtyard, the many lanterns had been lit and already the manor had a festive feel to it. Quickly the horses were seen to by Will and then everyone assembled in the Great Hall. The candles glowed giving the room a little warmth, for the fire had yet to be lit. Placed ceremoniously in the centre of the large grate was the Yule Log, last year's charred remains sat waiting on the hearth. As the guests milled around with goblets of spiced mead Lord Evan called everyone to attention.

"My friends, I welcome thee to this, our celebration on Christ's Mass Eve. To begin, let us light the fire. Oliver, my boy, I trust thee to be old enough to place last year's log in the grate," he announced, with slight challenge.

Oliver, amazed at this, quickly gathered up the charred log from the hearth and carefully placed it in the grate. A servant carrying the lit firelighter stepped forward ready to hand it

to Lord Evan, as was the custom of the manor. But this year his lordship stepped back, shook his head and said, "No, this year Master Oliver will perform the ceremony."

Taking the firelighter in his slightly shaky hand Oliver stepped back to the grate, turned to their guests and announced in a clear voice, "Praise be to Our Lord in Heaven. I light these logs with your blessing. Bring forth the good spirits of our yesterdays and go forth unto our morrows." He then bent down and lit the kindling beneath logs and the fire began to crackle and glow.

The small crowd cheered with pleasure; Abi and Penny cheering the loudest! Oliver glanced over, seeking them out with a beaming smile.

Lord Evan then asked everyone to take their seats and the Bishop said grace before the first of the many dishes were served.

"I dust not believe what hath happened," said Oliver in amazement to Abi and Penny once they had been served and his father's attention distracted by the Bishop.

"No, but it's great, isn't it. Must mean he thinks you're growing up," replied Penny, while Abi nodded her mouth full of succulently roasted goose.

"'Tis true, my friend, me thinks 'tis true," agreed Oliver and then they were all swept up in the joyous evening's festivities.

Musicians in the corner of the room played beautiful haunting melodies while jugglers and jesters wove in and out of tables as the guests ate, some of the performers cheekily pinching some food from the tables to include in their act. This caused the guests to laugh. Lord Evan, obviously enjoying the entertainment, clapped as the jesters teased Lady with some of the stolen food.

As the feast came to an end, Lord Evan stood and called for silence. He announced that the present giving would begin.

"Oh, this is so exciting," said Abi looking round at Penny and Oliver.

"'Twill be, me thinks!" he muttered, casting a sly look at his father.

Just then a loud banging struck the solid oak door to the Great hall. The guests were silenced at once and turned as one to their Lord.

"Perchance, Oliver, see who doth be at thy door," Lord Evan instructed his son. Oliver was quickly out of his seat, with a beaming smile that he was trying, without success, to conceal. Just as he got there, the banging boomed once more throughout the hushed hall.

Slowly, carefully, he opened the heavy door to reveal an old man with a long white beard and hair, dressed in dark red breeches, tunic and cloak. Next to him, tied with a set of reins were two young stags harnessed to a small cart which held a large sack of gifts; the gifts that had been under the Christmas tree earlier!



Realising that Oliver had told his father about Santa and what Lord Evan had done for them, Abi and Penny jumped to their feet and rushed over to thank him.

"'Tis such fun my girls," he said as they hugged him. "Now we must make space for this man to hand out thy gifts," he went on.

The remainder of the evening was full of joy as the gifts were opened and people thanked and hugged one another.

Lord Evan, Oliver, Will and all his family were thrilled with the kerchiefs that Abi and Penny had embroidered for them. Edith was so pleased that her students had learned well. From Will, Abi and Penny received a carving of their horse's heads; little did they realise that the carvings they had seen in his quarters were destined for them. Will had, also, carved the head of Red for Oliver.

Lord Evan looked across at his son, "'Tis most splendid, but thou must not get ideas to ride the stallion..." he warned. Thankfully, he didn't notice the look between Oliver and the girls!

From Lord Evan and Oliver, Abi and Penny each received a stunningly beautiful piece of jewellery. Abi had a sapphire blue pendant and Penny an amethyst pendant. As Oliver pointed out the colours matched their elegant gowns, which of course they were wearing for the feast.

The evening ended with dancing of many reels and, as before, everyone was exhausted when they left, agreeing it was the best Christ's Mass Eve celebration they had ever attended.

As the girls wearily climbed the stone stairs to their chambers, they were unable to believe what a fantastic evening they had had. Climbing into bed, they relived the moment that 'Santa' had arrived.

"I was so shocked, I didn't know what to say," yawned Abi, as she rubbed her tired eyes.

Nodding, Penny agreed. Snuggling under the warm covers, she commented that it been a great Christmas Eve, "We'll remember tonight, that's for sure!"

"Yep, you're right there!" Abi replied as she too got comfy in her bed. "Night Pens."

"Night Abi."

## Chapter 22

"It's Chriiiiistmaaaaas!" yelled Abi at the top of her voice as she bounced on Penny still sleeping in her bed.

"Umph! Ouch! Oh get off you big kid!" she said giving her a friendly push and sitting up. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes she looked around the still dark room. In the shadows, sitting on the armoire, she could just make out the silhouettes of the beautiful horse head carvings that Will had given them.

Following her line of sight Abi too admired them, "Will is so clever, isn't he Pens? The two carvings are quite different and he's really captured Lunar and Harmony in them."

"Yes, they're really brilliant. We were so lucky with all our gifts," Penny went on as she absently fingered the jewelled pendant around her neck.

"So, shall we get Oliver to help us with our Nativity play this afternoon?" asked Abi.

"Oh yes. It'll be our way of thanking Lord Evan for all that he arranged for us yesterday. Wasn't Borin great dressed up as Santa?"

Laughing, Abi replied, "Yeah; didn't recognise him until he took off his beard. Alys said he didn't need asking twice, although he said the wool fleece really tickled!"

"I bet! She said her father always likes to play the fool," Penny laughed, remembering his antics with the deer and pretend sleigh.

Later as they entered the solar, they were still smiling as they recalled the astonished looks on some of the guests' faces as Oliver had opened the door to Borin in his festive outfit.

"Ah, I see you both are in good cheer," Lord Evan greeted them from his seat by the fire.

"Happy Christmas Lord Evan and thank you again for such a wonderful party last night," said Penny giving him a brief embrace, quickly followed by Abi.

"No, my thanks to thee both. You have brought much cheer to the manor and to Oliver," he said, gratefully.

"Where is he this morning?" asked Abi looking round, "And Lady?"

"Perchance they are with Will, they shall return anon," he replied and then said he had to see his men to discuss more details about the planning of the tournament. He said he would see them for the evening feast in the Great Hall.

"Wow, another feast!" said Abi with glee. Seeing her delight Lord Evan explained that today's would be a special treat, just for the family, the four of them. He then left with a cheery smile and brief wave.

Almost immediately, Oliver entered with Lady close to his heels, "Greetings!" he said as he joined them in breaking their fast.

While eating, Abi and Penny brought up their plan of a nativity play for the evening. Oliver thought it would be a great idea as his father was a lover of plays and performances. Also, he wanted to include Will's family as they meant so much to them all.

During the rest of the morning, the three friends worked hard planning the play they would perform that evening.

"Philip, the wheelwright, has some sheep. His wife spins and weaves their wool. Perchance we can use one for the stable?" offered Oliver and the girls nodded, thinking it would be fun to have some animals in it. Oliver was sure that Will would be happy to be the Inn keeper. He

would bring in one of the young foals which they could use as a donkey and the star they had made for the tree could also be the bright star that the wise men followed to Bethlehem. Abi, who sat stroking Lady's head which rested sleepily in her lap, asked how they could include the three Wise Men as they had such a limited number of cast members.

"Tis a conundrum..." Oliver replied, and then thinking hard for a moment, he went on smiling, "Perchance... Lady could be our Wise Men?"

"What?" exclaimed Abi and Penny together not thinking Oliver was being serious! But as he went on to explain his suggestion to them they couldn't help but agree that it was a great idea and were sure that Lady could, indeed, be the Wise Men.

So it was agreed, and Penny wrote a quick script for Abi and Oliver who were to play Mary and Joseph wearing some woollen blankets tied with braids. She also said she would put on a white gown to be the Angel Gabriel and narrate the rest of the play. Whilst discussing the finer details of the performance, Lord Evan entered, in a jovial mood, with Merek equally happy.

"Praise be Oliver!" he said raising both hands upwards. Then he turned to Merek and indicated that he should speak.

"Praise be indeed Oliver. This morn my daughter, Alinor, was safely delivered of her child!" he announced with obvious delight.

The three leapt up and rushed over to congratulate him.

"That's great news," said Penny, as she hugged him, "Has she had a boy or a girl?"

"A boy. I have a grandson. Joseph is his name." answered Merek smiling.

"Yeah, that's so cool to have a baby boy on Christmas day Merek," said Abi and then asked if his daughter was well and at her own home or with Edith.

"She is most well and with her mother, she travelled to us late last eve. Edith was happy to deliver our first grandchild," he replied before turning and leaving with Lord Evan.

"Hey, do you think Alinor would let us use baby Joseph as a baby Jesus in the play tonight?" asked Abi enthusiastically.

"I know not of these things, but maybe we could go over and ask anon," replied Oliver.

"Yes, we'll do that, but now we must make our costumes," said Penny as they gathered the papers with her script and headed up to their chambers to gather cloth and braids and prepare for their surprise performance in the evening.

Later in the afternoon they took the cart with Will to visit Granston's newest babe. Will was pleased to be an uncle and showered love upon his nephew. Like all the males of his family, baby Joseph had a shock of fair hair on his head.

"I think he looks like Will and Merek, don't you Abi?" asked Penny when it was her turn to hold the baby.

Edith nodded as she looked adoringly at her first grandchild, "Yes, just like all my boys," she said lovingly.

When the room had quietened, Oliver whispered their request to Alinor and surprisingly she agreed. In fact she was quite excited at the thought of her newborn child starring as the baby Jesus. "They have the same day of birth. It is to be so," she said.

Before leaving Oliver asked if the whole family would join them in the evening's feast as it would be a joint celebration, not only of Christ's Mass but to welcome baby Joseph too. Edith said that was such a lovely idea, and yes, they would all love to come.

On their way back to the manor, Oliver explained to Will in gestures and signs what he needed to do in the nativity play. After many moments of confusion Will appeared to understand and nodded, smiling. He was happy to be a part of what he thought would be a very memorable Christ's Mass.

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"Right, Pens are all the costumes and props hidden in the Great Hall?" asked Abi as the girls once more climbed the stairs back up to their chambers.

"Yep, everything is ready, Will and Oliver have just gone to get the sheep and place her with the foal. They're to stay in the stables until the last possible moment when Will is going to bring them in," Penny explained as they reached their chamber door, "Time for us to get our 'glad rags' on, then it's downstairs for fun time!"

Abi started to giggle, "I can't wait to see Lady as the three Wise Men! What a brilliant idea of Oliver's!"

"I know; he spent so long on her costume and getting her used to wearing it. He was so patient as he trained her for her starring role..." replied Penny also having to smile at the memory.

Before long the girls found themselves in the Great Hall greeting Will's family alongside Oliver and Lord Evan, who agreed that it was a wonderful idea to include Will's family in the feast.

Tonight was a more informal affair with guests choosing where to sit and no 'head' table. The food was delicious and plentiful as always, with roasted meats such as venison, goose and a whole hog.

As the meal drew to an end, Oliver stood and addressed the guests.

"My family and friends, I thank thee for this bountiful feast on Christ's Mass day. To end this celebration, with my good friends Will, Penny and Abi, we would like perform a play for thee. 'Tis called Granston Manor's Nativity!" he declared, ending with a low sweeping bow.

The only guest not be taken by surprise by this announcement was Alinor and she smiled conspiringly at Oliver and then joined in the excitement with her family. There was then a brief pause for the performers to get ready.

Quickly, the thick curtains hiding the stage area were drawn back to reveal a wooden manger and the floor covered with fresh, sweet smelling straw. Penny stood on a raised box, in her glowing white gown, and once all the guests were settled into the hastily rearranged seats around the 'stage' she began to narrate the play.

"Long, long ago in a far away land, lived a young man Joseph, a carpenter. He was promised to marry a young lady by the name of Mary," as she spoke both Oliver and Abi entered the stage area. Penny went on, "One night the angel Gabriel told Mary that she was to have a child and the child would be God's son...."

As Penny spoke their audience sat enthralled at the story unfolding before them. Oliver and Abi acted their hearts out, making the recital all the more believable. Will put in a brilliant performance as the Inn Keeper; shaking his head to signal that there was no room there for the expectant couple. He guided them to the 'stable' pointing to the manger which could be used as a bed. When baby Jesus had been born and baby Joseph was lifted from the manger the audience gasped. Joseph made the perfect performance and contentedly slept through his starring role. The sheep and foal, too behaved themselves, now it was time for the three Wise Men to enter bringing their gifts.

At the signal from Oliver, Lady trotted on to the 'stage' wearing her elegant 'Kings' gown' of fine silk which was tied to her collar. Fastened on to the gown were three parcels which represented the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

'All is going well,' thought Abi as Lady sat waiting for the gifts to be unclipped from her 'gown'. Then suddenly Lady began sniffing the air excitedly... She had caught then scent of the sheep behind her. It was too much of a temptation and she quickly leapt round and barked, frightening the sheep, and foal too, who both bolted for the other end of the Great Hall. Lady was off after them. Straw flew in all directions. Will and Oliver gave chase. Under the table the animals went, chairs being tipped over, then the sheep and foal sort solace behind the beautifully decorated tree.

"Oh no...!" groaned Penny and Abi in despair.

Luckily Oliver had spotted this and called out to Lady, offering up a large juicy cut of venison. Again, Lady's nose began sniffing with excitement as she smelled her favourite roast. While she was distracted by this treat, Will quickly gathered the two frightened animals, now shaking, from the corner behind the tree and led them out to the stable where he hastily settled them in his quarters with some fresh food and bedding.

The audience watched the mayhem in stunned silence; Penny and Abi were distraught, they felt they had ruined everything.

"We're so very sorry Lord Evan, everyone. We only wanted to do the Nativity as a way of thanking you all for giving us a lovely Christmas..." Penny was almost in tears.

"Sorry? There is no need to be sorry," said Lord Evan as he stood up and gathered both girls into his strong arms. "'Twas most pleasurable and as for Lady... Star of the show!" he declared and started to chuckle before throwing back his head and bursting out laughing.

Abi and Penny turned to see the rest of their audience stand as one, clapping and cheering. Oliver walked back to them with the naughty Lady licking her lips with satisfaction.

"I feared she would knock over thy tree if she was not stopped," he said with a shy smile, before bending and ruffling Lady's ears with affection. Abi and Penny looked at her, her lovable brown eyes full of innocence, and they joined in the laughter that Lord Evan had begun. Before long, everyone was talking and laughing at once and it was decided that their Nativity had been the best play that anyone had ever seen!

The evening ended with joyous singing. Now with their confidence restored, Abi and Penny joined in with the familiar songs with Lord Evan, Oliver and Will's family. As a finale they stood up on the stage area with Oliver and sang 'Rudolph Red Nosed Reindeer', 'Frosty the Snowman' and 'Jingle Bells', much to the amusement of the others.

## Chapter 23

The following morning saw Lord Evan, with Oliver, delivering boxes of goods to many of the estate workers while Penny and Abi relaxed back at the manor in the solar with Lady.

"I hope Oliver is okay out with his father," said Penny anxiously later that afternoon, as she gently stroked Lady's velvet ears while they both snuggled together on a rug in front of a roaring fire, with a pile of soft cushions behind them.

Turning from her place at the window, Abi nodded in agreement. "I know what you mean, he's desperate to get over to Merek's and carry on with his training. He wants to try on the helmet and try the jousting again," she went on.

"Yeah, he was beginning to get the balance right with the lance before Christmas," smiled Penny before adding, "Hey? Wasn't that the best Christmas ever, Abi!"

Chuckling at the memory of Lady chasing the sheep in the Great Hall Abi agreed, "I'm so glad that Oliver stopped Lady before she hurtled into the Christmas tree! That would have made a right mess!"

"Oh, Lady, don't worry, we love you!" said Penny soothingly to the sleepy dog, while stroking her velvet ears.

Abi turned back to the window and gazed out across the grey landscape. The sun was hidden behind heavy, low clouds and the air was damp. Lord Evan had insisted that Oliver put on his warm winter cloak over his jerkin and take blankets with them when they left in the early

morning mist. The two of them would be gone for most of the day visiting with their tenants. Lord Evan felt it was an important part of his role to give some of his time to the people who worked hard on his estate all year.

During these visits he always asked if the peasants were in need of anything. One year a family had lost both their horses, which had sadly become lame. The family had to walk everywhere, so Lord Evan gave them two new horses from his own stables. The family were then able to work better as they were not so tired. Lord Evan hoped that Oliver would learn from these examples, as he hoped that one day Oliver would become Lord Oliver of Granston...

"Oh, Penny! I think they're coming," cried Abi as she saw the cart trundling along the track from the direction of the village.

Startled, Lady sat up with a low growl rumbling in her throat. She flicked her ears and tilted her head to the side, almost as if she was listening for her master's voice.

"Yes, Lady, I think it's your master," agreed Penny as she stretched over to Lady and ruffled her soft furry head.

Standing up and stretching her cramped legs, Penny asked, "Let's go out and greet them, shall we?"

"Yeah, come on then, slow coach!" called Abi as she and Lady raced out of the solar and along the passageway to the courtyard.

As the horses clipped over the cobbled stone bridge pulling the cart behind them, and into the courtyard, Penny, Abi and Lady entered from the opposite passageway. Lady dashed across to greet both Oliver and his father with excited yelps and a ferociously wagging tail.

Halting the cart for his son to jump down, Lord Evan smiled at the two girls, "Greetings my young ladies. I take it thou hath had a pleasant day?"

"Yes, we've had a very restful day," they said, then turning added, "but we're glad you're back Oliver."

Standing up after fussing Lady, Oliver said to his father that he and the girls would take the horses and cart over to the stables.

"Glory be!" sighed Oliver to the girls as they helped Will to unharness the horses in the stables.

"Did you have a busy day then, Oliver?" asked Penny as she heaved in more bedding for Midnight and Red.

"Verily 'tis so," he replied sitting down on an upturned wooden bucket. "I believe we have travelled to the ends of the earth!" he went on dramatically.

Abi and Penny looked at each other in amazement and burst out laughing.

"Mm; don't think you went quite that far, Oliver," said Penny kindly, "But I'm sure it must have felt like it."

Finally, the horses had been seen to and the three weary friends bid good night to Will and trooped back across the courtyard to the welcoming warmth of the manor.

Once inside they wound their way, chatting happily to each other, along the passageway to the solar.

"I had no belief of the many peasants here on the estate," Oliver said as they sat warming themselves in front of the gently flickering fire.

"Yes, there must have been many people to see. You were gone nearly all day," pointed out Abi, "We thought maybe we could have gone to Merek's for some practice this afternoon."

"I had thought this. But alas, the day ends," he replied and then after a moment's brief pause, he went on, "On the morrow, we shall return to the practice field!"

Feeling tired after his long day, Oliver excused himself after their evening meal with Lord Evan in the solar.

"Goodnight Oliver," called Abi and Penny as he left the room with a quick wave of his hand. Lady was at his heels, looking at him with her adoring eyes.

"Come, my girls," said Lord Evan, "I challenge thee to a game of Chess!"

"Yeah!" cried Abi ever hopeful of beating Lord Evan, who was the manor's champion.

Penny looked doubtfully at both Abi and Lord Evan, as she still hadn't mastered the rules of the complex game. "But I'm still not sure how to play," she said hesitantly.

"Then thee shall learn!" he replied gently with a smile, as he reached for the board and elegantly carved pieces.

For the next hour Abi and Penny played competitively against Lord Evan. He won the first game but Abi and Penny beat him in the second game. The third and deciding game was tricky and taking much longer than the previous two, with both sides having lost an equal amount of playing pieces. Lord Evan had just moved his castle and absentmindedly left his King exposed to Abi and Penny's Knight and both of the Bishops.

"Check Mate!" squealed Penny jumping up and realising the mistake before Abi had noticed it.

Chuckling, Lord Evan laid down his King and conceded the match, "Splendid, splendid! My girls, thou hath beaten me!" Standing up he gave them a hug, then he went on to say, "Now, to bed with thee. I doth believe Oliver wants thee to help him on the morrow."

"Goodnight Lord Evan," they said, both realising they were, in fact, very tired too.

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The following morning the weather was still damp and dull. The friends gathered in the solar to break their fast. Lady lay down in front of the heath, her favourite spot, chewing contentedly on a succulent bone brought up from the kitchens by Alys.

Quickly they ate their meal, saddled their horses and rode out to the village. Luckily, they set out quite early and the track was deserted. A slight fog hung over the fields, making them shiver. Lady trotted happily alongside them, almost as if she knew that some delectable treat would await her in Edith's kitchen.

Sure enough, Edith was awaiting their arrival, ready to welcome them. "Tis a bleak morn, Master Oliver. Merek waits for thee in the yard yonder." She called to them as Lady ambled over and sat on the stone slab at the front door, looking expectantly from Edith to the kitchen inside.

"Oh, thee doth be a jest, young Lady! Dost thou not feed her Master Oliver?" she chuckled while fussing the childlike animal.

Oliver, also laughing, just shook his head in wonder and the three trotted round to the field and Merek's workshop where they found him polishing Oliver's finished armour and shield.

Looking up at the sound of approaching hooves, "Master Oliver," he said as he recognised the group. Oliver and the girls jumped down from their mounts and as they tied them up, Merek went on, "This day thee taketh thy next stride towards Knighthood!" He offered Oliver the newly finished shield.

Abi and Penny stared at the beautiful suit of armour as it gleamed, catching the small amount of light fighting its way through the narrow doorway of Merek's workshop.

"Wow!" exclaimed Abi, "It's just like the one we saw in the castle museum in Norwich, isn't it Penny?"

Nodding, she touched the smooth metal of the breast plate as she replied, "It truly is a work of art Merek."

"Tis true, Merek; I doth be most fortunate. I thank thee," Oliver said with his usual gracious bow.

"I doth thank thee," Merek said accepting their kind words with a brief nod.

"What are all these different bits?" enquired Abi moving the various parts as if it were a puppet.

"This doth be the head guard or close helm," began Merek and then went on to explain the other various pieces. The cuirass would cover Oliver's chest but not his back, attached to this was the faulds which cover the hips and a culet which protects the lower back and buttock area. To protect Oliver's arms were vambraces and gauntlets, and for his legs there were cuisses, which were metal plates to cover his thighs.

Quickly, Oliver put on the full suit of armour, fumbling slightly with all the fixings but Abi and Penny helped him with these. Then he took up the shield and lance and paraded round Merek's yard as if he were already a true knight.

"You really look the part; doesn't he Pens?" admired Abi, first to Oliver and then to Penny, as they all walked over to the horses.

Nodding Penny had to agree with Abi that Oliver suddenly looked very grown up. Oliver turned and smiled to them as he untied Red. He then went to get on him and at once stopped. Seeing the puzzled expression on Oliver's face Merek began chuckling.

"Me thinks thou doth need the block to mount thy steed," he offered helpfully and Matthew came running with the mounting block so that Oliver would be able to heave himself up in the heavy suit.

Once sat upon his horse, Oliver looked very heroic, his armour impressive with the purple and blue plumes of his helmet adding a touch of elegance.

Slowly, with Abi, Penny and Merek walking at his side, they entered the practice field. The mannequin that had been repaired by Edith and Malkyn stood waiting for Oliver's attack. Carefully, he took the lance that Abi and Penny offered up to him.

"Phew, that's heavy!" groaned Abi as they struggled to lift it. "How do you manage to ride carrying it, Oliver?" she went on to ask.

Oliver just smiled in reply, lowered the visor of his helmet and turned Red towards the start of the training run at the far end of the tilt.

"He's grown so much and got stronger since we've been here, hasn't he Abi?" commented Penny as they looked at him ride off to begin his eagerly awaited mornings training.

The two friends watched with growing admiration as Oliver, again and again, thundered down the track and hit the mannequin with increasing force.

After what seemed like an hour, Edith approached from the scullery, carrying a large pewter jug and goblets on a wooden tray, carved, of course, by Merek.

Seeing her pouring the refreshing mead, Oliver rode over removing his helmet. The continuous exercise had made him very warm despite the cold day and his hair was plastered to his head. Reaching for the goblet that Edith offered to him, he said, "'Tis what I need! My thanks to thee, Edith."

While they all sat on some upturned logs, drinking their sweet, honey mead, Merek appeared holding two dull pieces of an old suit of armour. "Master Oliver, 'tis time for you to aim at a knight!" he joked as he walked past.

Watching with amazement, Abi, Penny and Oliver were amused to see Merek walk up to the, now slightly battered mannequin and fix the breast plate and helmet onto it. Also, with young

Matthew's help, they positioned the 'knight' onto a heavy, tall, upturned log, so that it was a similar height for a charging opponent.

For the rest of the morning and early afternoon, Oliver continued his practice with fierce determination. Through trial and error Oliver persevered. At first he found that if he didn't aim his lance at the centre of the breast plate, the tip just skidded off. Sometimes he found himself almost slipping from Red's saddle.

Each time this happened Merek would calmly walk over to a frustrated Oliver and explain, once more, where to aim. Finally, Oliver achieved his goal with a high speed charge at the mannequin. He hit it with such force that the end of the lance shattered.

Abi and Penny gasped as shards of wood flew into the air. Merek cheered and ran over to congratulate Oliver. Abi and Penny were puzzled, not realising that a good, direct hit would result in the splintering of the lance.

Trotting back with the broken lance resting triumphantly against his shoulder Oliver removed his helmet to reveal a grin as wide as the oceans.

"Well done Oliver! That was great," enthused Penny as she ran up to him and threw her arms around Red's sweating neck.

"Yeah, but look at your lance, it's ruined," pointed out Abi, giving the snorting Red a rub between the eyes.

"Do not despair. Merek hath made many more," Oliver answered. He went on to explain to them, as they slowly walked through the yard to the scullery door, that many lances were broken during tournaments. Reaching the scullery they left Red at the trough with Harmony and Lunar. As they went in they heard the gentle snoring and snuffling sounds of a very contented Lady who was fast asleep by the hearth, her paws twitching as she dreamed of chasing imaginary rodents.

"Ah, look at her, doesn't she look so sweet," said Penny gently as she bent down beside her and stroked her ears. At this, Lady awoke with a huge yawn and smack of the lips. At the same time Abi's stomach growled deafeningly, causing Penny to smile, "Sounds like someone's ready for some food!" True to her nature, Lady was immediately wide awake at the sound of that magical word!

Before heading back to the manor, Edith insisted that they have something to eat. In her usual motherly manner, she produced platters of thickly sliced cold meats, pies and chunky bread, followed by her special honey cakes and delicious gingerbread biscuits.

**Find out what happens to Abi and Penny in their time travelling journey only in the next issue of The Draytonian.**

**We hope you've enjoyed our latest issue. We look forward to being able to include even more of your articles and features in the next issue. Email all your submissions to [msilvester9nrp@nsix.org.uk](mailto:msilvester9nrp@nsix.org.uk)**



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