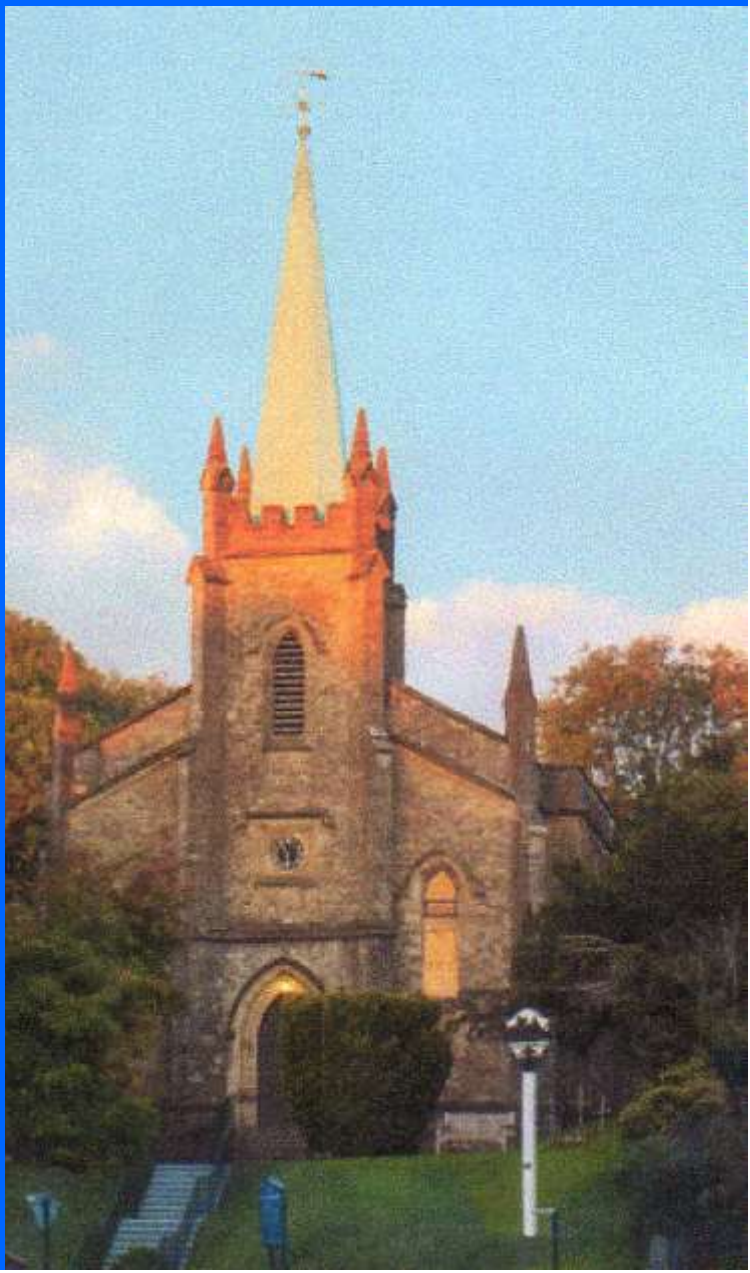
# The Landmark

## Parish of Riverhead with Dunton Green

## Christmas 2014



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# From the Vicar

There is a story about one of those great colleges in Oxford, or Cambridge, or somewhere; one of those colleges founded by and supported by the Church, as many are… I do not know if it is a true story - I hope and believe that it is.

It was Christmas time, and the college had got together in the Great Hall to celebrate the festive season with a sumptuous banquet. There was silver and porcelain and fine linen napkins everywhere. There was the best cutlery, the finest wine and the richest, most delicious food one could hope for. The college's historic crystal glasses glinted gold in the flickering light of a thousand candles in that oak-panelled room.
The celebration was in full swing when, all at once, one of the college Porters, in his splendid bowler hat, properly pressed suit, and waistcoat entered the Hall. He walked deferentially down past all the tables, full of students and tutors and honoured guests, and made his way to the Top Table. The principal of the college, The Dean, noticed him and invited him to approach, which the Porter duly did; leaning forward so that he may whisper discretely into the Dean's ear.
"Sir," said the Porter, "there is a gentleman at the college gate, asking to be let in. I have told him that the college is closed and that, regrettably we are unable to receive visitors at this time. But he insists, and will not go away."
"What kind of visitor?" asked the Dean.
"Sir, I regret to say, he has the form and the appearance of a Tramp."
"A Tramp?"
"A Wayfarer, a homeless person, sir."
The Dean set down the knife and fork with which he had been enjoying his Christmas turkey."Have the fellow brought in," he said.
"Very good sir," and the Porter left to do as he was instructed.
The Dean called across one of the waiting-staff. "Would you be so kind as to lay another place, please?" he said. "Beside me, at my right hand."
The Tramp was brought in, a place was laid for him at the Top Table right there, beside the Dean. The the poor fellow was given everything that the

rest of the college was at that moment enjoying. Everything: wine, and meat and roast potatoes and vegetables and stuffing and gravy.
At the end of the meal the Dean rose to make a toast; to the college, to Christmas and to honoured guests, of whom he made sure he included the fellow sat beside him at his right hand at Top Table. “For,” he said, “what greater message of Christmas is there than to give thanks for Our Saviour, by sharing God’s goodness and abundance with others, whoever they are?”
And the whole gathering rose as one, raised their glasses to toast the stranger - their most honoured guest, their uninvited visitor - and cried “Amen!”
The Stranger then rose to his feet.
A silence descended.
The Dean sat down.
Everyone sat down.
Then the stranger began to speak.
“I am very grateful and extraordinarily moved,” he began, “by your welcome and hospitality. But, I fear, I am here under false pretences. However, in my defence, I have done this for good reason. For I am not, as you may think, a Tramp. This was simply a disguise designed to test you. To test the Dean and to test you all. For, you see, I am the newly-appointed Bishop of the Diocese in which your estimable college sits. I am your new Bishop. I had heard that this college, and all of you here, practiced to the best of your ability the Christian commandments of love of God and love of Neighbour. Of welcoming strangers as if they were Christ himself. I wanted to see if this were really true. I am glad - indeed delighted and humbled - to note that this is indeed your practice and, it would seem, at the heart of everything you do. So, as I rise to thank you for your welcome and hospitality, I give you also a toast: To hospitality and welcome for everyone everywhere at this Christmas time and always!”
Those present rose as one and, together, they cried with renewed joy: “Amen!”

Which makes me wonder:
Who will we offer a welcome and hospitality to this Christmas time and always?
Who will we share the good things that we enjoy with?
Who will we take care of, as if we were taking care of Christ himself?

May the Spirit of Christmas dwell in your hearts and your homes now and evermore. Amen

# Christmas at St Mary's

**Sunday 30th November - Advent Sunday**
8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Parish Eucharist

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th December - Christmas Tree Festival

**Sunday 14th December**
8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Parish Eucharist
3.00pm Christmas Tree Festival Carol Service

**Saturday 20th December**
7.30pm Second Wind Band - Christmas Concert

**Sunday 21st December**
8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am St Mary's Nativity Service
7.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

**Wednesday 24th December - Christmas Eve**
2.30pm Crib Service with Christingle (for younger children)
4.00pm Christingle (for older children)
11.30pm Christmas Midnight Eucharist

**Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day**
8.00am Christmas Holy Communion
9.30am Christmas Parish Eucharist

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# *The Perfect Church*

*If you should find the perfect church*
*Without one fault or smear*
*For goodness sake don't join that church*
*You'd spoil the atmosphere.*
*If you should find the perfect church*
*Where all anxieties cease*
*Then pass it by, lest joining it*
*You spoil the masterpiece.*
*If you should find the perfect church*
*Then don't you ever dare*
*To tread upon such holy ground*
*You'd be a misfit there.*
*But since no perfect church exists,*
*Made of perfect men,*
*Let's cease on looking for that church*
*And love the church we're in.*
*Of course it's not the perfect church*
*That's simple to discern.*
*But you and I and all of us*
*Could cause the tide to turn.*
*What fools we are to flee the past*
*In that unfruitful search*
*To find, at last, where problems loom*
*God proudly build his church*

# St Mary's Photography Exhibition

Contributions are invited for our photography exhibition, which will take place at St Mary's Church on Saturday 16th May 2015
The subject and style can be of your own choosing, but it must relate to the overall theme of the exhibition which is: HAPPY DAYS
There will be four age-related entry categories: Under 7's; 7-11; 12-18; and Adult.

Photos can be any size up to A3. Just prints please, or simple mounts; but not framed. Please put your name, address and contact details on the back.
PLEASE NOTE: the photos will not be returned. However, there will be arrangements in place for you to collect yours after the exhibition is finished, should you wish.
Closing date for entries: Monday 11th May 2015
Donations on the day in support of Christian Aid
More details to follow, and online www.stmaryriverhead.co.uk nearer the time.

A little light relief:-

**The Church Lady**

There was a little old lady who was very spiritual who would step out on her porch every day, raise her arms to the sky and yell, "Praise the Lord"

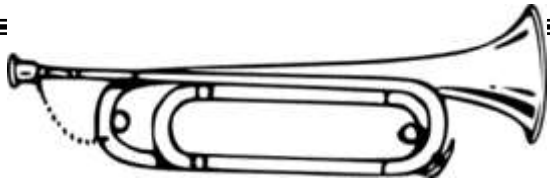
One day, an atheist bought the house next door to her, and he became very irritated with the spiritual lady. So after a month or so of her yelling, "Praise the Lord" from her porch, he would go outside on his porch and yell back, "There is no Lord." Yet, the little old lady continued.

One cold, wintry day, when the little old lady couldn't get to the store, she went out on her porch, raised her hands up to the sky and said, "Help me Lord, I have no more money, it's cold, and I have no more food."

The next morning, she went outside, and there were bags of food on the porch, enough to last her a week. "Praise the Lord," she yelled. The Atheist stepped out from the bushes and said, "There is no Lord, ha ha ha, I bought those groceries!"

(Hold on . . the ending is VERY good!).

The little old lady raised her arms to the sky and said, "Praise the Lord, You sent me groceries and you made the Devil pay for them!"



**St Mary's Church, Riverhead**

# *Carols by Candlelight*

## by the Second Wind Band

**Saturday 20th December 2014**
**at**
**7.30pm**

**We welcome donations of £7.00 for adults,**
**£5.00 for seniors and free for under 14's**
**Includes refreshments**

**Proceeds to St Mary's Church**

## TOTS AND TODDLERS

Tots and Toddlers offers a warm welcome to all babies and preschoolers, their parents and carers. The group takes place in the Church Hall every Monday 1:45pm - 3:45pm. For more information please contact Diane Williams 01732 762434 or Doris Gosnold 01732 451892

## LITTLECOURT LUNCH CLUB

St Mary's joins with the Christ Church URC and other local bodies to run this weekly lunch which takes place on Tuesdays at the URC Church Hall by Kippington Road. It enables the housebound, elderly and others to meet for an excellent lunch and companionship. Members can be picked up and brought home if they wish; either by an Age Concern bus or by volunteers in private cars. There are some vacancies. If you are interested in attending, helping to prepare and serve lunches or driving our clients, please ring Pam Rankin on 01732 460209 or Deirdre Montanaro on 01732 455435.

## CHURCH HALL

Our Church Hall is used by the Church on a regular basis by our groups and after-service activities. However it is also available for hire for parties, meetings and classes. For more information about hiring the church hall for an event please use the following contact details:
Margaret Nicholas Tel: 01732 457324
Email: magnicholas@tiscali.co.uk

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## George Vinell: Saved by the Bible

George Vinell served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery. He carried a Bible in his pocket which gave him spiritual comfort even in hard times during the War. It also saved his life. On 17th July 1915 he wrote home to his mum and dad sending a pocket Bible with his letter. The Bible had a hole in it, made by a piece of shrapnel.
George came into his sleeping compartment and took off his tunic at about midday when he heard a shell flying in close. It exploded and threw bits of metal around the compartment. One went straight into his tunic, but because the Bible was in the pocket it didn't get through. George threw himself to the floor while another shell exploded on the compartment and then ran for the protection of the trenches. He wrote 'as soon as we heard the next shell coming I flattened myself in the bottom, not caring about the dirt, until it was over."
When he got back to the sleeping compartment, there were ten men dead. As well as the shells, four bullets had come in: George felt hugely fortunate because one had hit his pillow, one had hit the floor where he had been lying just a moment earlier. Then he picked up his tunic, and found the shrapnel, aimed at his heart, but stopped by his Bible. He reminded his mum and dad of his last letter, where he had written that he felt 'safe in the hands of God' and wrote: 'Here I am, without a scratch, safe and well'. The shrapnel had gone through the whole Old Testament, and the point of it stopped at Isaiah 49 verse 8. George read the verse, which said 'I will preserve you.']
It felt like a miracle.

(With thanks to the Diocese of West Yorkshire & The Dales)

**ST MARY'S, RIVERHEAD, MOTHERS' UNION**

Mary Elizabeth Sumner was a mother of three children and knew the burdens and responsibilities of parenting and, as a vicar's wife, realised the loneliness of wives needing support and fellowship, she was the founder of the Mothers' Union in 1876.

Mary recognised that good parenting was more than providing for the physical needs of the child and she believed that the primary responsibility was to raise children in the love of God.

Mothers' Union is a Christian mission organisation working with people of all faiths and of no faith. Mothers' Union is firmly rooted in a voluntary ethos centred on mutual respect and collaboration. Our governance, leadership and programmes are undertaken and driven by members within their own communities worldwide.

Our aims and objectives are:

To promote and support married life

To encourage parents in their role to develop the faith of their children

To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service

To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children

To help those whose family life has met with adversity

Our members are male and female who may be single, married, parents, grandparents, or young adults just beginning to express their social conscience. Mothers' Union provides, for all four million members, a network through which they can serve Christ in their own community - through prayer, financial support and actively working at the grassroots level in programmes that meet local need.

At St Mary's Church, Riverhead, we have a branch and, are looking forward to welcoming new members. Our members meet once a month for fellowship followed with a Bible Study. Members who are unable to join with us due to family commitments or mobility can still pray for the aims and objectives of the Mothers' Union and where possible help with fund-raising events. At Diocesan level, we offer Retreats, Quiet Days and, if you know of anyone suffering with adversity, they can go on a Holiday or have a Day Out funded by the Rochester Diocese Mothers' Union. For further information please contact any Mothers' Union member or Karen Forster-Pearce 01732:451396 kgfp@btinternet.com. Rochester Diocese website www.rochestermothersunion.co.uk.

## *The Children's Society*

***We are keen and regular supporters of the Children's Society which provides help and comfort for children in desperate need. To help please contact Margaret Holman 01732 450408.***

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## Music and Choir

New singers are always welcome in the Church Choir. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings from 8-9 in the church, and the choir sings at the 9.30 Service on Sundays, except for the Family Service on the first Sunday of the month when there is an instrumental group [mainly school-age] which accompanies the hymns and songs.
For details about singing in the choir
Please phone Edwin Davis 01634 246477
For details of Music Group
Please phone Janet Sharp 01732 452715

**CONTACTS**

Vicar Revd. Martin Booth
Riverhead, Sevenoaks TN 13 3DR
01732 455736 & stmaryriverhead@aol.com
Churchwardens: John Curtis 01732 453176 jscurtis@btinternet.com
Barry Sharp,01732 452715 barjansharp@tiscali.co.uk
Church Website: www.stmaryriverhead.co.uk

**FOR A FULL LIST OF CONTACTS PLEASE SEE THE CHURCH WEBSITE**

**Trinity School Celebrates its First Birthday**

Trinity, the new Christian Secondary School in Sevenoaks, was one year old on 4th September. On that day a new group of 120 excited 11 year olds joined the school at its temporary location in Riverhead. This more than doubled the size of the school, which will keep growing until it has 800 pupils. In 2015 the school will move to its long term location at Wildernesse. We were delighted to welcome Bishop Brian to have a tour of our school on Monday 22 September which culminated in a service at St Mary's Church Riverhead.

Trinity is unique because it is sponsored by a diverse group of 30 local churches [including this church/St Mary's]. Most of the school's governors are elected by these churches. People from local churches regularly join with parents and governors to pray for the school. The school holds termly services at local churches. Pupils from the school carry out community service, including packing shopping at Tesco, visiting elderly folk, or helping out in local primary schools. Sometimes these events happen with or at local churches. The school has collective worship or reflection each day and often this is led by local church ministers. So the links are close and growing!

The school's strapline is 'Education for life in all its fullness'. The governors and staff wish the school to be academically excellent and to support the students' spiritual, cultural and physical development. Early indications, from tests at the end of the first year, suggest that the school is already in the top 15% of schools nationally in terms of academic progress. We look forward to welcoming an Ofsted inspection at some stage during this school year which will offer parents and local people more information about how the school is doing.

At Trinity, the Christian ethos is about more than morning worship assemblies, important though these are. The school aims that every

lesson should in some way connect the Christian faith to the subject under discussion. The framework for discipline is based on 'restorative justice' principles. The school's houses, chosen by the pupils, are named after Christians who have been leaders in advancing knowledge, the arts or social justice: Faraday after Michael Faraday the physicist, Barrett after Elisabeth Barrett Browning the poet, Fry after Elizabeth Fry the prison reformer, and Wilberforce after William Wilberforce the anti-slavery campaigner

It is daunting and difficult to set up a school from scratch, and many challenges remain, but we are very grateful to God and to all our local supporters for the excellent progress that has been made thus far.

Matthew Tate, Headmaster

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ST. MARY'S RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

# Festival of Christmas Trees

**Saturday 13th December 2014 10am - 4pm**

**Sunday 14th December 2014 11am - 4pm**

***Carol Service among the trees at 3pm on Sunday 14th December.***

**A fantastic display of Christmas trees ( all shapes and sizes) provided by local organisations and businesses**

* * * * * * * * * * *

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