

THIS AND THAT (273)

All Over Down Under [8]

Memorable lullabies. Thunder, lightning and heavy rain on a corrugated iron roof. Owls hooting from a frosty copse. Nightjars churring through summer's open windows. African drums from a nearby village beer party. Chorusing crickets and booming frogs on sultry evenings.

Huggermugger with mum

Best of all though, Tristan da Cunha in the 1950s. Falling to sleep on rare calm nights to the breathy honks of southern right whales, and the smack of their tale flukes on a tranquil, quietly heaving, sighing dark, dark ocean.

Without telling us why, my son Peter had insisted we book in to the unremarkable Nullarbor Roadhouse. It was because of its proximity to the *Head of the Bight*. From May to October every year, this bay, the northernmost point of the Great Australian Bight, becomes a nursery for about 60 southern right whales and their calves from Antarctica.

We arrived to see them in perfect weather, a chill breeze, but deep blue and cloud-free sky. A smart building well above the cliffs offered ice creams, teas and a till to take a tolerable toll. We strolled down a path to the cliff edge, overlooking a sparkling ocean. There were sand dunes way off to the east, and the great 'Bunda' cliffs below us and to the west. We zig zagged down a well constructed wooden gangway along which others were gazing at the ocean and photographing whales and their calves. We counted about 20 near to shore and further out. Difficult to photograph memorably, we enjoyed them for an hour or two on our own retinas, not the camera's. Just below us a mother and calf idly frolicked, drifting with the swell. The calf feeding and all fondly huggermugger with its mama.

Double vindication

In reading about southern right whales over the years, I have never come across references to them vocalising into the atmosphere. So much so I began to wonder if the noises I heard on Tristan da Cunha were a figment of my imagination. To my delight there, at the *Head of the Bight*, one great behemoth raised its monstrous, calloused head and gave a loud, breathy honk. My memory was vindicated.

That night I did a word-processor search though my mother's 300,000 word Tristan diary. I came upon this sentence in an entry for 11 October 1955: *The whales are making more noise than ever this year, the honks are terrifically loud both day and night.* Double vindication.

Lice and parasitic worms

In her diary my mother refers to whales frequently. Not surprisingly. Between our tiny wooden vicarage and the South Atlantic Ocean were only fifty or so yards of well grazed turf and a cliff. When the whales were around, during the winter months, they were often very, very close to land. She refers to them as being ugly, which, compared to dolphins and many other species of whale, they are indeed.

Their heads, in comparison to their bodies, are huge and notable for white, warty "callosities" of various shapes and sizes. Naturally grey these appear white due to the large colonies of whale lice, barnacles and parasitic worms that reside on them. Found on the upper surface of the whale's head, above the eyes, on the jawline and chin and surrounding the blowhole they form a unique pattern on every whale. Although when overgrown they tend to break off, the patterns do not change over a lifetime. This makes them a useful tool for the purposes of photo-identification and conservation.

In 1961 there was a volcanic eruption on Tristan da Cunha and the island was abandoned for a couple of years. During this time Russian whalers illegally decimated the island's whales. Since then numbers have never returned to those of the days when we were resident on the island.

Whistled on our way

As reluctantly we left the *Head of the Bight* we were whistled on our way by a small *singing honey eater*, perched on the gutter of the reception building. As unique to Australia as the kookaburra it is much, much sweeter voiced.

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

St John's, Boldre St Nicholas', Pilley

Parish Priest: The Reverend Canon Andrew Neaum

Phone: 01590 718439 Mobile 078080 57168

Email: andrew.neaum@gmail.com

Assistant Priest: The Reverend Felicity Boot

Email: felicityboot@yahoo.com

St Mary the Virgin, South Baddesley

Parish Priest: The Reverend Richard Elliott

Phone: 07836 760150 Email: parishpriestsbg@gmail.com

Benefice Office (at St Nicholas Pilley)

Office hours: Mon, Wed & Thurs: 9am-11am

Phone: 01590 673484 **Email:** bsbbchurches@gmail.com

Webpage: <http://www.bsbb.org.uk/>

TODAY: : 2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT 9 DEC 2018

St Mary's South Baddesley: 8.00am Holy Communion BCP

St Mary's South Baddesley: 9.30am Family Service

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

St Saviour's Brockenhurst: 6.30pm Group Choral Evensong

For Prayer This Week

Peace of the world. Especially in Yemen. For calm heads and wise counsel in our own Government. Bishop Jonathan newly appointed Dean of York. For Vicar of Brockenhurst applicants and selectors. **Prayer requests:** Jean Broomfield, Janet, James, Libby, Rachel, Sarah, Colin Erne, David, Vanessa & Dominic.

Activities This Week

Tues 11 Dec - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. Seated exercise to music at St Nicholas' Pilley & refreshment

Wed 12 Dec - 10.30am Communion St Nicholas' Pilley + coffee

Wed 12 Dec - Bible Study Ph. 07786194282 for venue & time

Thu 13 Dec - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. As on Tuesdays

NEXT WEEK: 3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT 16 DEC 2018

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

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

St Mary's South Baddesley: 4.30pm 9 Lessons & Carols

Dates for the Diary 2018

Wed 19 Dec - 2.00pm St John's - Hill House School Christmas
Wed 19 Dec - 6.00- 8.00pm St John's - Wm Gilpin Carol Service
Fri 21 Dec - 1.30pm St John's -WG School end of term Service
Sun 23 Dec - 6.30pm St John's - Nine Lessons & Carols
Mon 24 Dec - 3.00pm St John's -Crib Service with donkeys
Mon 24 Dec -11.00pm St John's, Midnight Mass
Tue 25 Dec- 10.30am St John's Family Christmas Communion
Fri 28 Dec - 3.30pm St John's Wedding Richard and Rachel
Sun 6 Jan - Feast of the Epiphany
Mon 7 Jan - 6.45pm St Nicholas Chapel, PCC meeting
Sun 27 Jan - 10.30am St John's, Australia Day
Sun 27 Jan - 6.30pm St Nicholas Chapel, Xian Unity Evensong
Wed 30 Jan - 11.45am St Nicholas' Chapel, Mission Meeting
Fri 1 Mar - 2.30pm St John's, World Day of Prayer
Sun 3 Mar - 10.30am St John's - Africa Sunday
Mon 4 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 1
Wed 6 Mar - 10.30am St Nicholas', Ash Wednesday
Mon 11 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 2
Sat 16 Mar - Concert Rob Dishington
Mon 18 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 3
Mon 25 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 4
Sun 31 Mar - 10.30am St John's, Mothering Sunday
Mon 1 Apr - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 5
Fri 5 Apr - 1.30pm St John's, WG School end of term Service
Sat 6 Apr - 9.00 -12.00 St John's Churchyard tidy up

ST NICHOLAS SINGERS CHRISTMAS CONCERT

4.00pm THIS AFTERNOON in St John's.

A December highlight. The most enjoyable of pre-Christmas musical treats. A glass of mulled wine and mince pies part of the fun. Tickets £12 from Jean Gibbins at St John's, or at the door.

EIGHTEEN LESSONS AND CAROLS

NINE AT:

St Mary's South Baddesley 4.30pm Sunday 16 December

NINE AT:

St John's Boldre, 6.30pm Sunday 23 December

Lovely services. Why not attend both? A chance to sing the great carols, listen to the Christmas narrative and enjoy additional items sung by the choir, all in tranquil and lovely surroundings.