

# Whatlington News

DECEMBER 2024

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## Tuck into the Festive Supper

Saturday  
14 December  
7pm  
*Merry*  
CHRISTMAS  
& HAPPY NEW YEAR  
Village  
Hall

\* Two course  
meal, coffee  
& chocolates

\* Raffle

\* Quiz

Make up a table with friends  
or join other villagers on the night

See page 9

## Pageant: historic village nativity

Sunday 22 December 3pm  
Whatlington Church

Children needed to play  
all the star parts  
See page 8

## Carols round the bar - festive singalong at the Royal Oak

Fun for all the family Songsheets provided Not a singer? Not a problem!

Monday  
23 Dec  
6.30-9pm



New Connectors event Feb 2025: Antiques & Collectors Fair  
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Welcome to the  
Royal Oak

## CHRISTMAS OPENING

**Mon 23rd:** carols round  
the bar, 6.30-9pm.  
Drinks only

**Tues 24th:** Closed  
**Christmas Day:**

12-4pm, drinks only  
**Boxing Day:**

open as normal

**Fri 27th to Sun 29th:**  
open as normal

**Mon 30th:** closed  
**New Year's Eve:**

5pm-late, bar snacks

**New Year's Day:**  
open as normal



*A very merry  
Christmas to  
all of our  
regulars  
from Hasan  
and the  
Oak team*

'King Blues Band – last Oak gig of the year 6 December 8pm



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# POO-DUNNIT?

Bus stop dirty deed remains a mystery

A whodunnit mystery fit to test the powers of even Hercule Poirot surrounds the bus stop by the Royal Oak.

A pile of human excrement was found in the shelter, discovered by Parish Councillor Sandie Sullivan who gallantly cleared up the mess.

At the Parish Council meeting Chair Roger Fisher said it was the fifth time this had happened, with the dirty deed having been cleared up by residents close to the stop.

Sandie said: "I cleared it because I was concerned that school pupils regularly wait for the bus in the shelter. It's not a pleasant experience clearing up somebody's poo."

Roger said: "It would be helpful if anybody who discovers it gets in touch with the parish council and then we can arrange for it to be dealt with."

But as for who is to blame, nobody knows.

## WHITE LINING

A request to paint white lines along Whatlington Road prompted a town v country debate at the Parish Council.

Chair Roger Fisher sided with a villager's request for the lines as a safety measure.

Footpath warden Bev Marks said that twice in the last month he'd had to take evasive action from a bus straddling the centre of the road.

Councillor Simon White, however, said: "We don't want white lines on a country road – it's a town v country thing."

Councillor Amanda Davis said the main danger

was created by vehicles swerving to avoid potholes on the edges of the road.

In a compromise solution councillors agreed to request that only previously existing white lines, where faded through age or covered during road resurfacing, should be reinstated.

## CARRY ON FLOODING

A request from the Parish Council to do something about regular flooding of the A21 at its junction with Marley Lane has sunk without a trace.

National Highways responded that: "The flooding is caused by the road being low at the junction and with a plain on either side. It would be too costly to raise the road bearing in mind the amount of time that flooding occurs."

However the authority has agreed to consider closing the flooded A21 at John's Cross, diverting traffic along the A2100. That would avoid the current practice of a road closure by the Royal Oak that sends vehicles along Whatlington Road.

## SPEED LIMIT HOPE

East Sussex Highways has agreed to consider a Parish Council request for lower speed limits on the C293 (Whatlington Road, currently 40mph), B2090 (Park Lane, 60mph) and B2089 (Udimore Road, 60mph).

The authority stated it would also look at the possibility of establishing footways on the roads to make them safer for pedestrians.

## HA! HA! HA! Some Christmas crackers – a gift from the editor.

My friend faced the prospect of being out of work for a few months so took a temporary job as a waiter. He said: "Well it puts food on the table."

*When a woman's car wouldn't start she looked under the bonnet and found a bat sitting there saying: "My, what a beautiful woman you are." It was a bat flattery.*

My friend the waiter has found a new job as an archaeologist. Now his life is in ruins.

*Thieves broke into a village store and stole 500 cans of energy drinks and 100kg of coffee.*

*Honestly, how do these people sleep at night?*

I found out my friend the archaeologist used to be a mime artist. He kept that pretty quiet.

*There was a theft at my office the other day when all the coffee cups were stolen. I've got to the police station to look at some mug shots.*

Did you hear about the man who swallowed a bottle of invisible ink? He's still in A&E waiting to be seen.

*My friend has finally found a job he's good at. He's using his attic as a space to build boats. Apparently sails are going through the roof.*





JOHN CHARLES WILLIAM BEECHING 1951-2024

# Last of the Renegades



**John was a leading figure in the Hastings Jack in the Green celebrations**

John Beeching, a legend among Sussex bonfire societies and one of the best known Whatlington residents, has passed away.

He suffered a stroke just hours after making his last bonfire torch at Robertsbridge.

Born in Marley Gardens, Battle, he went to Battle and Langton School and then Claverham. He worked on local farms and the Newberry Jam factory before joining the police force.

After his time in the Force he worked at the Gypsum Mines as a shot firer and married Liz at Hastings Registry Office in 1983, with a blessing afterwards in Whatlington Church, then a reception at the Royal Oak where Liz worked.

They lived first at Bybridge in Whatlington, along with Liz's two children from her first marriage Zo and Leo Huggett, before moving to Greenman Cottage in Whatlington Road – Fairmooring as it was known then – in the summer of 1986.

They had a son Guy in 1984 – the same year, as Zo recalls, that Liz burnt the house down while using a paint stripper!

She says: "John was on a fire training course when it happened and thought it was a joke when he got the call to go home."

The couple's spare time was **Continues next page**



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A REPTON SCHOOL



**'Laying' torches for the Robertsbridge bonfire**

**JOHN CHARLES WILLIAM BEECHING 1951-2024**

# Whole load of silliness

*From previous page*

largely spent at Saxon re-enactments and involvement with local bonfire societies. John was instrumental in reforming the Hastings and Robertsbridge societies and setting up the Whatlington Renegades.

The Renegades, essentially John, Liz, their children and a handful of friends, was formed in the 1980s when Whatlington had its own firework celebrations including a small parade of mostly children and a bonfire and display in fields opposite Woodman's Oak.

The Renegades faded as John became more involved with the Battle Bonfire Boys, often helping to build the bonfire on the Abbey Green.

He played a leading role in the Hastings Jack in the Green celebrations and started a winter wassail tradition in the village. It began after Liz bought him an apple tree for his birthday, which was planted outside the Royal Oak.

A noisy ceremony would take place each January to wassail the apple tree, which exists to this day.

He had a love of live music and was a regular at Hastings Old Town pub gigs and a great advocate for the Completely Scuppered Shanty crew, a member of which said: "We will all miss



**Lighting the Hastings Bonfire**

him, he was a great character, with a great sense of humour and a whole load of silliness, which endeared him to those around him."

Whatlington friend Mike Tapsfield recalls how both had their beards shaved in the Royal Oak on a music night in aid of MacMillan.

John and Liz were staunch Labour Party supporters and regularly joined picket lines and protests locally and in London.

The funeral was due to take place on 28 November with the cortege to Hastings Crematorium taking in the Abbey Green and a torchlit procession in the Old Town. The huge number of mourners expected meant the service was streamed live to the East Hastings Sea Angling Club.

# A sense of belonging to something historic

*Extract from an interview with John and Liz in the Whatlington News in 2012*

John was the leading figure in the revival of the Hastings Bonfire Society, which had died out in the 1950s.

"I built the bonfire, I made the

torches and I let off the fireworks," said John.

It has become one of the biggest bonfire events in the area since those days but John said: "I think my favourites are Ninfield and Staplecross – the small village bonfires that remind me of what Battle was like when I was a kid.

"Up until the early 1900s every village used to have a bonfire celebration – usually in the middle of the street – until the police started to crackdown on them. It's the sense of community, of belonging to something local and historic."

Liz adds: "We meet all of our friends and our family come along. It's a big celebration – it's our Christmas, really."



**Liz and John**

# Feeling full? Walk off that festive feast

## Residents urged to take part in footpath survey

Villagers are being urged to work off their festive feasts by treading some of Whatlington's 10 kilometres of footpaths and bridleways.

At the same time they are asked to take note of any problems, such as broken bridges, gates and stiles, surface and vegetation obstructions, and missing, broken or misdirected signs.

The Parish Council initiative will be the first survey of the village's footpaths for many years and is designed to check where repairs are needed.

Footpath Warden Bev Marks says: "We are fortunate to live in a designated Area of Outstanding Beauty with footpaths and bridleways taking in some wonderful scenery.

"Walking has huge mental and physical health benefits and is a great way of getting some activity during the festive break."

Route Code	Name	Length	Type
WHA/1/1	Whatlington 1	400.85	FP
WHA/10/1	Whatlington 10a	1032.03	FP
WHA/10/2	Whatlington 10b	512.63	FP
WHA/11/1	Whatlington 11	1242.04	FP
WHA/12/1	Whatlington 12	210.33	FP
WHA/2/1	Whatlington 2a	155.10	FP
WHA/2/2	Whatlington 2b	630.36	FP
WHA/3/1	Whatlington 3	821.16	FP
WHA/4/1	Whatlington 4	209.23	FP
WHA/5/1	Whatlington 5	978.53	FP
WHA/6/1	Whatlington 6	427.93	FP
WHA/7/1	Whatlington 7	506.82	FP
WHA/8/1	Whatlington 8a	47.79	FP
WHA/8/2	Whatlington 8b	828.18	FP
WHA/9/1	Whatlington 9a	910.56	BW
WHA/9/2	Whatlington 9b	44.93	BW
WHA/9/3	Whatlington 9c	422.43	BW
		<b>Total: 9380.89</b>	<b>metres</b>

**SPOT AN ISSUE? Problems can be reported direct to the county council's Rights of Way team via the website <https://row.eastsussex.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx> Additionally, so that there is a local record of your report, email the web reference number (sent to confirm your report), to parish footpath warden, Bev Marks at: [bevm@hollyblue.net](mailto:bevm@hollyblue.net)**



  
 st michael's hospice

## Hastings Half Marathon

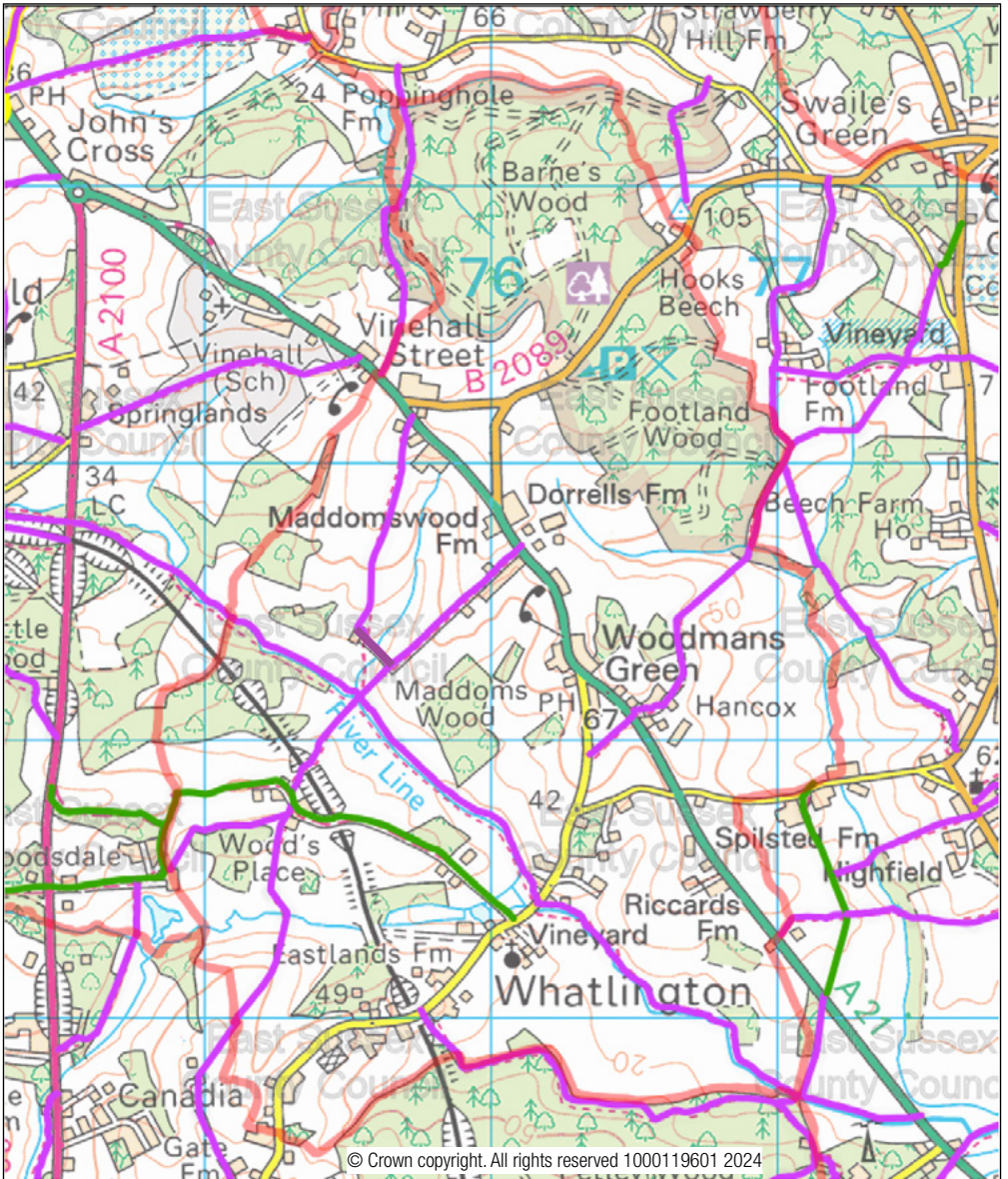
### Sunday 23rd March

Free Runners Reward Bag for every runner

Move for St Michael's Hospice in 2025. To sign up, visit [stmichaelshospice.com/event-diary](http://stmichaelshospice.com/event-diary) or call 01424 456396.

Registered charity number 288462





<b>KEY</b> BW = bridleway FP = footpath
Green line = BW (Mill Lane)
Mauve line = FP
Orange line = Parish boundary
Green, double black lined = A21

## Walking festival planned

A possible village walking festival is being considered for 2025. The Parish Council will be consulting local walkers' groups with a view to several organised walks during Walk Whatlington Week in September.

# Bring out the stars for the village nativity



**SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER  
3PM, WHATLINGTON CHURCH,  
PARKING AT VILLAGE HALL**

If you have a Mary or Joseph, a bunch of kings or angels, or even some mini-shepherds in your household then the village's biggest Christmas celebration needs you.

The Pageant has been the centrepiece of Whatlington's festivities for more than half a century, retelling the nativity story with local children playing all the key parts.

Now the search is on for the young stars to take on the non-speaking roles, with the support of their parents or guardians, for the Sunday 22 December event at 3pm.

Costumes will be provided and there will be a run-through beforehand at 2pm on the 14th.

Older children and adults are needed to read excerpts from the nativity story as it unfolds, starting in the church before moving outside, taking in the shepherds' camp fire before arriving at the stable scene at Leeford Farmhouse.

Members of the Cranbrook Brass Band will accompany carols sung along the way and Lesley and Hugh Apthorp invite you to a warming cup of hot soup or mulled wine.

To find out more – including adults who can help with organisation on the day – contact John Crouch, who is organising this year's pageant 50 years after having taking part in it himself.

Email [johncrouch56@outlook.com](mailto:johncrouch56@outlook.com) or leave a message on 07788 416903.



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# Wreath-making courses

**Robertsbridge florist Sandie Madge is holding two Christmas wreath-making sessions:**  
**7 December at 2pm at Whatlington Church – for details contact Fran Crouch on 07825 405355 or email [fecrouch@hotmail.com](mailto:fecrouch@hotmail.com)**  
**11 December at 7pm at the Village Hall – for details contact Sandie Sullivan on 07939 025828 or email [info@whatlington.com](mailto:info@whatlington.com)**  
**Sessions cost £35 to include materials and festive refreshments.**



## Give your front door a festive makeover

# Singers tune up for Christmas

Whatlington Singers under their Director Lucinda Shephard are practising hard for their Christmas Concert, writes *Yvonne Underhill*.

This will be held on Monday 16 December at 7pm in St Mary's Church, Battle. There will be festive music with some lovely arrangements of old favourites, and we will be joined by Louise Winter, our local opera star.

Entry is free but we would be most grateful for donations towards the cost of the concert and to support our chosen charity.

This year we have selected Music for the Memory, a Battle-based choir offering free singing sessions for those living with dementia.

Wine and soft drinks will be on sale before the performance and during the interval. Doors open 6.40pm.

The choir has developed over the past few years and now numbers 40 singers. Our growing reputation was enhanced by winning the St Cecilia Shield at Hastings Musical Festival for the best community choir.

Do come along and kick off Christmas week in style with some wonderful music.

■ **See page 14 for more details**

**Whatlington Village Hall**  
**Festive Supper**

At the Village Hall  
 7pm Saturday 14th Dec

**Xmas Quiz and Raffle!!**

**Book a place!**  
**Contact Annette**  
 07484638253  
 01424871629

**Tickets £12.50 per person**  
**Bring your own bottle!**

**Whatlington Village**



## CHRISTMAS FAIR

# First festive fair proves a hit with early gift hunters

From hand-woven baskets to local honey products and festive decorations, the first Christmas Fair in the village for many years proved a big attraction.

Around a hundred people attended the event, held in early November and organised by the Whatlington Connectors.

Just over £400 was raised with the money shared between Warming Up The Homeless and the Connectors' fund for future events.

A massive clearout of the stage by Village Hall volunteers allowed for the area to be used for visitors to sit and have a cuppa and home-made cake.

One of the big hits was the stall selling Christmas gifts and decorations made by members of the Wednesday Craft Club (see page 12).







## WINE AND CHEESE TASTING (+ CRISPS!)

# Fine wine and cheesy jokes but don't mention the crisps



It was a coffee morning with a difference – nothing to do with coffee and it was held in the evening.

The Whatlington Connectors put their own spin on the annual Macmillan fundraiser.

Thirty thirsty guests were challenged to identify the 'best' (ie the most expensive) from a selection of wines, provided courtesy of Tesco. Most failed, with the cheapest scoring as many votes as the costliest.



The cheeses proved almost as hard to identify but, with no reflection on the tastes of the audience, there was a much higher success rate with the crisps, even though some were eye-wateringly strong.

To accompany the feast were some of the world's worst food-related jokes and, eventually, coffee made its appearance along with a selection of home-made cakes.

The biggest winner of the night was Macmillan, with a £100 donation to its vital cancer support.





## CRAFT CLUB

From oil and watercolour art classes, to ceramics, felting and floral bouquets, the Wednesday Craft Club has seen local experts pass on their knowledge in the informal two-hour Village Hall sessions.



Keep an eye on [www.whatlington.com](http://www.whatlington.com) to find out what's coming up next at the Wednesday Craft Club.

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# War heroes' names live on

Looking back through old PCC minute books I came across some information about the village War Memorial, including details of the company that made the two plaques inside the church on the south wall of the nave.

The original War Memorial, recording the names of the men who fell in the Great War of 1914 to 1918 was commissioned from James Powell & Sons, of Whitechapel, London.

Powell & Sons were glassmakers, leadlighters and stained glass window makers and as Whitefriars Glass could trace their origins back to the 17th century. James Powell was of the same family as the founder of the scout movement, Robert Baden-Powell. The Memorial was unveiled on 11 September 1922.

The additional plaque to record those who gave their lives in the Second World War

By **Jeffrey Bridges**, Churchwarden

was commissioned from the same company. Whitefriars Glass is better known for paperweights and glass ornaments. It closed in 1980.

The cost for the additional panel was £55, raised by subscription in the village. It was unveiled on Armistice Sunday, 6 November 1949.

The Memorial was badly damaged in the fire of July 2010. Pieces of the mosaic that came away were placed in the Font for safe keeping by Roger Morgan who, with his son James, was the main restoration contractor.

The Memorial was restored by Claire Davies Conservation. Sections of the broken marble surround were replicated using a resin bond and the joints cannot be detected.

### CHRISTMAS SERVICES

**Advent Carols – Sunday 8 December, 4pm**

**Christmas Pageant – Sunday**

**22 December 3pm see page x**

**Christmas Eve – Holy Communion 10pm**

## Have your say on church anniversary celebrations

A celebration window or lych gate, a new website, services themed around historic villagers and an art exhibition – just some of the ideas being considered to mark the 750th anniversary of Whatlington Church.

The latest meeting of the anniversary steering group also considered a book detailing the history of the church, children's events and musical evenings.

Involving the village community will be a central part of the year's activities and residents are invited to attend the next meeting of the group to add other ideas, comment on those already suggested and find out how to get involved.

■ **The meeting is at the church at 2.30pm on 9 December.**

**ST MARY'S CHURCH  
BATTLE**

**A CELEBRATION OF  
CHRISTMAS MUSIC**

**Monday December 16th 7pm**

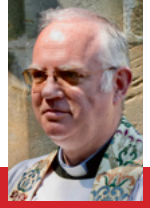
**WHATLINGTON  
SINGERS**

**Director Lucinda Sheppard**

**Free entry Doors open 6.40pm**  
**Refreshments Donations welcome**



# Early Christmas activities diminish true Advent



By Rev John Hawkins, Rector, Whatlington Church

It's Advent at last! The season when we prepare to welcome the arrival of the Christ-child. It's a shame that so many activities that call themselves 'Christmas' start months earlier.

This early celebration of the season diminishes Christmas and the parties become just an excuse for excess. There are plenty of other things to celebrate before Advent.

The whole point of Christmas is that God came to save humanity from the very things that the commercialism of today represents.

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation. We prepare to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in the birth of a baby, and we look ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time.

There are traditional themes of the 'four last things' – death, judgement, heaven and hell. The prayer of Advent is, in Aramaic, 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come.'

Church decorations are simple and spare: purple, the colour of penitence, is the traditional colour of vestments and the church.

In this part of the world the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, so natural symbols of darkness and light are seen.

The lighting of candles is an important part of the symbolism of this time – with one more candle being lit each Sunday on the advent wreath until the great central candle is lit on Christmas Day to remind us that Christ is born as light for the world.

But I don't want to be a killjoy! o, enjoy the parties and especially the carol singing. Some of the greatest music we enjoy was written for Advent and Christmas and, of course, we will have our Pageant on 22 December at 3pm.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.

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# The holly and the ivy – what's that all about then?



**Martyn Hole delves into the lyrics of the ancient Christmas carol and finds new meaning and symbolism few have ever thought about.**

**F** As Christmas approaches, we start to think about Christmas Carols and it is interesting to reflect on the words as some of them contain fascinating symbolism. As my example I take the Holly and the Ivy.

The holly represents Christ and the ivy represents the Virgin Mary. I'm not sure about the symbolism with regard to Mary here: is it the fact that the ivy needs other trees to reach the light, symbolising Mary's dependence on God? Or simply that being an evergreen, it is vibrant and fecund in winter? I would appreciate other people's views.

The holly symbolism is more obvious: its white flowers represent Mary's virgin state. Note that the flowers are only carried by the male tree.

The berries represent Christ's blood and are only found on female trees. That is symbolism that I've not thought of before, that you need both sexes to produce the seed.

The leaves represent the crown of thorns and it is interesting that only the leaves on the lower branches are spiky, above about 10 feet they are not. The spikiness is a defence

against being eaten, which the higher ones don't need.

Finally the bark, which is supposed to taste bitter (although I have never tasted it myself.) Gall has two related meanings: something bitter to endure and an abnormal outgrowth of plant tissue usually due to insect or mite parasites or fungi.

Now this is the one that I think is the most interesting. Many interpretations of the offering to Jesus by the Roman soldiers of sour wine or vinegar view it as cruelty (Luke 23:36).

An alternative view is that they were trying to ease Christ's suffering. The mixture of sour wine and water, flavoured with herbs, was called Posca and was a common drink in the Roman army (see Plutarch, Hadrian and Trajan). If mixed with myrrh, it was thought to have pain-killing and anaesthetic properties, which may be why Christ refused it (Mark 15:23). This drink was not something that was to Jewish taste.

Have a peaceful and thoughtful Christmas . . . and watch Life of Brian again.



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