

The white stuff is-thankfully- leaving at a steady rate, and the Ure is coping with the melt water so that this time we seem to be avoiding the dreaded floods; in the run-up to Christmas we definitely do not want to have to cope with a flood emergency either in Boroughbridge or Ripon!

On Monday we were invited to Chapter House School's Christmas carol service at Ripon Cathedral, and on Tuesday our rather tarnished haloes received a further polish when we attended Queen Ethelburga's carol service at the Cathedral. Both services were memorable and poignant, as so many pupils at both establishments have parents in the Forces, many of whom are serving in Afghanistan. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, particularly at this time of year which is so important to families. The cathedral looked even more magnificent than usual, thanks a spectacularly beautiful Christmas tree, which was covered by myriad blue lights-wonderful!

On Tuesday evening we held the monthly full Council meeting, which had an even longer agenda than usual as three committees had been unable to meet previously due to the weather; consequently their business had to be dealt with at full Council. We had the pleasure of having a presentation by Mrs. Jane Charlton who is now Chair of Governors at the High School, and is determined to forge stronger links with the community, with the entire agreement and backing of the Town Council. Mrs Charlton gave a similar presentation on Thursday to the Joint Parish Council quarterly meeting. With the facilities which are available at the High School it can play an important role in the community and we look forward to an even higher level of involvement and co-operation. As you will no doubt have heard there is a distinct likelihood that the library in Boroughbridge will be a victim of the NYCC cut backs; the library has been an essential part of the town and surrounding villages for more than 70 years, and the Town Council is determined that in some form it must continue. So far no concrete decision as to the library's future has been reached by County, but we are keeping a close watch on the situation.

On Saturday, along with the Mayors and Mayoresses of Ripon and Pateley Bridge I had a joyful time with the members of the Ripon Activity Project at the Ripon College Youth Centre, who were having their annual talent competition. Betty was unable to go, as she was selling raffle tickets for the St. Michael's Hospice Appeal at Morrisons. Proceedings were lively from the word "go"; due to a fire alarm we were not able to get into the building for about 30 minutes, by which time everyone was pretty well wound up. After warming drinks, the members launched into their acts, which were judged in some trepidation by the three Mayors.

The standard of the acts was astonishing, and we were -thankfully- "let off the hook" when the fire alarm went off again, and we all had to exit the building. The morning was not lost however, as (through mouthfuls of mince pies) we all sang carols to the accompaniment of a guitar and an enthusiastically blown saxophone. A brilliant morning and I understand there is to be a re-run of the contest in the New Year. I can't wait-they are the most brilliant group of people and it is such a pleasure to be in their company. Thank you all.

Over the weekend, the Christmas Tree Festival was held in St. James' Church, with entries from many local organisations and schools, to raise money for Community Care; as usual the exhibits were all to a very high standard- Keith Trott will be writing about this elsewhere in the "Herald".

On Sunday morning, with the help of our vicar Philip Smith and the Chairman of Community Care Keith Trott we erected gazebos, installed lights and the P.A. system for Carols of the Square, which started at 4 p.m. Fortunately the weather stayed fine but cold, and there was a good crowd of carol singers, some of whom had followed Father Christmas from the Church at the ending of the Christmas Tree Festival. Whilst the Carol Service was in progress, Mr Dexter from St. Michael's Hospice drew the raffle, and the winners were announced afterwards. Could I take this opportunity to thank everyone who bought and sold tickets, and to those generous individuals and firms who gave the magnificent prizes. The raffle raised £1,380.00 for St. Michael's Hospice-this year's Mayor's Charity.

Next week's Diary is due on Christmas Eve, so if you intend to emulate the parsimony of the infamous employer of poor Bob Cratchitt and not buy a Gazette and Herald, may I wish you a Happy Christmas now-for the rest of you, I'll do it next week!