



## Come Singing newsletter December 2024

Dear All,

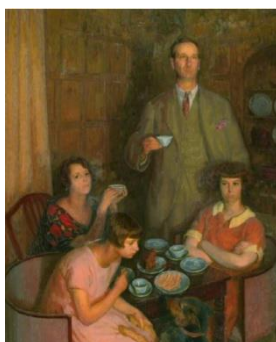
This was going to be a duly Christmassy newsletter but you probably already have enough yo ho ho to get you through December, so instead here are a few stocking fillers - odds and ends to keep you going until the main event!

It's the time of year when a cup of something hot often seems a comforting thought, whether in polite surroundings or more informally...



In the eighteenth century, teaware, an expensive status symbol, often appeared in prestige 'conversation pieces' like the first picture here by Richard Collins (c1727). Tea bowls at that time had no handles: handles were introduced to Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although on chocolate drinking cups much earlier, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

We all have our own ideas and ideals of a good cup of tea and how to drink it. The artist Henry Lamb noted of the Japp family that they 'were taught the 'proper' way to stir tea was to place the spoon in the 12 o'clock position in the cup and softly fold the liquid back and forth 2-3 times to the 6 o'clock position.'



Tea for two

<https://youtu.be/vjGwxPNKMtg?si=Dc6JJgPjKWfBwzWII>  
like a nice cup of tea in the morning

[https://youtu.be/xf6VWBBm12s?si=uHe4p9k1vTYiE\\_MH](https://youtu.be/xf6VWBBm12s?si=uHe4p9k1vTYiE_MH)

You may well need that cup of tea after an evening of carol singing! Many of us may already have attended Advent services, with the wonderful symbol of light emerging from darkness, or be looking forward the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge on Christmas Day (first broadcast in 1928.).

The words and melodies of Christmas carols seep into our memories from earliest childhood, but carols themselves go well back before Christian times, to songs danced around stone circles in pagan ceremonies of the winter solstice. Many too celebrated other seasons such as spring or harvest time and were sung in the community, probably by groups of wassailers going from door to door.

There's an especial freshness, beauty and energy to some of the mediaeval English carols.

'There is no rose of such vertu'

[https://youtu.be/x67ewYepN3g?si=Us\\_Jq6YayY2NV\\_1o](https://youtu.be/x67ewYepN3g?si=Us_Jq6YayY2NV_1o)

Nova nova ave fit ex Eva <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EurSITVUo1A>

It was only in the eighteenth century that carols began to come into churches, and for some time the only one sanctioned for use in the Church of England was 'While shepherds watched their flocks', joined later by 'Hark the herald'.

How about a gentle quiz about some more recent favourites?

1. Which carol was originally sung to the tune of 'On Ilkley Moor ba' tat'?
2. Which carol contains the line: 'Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled'?
3. Which carol has the chorus (needing a good deep breath!) 'Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis'?
4. By what name is 'Adeste Fideles' better known?
5. Which famous poet wrote the words of carol of which the last verse begins 'What shall I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb'?
6. How many different birds are mentioned in 'The twelve days of Christmas'? (|Not the total number, unless you enjoy sums!)
7. Jollity – which carol brings 'tidings of comfort and joy'?
8. Henry Gauntlet was an organist working in London churches. For which famous carol, sung at the beginning of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols did he compose the music?
9. Who composed the song 'White Christmas'?
10. Can you name an Advent hymn – or two?

The not-so-gentle hare!

A few weeks ago in a charity shop I found a wonderful book of prints of hares, *The Artful Hare*, and bought it for a friend. Hares are such intriguing creatures, part of myth and legend and at both elusive and extravagantly uninhibited if you're lucky enough to see them boxing. But they have sides to them not so romantic...



Did you realise that in earlier times they were known for their ferocity and violence? The picture below gives new meaning to the idea of kick-boxing, and a quite different image from the quiet dignified and gentle Serena, companion of Maria Merryweather in Elizabeth Goudge's *The Little White Horse*!



The poet William Cowper had two hares, Tiney and Puss, as well as his much-loved dog Beau. They appear in his memorial window at Dereham, here in Norfolk, and Tiney seems to have been a militant character:



*'Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,  
Who, nursed with tender care,  
And to domesticate bounds confined,  
Was still a wild jack-hare.'*

It's easy to feel guilty when eating lots of chocolate at Christmas - like Easter, Christmas has turned into an excuse for over-indulgence in one of the nation's favourite treats. But cocoa and chocolate have a noble history, going back to their use in early Mesoamerican days of xocolatl in ceremonies of birth death, initiation and even as currency. Montezuma kept a storehouse of cacao and is said to have drunk 50 golden goblets of chocolate a day. (His poor intestines?!) Only those men who went to war were entitled to drink cacao, even if they were his own sons...

Montezuma's version wasn't the hot chocolate we now know but a bitter unsweetened concoction with spices added for variety. Foamy, but no milk involved... One commentator wrote: "he who drinks a cup of this liquid, no matter how far he walks, can go a whole day without eating anything else."

On spreading to Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was still a manly and privileged ethos to drinking chocolate, both in monasteries which often had a special room - the chocolateria - for its preparation and enjoyment, and in the upper-class chocolate houses where people gathered to discuss politics.

Its worth was rediscovered in the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Scott's polar expeditions. The daily ration for Scott's trek to the South Pole included :450g biscuit, 340g pemmican, 85g sugar, 57g butter, 24g tea, 16g cocoa. The sugar was mixed into the cocoa, and Scott said, prevented the men from wanting to kill each other.



In 'The Worst Journey in the World', Ashley Cherry-Garrard a member of the Terra Nova Expedition mentions cocoa no less than two dozen times, saying, "there was always plenty to be had," and calling it "the most satisfying stuff imaginable" and "the most comforting drink." The invention of

cocoa powder made "chocolate" easier for soldiers to carry and prepare while on campaign. During World War I, before true field rations had been invented, troops had often been supplied with hot cocoa by YMCA volunteers sent to military units and bases from Egypt to France.

So eat and drink your chocolate in heroic company! The darker it is, the better for you, and you'll get the maximum health benefit without cow's milk, so perhaps experiment with almond or oat instead?

All I want is a room somewhere <https://youtu.be/XB82q-9f2Nk>

[https://www.tiktok.com/@cine\\_film\\_guesser/video/7135351948932336902?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc](https://www.tiktok.com/@cine_film_guesser/video/7135351948932336902?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc)



Let's end on that warming note!

Whether your ideal Christmas is merry, meditative, musical, active or solitary we all wish you a happiness, health and peace. Thank you for the joy you bring to singing sessions and with your messages and friendship – we have a wonderful community.

The final sings of 2024 are tomorrow, Tuesday, 10th at the Millennium Library and on Friday 20th at Earlham Library. We then kick off 2025 on Tuesday January 14th at the Millennium and Friday 17th at Earlham.

We hope to see you soon!

With much love from all at Come Singing.

### Answers to the carol quiz

1. While shepherd watched their flocks by night  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZxvfZ9Ga2E>
2. Hark the herald angels sing  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Bwn0k0k8xl>
3. Ding dong merrily on high  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OppQRVsdKNs>
4. O come all ye faithful [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1wHyMR\\_SCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1wHyMR_SCA)
5. Christina Rossetti <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw43gnT-tyw>
6. Six: partridge, turtle dove, French hen, calling bird. goose, swan  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqEbbgZCo74>
7. God rest ye merry gentlemen  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlfHyb397VY>
8. Once in royal David's city  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmspXB6IUeg>
9. Irving Berlin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOkyBqGw2Wg>
10. O come, o come Emmanuel  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcllZpnZPgo>  
Hills of the North rejoice <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufsfurSpPmM>



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7. God rest ye merry gentlemen
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10. Come, O come Emmanuel, Hills of the North rejoice