

## Country Notes for December 2020

As Christmas approaches once again, the traditional symbols of Christmas may be seen everywhere – and especially on Christmas cards. One of the recurring symbols is that of snow, and there can be little doubt that the thought of a white Christmas, while we snuggle up in our homes enjoying Christmas fayre and hospitality, is very alluring.

Snow at Christmas is simply part of the package and indeed references to it may be found in quite a few of our Christmas carols. ‘In the Bleak Midwinter’ tells us that ‘snow had fallen snow on snow’ and ‘See Amid the Winters Snow’ even has it in its title.

I can recall one Christmas as a child when the snow arrived and fell deeply as darkness fell on Christmas Eve. Walking to Midnight Mass became a necessity, as the car was going nowhere, and on Christmas morning the scene outside our windows was the perfect Christmas one. However, the reality is that in this corner of England, with its relatively benign climate, a white Christmas is a rarity and in most people’s lifetime it is likely that white Christmases could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is certainly many years since we had one in our parishes.

The reason for this is mainly that being an island surrounded by water, any prevailing winds are moderated by the water. Thus, clouds which may have contained snow at one point, warm up as they approach our islands. This is because sea temperatures take much longer to cool down and warm up, than do land temperatures. This is why on the first day of really warm weather in spring, a dip in the sea can be surprisingly cold, whereas a swim in the middle of autumn might be pleasantly warm!

The fact that Christmas scenes are so often depicted with snow may also have something to do with the fact that in some Orthodox countries Christmas has traditionally been celebrated on 7th January, when the winter chill may have taken more of a hold.

None of this stops us all hoping that this year will be the year when it does indeed snow - and what a wonderful surprise it will be if it does! Here’s hoping – in this household at least!

A very merry Christmas to you all!

Andrew G Snowdon