

Onen hag oll

The Cornish Association of Victoria Inc. Ballarat Branch

A.C.N. A0008 264A

December 2025 Newsletter

Chairperson

Keith Lanyon
34 Glazebrook St
Ballarat 3350
0411 512 160

kmlanyon@hotmail.com

Admin.Secretary

Wendy Benoit
3 Pistol Club Road
Mt Rowan 3352
0403 166 887

wendy.benoit45@outlook.com

Treasurer

Jim Hocking
PO Box 4010
Alfredton 3350
03 5334 3322

jim@go2000.com.au

Newsletter Editor

Robyn Coates
28 Town Hall Ave
Preston Vic 3072
03 9478 6135

robyncoates@hotmail.com



Saturday 6th December

Lunch at the **Grand** in Dana Street - numbers to Keith Lanyon by **30th November - Two course Christmas Meal - \$38.50** (not \$40 as advertised in the CAV Newsletter)

Please tell Keith of any dietary requirements you may have when you give your numbers.

Saturday 7th February 2026 - Tour of the

Ballarat Old Cemetery - if you have a relative buried in the Old Cemetery and would like to share details of their life, please let Wendy Benoit know by Wednesday 28th January 2026.

We may also look at some historical graves with a Cornish connection. Further details early next year.

Sunday 8th March 2026 - possible St Piran's Day

Church Service, lunch and afternoon activity.

October Visit to Geelong

A comprehensive report was included in the November CAV Newsletter but it was a wonderful day for those who attended.

Jim and Bev Hocking, Wendy Benoit, Keith Lanyon and Robyn and Arthur Coates joined seventeen from Geelong and Melbourne.

The weather was warm and sunny though the wind was quite blustery at times.

Neil Thomas, the Chairperson of Geelong, had planned a wonderful itinerary and the members of the Geelong group made everyone most welcome. We enjoyed a wonderful lunch and morning and afternoon teas. It was terrific to meet up with friends we hadn't seen in a long time.

St Erth

The Parish, Church and village of St Erth receive their name from an Irishman who lived from 424 to 514 A.D.

He was Ercus, or Erc, son of Deagh, who had been baptised by the aged St. Patrick and then consecrated Bishop of Slane, in Ireland.

He was the brother of St Ia and St Uny, who came with him to found their respective churches, Ia to St. Ives, Uny to Lelant and Ercus to St. Erth.

At that time ships sailed inland as far as where the old bridge now spans the Hayle River and it was about here that Ercus must have landed. There had been missionaries before him, and the place was known as Lanuthnoe, after Uthinock, another Celt who had founded a monastic cell, nearby. Tradition has it that a Church was built and that Ercus consecrated it in the usual manner of a 40 day period of prayer, fasting and preaching, after which it was given the Bishop's name. The place has been called St Erth ever since.



From a postcard - Original print 1832

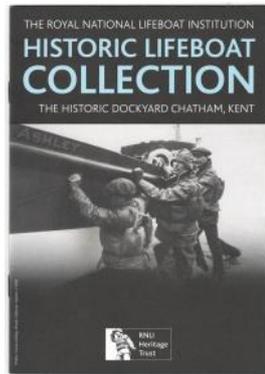
Normally meetings are held on the even months at Skipton Street Uniting Church Hall, cnr Darling and Skipton Streets, Ballarat.

Meetings begin at 2.00 pm and are followed by a shared high tea.



Susan Ashley Lifeboat

Located at the Historic Dockyard Chatham, on the River Medway, about seventy miles from Heathrow airport, is a collection of Historic Lifeboats from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.



Chatham is where Nelson's ship *Victory* was built from 1759-1765 and is also home to the Ropery, which still makes all kinds of rope to this day. In the age of sail, rope was a core component of every vessel.

A major warship such as Nelson's *Victory*, needed over forty-eight kilometres of rigging.

Rope has been produced at Chatham since 1618. The present ropery, is four hundred metres in length and the building mostly built from 1785-91.

Included in the RNLI Historic Lifeboat Collection is the *Susan Ashley* which spent most of its life in Cornwall.

The *Susan Ashley* was the first of its type to have a superstructure made from aluminium and was one of thirteen forty-one feet Watson Class Lifeboats designed for slipway launching.

The rescue of the replica *Hispaniola*

According to information at the Museum, in April 1968, the replica galleon, *Hispaniola*, was drifting on her anchor in terrible sea conditions about fifteen miles off Cape Cornwall.

The crew launched the boat at 2.30 pm and worked against the tide and strong headwinds to set up a tow.

It took them until 4.45 am to moor the galleon safely in St Ives Harbour.

On the way back to Sennen Cove, they diverted to support another rescue, as a helicopter crew took a very unwell man from the Wolf Rock Lighthouse. The crew finally reached home at 4.00 pm. after twenty-six hours at sea.

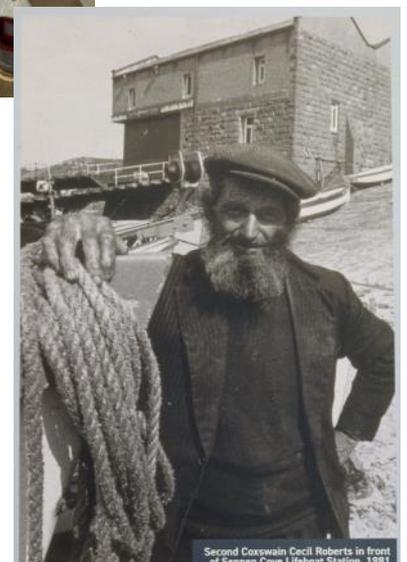
The boat served from Sennen Cove from 1948-1972 and at Barry Dock from 1973-1979.

It saved sixty-seven lives; had a crew of eight and a speed of seven knots.

Its range was eighty-nine nautical miles and had two diesel engines.



2nd Coxswain Cecil Roberts in 1981 in front of the Sennen Coast Guard Station



Travels around Cornwall

The Doniert Stone and The Other Half Stone

In a small fenced enclosure, not far from St Cleer, is the Doniert Stone and the Other Half Stone.

The enclosure was built in 1933 by the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society and replaced a hedge which blocked the view of the stones from the road.



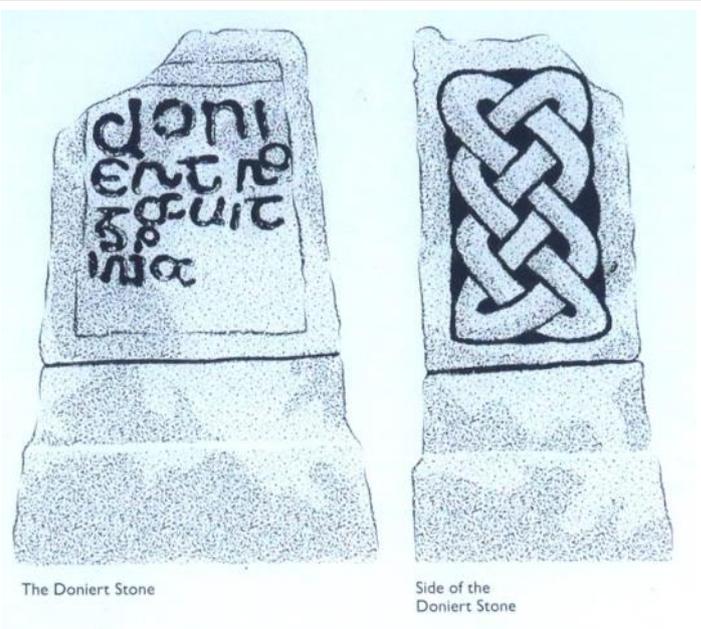
According to information at the site, the stone is the decorated granite base for a Celtic Memorial cross that dates to the late 9th century.

It is thought to have been built to commemorate Doniert, the last recorded King of Cornwall.

There is a mortice cut into the top where the stone cross was fitted.

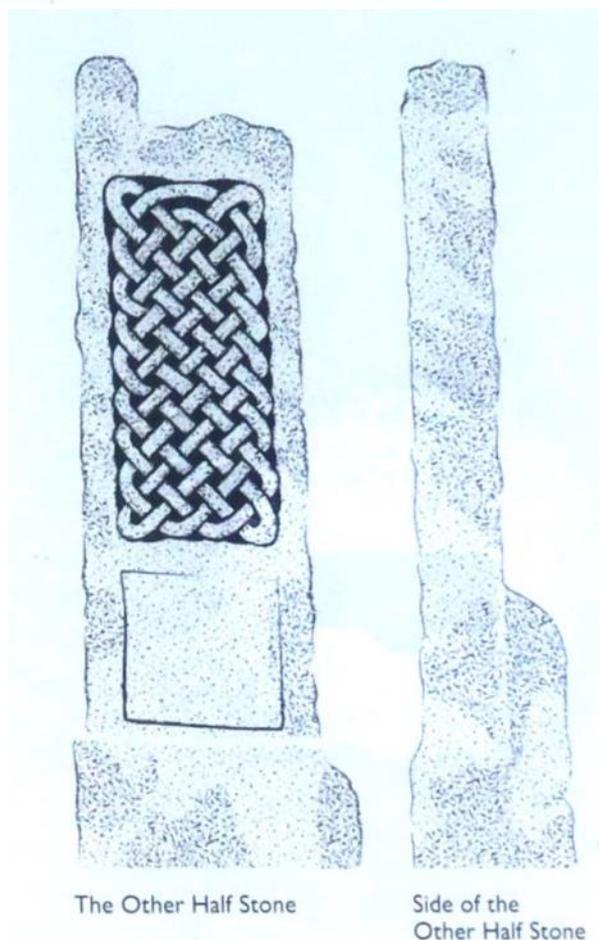
An interlace pattern is carved on three sides of the stone and on the fourth side is a Latin inscription which reads *Doniert rogavit pro anima* - Doniert has begged prayers for his soul.

Next to the Doniert Stone is another Celtic decorated base called The Other Half Stone. It was also designed to support a granite cross. The front panel is carved with an eight cord plait. The two side panels have no decoration. It is not known whether this cross was finished.



The Doniert Stone

Side of the Doniert Stone



The Other Half Stone

Side of the Other Half Stone

It is believed that Doniert was actually King Dumgarth, the last King of Cornwall. His death is recorded in the 12th century *Annales Cambriae*.

The entry for 875 written in Latin reads: *Dumgarth Rex Cerniu mersus est*.

This translates King Dumgarth of Cornwall was drowned.

He possibly drowned in the River Fowey in 875

St Cleer

St Cleer is named after St Clarus, an Englishman who went to Cornwall to preach to the inhabitants in the 8th century.

He founded the church of St Cleer and lived a saintly life nearby.

However, he rejected the advances of a local noble woman who had fallen in love with him and when she continued to pester him he fled to France where he lived in an isolated hermitage.

The woman had him pursued and then murdered.



St Cleer church was first built around AD 800 and was made from timber and subsequently rebuilt in the 13th Century.

The tower suffered damage and was rebuilt in the 15th Century.



A short walk from the church, is the Holy Well of St Cleer. It is in a walled enclosure with a roof over the top and open sides.

It was a regular supply of water and in olden times was thought to cure eye problems and aches and pains and some references also suggest insanity.

St Cleer was a major settlement during the area's mineral boom during the mid to late 19th century. This was followed by a decline as that mining period failed.

The transcript below is taken from information boards in St Cleer



To the north of St Cleer, is the landmark of Caradon Hill, topped by a large television mast.

In 1644, King Charles I gathered his troops before riding to victory at Castle Dore.

Today nothing remains on the site of this event but the ruined buildings are reminders of a later chapter in Cornish history.

By far the most significant event in the development of St Cleer Parish was the discovery of copper in 1837.

Streaming and shallow surface working for tin had been carried out in the area for centuries, but the realization that rich lodes of copper lay just below the surface did not occur until 1833.

Captain Clymo and his sons James and Peter, all working miners, began to investigate the ground to the north of Crows Nest.

They initially mined only small amounts of copper ore, but remained convinced that more was to be found.

Despite failing to attract investors to fund their enterprise, the men persevered and eventually struck the main lode at South Caradon.

Shares in the mine that had failed to sell for £5 each a few months earlier, now traded for £2000 a piece.

Between 1840 and 1860, twenty-five mines opened in the area fueled by the Industrial Revolution sweeping Britain and the world.

Many fortunes were won and lost in mines in Cornwall.

During the 'boom', the population of St Cleer rose from 600 to over 4000, as miners and their families flooded in from other parts of the country to take advantage of the plentiful employment.

The hamlets of Pensilva, Darite, Commonmoor and Tremar Coombe expanded rapidly. In other places, makeshift 'shanties' were hastily constructed to accommodate the new work force before proper terraced cottages could be built.

Many of these communities were lawless and violent, similar in character to the mining camps of the wild west of America, with drinking dens and brothels set up to relieve the men of their hard earned money.

Many men were injured or killed in mining accidents. However, extreme temperature, constant wet conditions, foul air and physical exhaustion killed many more.

A poor diet was also blamed for illness especially the heavy pasties, prepared with suet, potatoes and a tiny quantity of cheap meat. The then Vicar of St Cleer, the Reverend Berkeley described them as '... complete engines for the destruction of health especially in the case of the miner'.

Women and children were also employed at the mines.

The women, called Bal Maidens, were surface workers, processing 'dressing' the ore, breaking, grading it and washing it in open yards or large sheds.

They often worked a ten hour shift for a shilling a day.

Conditions at South Caradon were better than at most other mines.

There were washing facilities and a changing house where clothes were dried between shifts.

In 1842, the miners with support from the Methodist Church, formed the Caradon Miners and Mechanics

Friendly Society.

Members paid 7½ pence per month to ensure that if they were ill or died, their families would be helped. Meetings were held in the Sportsman's Arms Pub, which was also the gaol (now a charming house).

The Unions arrived in 1860.

The Methodist movement had grown steadily since the visit to St Cleer by John Wesley in September 1751.

The famous preacher seemed to understand the hardships of rural life and his message had a sobering influence among a previously tough and rowdy population.

Temple Church



Located about halfway between Bodmin and Bolventor is Temple Church.

Unfortunately, when we visited, the church was closed and we were unable to view the interior.

Temple Church was built around 1120 on land owned by the Knights Templar. The Knights Templar built refuges for pilgrims and travelers, en route to the Holy Land, in the 12th century.

This Catholic military order had been founded in Jerusalem in 1119 and although many of the Knights Templar were skilled fighters the vast majority of the order favoured charitable work.

The Templars quickly built up enormous wealth and power, with a vast network of houses, land and fortifications throughout



Europe and the Middle East – much of it given to them free of charge.

In return, the knights fought in the Crusades and in the UK provided protection for pilgrims making their long journeys to the Holy Land.

Pilgrims from Wales and Ireland, as well as Cornwall itself, frequently journeyed across the moor.

It was considered safer to travel over land between the Camel and Fowey estuaries than to risk the treacherous seas around Lands End.

The Templars could provide a warm meal and a bed for travelers.

On the suppression of the Templars, Temple Church passed into the hands of the Knights Hospitallers (in 1314), who held it until the religious houses were suppressed by Henry VIII.

Knights Hospitallers were founded to provide care for sick, poor or injured pilgrims and so continued to provide a welcome for travelers.

By 1340 the community was recorded as having a preceptor (religious teacher) and one brother, as well as two men servants and a chaplain to hold the services in the church.

Cornwall's Temple Church supposedly, was famous as a place where marriages could be performed without banns or licence (similar to Gretna Green) until the early 20th century.

Temple Church also allowed anyone who had taken their own life to be buried in the churchyard.

Additional information -

<https://cornishbirdblog.com/temple-church/>

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CORNWALL

Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954),
Saturday 12 May 1934, page 10

The reader who enjoys delving into folklore will find a mine of information in Mr. Hamilton Jenkin's new book, "Cornish Homes and Customs."

This is not the Cornwall of the King Arthur legends, of Tintagel, of Tristram and the Fair Iseult, but is, as the name signifies, an account of the homes and customs of Cornwall.

Mr. Jenkin describes the extreme poverty in which many of the inhabitants of Cornwall lived even a hundred years ago and less.

Some of the Cornish customs had their roots in this very poverty, as, for instance, the "houses built in a night."

It was believed that if a house could be built in one night, the builder could claim the freehold for ever. Therefore it was customary for the friends of a newly married pair to band together, and, the materials having been secretly gathered near the spot in advance, they would set to work with a will and complete the four walls and the roof in one night, it being permissible to add such details as window, hearth, and chimney afterwards.

Mr. Jenkin adds an interesting comment: - "Not a few have been retaken, but, as it would seem, unlawfully, for in quite recent years the Duchy of Cornwall claimed one such cottage, but failed entirely in its suit."

The rural calendar abounds in harvest customs, Christmas customs, midsummer fires, guise dancing, and so on.

Many of these have, unfortunately, lapsed with the years, but faithful members of Cornish societies have revived some of the old ways quite recently, such as "crying the neck" (the last swath of the harvest).

Cornish cream is almost as famous as Devonshire cream, but there are many characteristic items of Cornish diet that are not so well known.

Most of them sound extremely good, but others are more strange than appetizing in their mode of preparation, as, for instance, the habit in former years of placing a toad in a cask of cider to "work" it: "Tradition indeed affirms that toads sometimes lived for over 20 years in this fermenting work. When the cask was empty the creature would be tipped out through the bunghole, and the people standing by would exclaim: 'Mind the toad, mind the toad, save 'un up for the next brewen!' "

The anecdotes that Mr. Jenkin tells are most amusing, and one could wish that there were more of them scattered through his book.

However, there is so much information of absorbing interest to the student of folk-lore that one feels it would be unfair to be greedy.

One item that many people will note with surprise is that the "floral dance," so widely known, ought really to be called "furry dance" — "floral" having no bearing on its origin. Mr. Jenkin tells us that it is derived from the Latin "Feriae," and, having turned first into the French "ferie," and then into the Middle English "ferier," eventually became "furry," meaning "parish feasten holiday."
(J. M. Dent and Sons.)

From TROVE - Some Christmas Snippets

Manning River Times and Advocate for the Northern Coast Districts of New South Wales Saturday 25 December 1926, page 1

Christmas Poetry - A Cornish Christmas Carol.

*Welcome that star in Judah's sky,
That voice o'er Bethlehem's palmy glen: .
The lamp far sages hailed on high.
The tones that thrilled the shepherd men:
Glory to God in highest heaven!
Thus angels smote the echoing chord ;
Glad tidings unto man forgiven!
Peace from the presence of the Lord!*

*Those voices from on high are mute;
The star the Wise Men saw is dim;
But Hope still guides the wanderer's foot,
And Faith renews the angel-hymn:
Glory to God in loftiest heaven,
Touch with glad hand the ancient chord;
Good tidings unto man forgiven,
Peace from the presence of the Lord!*

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Wednesday 25 December 1907, page 6 CORNISH CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

In Cornwall, there is a time-honored observance attached to the early hours of Christmas morning. The adults unloose the left shoe of the first child they meet who, in return, asks a small contribution,, which it is thought most unlucky to refuse. This quaint practice is believed to bring prosperity and freedom from every kind of fatal illness throughout the approaching year, and is therefore kept up in many districts.

Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940), Friday 23 December 1910, page 6

THE CORNISH CHRISTMAS
BY S. TREVENA JACKSON.

The Cornish people have been given the palm for Christmas celebrations by those who have joined in the Yule Tide festivities in many lands.

There are about four hundred thousand people living in the south-west part of England, in the county of Cornwall, which is bounded on the east by Devonshire, on the north and west by the Atlantic, and on the south by the British Channel.

The extreme length of Cornwall is 81 miles, and its breadth 46 miles.

The climate is warm and damp.

Snow is a rare sight; when a little of it falls the warm

face of mother earth causes it soon to melt.

The Cornish custom of making Christmas the day of days is worth much to their home life.

For nearly fifteen hundred years these people have held firmly to their faith in the Christmas religion. In all England there is not a more God-fearing, law-abiding, Sabbath-keeping, home-loving people than the Cornish Christians.

Eight or ten weeks before Christmas much is done with a view to make the season a time of joy and good-will.

The mothers are making their Yule-tide puddings. The boys and girls are placing their pennies in little tin boxes, not to be touched until Christmas Eve. The miners are bringing home the Christmas blocks from the mines to burn in the open fireplace on the night of the celebration of the Saviour's birth.

Boys of the various parts of the town are forming themselves into groups of about six or seven to practice carols for Christmas.

Some of the boys are quite young, others are able to read but little, while some who cannot read at all can sing many Christmas carols.

They meet in some woodshed, empty chicken-coop, washhouse or barn with a miner's candle for a light, repeating over and over again the great selections they desire to sing from house to house on Christmas night.

Find the Cornish man or boy where you may, he is well versed in great hymns and Christmas carols.

The young men meet in the churches and chapels, and have a most careful training to sing well on the morning of Christ's birth.

Certainly the young women join with the men. Many of these young men have remarkable voices. They gather weeks before the celebration on the corners, under lighted street lamps, and sing, each one taking his part.

It is now two weeks before Christmas.

The Cornish mothers are as busy as beavers. The Cornish saffron cake must be made; the home would be dark and dead without its Christmas saffron cake. The Cornish women are experts in this part of cookery. In some homes they make as many as twenty or thirty loaves. They are careful to have the cake very rich, with a beautiful golden colour.

The poor must not be forgotten, so an extra loaf is made for the needy.

The Christmas saffron cake is the main thing in a Cornish home at Christmas-tide.

They have many things, but nothing in such quality and quantity as this golden cake.

Christmas Eve every one that is able goes to market; it is one of the busiest beehives in the world.

The streets are thronged with young and old making their last purchasings of fruit, nuts, candy, and other dainties at the shops, for all must be closed on the day the Lord Christ was born.

It is now twelve o'clock, and every person must be out of the public houses.

It is an interesting sight to see the men come out of these places.

Joining in groups, they sing most heartily Christmas carols, then go to their homes, sleep until about four in the morning, arise and hasten to the chapels to hear the singing.

Three thousand persons have often been crowded in one of these places of worship at five o'clock; at six o'clock they go to another chapel.

There is no preaching, simply singing the glory of God for the gift of His Son.

The Christmas dinner in the Cornish home is a dinner indeed. No stint anywhere, for if they are poor some one has been abundant in good deeds.

The meal done, the family gather around the fire in the little parlour, while someone tells a story of old Father Christmas, and join in singing the anthems of the season.

About four o'clock in the afternoon these folks must have their cup of tea and a piece of Christmas cake.

About seven in the evening, the boys, who for eight weeks have been doing their level best to know the carols by heart, are starting out to sing in the homes. The boy who can repeat the verses best is the leader.

At some homes they get a cool reception, and are not admitted; at another you will hear a dear old Cornish mother say : "Come in, my dears, give us a car! I'llie Lord bless ee. What can ee sing my dears?"

Then the leader gives out the first verse of the first carol that the Cornish boy learns:

*The Lord is come, the heavens proclaim
And all the nations learn His name,
An unknown star directs the road
Of Eastern sages to their God.*

This having been sung with real vim through, the dear old mother asks

"What more can ee sing, my dears?"

Then the leader gives out:

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.*

Then the cake and lemonade are passed around; the boys enjoy all there is for them.

One of the company suggests they sing "Christians Awake. "

'That's a trifle hard for we boys,' spoke the leader.

"Go 'ead, try un Sam."

The leader announced:

*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of mankind was born;
Rise to adore the mystery of love
Which hosts of angels chanted from above;
With them the joyful tidings first began
Of God Incarnate and the Virgin' Son.*

This was sung well. It was the time to pass the hat. When it came back there was a silver piece in it with some pennies.

The leader gave out with great deal of joy in his face:

*Hark, the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled.*

Thus the Cornish boys from year to year become the songsters of God's best gift to this world.

This is one of the means of making boys better, girls purer, mothers nobler, and fathers more fervent in fidelity to the Christian faith.

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Some riddles for the young at heart

+Why was the Christmas tree so bad at sewing? It kept dropping its needles!

+What did the beaver say to the Christmas tree? Nice gnawing you!

+Why are Santa's deers always wet? Because they're reindeers!

+How does Santa keep track of all the fireplaces he's visited? He keeps a logbook

+What do you call a blind reindeer? No eye deer

+Who hides in the bakery at Christmas? A mince spy

+What did Adam say the day before Christmas? It's Christmas, Eve.

+What is Santa's favourite pizza? One that's deep-pan, crisp and even

+Why did the scarecrow get promoted? Because he was outstanding in his field!

+Have you seen the film about the tractor?

Well I haven't, I've only seen the trailer!

+What athlete is warmest in winter? A long jumper

+What is the best Christmas present?

A broken drum, you can't beat it!

+What do Santa's helpers learn in school?

The elf-abet!

+What falls but never gets hurt? Snow!

