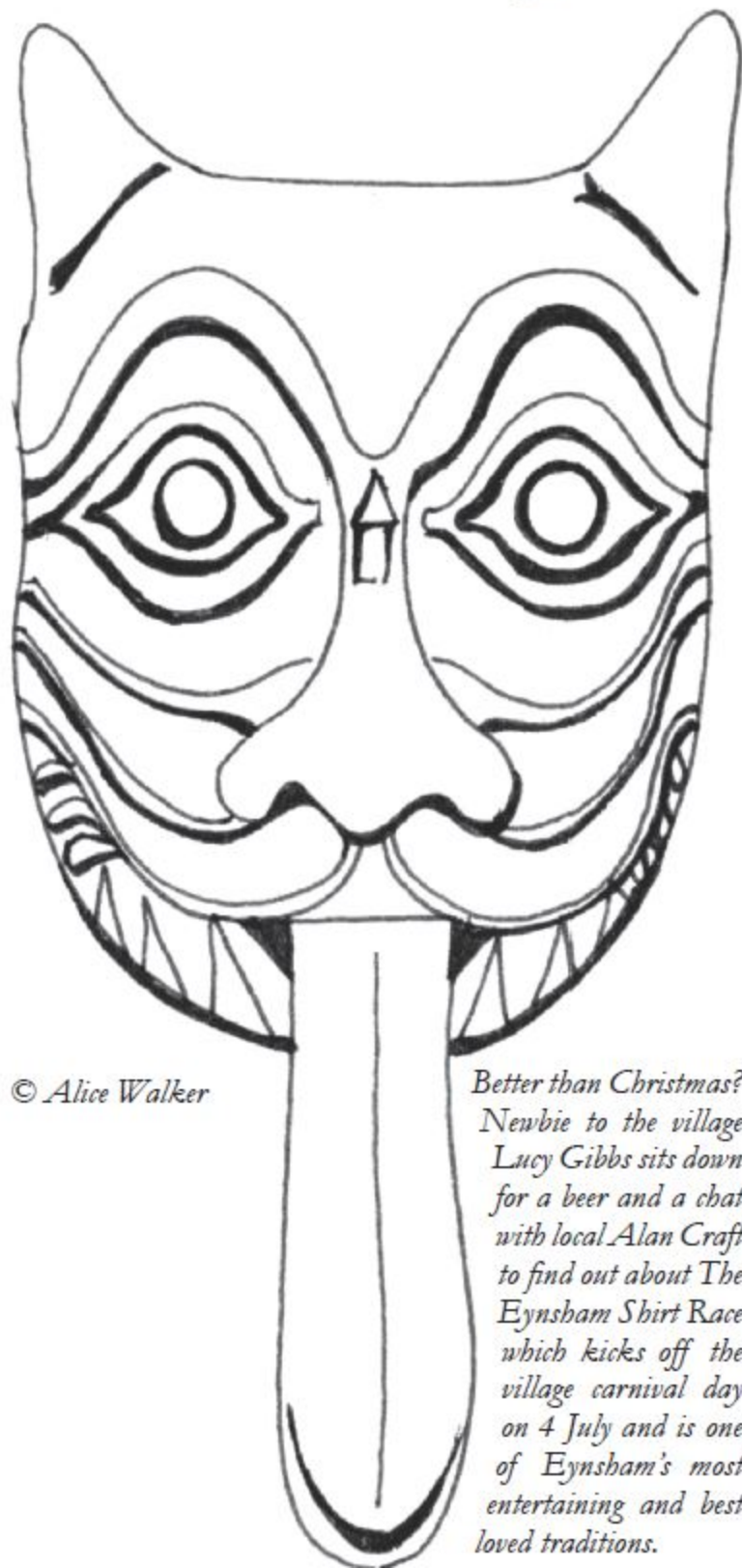


Over to you



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*Better than Christmas?
Newbie to the village
Lucy Gibbs sits down
for a beer and a chat
with local Alan Craft
to find out about The
Eynsham Shirt Race
which kicks off the
village carnival day
on 4 July and is one
of Eynsham's most
entertaining and best
loved traditions.*

Luckily Alan has lots of photos on his phone of entrants from previous years and we spend a fun few minutes scrolling through images of; Thomas the Tank Engine chugging down Acre End Street, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang speeding past the Co-op and Thunderbird 2 touching down outside the Queen's Head. "Clearly," I say to Alan, "a great costume is vital, so what are you going as this year?" I wait, but Alan says nothing. Perhaps Alan hasn't heard me or maybe he's annoyed because I've scoffed all the



crisps. I try again. "Your costume Alan, what is it?" Again nothing. Eventually (and in a very slow voice) Alan explains that the golden rule of Shirt Race is that costume and vehicle design remain an absolute secret until race day. Pleading will do you no favours, and neither will snooping. "So", warns Alan, "definitely no peeking through your neighbour's shed window." In one of the photos I recognize Alan. He's pushing his team-mate through the village, both of them clad in cotton wool and grinning from ear to ear. "That's me and my dad", he says. I love getting my family involved. This year I'm competing with my sister. My daughters are old enough now (the minimum age is 18) and my nephew will be in seven years' time. I want to take part with all of them. If we come first or last, it doesn't matter, it's just a great experience."

Taking part would be fun, but this year I'll stick to being one of the many volunteers needed to support this remarkable Eynsham tradition. Alan reckons ESR can never have too many helpers on the day, especially people who could help with marshalling the event. It's a fantastic opportunity for a front row seat to the race and the parade. If you're interested you can email esr@eynsham.net or pop into Evenlode DIY for a word with Trish or text 07986 099173. And keep up to date at www.facebook.com/EynshamShirtRace