

**Chinese New Year – The Great Race**

The Jade Emperor decreed that the years on the calendar would be designated to one of 12 animals. The animals would have to cross a river to reach him and the order in which they arrived would decide the order of the animals for each year.

The cunning RAT knew that he was smaller and weaker than many of the other animals. He spied the OX and hopped onto its back. The kind-hearted OX did not mind but the cunning RAT leaped off the back of the OX just as they reached the river bank so became first to reach the Emperors side. The OX coming a very close second.

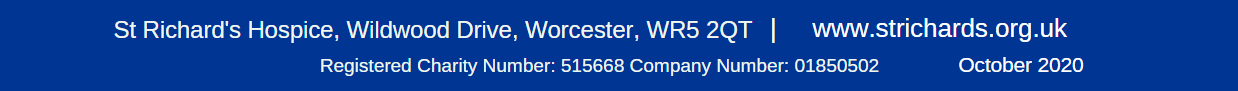
Next arrived the TIGER who complained that the strong river currents had swept him downstream and hindered his crossing.

From a distance came a thumping sound and RABBIT arrived fourth having jumped the river.

DRAGON flew into fifth place. The Emperor was astonished that fast flying dragon had not arrived first so DRAGON explained he had been on a mission of mercy at a nearby village which had held him up.

Just after the DRAGON arrived a galloping sound was heard and HORSE appeared. SNAKE however was hidden on HORSES hoof and on arrival frightened the horse who fell back into the river. Hence, SNAKE is sixth and HORSE seventh.

GOAT, ROOSTER AND MONKEY found a raft and worked together to get across. The Emperor was very proud of them and named them GOAT eight, MONKEY ninth and ROOSTER tenth.

Eleventh place was DOG who although speedy at running and swimming had wasted time playing in the river so arrived later. The Emperor just about gave up when PIG arrived. PIG had stopped for a snack before setting out on the race so arrived last!