

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



The Transfiguration of Our Lord

AUGUST 2021



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From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

The weather over recent days in Northern Ireland has been glorious almost too warm for some with record temperatures reached in Co. Down. Death Valley in California recently had the highest ever temperature recorded on Earth of 54.4°C (130°F). I once experienced 120°F in Cyprus and that was quite simply unbearable so I can't imagine what 130°F would be like. Whilst all this has happened central Europe has experienced some of the worst floods in decades with dozens dead and many more still missing in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The scientists have been warning of the extreme effects of climate change for years now and it seems to me that the evidence is clear. Yet there are many Christians, especially in the U.S., who not only ignore the signs but deny that climate change is an issue. I saw one American Christian website recently which boldly stated that the church should have no concern about the environment but instead concentrate on spiritual matters only. I don't know what bible they've been reading but any bible I've read clearly shows in both the O.T. and N.T. God's concern for his creation and that we are called to be good stewards of it. It's clear from the teachings of Jesus that he was very concerned about the physical well being of others and encouraged his disciples to do likewise. That means we need to be responsible for the world we live in and for how pollution and climate change affect the lives and welfare of our fellow human beings especially the poorest and most vulnerable. To be concerned only about 'spiritual matters' is like clapping with one hand, it achieves very little. There's a great deal to be said, and more importantly done, to combat climate change so we all need to take this seriously as a priority for Christians in the 21st Century.



I recently got in touch again with an old friend from my days at Merton Technical College in south London in 1980/81. He sent me a photo which I'd completely forgotten about which shows me being a highly irresponsible 20 year old on a Honda 90! You can see what the Rector used to look like with hair and marvel at the Icelandic style jumper which my sister knit for me to combat the cold of long motorcycle

journeys. It was my pride and joy! Suggested captions may be sent to the editor.

God bless you all.

Brian Stewart

THE PORTRUSH OUTING

by Geoffrey Johnston

When I was a boy chorister in St Bartholomew's Choir in Belfast, there were several highlights in the year, e g the Harvest Festival, the Christmas Carol Service but none was greater than the Choir Outing to Portrush each summer. Nothing could compare with the anticipation and thrill that the event gave rise to among choir members. Weeks before it 'The Doc' assured us that a booking had been made for a meal at the Trocadero restaurant. The high tea there was the climax of the day, as well as being a posh venue such as few of us visited on a regular basis. One year he announced that the Trocadero, for some reason, was unavailable, so we would go instead to Farquhasons. What a 'come-down' that sounded to us in the glamour of the meal. However, in the event the new venue served us very well and normal service was resumed the next year.

The day began with a train journey to Portrush. Being away together gave us a great sense of occasion and the weather usually was fine. On arrival we first made for Barry's amusements to sample the rides there. Next stop were the ice cream parlours. Then it was on to the strand to enjoy rounders or explore the beach. Then it was time for high tea at the celebrated Trocadero. The meal was always a salad and never failed to give us a sense of luxury and importance. Then we made for the train and our homeward journey.

One year there was added excitement. We were all on board and the station master had blown his whistle but where was the curate? Stanley Woods, a tall rangy chap with dark wavy hair, was missing. Then we spotted him just leaving the barrier as the train got into motion. He sprinted after the train and someone let down a window with the leather strap, common in those days. He then simply took a leap and dived headfirst through the open window. Willing hands then pulled him in and all was saved. The ladies admired him already, but this feat of bravado made him even more popular.

When I recall those halcyon days, I know that nothing remains but memories. There is just one reminder. If you walk down Portrush Main Street and pause a few steps before you come to the Whitehouse Shop, you can still see a mosaic on the footpath, where an entrance once was, announcing in faded letters *Trocadero*.

*'The Doc' referred to above was Dr Selwood Lindsay, for many years
Choirmaster at St Bartholomew's in Belfast.*

THE LOLLIPOP MAN

by Paul McLaughlin



“Get away into your warm school, lads” he shouted above the idling engines of cars, vans and lorries, as he ushered us across the road. “And be good boys for your teachers”.

I can remember his words clearly after 60 years, which is hardly as surprising as it sounds. Like his smile and raucous laugh, they were always the last things he said to us each morning. Monday to Friday, September to June. Hail, rain snow or blow our crossing guard, a sprightly pensioner in a long white plastic coat and peaked cap, encouraged us into school with a helping hand and a wave of his giant ‘lollipop’.

He always had a word of comfort for an upset youngster, an arm ‘round the shoulder for the fearful and a terrible joke or two for the rest of us. He was the man who kept us safe. He was ‘Mister Lollipop’.

Crossing guards were christened Lollipop Men within days of their taking up their stations on main roads of Belfast at the beginning of the 1960s and rightly so. Their huge stop sign, with its long shaft and circular ‘stop - children’ sign looked just like a lolly. I remember a lad in our class calling it a magic wand. Mister ‘L’ would walk into the middle of road, raise his sign and the traffic, including the horse drawn carts of the Wordies haulage company, would come to a halt. Magic indeed.

My bus had been ten minutes late that December morning. My father travelled with me on it to the stop nearest our school before continuing onto work in the city centre. “Don’t worry Paul’, he said, “Just tell the master that it isn’t your fault and there won’t be a problem”. With that he patted me on the head and slipped a thruppenny bit into my hand.

Mister Lollipop was still on duty and echoed my father’s words as just we two crossed the Springfield Road.

Unfortunately, there had been a problem. And a serious problem at that. Forty odd boys in P3 watched in total and terrified silence from their wooden gallery seats in our unusual, tiered classroom as our master Mister Agnew shook a stuttered and incoherent explanation out of me.

“You have no respect”, he shouted into my face, “A lazy, lying-in-bed boy with no respect. Well, we’ll soon fix that”

He opened his attaché case on the big desk at the front of the class and drew out a three foot cane. I could feel tears at the back of my eyes and my face burning red with humiliation.

“Ah”, he said, swishing the frayed cane back and forth, “This old girl has seen better days”, and handing me a sixpenny piece he ordered me to go Mister Greenwood’s shop on the front of the main road for a new one.

“He’s not going to beat a wee man like you, is he? That’s terrible so it is”. Mister Greenwood, a kindly man with a large family, leaned over the counter and sympathised with me, but he still made the sale, wished me well and I trudged back toward the school.

The traffic now was fierce, and I stood scared of it and even more scared of being any later back to class. The master would be pacing up and down by now, his fringe flicking angrily across his face. His temper building not slowly but surely.

“What are you doing out and about in school time young fella?” It was Mister Lollipop, just finished his morning shift, the big lolly under his arm. His cap tilted back to reveal a Bill Haley-type kiss curl that was as white as the sea-bleached shells I’d collected on the beach at Omeath in the holidays.

“I’m going to be slapped for being late, Mister”, I said, my voice trembling, “And it wasn’t my fault”.

Mister Lollipop, who I will remember ‘til the good Lord calls me, put a strong hand on my shoulder. “Well there’s nothing I can do about that wee man” he said, “But there’s something *you* can do. Look right at that brute of a master when he hits you. Look right at him and you’ll be the better man”.

I watched as he walked into the home bakery for his morning bap and galloped down the entry between the terrace of houses and the police barracks that ran directly to our school.

Tears flowed during and after ‘four of the best’, the cold and the cane doing their biting work on my tiny hands, but I did feel the better man the very next morning when Mister Lollipop called me a brave wee soldier.

(It’s a true story!)





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SOME IRISH SAINTS by Billy Adair

We are surrounded by Churches, some of which have strange names for their dedication, names like Molua, Martin, Finnian, Donard. So here is a short account of the salient points in the lives of some of them.

St BRENDAN (484-577 or 583)

Probably no other Irish Saint is so surrounded by legend as Brendan the Navigator. Brendan was born in Munster in 484 and was, throughout his life, celebrated for his virtues, humility and bravery. He founded an Abbey at Clonfert, Co. Galway and became its Abbot. At one period he ruled no fewer than 3,000 monks!

As a result of dreams or visions, Brendan made many journeys by sea in an open boat, visiting the Hebrides and Orkneys and perhaps even the West Indies. Much of his voyaging is shrouded in legend, but he was a Pioneer of the Faith and led an exciting life - much of it on the ocean wave!

His Feast Day is May 16th.

St CHRISTOPHER (3rd Century)

The name Christopher means "One who bore Christ." Again he figures largely in legend, but tradition has it he was martyred in Asia Minor during the 3rd Century. One legend represents him as a powerful giant who earned his living by carrying travellers across a river. On one occasion his burden was a mere child whose weight caused Christopher to buckle under. It was the Christ and His weight the sins of the whole world.

In Medieval times a large mural painting of the Saint was placed opposite the south door of many Churches in the belief that the mere sight of it would safeguard the passer-by from accident that day. So St Christopher is the Patron of Wayfarers and more recently of motorists.

His Feast Day is July 25th but was dropped from the Roman Calendar in 1969. Why, one wonders?

St CLEMENT (c 96)

Clement was a popular name for Popes, - they reached Clement XIV by 1769. Only one was Canonized, Clement of Rome, who lived around 96 AD. He was Bishop of Rome, probably the third Bishop after St Peter, although originally he was thought to be St Peter's immediate successor. He may have been an ex-slave and it is just possible he was the Clement referred to in Philippians 4: verse 3.

His Feast Day, November 23rd.

St COLUMBA (or COLMCILLE) (c 521-597)

Of noble lineage - his father descended from the High Kings of Ireland, his mother from the Kings of Leinster. His name means "a dove." He received Minor Orders and later Priest's Orders at Clonard. In 546, acting independently (a not uncommon feature of the Irish Church) he founded his first Monastery at Derry. Ten years later Durrow was founded, to be followed by Kells, Co. Meath, Swords Co. Dublin, Drumcliff, Co. Sligo and Tory Island, Co. Donegal.

The row over his copying Finnian's New Testament led to bloodshed and to atone for this Columba set out on a Missionary Campaign. So the famous Monastery at Iona was founded about 563, with a Royal Irish Prince in Priest's Orders as its Abbot.

With 12 companions he lived and worked there for 34 years, converting many including Brude, King of the Picts, and in 574 the new King of the Scots of Dal Riada. He never again set foot on Irish soil and died at Iona in 597.

His Feast Day is June 9th.

St DONARD (5th Century)

Donard or Dromangard is Patron of Maghera, Co. Down. In the time of St Patrick he lived as a hermit on Slieve Donard, hence its name. He died in 500 AD.

His Feast Day is March 24th.

St FINNIAN (c 495-579)

To-day Finnian is an obscure name - in the 6th Century it was the most powerful in Ulster. (The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church says he is the Chief Patron of Ulster!).

He came from the Dal-Fintach family, who were the Ulster Royal Family, and he became its head. His renown spread because of the Monastery he founded at Moville in 555, 4 years before Bangor was founded.

Finnian was a scholar, and it was his rare copy of the New Testament (some now say the Old Testament) which Columba copied out without permission. He also founded a Monastery at Dromin, Co. Louth.

His Feast Day is September 10th.

St MARTIN (316?-397)

Three people with this name were Canonized - Martin, Archbishop of Braga (520-580), Martin 1st, Pope from 649-655, and Martin, Bishop of Tours and Patron Saint of France. I fancy the latter is "our man."

Martin was born a pagan but early became a catechumen. He joined the Roman Army, but after giving half his cloak to a beggar

at Amiens, a vision of Christ impelled him to Baptism and the Religious Life. In 360 he founded the Monastery of Liguge, the first in Gaul, and became Bishop of Tours in 372.

His Feast Day is November 11th.

St MOLUA (or MALACHY) (1094-1148)

I think I read somewhere that Molua and Malachy were one and the same person.

Malachy was born in Armagh in 1094 and lived in troubled times, Ireland being repeatedly ravished by the raiding Scandinavians. The result was the country more or less reverted to paganism.

Malachy gave much time encouraging recourse to the Sacraments, reformed the Abbey at Bangor and then became Bishop of Connor. In 1129 he was made Archbishop of Armagh but was prevented from occupying the See for some years.

In 1139 he visited Rome for an audience with the Pope and en route called on St. Bernard at Clairvaux, who became his close friend and biographer. A second visit to Rome was commissioned in 1148 but again stopping at Clairvaux, Malachy took ill and died in the arms of his friend, St. Bernard, at dawn on November 2nd.

His Feast Day is November 3rd.



Charms and Knots

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Who reade a chapter when they rise,
Shall ne're be troubled with ill eyes.
A poore mans rod, when thou dost ride,
Is both a weapon and a guide.
Who shuts his hand, hath lost his gold:
Who opens it, hath it twice told.
Who goes to bed and doth not pray,
Maketh two nights to ev'ry day.
Who by aspersions throw a stone
At th' head of others, hit their own.
Who looks on ground with, humble eyes,
Findes himself there, and seeks to rise.
When th' hair is sweet through pride or lust,
The powder doth forget the dust.
Take one from ten, and what remains?
Ten still, if sermons go for gains.
In shallow waters heav'n doth show;
But who drinks on, to hell may go.

Days

by Philip Larkin (1922-85)

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?
Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

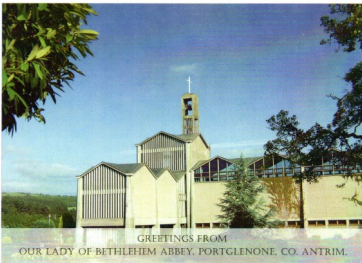
Submitted by Geoffrey May

PORTGLENONE

From the Irish, Port Chluain Eoghain meaning, "landing place of Eoghain's meadow". Pronounced PortglenOWN. Population 8,100.

We boarded the yacht in Antrim town and sailed across Lough Neagh. Just some facts about this great lake; it is owned by just one man, Nicholas Ashley-Cooper, the 12th Earl of Shaftesbury. It is thought to work better than a committee of thirty or so arguing. Apart from free water for Belfast, 400 tons of eels per annum are sent to Holland for smoking and London for jellifying, but for our part, we humbly caught one 7 inch brown trout. On the northwest shore, we dropped the sails and used the outboard to take us to the busy river crossing town in the centre of Ulster with roads coming in from all over. The favourite alternative way of reaching here is by the scenic routes from Randalstown or Ahoghill, with views of miles of rolling countryside and Lough Neagh to be seen from a height.

Whichever way you come upon this beautiful town, well stocked for necessities, no flags, no ugly yellow lines, and 6 very attractive churches: 3 Presbyterian, one each, Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland and Bethel Temple. A mosque and synagogue are planned for those of alternative faiths hereabouts. There is a widely varied forest, scattered with bluebells, anemones, wild garlic much more, 2 holy wells and an ancient graveyard. By the river is one of the best sunflower fields in Ireland.



By far the most distinguishing feature however, is the Cistercian Abbey of very modern architecture, on 300 acres of land, bought from the Alexander family in 1948. There is some tragic romantic history here; Thomas Alexander, the eldest son of the landed family, in 1795 inherited the substantial house and 1,000 acres of land. He also falls in love, and 3 times he proposes marriage to his adorable, only to be refused, so there was nothing for it but to join the army. This he did, taking a horse and servant with him, to become a Major. Returning a year later, on leave, he gets a 4th refusal even after telling her he has made a will, leaving the estate and all property to herself. Then, sadly, off to foreign fields, where he is killed, leading a charge. Being of high rank, his body is brought back to be buried in the family graveyard on the estate. After the funeral, the will is read and Cynthia, for that was her name, turns the Alexander family out of the house. It came as a bit of a shock. This story has a happier ending

than you might expect, for when the loved one eventually dies, she leaves all the property back to the Alexander family.

Some unusual treatments for the sick were popular in the mid 18th century. To cure heart disease, a local male charmer would pass a stocking 15 times round the body of the afflicted person. The remedy for whooping cough is the passing of the sufferer round, "over and under" the body of a donkey 10 times. To cure rheumatism 3/4 fill a stone jar with frogspawn, add 3 horseshoe nails, some camphor and poteen, leave beside fire for 3 days to mature. Apply the lotion 3 times daily to the parts in pain. After a while, the mixture is said to develop an aroma that is not pleasantly fragrant, but you're not to stop the treatment. Yet another cure is feeding owl's eggs to children, (not favoured by publicans) preventing them from becoming addicted to strong drink in later life.

You may have found the above outrageous, even unbelievable, but bear in mind today everything on television is a lie; canned laughter, faux superiority, fake news, misleading advertisements, which sell millions of pounds worth of teeth whiteners which do not work, hair growing lotions that don't make hair grow, and skin products that don't stop wrinkles. Without such nonsense the following were lucky to be born and raised here: Bernard Diamond VC (1827-1892) Bengal Horse Artillery. Emma Kearney of Coronation Street fame. Augustine Henry, a tree donator and Timothy Eaton, the Canadian trader who served his apprenticeship here. The Rev Kennedy McKay (of 90 minute sermons) a poteen maker of some distinction, he wrote interestingly "the kick of a dying beast is dangerous". Finally the wonderful Rev John Abernethy (1750- 1822), of whom it was said:

He was a bright and luminous preacher
A sound and honest moral teacher
A subtle abstract metaphysician
A shrewd and able politician.
He knew the system of creation
Better than most men of the nation
He sat sedately at his ease
And ate his butter bread and cheese.

We wish there were more like him.

There is much more to write about this beautiful part of the world, but that's for another time.

Terence Mayne

Endpiece by Jo Calder

To The Moon And Back.....

For me one of the most beautiful sights in the night sky is the Full Moon. It holds romantic ideas, as well as inspiring songs and poems. The moon has always held fascination for all sorts of people, including the scientists of course.

I'm sure, like many, many thousands of people, we all remember the first time a human being actually walked on the moon. It was the summer of 1969, and at the age of 17 I was fascinated – the names of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in particular were household. At that time I never really thought about why it had been so important to the world at large. Of course there were, and still are, conspiracy theories that the whole thing was faked. Also, this was not the first time that a spacecraft had gone up through the atmosphere – the Soviet Union had also been experimenting in going into “outer space” for many years. Yuri Gagarin was the first human to go into space in 1961, and at the age of nine I always thought his name sounded a bit “weird” but, hey, he'd gone into “Space”! Before that, of course, sadly, animals had been used – put into a spacecraft and blasted out into the ether. These included dogs, cats, rabbits and monkeys – a few survived, others did not, dying from the likes of stress, overheating and starvation.

Now we have already had space explorations going to Mars. I must admit my first reaction was – why? Do we really need to know what this Planet is like, what the atmosphere is, what is going on there? Are there any life forms? Does it matter what Mars is about? No doubt there would be many scientists who would shake their heads in disbelief if they had to listen to my rantings! But I have to admit I cannot see why, when the Planet we live on is in such a bad way, should millions of pounds be spent in trying to find out if other life forms would be remotely interested in us.

Speaking of millions being currently spent on going into outer space, we have recently seen the unedifying competition going on between the multi-millionaires now vying for recognition as to who is offering the best “outer space” package. What ever happened to an ordinary “package” holiday – Covid permitting of course. Sir Richard Branson was, I think, the first of the three to use his own “rocket plane”. He was followed by Jeff Bezos, and then by Elon Musk. Their reason is that they are *“blazing a trail for us all – opening up the exciting prospect of space tourism.”* Jeff Bezos is widely recognised as the world's richest man, Elon Musk certainly has a penny or two, and Branson isn't living on the breadline. If all goes to plan you will be able to book a flight for the small sum of £200,000. All three men are hoping to claim that their flight is the best, with Bezos saying his rocket goes higher. Frankly, my initial response is “who really cares?” There may be those who would say I'm suffering from “bah

humbug”, but to me this is an obscene squandering of money which is totally beyond anything I’ve read of before.

We’ve all heard how so called celebrities spend their money in ways that range from ridiculous to unbelievable. I still cringe in utter disgust when I recall an article I read about the spending habits of Victoria Beckham. Her passion for leather clothes knows no bounds – a pair of leather trousers costing almost £2000 – what made me incandescent with rage is that it may “cost” the lives of 150 cows or 600 calves to assuage her love for wearing leather. Or bags costing from £2,150 to £42,000 - every year 440,000 pythons are slaughtered to provide such handbags. I won’t mention her cashmere or Alpaca sweaters, but the cost of animals lives is even worse.

Then we hear about the other side of the proverbial “coin”. People, including very young children, literally starving to death; people without ever having a decent life, others without a roof over their heads, those whose lives are without hope, others desperately needing medicines and equipment just to live. Surely, instead of spending such obscene amounts on a handbag would it not be a humanitarian gesture to help those in such need? Or am I being too simplistic?

Going back to space travel, do Messrs Bezos, Musk and Branson not follow the news. The Amazon rainforest is now emitting more carbon dioxide than it can cope with – this is threatening the very existence of our once beautiful planet which God gave us. Sadly, for years humans have been chopping down the precious trees and setting fire to them, just to plant soya beans. Bezos was quoted as saying “*to see the earth from space changes your relationship with humanity*”. We don’t need to go into space to see our earth burning or think about humanity. Climate change, which for so long has been denied by some who found it easier to ignore, cannot be denied any longer. Just recently here in Northern Ireland there was the highest temperature EVER recorded. Floods in Germany and Belgium, two countries who have never normally been affected, and we only have to look at other parts of the world to see what is going on. Not just to the human population, but to the wonderful animals who have been on this earth so many many years before us and are becoming extinct.

Maybe these space “entrepreneurs” DO realise what is being done and maybe they think that if they can colonise the Moon or Mars then there will be somewhere else for us humans to go to and begin to destroy as well. Or, maybe, if there are life forms on the Moon or Mars they may already know what we are doing and decide they don’t want us!! Most of all, have some of these people who spend money without another thought ever considered what the Person who gave them this planet may think about what is happening? God has been so patient with us; how much longer do we deserve His infinite love and patience?

