

# The Parish Church of Saint George



## PARISH MAGAZINE

*An open door in the heart of the City*



**FEBRUARY 2022**

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## From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

First of all, I would like to put on record my personal gratitude and the thanks of the parish to all the musicians who made our Advent and Christmas services such a delight and who enriched our worship with such splendid music. The Advent and Christmas Carol Services were particular highlights musically and were well attended up to the maximum allowed. Likewise, the Midnight Mass and other services over the period. Working under the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, we were still treated to a feast of wonderful singing and accompaniment. The wide variety of settings, anthems, carols, hymns and other pieces involved a huge amount of practise and preparation by the Director of Music, David Falconer Maeve Faulkner-Morris, various assistant organists and the Gentlemen and Boys of the parish choir. The commitment of choristers and their parents was superb and the results speak for themselves. Well done and a very sincere thank you to all concerned. The musical tradition in Saint George's is truly a jewel in the crown of the parish and the city.

The further good news on the musical front is that we will recommence our Sunday 5:00 PM choral services on the First Sunday of Lent, 6th of March, providing there are no more major COVID-19 outbreaks or restrictions. Choral Evensong will be sung on the first, second and third Sundays of each month, and on the fourth Sunday there will be an Order 1 Choral Eucharist. The early Sunday morning celebration of the Eucharist will also recommence on 6th March, but at the slightly later time of 9:30 AM and using the traditional language Order 1 rite (The 1662 BCP form).

There are two financial matters, that I would like to draw to your attention. Firstly, there will be a retiring collection on Sunday 20th of February for Afghanistan. Monies raised will be sent to the Disasters Emergency Committee Afghan Appeal through Christian Aid. This appeal by all the major UK aid charities is in response to the plight of the Afghan people after the withdrawal of western forces and the coming to power of the Taliban again. The situation there for most ordinary Afghans has become very desperate. Please remember the appeal on the 20th and give appropriately, using the Gift Aid envelopes if you can.

Secondly, at the beginning of another year, I would just like to gently remind all our subscribers, whether by Standing Order or through the FWO envelope scheme, to consider an increase in the weekly or monthly amount they give. Even a small uplift of a pound a week, or £5 per month will help us keep afloat financially and offset the effects of inflation which never stand still. Gas and electricity prices in particular have rocketed in the last year and we must pay our bills. I would respectfully ask that all our parishioners consider carefully by how much they may be able to raise their contributions, with the proviso that no one should increase their subscriptions if that would cause them financial hardship. Thank you for your consideration of this annual matter. Ash Wednesday Eucharists, with Imposition of Ashes, will be 7:30 AM, 10:30 AM, 1:00 PM and 7:30 PM (with choir and sermon).

Yours sincerely in Christ

*Brian Stewart*

## THE RECTOR'S ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL OF RAYMOND CAIRNS

*Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek:  
May we, who with the Wise Men have been drawn by your light,  
discern the glory of your presence in your incarnate Son;  
who suffered, died, and was buried, and who is alive  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.*

*(The Post Communion Collect for Epiphany)*



Our dear Raymond was very much like the Wise Men who visited the infant Christ at the manger, who bowed down and worshipped him and gave him their treasures. Raymond like them was drawn by the light of Christ as the prayer says and like them he discovered the glory of Christ's presence. For the Magi that was at the manger in Bethlehem for Raymond it was at the altar in Saint George's.

As you will all know Raymond and Agnes were absolute pillars and stalwarts of this church, its worship and music, together with its life and witness. They were rarely, if ever, seen apart in this place. If Agnes attended a Mothers' Union meeting, Raymond would bring her in the car and then remain quietly somewhere in the building, reading a book until the meeting was over. Raymond never actually attended the meetings, he knew his place or more likely knew his limits but would appear when the tea was being served, and slip away again if Mothers' Union business was being discussed.

I think most of us were surprised by how long Raymond lived after Agnes's death last year. They were inseparable and most of us could not imagine him without Agnes. They are now reunited in God's eternity, something he devoutly wished for in recent months.

Both he and Agnes were from north Belfast, the Serpentine Road. They were near neighbours and knew each other as children. Both of them could remember the Blitz in 1941 which badly affected that part of the city. Raymond was fortunate to survive a bomb blast which blew in the door of his family home and threw him bodily down the hallway. Agnes recalled seeing people fleeing barefoot in their nightclothes, as their homes and streets burned.

Raymond was directed towards St George's by a friend in the late 1940s who knew of Raymond's love of church music and his involvement in the Abbey Singers. They sang services in various

churches including Saint Peters, Chapel of the Resurrection, St James, St Luke and St Georges, all of which had strong choral traditions. It was through their membership of the Abbey Singers that Raymond and Agnes childhood friendship blossomed into romance and eventually marriage in 1960.

Raymond formally joined St. George's in 1952 during a vacancy, to help boost the membership and fight off a very real attempt to close the church. Raymond, and later Agnes, were not only devout and weekly attendees at church but enormously supportive of all the clergy and musicians associated with the parish over the years. They both spoke with great fondness of Fr St. John Pike, Fr Edgar Turner and Fr Peter Barrett, who all served as Rector, and of the many curates and assistant priests who have ministered here. I have lost count of the number of people who have told me that Raymond was the first person to welcome them to Saint George's. That is certainly true for Fr Colin Young and for me. In my case, I arrived at the Rectory with the furniture removal van about 11:00 AM a week or so before my institution. The electricity had not been reconnected but there were Raymond and Agnes already inside with a small gas stove, teapot, milk, cups and sandwiches for me and the removal men. Louise, my girlfriend at that time, turned up later to help arrange things and remembers Raymond saying to Agnes that she should take things easy and remember her weak heart. Of course Agnes ignored him and spent the next four hours unloading and unpacking my belongings!

So many people were welcomed to St George's by Raymond that I would say he was the best evangelist I have ever seen in action. He put visitors and new members at their ease, made them feel really welcomed and at home and brought them in for tea in the Parish Hall. He was unafraid to approach and engage anyone in conversation and introduce them to the parish and to parishioners. Of course, he also wanted to know who you were and where you were from, but this was out of genuine motives of kindness and a real interest in people.

Raymond and Agnes were such generous benefactors of this church in so many ways over the years, - the Lectern Bible from which our first lesson was read was presented by them over 50 years ago, and the Violet Frontal on the High Altar was recently restored thanks to a generous gift from Raymond. Nowhere was their generosity more obvious than in their support for the choir. The choir would be presented with hymnbooks by them, they would buy the choristers gifts at Easter and Christmas and they went on virtually every choir trip they could, where they acted as 'grandparents' to the boys. Generations of former choir members from the 1950s onwards have

testified to Raymond's gentlemanly manner and kindness to them and his deep love and knowledge of choral music.

There is much today to be thankful to God for as we recall the long life of his servant Raymond Cairns. We extend our deepest sympathies and prayers to Raymond's nephews, nieces and family circle, Karen McCann, Heather Semple, Jacqui and Tom Oliver, Ken Mackenzie-Reid, Keith Reid, Linda Wilson, Judith Burnett and Agnes' brother, Jim Cassells.

At the heart and centre of Raymond's faith was the Eucharist, which he attended and received every week in this church. He died, very peacefully on Thursday 17th December in the excellent care of the staff at Jordanstown Care Home, having received the Sacraments of the Church and in full faith and hope of a reunion with his beloved Agnes. Raymond, like the Wise Men, was drawn by the light of Christ, may he now discern Christ's glory face to face, in the presence of the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom be all honour, might, majesty, power and dominion both now and for evermore. Amen

## **EAST COKER BY TS ELLIOT - 1888-1965**

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older  
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated  
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment  
And not the lifetime of one man only  
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.  
There is a time for the evening under starlight,  
A time for the evening under lamplight  
(The evening with the photograph album).  
Love is most nearly itself  
When here and now cease to matter.  
Old men ought to be explorers  
Here or there does not matter  
We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion  
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,  
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters  
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

Submitted by Geoffrey May

## PARISH NEWS

### 2022 REGISTER OF VESTRY MEMBERS

#### WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

During the last two years, with all the restrictions that the COVID pandemic has imposed on us, the parish has not been able to socialise as before and we are particularly missing the chance to meet up after the Sunday Eucharist in the Parish Hall over tea/coffee/biscuits – and an opportunity to meet new people and introduce them to life at St George's.

For instance, every year, the Register of Vestry Members is brought up to date early in the year in time for the annual meeting which is held around Eastertide. Those listed on the Register must either be **resident** in the parish (only one person in our congregation is actually a resident) or **an accustomed member** (everyone else on the list) who is subscribing to church funds through a receiptable collection. For those already registered, there is nothing more you need to do; you can check for your name on the 2021 list of Vestry Members, which is on a noticeboard in the central area of the narthex. Membership of the Vestry entitles you to participate and vote in the elections, which are held at the Easter General Vestry meeting.

However, if you are new to the parish we invite you to join the Parish Register by speaking to one of our Churchwardens, Janet and Eleanor, before the end of February. They will provide the necessary straightforward Declaration form to be filled in. The Free Will Offering (FWO) scheme is an ideal way to subscribe to parish funds and satisfy the receiptable collection requirement; for further information on the scheme please ask Janet or Eleanor to direct you to Selby Nesbitt, FWO co-ordinator or Douglas McIlldoon, our Treasurer. And if you are already signed up, please do encourage any newcomers to talk to Janet and Eleanor about this registration process.

The Select Vestry will carry out this year's review of the Register of Vestry Members on Tuesday, 1st March 2022. If you have any general queries about the Register of Vestry Members, please speak with the Rector or Peter Hunter, Hon. Secretary.

We will hope for a safe and gradual relaxation of the various COVID restrictions in the not too distant future which will enable us all to meet up more sociably.



Hi Folks

I was wondering if anyone would be free to help with the following collection:

Tuesday, 8th February - To collect at Shamrock Park football ground; 6.45 PM-8.00 PM before the start of a football match.

As always, I very much appreciate any help given.

Many thanks

**Amanda Scott**

**Community Fundraising Manager**

Email: [amandascott@simoncommunity.org](mailto:amandascott@simoncommunity.org)

Tel: 028 9023 2882

## **PRINTING AND STATIONERY FUND**

Enclosed in this Magazine is an envelope labelled "*Printing and Stationery Fund*". This fund supports the printing cost of all our publications such as the Magazine, the Sunday Service Sheet, Special Service Sheets, etc.

We consider the Magazine to be available to all parishioners free of charge. However, we would be grateful if you could make a donation to the Printing & Stationery Fund in order that we may continue to produce what we believe to be essential parish publications. **Please Gift Aid your donation if possible.**

## **STOREHOUSE NEWS**

A happy new year to you all.

A massive thank you for your very generous donations, totaling £12,535, throughout 2021 to Storehouse (a foodbank supported by St George's) and your super response to their Christmas Hamper appeal. Storehouse delivered 243 hampers in total which is the most they have ever done.

Storehouse have recently opened a new food shop in the Storehouse centre. This allows their service users to shop for themselves and choose what they want to eat as opposed to being given a prepared bag of items that they may not like. This has been a great success so far, as people seem to really appreciate the ability to choose. On average each week they have 170 visits to the Storehouse centre, about 120 of which use the food shop, the rest being clothing appointments, where they often give out 300 plus items of clothing.

Storehouse want me to pass on their thanks and appreciation to all of you who donate. They say your continued generosity over the last few years has been incredible and it has been invaluable in helping set up the food shop.

Sincere thanks everyone

Betty Flynn



## A FAMILY NAME

by Paul McLaughlin



St Brigid's day brings back happy memories; I remember that a semi-darkness fell fast in the Cooley Mountains. Rain had been squalling on and off for more than the half-an-hour it had taken my father and me to reach the plateau that promised our small cottage and a blazing turf fire. The village of Omeath, with its bobbing boats and salty-smelling, sea food stalls was getting further behind us with every step as we climbed the steep winding road.

With little more than a quarter of a mile to travel, a dark cloud of bats swooped over our heads and my seven-year-old hand tightened its grip on my father's as he laughed, dropped his canvas bag of groceries to the ground and waved his free hand like a mad man.

"They're fierce fellas", he shouted to be heard over the summer storm, "It's as well we have short, back and sides or they'd make a nest on our heads."

Suddenly the wind dropped, the rain stopped and we stood bathed in August sunshine, gazing at two marshy ditches full of rushes that bordered the mountain road.

"Come on and we'll gather a bunch of these, Paul," and he pointed to the green clumps, some of which were as tall as myself. "And I'll show you how make a special cross for St Brigid.

Sometimes when I sit in my coiffured back garden in summer, I can still recall the warmth of that afternoon sunshine on my face, my eyes shut tight against the brightness, while red, orange and yellow dancers played behind the lids. The cool wetness of the long stems, the bubbling squelch of marsh under our feet as we stooped and pulled, my father encouraging, always encouraging.

"St Brigid is a bit like the patron saint of my family," he said, holding my arm for fear I would slip into the sheugh. Every generation has at least one, some even more, on both your Grannie and Granda McLaughlin's sides. We have our Bridgets and our Bridies, but they're the same name.

"St Brigid was a great woman, just as important as St Patrick and a protector of our people. Her cross will be like a shield behind our front door and the Devil himself will cross our street with his pointy tail between his legs to keep away from it."

He laughed again, picked up the bundle of rushes and the canvas bag which was now nearly dry again and we headed on to our holiday home with its paraffin lamps, its stove-black range that was never allowed to go out and the toilet that stood at the bottom of its wildflower garden like an unwelcome telephone box.

The talk of the Devil certainly put a spring in my step. I'd heard of him at school where our teacher Miss Thompson had said that he had a wicked tail and horns like a goat and wanted to steal away our souls.

That was good enough for me and the forty odd other lads that sat around me. Miss Thompson was beautiful like a film star, very rarely frowned like all the other masters and if she said this Devil fella was bad, well he was no friend of ours, souls or no souls. Whatever they were.

My father made the cross the following day, cutting the rushes to size and weaving them through each other just as an old shipmate had taught him in the navy.

I watched for a wee while and then slunk off, bored, to play football in the field behind the toilet. My father called it 'the bog behind the bog' much to my mother's disapproval.

That cross took pride of place for many years above and behind the front door of our terraced house and although its colour faded and time brought with it an inevitable frailty, both my mother and father were reluctant to remove it.

Superstitious? No. Faith-filled? I think so.

I had forgotten the cross completely, God forgive me, until my recent research into the family tree brought it back like a welcome fashion.

The family name Bridget is sprinkled here and there throughout the two Census available online, in handwritings as different as the personalities concerned I'm sure and in the forest of paper produced by websites dedicated to our domestic past. Just as my late father had said.

What he couldn't have known was that his great grandfather had had **two** wives with that same Christian name, but that's a story for another time.



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## JESU LOVER OF MY SOUL - CHARLES WESLEY 1707-1788

It is a gross understatement to say the Wesley family were unique. They all led chequered careers beginning with Samuel the father of the large family, chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham, and rector of Epworth, who at one stage landed in Lincoln gaol for non payment of debts.

Much has been written about Samuel's famous son John, the Evangelist parson who had a most unhappy marriage and constantly travelled around the country preaching and holding missions.

Charles was the youngest son and the 18th child of Samuel. A wealthy Irishman offered to adopt Charles, which would have meant a life of ease and luxury, but the boy declined the generous offer. He later took Holy Orders and became curate to the Vicar of Islington.

When two brothers like John and Charles combined to work for God much was sure to happen. John set up the structure of Methodism and Charles with his 6,500 hymns sent it singing on its way.

The Singing Church owes much to Charles Wesley, for he gave her many of her finest and noblest hymns. Think for a moment: what would Christmas Day be without "Hark the Herald Angels Sing", or a wedding without "Love divine all loves excelling", or a hearty Methodist meeting without "O for a thousand tongues to sing", or any Christian Hymnal without "Jesu lover of my Soul"?

Probably no other single hymn has attracted more stories as to its origin. One version claims that the idea of the hymn came when a bird flying from a hawk, took refuge in Wesley's bosom as he sat at an open window. Another says the same thing happened to an exhausted sea bird during a heavy storm at sea, whilst a third attributes it to Wesley's own deliverance from a hurricane when he was on a voyage. There is no proof that any of these, or the dozen or so others, are but fanciful stories.

"Lover of my Soul" is a curious expression, one to which other Christian bodies have taken exception and found it unacceptable, as evidenced by these variations: "Jesu refuge of my Soul", "Jesu Saviour of my Soul", "Father, refuge of my Soul". None of these is nearly so good as the original which Wesley took from an obscure passage in the Wisdom of Solomon (Ch 11 v26) "Thou lovest all things that are, and abhorrest nothing that Thou hast made . . . for they are Thine O Lord, Thou lover of Souls."

"Few of us can have gone through our childhood without singing "Jesus loves me this I know" and St. Paul says, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me", so we should be able to accept the first line "Jesu lover of my Soul" without reservation, for it happens to be the truth - the Gospel truth.

The entire hymn is an intimate personal prayer, yet it is no contradiction to say it is also part of the public praise of the whole English speaking Protestant Church. It baffles one to explain why the highest Anglicans and the most evangelical non-conformists are happy to sing such intimate lines as these, as though the entire singing church were a single singing person.

The message of the hymn is completely honest, and one should not be taken in by the almost escapist sentiments of the first two verses—hide me, guide me, receive me, don't leave me, comfort me. It is almost as if one is asking for protection from the storm rather than grace to walk on the waves. We will know better before Wesley is through with us, for he cuts us down to size and puts us in our true relationship as "miserable sinners" with an almighty yet merciful God, who is the lover of every human soul.

If verses 1 and 2 are a prayer for protection verse 3 is a prayer of confession. With the realisation that Christ is all one can possibly want or need, the essence of all that is good and pure and just and holy, we see ourselves, as we really are, - false and full of sin, or as Wesley sums us up "all unrighteousness." When we are confronted "with ourselves in this state we get really frightened - false and full of sin I am" - every hand is against me, my past haunts me. This is the real "storm of life" - the bad conscience. But the Psalmist says, "They were in great fear where no fear was" and Wesley says, "Thou art full of truth and grace." So finally, we can sing "Plenteous grace with Thee is found" - grace enough for me, for the man in the street, for the man in trouble, and for every man who will-acknowledge himself a "miserable sinner".

"Plenteous grace". Grace is one of the most important words in the entire Christian vocabulary. Grace is not wisdom, or instruction, not guidance or strength, not mercy or forgiveness, but a combination of all these things, and more besides, for Grace includes Love - the Love of Jesus, the Lover of my Soul.

William Adair

# MUSIC LIST February 2022

## Sunday 6th February

### 11.00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	Glorious things of thee	<b>362</b>
Setting	Mass for the Quiet Hour - <i>Oldroyd</i>	
Psalm	138	
Offertory Hymn	God is love	<b>364</b>
Communion Hymn	308	
Motet	Ubi Caritas - <i>Gjello</i>	
Recessional Hymn	Son of God	<b>498</b>

## Epiphany 5

### Parish Choir

## Sunday 13th February

### 11.00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	Bright the vision	<b>343</b>
Setting	Mathias In G	
Psalm	1	
Offertory Hymn	The strife is o'er	<b>119</b>
Communion Hymn	300	
Anthem	When Jesus our Lord - <i>Mendelssohn</i>	
Recessional Hymn	O worship the King	<b>433</b>

## Epiphany 6

### Men's voices

## Sunday 20th February

### 11.00am Eucharist

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent

### Choir Holiday

## Sunday 27 February

### 11.00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	All creatures of our God	<b>263</b>
Setting	Stanford in C and F	
Psalm	99	
Offertory Hymn	Love divine	<b>408</b>
Communion Hymn	302	
Motet	Locus Iste - <i>Bruckner</i>	
Recessional Hymn	Lead us Heavenly Father	<b>393</b>

## Sunday before Lent

### Parish Choir

## CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

The withdrawal of British and American troops over the late summer months last year alerted us all to the severity and complexity of the problems facing the Afghan peoples. The impact of long-term conditions of drought, famine and scarce medical supplies was set to escalate. We decided in St George's to delay an appeal to our parishioners for donations until after Christmas when we could give adequate time to the task. The immensity of the crisis and the difficulties in setting up humanitarian relief indicate a long-term need for aid.



Rather unusually for St George's, for this appeal we know someone directly immersed in the situation. Angus Lambkin, a former choirboy, whose parents are parishioners, has worked with UN Peacekeepers through the Irish Aid Rapid Response Corps for many years. When home in Belfast, he has given excellent talks in St George's to groups from the church and the United Nations Association on his deployments which include the DCR, Iraq and South Sudan. In the Autumn of last year,

Angus was sent with a small group of colleagues to Afghanistan where he is a Civil-Military Coordination Officer for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (Afghanistan).



Over the next few weeks Kay and Brian Lambkin will try to bring us news and photos of Angus and an idea of the extent of his activities to illustrate how humanitarian aid is set up and organized. Meanwhile we hear that Angus started his work with the huge task of visiting different regions, meeting local representatives and fact finding, assessing what is needed, where it is needed and how to transport it there.

The problem of the supply of fresh water after several years of drought is critical and we learn that the current very low temperatures bring snow which brings the benefit of water as it melts.



Angus negotiates and meets with the Taliban for permission both to work in different areas and on gender issues – just a sample of his daily life.

**There will be a collection at the 11.00am Choral Eucharist on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February for UN CRISIS RELIEF.**

It provides immediate rapid response aid when disasters strike, and individual funds for ongoing crises in specific countries. It is run by the UNOCHA. You can also donate in the usual way by electronic transfer to the St George's bank account using, if possible, the reference Afghan 2022 for clear identification. (Sort-code: 98-00-10. Account: 09028029). Or you can write a cheque to St George's Parish Church and send it to: The Hon Treasurer, St George's Parish Church, 105 High Street, Belfast BT1 2AG. Please include a note to confirm that the donation is for the Crisis in Afghanistan Appeal. Gift Aid will automatically be assumed if we already have your instruction. If you want to set up Gift Aid, please email Selby Nesbitt for further information [selby.nesbitt@btopenworld.com](mailto:selby.nesbitt@btopenworld.com).

Kay Lambkin, Eleanor Maynard, and Judith Fawcett



## WALSINGHAM GROUP



As many of you already know there is a group of us who go on pilgrimage every year to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. However, what some of you may not know is that the group was founded as an ecumenical one back in the late 1970's in order to foster greater understanding between Christians of different backgrounds and traditions. Not all who belong to the group are Anglicans, and in the past there have also been Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists who have been part of the Walsingham family. Technically the group is not an organisation belonging to St. George's parish as such, but was begun by a parishioner of St Mark's, Dundela. As the group began to grow and also due to

the declining health of its founding member the focal point of the group's witness and fellowship moved to St. George's under the spiritual care of Fr. Peter Barrett and then Fr. Brian, our present Rector with the assistance of various other retired clergy, as well as the late Geraldine Black. For many years, the group has made its annual pilgrimage to Walsingham in late September into early October, usually staying five nights. In 2019 there were 18 who made the pilgrimage of whom 3 were Roman Catholic, 1 Non-subscribing Presbyterian, and 7 were from other Anglican parishes. However, because of COVID-19 we were unable to make our usual pilgrimage in 2020. As pilgrims to Walsingham we are commended to meet together for mutual spiritual upbuilding between pilgrimages. This being so, we meet together on the last Thursday of the month in St George's at 1.00pm. for a celebration of the Eucharist. It is also hoped that we will soon be able to reinstate the light lunch afterwards in the Sunday School Room once COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. These monthly gatherings for prayer and worship are open to anyone and you will be most welcome.

Fr. Graeme Pollock

## NICOTINE

Nicotine slaves are all the same at a betting party or a poker game, they just gotta stop to have a cigarette. Long before the first voyage of Columbus, and he made three more so he must have liked the place, the Indians were in the habit of inhaling nicotine in the form of cigars, taking snuff as well as chewing and smoking in peace pipes (calurnets). Widely employed in the performance of religious rites and an essential feature of ceremonial gatherings for some god or other, must have told them that coating the lungs with smoke and blowing it about the place is a peaceful way to carry on. Well! ... Better than war. Nevertheless, these ancient people died young, of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and on the way having trouble with eyes, gums and fertility. It is not the nicotine that harms the body functions but the burning of the drug stimulating up to sixty carcinogenic chemicals in the make up of the mixture, depending on where it's grown.

Today most young briefly experiment with smoking. Personally, I started at eleven, puffing cinnamon sticks behind the cricket pavilion, although I cannot remember enjoying it, but it is certainly not a killer. Moving on, watching the old and film stars apparently enjoying the noxious weed, I took it up myself until Mother bet me £5 I would not give up cigarettes for a year, so I smoked the pipe and won.

The nicotine drug in cigarettes gives one the feeling of wellbeing, so much so, you desire another one and you'll weaken. There are other advantages; children love the smoke rings, peace is achieved by secluding oneself from the disapprovers, and especially with pipes, as the smell is liked, also hiding unwanted odours in crowded areas.

The word "cigar" ("ette") is from the Spanish "cicada", for cigar shaped insects. Cigarettes ("cigarillos") originated in Spain, rolled one at a time. It was not until the late 19th century that they were sold in packets, ready made. It is a long time since then, for in the 1950s industrial machines were making 17 a second and today 141, facilitating some who smoke as many as 40 in 24 hours at £15 for 20\*\* and rising. With technology as described, in 50 years time we will be in Australia in 10 minutes or on Mars for lunch. All this progress making much brass in taxes and shareholder profit, whilst, unfortunately killing off a large slice of humanity.

Historians relate Walter Raleigh was exceptionally ill in the aftermath of a tobacco party in Cuba, so it's hard to understand why he introduced the habit to the ginjuiced people of London. For those who find nicotine sickening whilst smoked, and unnatural so to do, their nicotine hit is readily available in other forms such as pills and plasters, but it's just not the same, so go on, have another one for that delightful feeling of wellbeing. You will say to St Peter at the Golden Gate, "Hang on a minute, be a sport, I just gotta have another cigarette" .... that's if he lets you in.

\*\* $(N.B. 365 \times £30 = £10,950)$

Terence Mayne

## Endpiece by Jo Calder

### THE AFTERLIFE

*“When I find myself in times of trouble Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be”.* This is taken from the song Let It Be, written by Paul McCartney. He said it had been inspired by his mum, Mary, who died of cancer when he was 14 and who came to him in a dream. He also said there may have been others who thought the song had a religious reference.

There are people who say they have had similar experiences, some seeing a loved one who had died, but came back to “visit” them, especially if they were going through hard times. I still remember my Granny Briggs, my mum’s mum, telling me she always would remember one night in particular when she was once again crying herself to sleep, aged 8. Her own mum had died when my Granny was very young, and her dad remarried. It would seem her stepmother was the archetypal wicked step-mum, and made my granny’s life what could be described as a living hell. Granny’s elder sister escaped the nastiness. That night, Granny Briggs told me, she was lying in the dark when she felt the bed going down as though someone had just sat on it. She looked up and saw her mum, who then said to her *“don’t cry, Lizzie, all will be ok. I’m with you”*. (Granny Briggs had been baptized Elizabeth, which is what her dad and sister called her, but it seems her mum called her Lizzie.) The weight then lifted from the bed, and Granny was alone. Granny Briggs, who was a devout Christian all her life, always maintained that God had sent her mum to comfort her at a very bad time in her young life.

As we know, there are people who claim they are in touch with those who have passed on - some call themselves clairvoyants, others “mediums”. A clairvoyant is regarded as someone who claims to have supernatural abilities to see into the future; a medium is better known as someone who offers to help communicate with a loved one who died. Not having had direct knowledge of either I can’t really make an observation or comment. I do know there are those calling themselves as such who are in the “business” to make money from the bereaved at a very vulnerable time in their lives. How to spot such people may be difficult for someone who genuinely wants to believe this person can make contact with their deceased. I do wonder what would make a person decide to go to a medium – certainly I totally understand the depths of sadness and loss felt when a loved one dies.

I have recently read a couple of articles dealing with a loved one appearing to the bereaved person. Both articles are from people who would be regarded as very sensible, no-nonsense types; one being a City investment business person, the other a columnist for a well-known national newspaper.

The first wrote that a few months after the death of their 12-year-old child a physic told them the child would visit them, and the person

could not understand what this would involve, - would it be like an apparition, or in a dream. The question was soon answered. The writer said it was not as a ghost but as a “palpable presence”. It was in the early hours of the morning when the bedroom door was flung open and the child was standing there in white trousers and a cotton shirt. The parent went on to disclose their eyes met, the child sat down on the bed, and hugged their parent. After a little while the child stood up, smiled and left the bedroom, closing the door behind them. The writer stated until then they did not believe in the afterlife despite being baptized in the Anglican faith and attending Church regularly as a child. However, they went on to say following the child’s death strange things started to happen: photos in the home began to fall off the wall, a glass chess board appeared to float in the air before falling to the ground while two siblings had been playing the game. When the child’s photo, which normally sat on the dressing table was found at the other end of the room, the parent confronted two of the children asking if they had moved the photo but they insisted they had not been in the bedroom. The person went on to recall many other “happenings” which there were no explanations for, and eventually spoke to a Consultant about all that had taken place. The doctor told them of hearing many stories from parents regarding supernatural experiences following the death of their child. This parent said they has always been regarded as a very practical, logical person, but cannot dismiss the events that took place.

The columnist had read the article, and felt they too wanted to tell of their experience following the death of an elder brother from cancer. They recalled as the brother’s death became imminent how he had deteriorated so badly it was extremely difficult to watch. The day before he died, he visited and when asked why he had struggled to see his sibling he said he wanted all the happy times to be remembered, not how he looked that day. The columnist said for years afterwards all the memories were blinded by grief and loss, and could not rid the last image of him from their mind. They wrote when they had been very ill several years after the brother’s death, he came to see their sibling. They recall how the brother sat on the bed, held out his hand and said that all would be ok and he was watching over them. They went on to say their brother continues to visit, looking like the brother he was before the awful illness took its toll. The person maintains it is not a dream, that they are wide awake – the writer then added it gives them a feeling of unimaginable comfort. They finished their article by saying their belief is that loved ones do visit from beyond the grave.

Very few of us can claim to assume what happens after death, though as the two examples above show, some others believe they have had a glimpse. As Christians we are told by Jesus if we believe in him, no matter what happens in life, then we will see our loved ones again when we join Him, at the time of His choosing. For me that is all I need to know.