

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



*This is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born.*

John Milton : Ode On The Morning Of Christ's Nativity



DECEMBER 2023

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Editorial Team: William Odling-Smee, Selby Nesbitt, Tony Merrick.

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

As I write this on 19th November, the news from around the world is not especially good. Conflict rages in the Middle East in Gaza, with the ever present risk of escalation. The images we have seen on our televisions and on social media are heartbreaking. War also continues in Ukraine and reports I have read tell of increased fighting in Myanmar (Burma) between various rebel factions and government forces, with great loss of life on both sides and amongst the civilian population. There are still ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Tigray, Sudan and numerous other places. Meanwhile, stalemate continues in Northern Ireland and political upheavals take place in the UK, USA and various other places. Advent will soon be upon us, and reminds us that while the kingdoms and nations of this world may rise and fall, Christ came to proclaim another Kingdom to which we as Christians owe our ultimate allegiance. Just as Advent Sunday marks the beginning of the Christian year, so it also recalls the coming of God's Kingdom amongst us in Jesus and the need for the Church to proclaim afresh the hope that is ours through Christ. Advent also points to the future with a strong note of judgement on our human failings. It is the role of the Church and of every Christian to remind the whole of creation that ultimately we will be held to account for our stewardship of God's good earth and of the many gifts and talents we have been given. The Hebrew concept of 'righteousness' is firmly rooted in the idea of justice – both divine justice in eternity and the need for justice in all our dealings and actions now. It is a message the whole world needs to hear once again clearly from the Church and the people of God.

Our Advent Carol Service will take place on Sunday 3rd of December at 5:00 PM. It will also mark the official launch of our Organ Restoration Appeal Fund. There will be a retiring collection to support the Fund and there will also be an opportunity to contribute at the reception afterwards through our new electronic card machine, should you so wish. Please Gift Aid your donations if you are a UK taxpayer. The services over Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are set out elsewhere in this magazine.

The Bishop will be here to preach on Sunday 21st of January at 11:00 AM when he will relaunch our Servers Guild and receive the vows of our serving team. I have already scheduled quite a number of home Holy Communions for the housebound. Please let me know of anyone who would like to have Holy Communion at home or in nursing care before or after Christmas. I can be contacted on 079 0279 2080 or by e-mail at bstewart1662@gmail.com. You can also let me know of any prayer requests by the same means.

May the Holy Season of Advent prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of the birth of Christ and the coming of God's Kingdom amongst us.

Every blessing in Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NOTICES

ORGAN RESTORATION APPEAL

The **Organ Fund** will be launched at the Advent Carol Service on **Sunday, 3rd December**. There will be a retiring collection after the service in aid of the new Organ Fund. If you would like to Gift Aid your donation, please place it in a yellow envelope and fill in the details on the front of the envelope. Thank you.

The Organ Committee

CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

The **Parish Choir Christmas Concert** takes place on **Friday, 15th December at 7:30pm**. The choir will sing popular Christmas music from both sacred and secular works. The accompanist is Mr Mark McGrath.

Please come along and support the boys and men in this festive performance and join us afterwards for refreshments in the Parish Hall.

There will be a retiring collection when donations will be gladly received in aid of the Choir Fund.

The **St George's SSA Choir** will present a fabulous and timely Christmas Concert on **22nd December at 7:30pm**. The choir will perform **Britten's Ceremony of Carols**, accompanied by Richard Allen on Harp. This is a fantastic work, featuring many older English texts and some fabulous, virtuosic solo writing.

The second half of the concert presents selected Christmas works for upper voices, and will include some surprises. The accompanist on piano will be Mr Mark McGrath.

The audience is warmly invited to refreshments afterwards in the Parish hall.

There will be a retiring collection when donations will be gladly received for **BOMOKONI** the Northern Ireland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Women Association.

David Falconer



ADVENT CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY SERVICE LIST 2023 / 2024



ALL OTHER SERVICES AS USUAL OVER ADVENT, CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY

Advent Sunday (3 December 2023)

11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Advent Carol Service

3rd Sunday of Advent (17 December 2023)

11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve (24 December 2023)

9:30am Eucharist

11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Evening Prayer

11:00pm Midnight Festival Eucharist

Christmas Day (25 December 2023)

9:30am Eucharist

11:00am Choral Festival Eucharist

St Stephen's Day (26 December 2023)

10:30am Eucharist

St John the Evangelist (27 December 2023)

10:30am Eucharist

The Holy Innocents (28 December 2023)

1:00pm Eucharist

The First Sunday of Christmas (31 December 2024)

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Eucharist

5:00pm Evening Prayer

The Epiphany of Our Lord (7 January 2024)

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Epiphany Carol Service

SAINT GEORGE'S SINGERS perform

J.S. BACH's

Christmas Oratorio
(Parts 1, 2 and 3)

TUESDAY 19th.DECEMBER at 7.30pm
SAINT GEORGE'S CHURCH,
HIGH STREET, BELFAST

with Saint George's Sinfonia and Soloists
conducted by Mark McGrath



Admission: £25 (Concession £15 for Students)

(Including traditional refreshments)

Tickets can be purchased from Choir Members and at the Door,
or Online (No Fee): Please visit www.saintgeorgessingers.co.uk

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

BY JOHN MILTON

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Submitted by William McArthur

BURNT NORTON

BY T.S. ELIOT

Time and the bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?

Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world

Submitted by Geoffrey May

ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND GROUP

Did you know that there are more than 20 million people around the world working as waste pickers? They are the backbone of the world's recycling system, and the [hidden heroes tackling the world's rubbish problem](#). Today we're praying for these individuals and their vital work.

*Creator God,
We pray for each of the 20 million waste pickers
around the world who do vital work. They collect
60 per cent of plastic that gets recycled globally
yet are often overlooked and underpaid. We pray
that their voices will be listened to at the UN
treaty negotiations and that their human rights
and livelihoods will be protected.*

Eleanor Maynard

WREATHED IN TEARS

by Paul McLaughlin



Tradition is defined as the passing of beliefs from one generation to another. It happens in the big things of daily life such as religion and politics and, sadly, even the religious and political prejudices that often accompany them. Thankfully, it remains as powerfully inspirational as ever in the heart of the family.

My mother was a great one for tradition, whether it meant the passing on of family values, stories, memorials to long-dead relatives or faith, with faith being the most important in her eyes. She described Christmas to me as one of the most traditional times of our year.

“Everything comes together at this season”, she said, “The memories of Christmases past, happy and sad, all that we have received from our parents and theirs. A whole way to celebrate Christmas as the second-most important feast in the church calendar. A little holy link to our past.

I pictured presents and chocolate and having a good time without shame, guilt or a second thought, but fourteen-year-olds, then, thought of little else.

She spoke as she fondled a bright-blue, little glass bird that would take pride of place on a prominent branch of our Christmas tree. It had belonged to her late mother, as she reminded us every time it was unwrapped from a nest of scrunched up newspaper. Frail and fragile it might have been, but its colour had remained as vivid as my mother’s memory and that bauble took pride of place for as long as I can remember.

My mother was the practical side of this tradition as we prepared to mark the birth of Christ each year. Everything that needed to be done, from knitting new sweaters for us children to spring-cleaning the house in mid-winter was done. And her husband played his part in a partnership that caught the envy of even my teenage eyes.

My father ‘rescued’, as he put it, the artificial tree from our glory hole, organised the hanging of the dainty but flimsy paper decorations that festooned our living room. Great waves of coloured paper strung from corner to corner of the ceiling, billowing in loops around the glass bowl that shielded the centre light.

He organised the turkey that would hang on the back of our coal house door for at least a week, named it each year much to my distaste and, through his friends in the Belfast market, put together a hamper with oddities like dates and salted peanuts complimenting tins of ham, biscuits and a plum pudding to feed five to ‘stuffing

point'.

Most of all, he made us laugh. My mother dealt with discipline as Daddy was at work so much and she was born to wield the leather tawse that skited across our legs occasionally. They were like a cat of nine tails that, ironically, a friend of my father's had made from an old red bus seat. They hung menacingly on a hook at the side of the fireplace. Daddy said they were red to hide any evidence of blood.

Pop, as I would later call him, joked and clowned and teased us that Santa Claus would be annoyed if we were not well behaved and would leave us a sack filled with ashes. I was a teenager, my brother a worldly-wise ten-year-old, but the joshing about Daddy Christmas just made us laugh all the more.

My growing maturity must have been noticed by my parents sometime before that Christmas of 1967. Each Christmas morning after first Mass, my father would lay wreaths on the graves of our grandparents in Milltown Cemetery. That year I was invited to go along with him.

It rained heavily as we lay the first wreaths on the graves of my mother's people and we trudged, soaking wet through the darkness to the rear of the cemetery where Pop's mother was buried.

He knelt down at the graveside, the mud oozing through the tail of his topcoat and onto the knees of his good, navy serge suit. I watched as he bowed his head and.....sobbed quietly. Embarrassed I put my hand on his shoulder for want of knowing what else to do. Suddenly, the moment over, he stood, used his big cotton handkerchief to wipe away the sorrow and said, "Right big fella, let's get you home before you catch pneumonia".

That moment of prayer was not mentioned for more than forty years, and then just a few months after my mother had died and I was spending the night with Pop.

I asked him when he wanted his Christmas decorations put up.

"I've never liked Christmas", he said seriously, "My father was lost at sea just before Christmas and my mother died just after it".

I didn't ask anymore, but I knew that his yearly present to us of love and laughter had come at a cost.



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MY FIRST PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

By Jack McCormick

I first heard about 'The Walsingham Group' during an interrogation by, surprise, surprise, the great Mr William McArthur, on my first ever visit to St George's, in 2020. He invited me to the next of the monthly services of The Holy Communion that take place in St George's, and at which the Walsingham Group meets. This was not something I was particularly familiar with in my own church of Belfast Cathedral, so I went along to learn more. Though the service was, indeed, lovely, I have probably only continued to attend because of a lasting impression of Billy's delicious tongue and mango chutney sandwiches! I don't think I have missed a single Walsingham Group service since then.

I became fascinated by the colourful stories I heard from Billy about the group's pilgrimages over the years. The pilgrimage began to sound like a church-crawler's dream, and, indeed, this certainly turned out to be the case. I went from simply being an inquisitive could-be pilgrim, to booking a place on the 2023 pilgrimage with Fr Graeme. I must put on record my appreciation for, and awe at, Fr Graeme's organisational skills and ministry as our group's Chaplain.

I have to admit, I was rather ambivalent about what to expect in both Mirfield and Walsingham. I would consider myself to be on a relatively Anglo-Catholic end of the Anglican scale, if such a thing exists, but I was worried the high, catholic style of worship in Walsingham would be too much for even me. How wrong I was!

I started my pilgrimage by rising from my bed at 5AM – if that isn't devotion, what is? After a very pleasant passage on the ferry to Cairnryan, we enjoyed a smooth journey through Scotland to Mirfield, West Yorkshire. We couldn't have received a warmer welcome from the brothers, especially from our friend, Fr John Gribben. The food was excellent, the accommodation comfortable and the sense of peace, calm and serenity most agreeable. There were five services a day, my favourite of which being Evensong. The acoustic in the church was nothing short of celestial; it sounded its best at the end of Evensong on Wednesday night, when the mighty Harrison organ filled the building with a glorious rendition of 'How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds'.

It was sad to leave Mirfield, but I was excited to get to Walsingham. Fr John kindly blessed our cars. After some prayers, we departed for Walsingham. The scenery en route was simply glorious, and made

the five-hour drive go quite quickly. Arriving at the Shrine Church, I knew I had made the right decision to come. I thanked God for leading me there and prayed that we all would receive spiritual refreshment whilst there. The pilgrimage officially started after a delicious meal in the Refectory, with a moving first visit to The Holy House, and subsequently a quiet, reflective Service of Compline.

On Saturday morning, I rose excited for the worship that lay ahead. I spent the day exploring, Like St Patrick, Our Lady of Walsingham must like birds, and particularly pheasants – the countryside was teeming with them! That evening, Tony Merrick and I were privileged to be asked to act as acolytes for the Procession of Our Lady. This was most enjoyable. I think I was the only server to be wearing a Gammarelli cassock, which a dear friend and retired priest had sent with me to wear – having been ordained in it 47 years ago! The Crucifer and Thurifer were presented by The Parish Church of St Luke, Jersey. I thought the Thurifer was joking when he said he was going to swing it round like a lasso – he wasn't. Tony and I stayed a safe 4 yards behind him, though there were a couple of occasions where I thought I was going to end up concussed!

On Sunday, we headed to the Parish Church of St Mary & All Saints for The Parish Eucharist. We were made to feel most welcome, but I must admit it was a strange feeling being on the other side of a Gospel Procession, as I'm so used to acting as Crucifer every Sunday in the Cathedral! It was lovely, however, to be able to walk to church, kneel to say my prayers and enjoy the organ music before a service – I'm normally running about like a march hare at home!

Monday started with a lovely service of the Holy Communion in the shrine, for our group specifically. I then walked out to see St Peter's, Great Walsingham. That afternoon, we had a deeply moving Stations of The Cross – in which we each read prayers and sang, going from station to station. We sang an emotional 'When I survey the wondrous Cross' at the foot of three life-size crosses in the Shrine grounds, and, subsequently a triumphant 'Thine be the glory' at the Station of The Resurrection.

After this, Janet Sandikli, Lorraine Hunter and I embarked on a six-mile trek to Wells-next-the-Sea. This was very pleasant, and a great way to see the countryside. Janet was confident she could walk back – Lorraine and I, however, were not. After meeting some llamas and having fish and chips by the sea, we hopped on the bus and made our way home.

Tuesday was to be our last day in Walsingham, so a small group of

us decided to take a trip out to see Kings Lynn Minster. If you are ever in Walsingham, I can't recommend a visit to the Minster more. We were welcomed warmly by the Vicar, The Rev Canon Mark Dimond. En route back to the Shrine, we planned to make a stop at The Parish Church of St Giles, Houghton, however, we instead made an unplanned stop at The Parish Church of All Saints, East Barsham. This was because our driver, who shall remain unnamed, wanted to meet some sheep, and, after I pointed out that there were two sheep grazing and minding their own business in the churchyard, he pulled the car in immediately! I'm glad we did make this stop however, as it turned out to be the church where Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon worshipped before walking the two miles from East Barsham to Walsingham, barefoot. As well as this, myself as a verger of St Anne's and Lorraine as a former churchwarden of St George's, we spied two warden's wands and decided we would add East Barsham to the list of churches we had processed in – albeit to a grainy recording of 'Lo! He comes, with clouds descending' that I played on my phone! I did write greetings from St George's in the visitor's book, so I hope their vicar doesn't catch us mucking about on CCTV and report us to Fr Brian. Hopefully he doesn't read this.

Our final morning in Walsingham was rather sad, as we were all sorry to be leaving. However, the Final Visit to The Holy House that Fr Graeme led inspired us all to go home and encourage others to make the pilgrimage with us again. We enjoyed a delightful stop over and night's stay at The Yorkshire Hotel in Harrogate.

The following morning, we embarked for Cairnryan, stopping, however, at Ripon Cathedral. As a member of a Cathedral Church myself, it was lovely to visit Ripon and bring them greetings from St Anne's and St George's. We enjoyed a warm welcome, especially from a steward by the name of Mrs Margaret Shepherd. Long after everyone else in our group had left for lunch, I was still deep in conversation with this lovely lady. Though she had a voice not unlike the great Angela Rippon (fitting considering she is a steward of Ripon Cathedral!), she admitted to me she was born in Lisburn and grew up on Massey Avenue in East Belfast. I explained that that was only about five minutes away from my own house, and that, not unlike herself, that I belonged to Belfast Cathedral – imagine my shock when she said she used to sing in the late Harry Grindle's Belfast Cathedral Consort! What a small world it is.

Overall, I must emphasise to all Walsingham-sceptics that, in its High-Church worship, Walsingham has at its root in simple Bible religion, and the constant and never ceasing praise of Almighty God,

and the veneration of Our Lord's mother, The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Shrine shining a light on the often-neglected glory of the Incarnation in its ministry. If you have enjoyed my account of my first ever pilgrimage to Walsingham, I do encourage you to come along on the last Thursday of the month at 1PM to learn more about the pilgrimage, and to, perhaps, challenge some preconceptions you might have about the Shrine and its ministry. If for nothing else, the service is certainly worth coming to for the delicious sandwich lunch afterwards!



WALSINGHAM PILGRIMAGE 2024

If anyone has been moved by Jack's experience of what a pilgrimage to Walsingham might be like please speak to me or else come along to a Walsingham group meeting which is normally on the last Thursday of the month with a Eucharist followed by a light lunch. Next year the dates for our time in Walsingham will be from Thursday, 12th September to Tuesday 17th, September, a little earlier than this year. I will be opening a fresh list for the next pilgrimage to Walsingham at the January meeting of the Walsingham Group. All are most welcome. In the meantime may I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and blessed Christmas.

Fr Graeme Pollock

MUSIC LIST December 2023

Sunday 3rd December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	O come, O come Emmanuel	11
Setting	Missa Secunda - <i>Hassler</i>	
Psalm	80: 1-7, 17-19	
Gradual Hymn	The Lord will come	15
Offertory Hymn	Long ago, Prophets knew	10
Communion Hymn	298	
Anthem	Hosanna to the son of David - <i>Weelkes</i>	
Hymn	Come thou redeemer	19 (omit *)

Advent 1

Parish Choir

5:00pm Advent Carol Service

Sunday 10th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	On Jordan's bank	12
Setting	Collegium Regale - <i>Howells</i>	
Psalm	85: 1-2, 8-13	
Gradual Hymn	Ye servants of the Lord	18
Offertory Hymn	When came in flesh	17
Communion Hymn	275	
Anthem	This is the record of John - <i>Gibbons</i>	
Hymn	Wake O Wake	16

Advent 2

Parish Choir

5:00pm Choral Evensong

Choral Scholars

Responses	Hunter	
Psalm	40: 14-21	
Setting	Faux Bourdons	
Motet	Benedictus - <i>Byrd</i>	
Hymns	282, 10	

Sunday 17th December

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	Bethlehem of Noblest cities	48
Setting	Canterbury Mass - <i>Piccolo</i>	
Psalm	126	
Gradual Hymn	The advent of our God	14
Offertory Hymn	Come thou long expected Jesus	3
Communion Hymn	295	
Anthem	Mary's Magnificat - <i>Carter</i>	
Hymn	Sing we of the Blessed Mother	185

Advent 3

Parish Choir

5:00pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

MUSIC LIST December 2023

Sunday 24th December

Advent 4

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Parish Men

Processional Hymn	Tell out my soul	186
Setting	Byrd 3 part mass	
Psalm	89: 1-4, 20-27	
Gradual Hymn	A great and mighty wonder	21
Offertory Hymn	Of the father's love begotten	33
Hymn communion	308	
Anthem	Riu riu chiu - <i>Arr McGlynn</i>	
Hymn	City of God	346

Sunday 24th December

Christmas Eve

11:00pm Choral Festival Eucharist

Parish Choir

Setting	Little organ Mass - <i>Haydn</i>	
Anthem	Nova Nova - <i>Chilcott</i>	
	O Holy Night - <i>Adam</i>	

Monday 25th December

Christmas Day

11:00am Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	O little town of Bethlehem	32
Setting	Darke in F	
Psalm	97	
Gradual Hymn	What child is this	40
Offertory Hymn	God rest ye merry gentleman	25
Communion Hymn	Carols	
Hymn	O come all ye faithful	30

Sunday 31st December

Christmas 1

11:00am Eucharist

Parish Choir Holiday

Processional Hymn	Hark the herald angels sing	26 (Omit *)
Psalm	148	
Gradual Hymn	O little town of Bethlehem	32 (Omit *)
Offertory Hymn	It came upon a midnight clear	29
Hymn	Once in royal David's city	34

5:00pm Evening Prayer

Choir Holiday

CALENDAR December 2023

Dec 2

9.00am

Russian Orthodox Liturgy

Dec 3

ADVENT SUNDAY

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 64: 1-9; 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9;

Mark 13: 24-37

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *Janet Sandikli*

Servers: *Omolewa Akinyele, Agape Laoye, Tony Merrick*

Tea and Coffee: *Valerie Roberts, Howard Fee*

5.00 pm

Advent Carol Service: The Rector

Dec 10

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 40: 1-11; 2 Peter 3: 8-15; Mark 1: 1-8

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Paul McLaughlin*

Intercessor: *Fr Tom Layden*

Servers: *Banji Akinyele, Laura Brannigan, Tony Merrick*

Tea and Coffee: *Eleanor Maynard, Catherine Hunter*

5.00 pm

Choral Evensong: The Rector

Lessons: 1 Kings 22: 1-28; Romans 15: 4-13 (*Fr Graeme Pollock*)

Dec 15

Parish Choir Concert - 7.30pm

Dec 17

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24;

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Anne McBride*

Intercessor: *Pam Tilson*

Servers: *Banji Akinyele, Geoff Newell, Jonny Calder*

Tea and Coffee: *Keith Suckling, Steven McQuitty*

5.00 pm

Nine Lessons & Carols: The Rector

Servers: *Laura Brannigan, Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick*

Dec 19

Concert by St George's Singers - 7.30pm (*See page 7*)

CALENDAR December 2023

Dec 22

Parish SSA Choir Concert - 7.30pm

A performance of Britten's Ceremony of Carols

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Dec 24

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16; Romans 16: 25-27;

Luke 1: 26-38

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Meisam Khalili*

Intercessor: *Janice Carruthers*

Servers: *Banji Akinyele, Tony Merrick, Jonny Calder*

Tea and Coffee: *Brenda Claney, Judith Fawcett*

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: Zechariah 2: 10-13; Luke 1: 39-55 (*Paddy Sloan*)

11.00 pm

Midnight Festival Eucharist: The Rector

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *Clergy*

Servers: *Laura Brannigan, Steven McQuitty, Mark Claney*

Dec 25

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Festival Eucharist: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 9: 2-7; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14

Sanctuary Flowers: Christmas Festival Flowers

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *Clergy*

Servers: *Jonny Calder, Steven McQuitty, Mark Claney*

Dec 26

ST STEPHEN'S DAY

10:30am

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 27

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

10:30am

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 28

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

1:00pm

Eucharist The Rector & Fr Graeme Pollock

The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist – all welcome

Dec 31

1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

9:30 am

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00 am

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3; Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 15-21

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *George Woodman*

Intercessor: *Janet Sandikli*

Servers: *Agape Laoye, Tony Merrick, Mark Claney*

Tea and Coffee: *Linda McConnell, Karen Brett*

5.00 pm

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: Isaiah 35: 1-10; Colossians 1: 9-20 (*Janet Sandikli*)

ENDPIECE by James Little

Sir Christopher Wren (1632 to 1723)



I contributed an article for the September magazine about the composer, William Byrd who died 400 years ago this year. Just nine years after that, in 1632, another person who went on to achieve great fame, Christopher Wren was born. We saw that, unusually for the time, Byrd lived till he was 82. Wren exceeded that achievement, living till he was over 90 and being highly active till the end. Therefore, this year we are celebrating 300 years since his death. There have been many

commemorative events in such places as St Paul's Cathedral, London, his *magnum opus* and others.

Christopher Wren was truly a polymath. Today we remember Wren as a great architect, but he was known initially as a mathematician and astronomer. When he came to design the current St Paul's Cathedral after its mediaeval predecessor was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, a deep understanding of mathematics and physics came in to play-but that's perhaps for another article.

Wren was born in Wiltshire in 1632 to a father (also Christopher) who was an Anglican Priest and a mother who came from a wealthy family of merchants. His mother died when he was just nine. Wren's father was appointed to the prestigious post of Dean of St George's Chapel, Windsor. He (the father) and his brother, Matthew were close to King Charles I so they later lost their positions when Charles was deposed and executed. Matthew, Dean of the Chapel Royal and Bishop of Ely, ended up spending 18 years in the Tower of London for his views whilst Christopher simply lost his post and retreated to an early retirement in the country.

Fortunately for Christopher senior, the family wealth enabled him to fund his son's education and broker excellent marriages for three of his daughters who all married fervent Royalists. Former Dean Wren owned a library of scientific books and was fascinated by botany, climatology, mathematics and architecture. He took great care over his son's education and in particular encouraged his mastery of mathematics.

At the time of the Restoration in 1660, Wren (junior) was 27 and had already made a considerable impact. He had graduated from Wadham College, Oxford in 1653 and then become a Fellow of All Souls. In 1657 he became Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College, London and in 1661 was appointed Savilian professor of Astronomy at Oxford. He observed a solar eclipse in 1654 and published his conclusions on the trajectory of a comet.

Wren was one of the founders of a society 'for the promotion of Physico-Mathematicall Experimental Learning' which became the Royal Society of London for the promotion of Natural Knowledge. He

served as president from 1680 to 1682. This is the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. He did research in everything from meteorology to anatomy – he was a mathematician and scientist first and architect later. He was right at the heart of an exceptionally active and exciting community of scientific thinkers. The group around Gresham College included Robert Hooke, who was Gresham Professor of Geometry at a similar time. Hooke was known to be very difficult to work with, yet of Wren he wrote ‘since Archimedes, there scarce ever met in one man in so great a perfection, such a mechanical hand and so philosophical a mind.’

In the background was William Harvey (1578-1657), whose discovery of the circulation of blood influenced so much of this group’s work. One aspect relates today to studies to improve effectiveness of local blocks for awake carotid artery surgery. This relates to the ‘Circle of Willis’, for which Wren provided the illustrations. He wrote on surgical techniques in his book on operative surgery. He also collaborated with John Mayow on respiration.

In February 1658, mathematicians in England received a challenge from France, probably from Pascal to do with ellipses. Wren solved the problem, and then in return challenged the mathematicians of France to solve another problem about ellipses, Kepler’s laws about planetary motion which he had himself already solved-the first of many leaders in their field.

Another example of Wren’s eminence was that when Isaac Newton introduced the idea of a force governed by an inverse square law in his *Principia Mathematica*, he said that one example is the force governing the motion of the planets ‘as Sir Christopher Wren, Dr. Hooke, and Dr. Halley have severally observed’. In fact, the leading architectural historian John Summerson (1904- 1992) wrote that if Wren had died at 30, he would ‘still have been a figure of some importance in English scientific thought’.

There is a great deal of mathematics in architecture – balancing the different forces acting on load-bearing structures, designing a building whose proportions are aesthetically pleasing while also satisfying the practical requirements of its intended use, and so on. His first forays into architecture came shortly after the Restoration in 1660 in the form of the chapels at Pembroke and Emmanuel colleges in Cambridge and the Sheldonian theatre, Oxford.

Wren would have known Charles II, only a couple of years older than himself, from Windsor in the 1640s. When contact between the two men resumed in 1660, Christopher Wren had become known as a mathematical genius. The profession of architect didn’t exist as such. As well as having his own ideas, Wren was influenced partly by having visited Paris in 1665 (to escape the plague in London).

When, in 1669, Christopher Wren became the head of the Office of Works he inherited command of an organisation very nearly 300 years old. The Surveyor of the King’s Works was a member of the King’s Household and Wren was essentially one of the great ministers

of state on a par with, for instance, the Lord Chamberlain. In a period when the monarch was head of the Executive, Whitehall, the principal palace of the British monarchy, was not only the king's main residence, but was the centre of national administration. On assuming his senior court post in 1669, Whitehall became the centre of Wren's life and the lodgings he was assigned there became the engine room of his career. As well as the royal family, Whitehall was home to an army of over 800 domestic staff.

That was just three years after the Great Fire of London in September 1666. With his appointment as the King's Surveyor of Works in 1669,



St Stephen's Walbrook

he had a presence in the general process of rebuilding the city but was not directly involved with the rebuilding of houses or Livery companies' halls. Wren was personally responsible for the rebuilding of 51 churches, though it is not necessarily true to say that each of them represented his own fully developed design. Many of these were destroyed in the blitz in WW2 but some such as the wonderful St Stephen's, Walbrook (see photo) have been restored and others survived.

Outside the City of London, Wren was responsible for a number of buildings which became famous. In addition to those already mentioned, these include the Royal Observatory and Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich (see photo), the Royal Hospital for retired soldiers at Chelsea and the library at Trinity College, Cambridge (see photo). He also refurbished the façade of Hampton Court Palace and part of Westminster Abbey among very many other



Trinity College Cambridge



Royal Naval College

places. He was knighted in 1673.

I hope to concentrate on St Paul's Cathedral itself in a subsequent article and will finish this one with the words of Wren's memorial in St Paul's, composed by his son, also Christopher: 'Here in its foundations lies the architect of this church and city, Christopher Wren, who lived beyond ninety years, not for his own profit but for the public good. Reader, if you seek his monument – look around you. Died 25 Feb. 1723'.

