

Christ Church Birkenhead

Bessborough Road, Birkenhead, CH43 5RW

Priest in charge: Rev Gerri Tetzlaff

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Services and Community Activities

Our Sunday services continue this month.
Some community activities have recommenced,
please contact the organisers.

Updates will be provided on our Facebook page and website.

<https://www.facebook.com/christchurchbirkenhead>

<http://christchurchbirkenhead.net/>



And don't forget, it's your Magazine!
Please give me your contribution at church
or email it to me at oxtonrees@gmail.com
by Sunday 24th January 2021. Thanks.

Paul Rees, Editor



CHRIST CHURCH
BIRKENHEAD



Parish Magazine
December 2020—January 2021



Services

All at 10.30am

6th December, Advent 2: Morning Prayer
13th December, Advent 3: Holy Communion
20th December, Advent 4: Carols & Readings (no singing)
25th December, Christmas Day: Holy Communion
27th December, Christmas 1: No service with Bishop's permission

3rd January, The Epiphany: All Together Worship
10th January, Baptism of Christ/Epiphany 1: Holy Communion
17th January, Epiphany 2: Morning Prayer
24th January, Epiphany 3: Holy Communion
31st January, Epiphany 4: Holy Communion

Everyone is welcome
Full social distancing will be observed.

Christmas Eve 2—4pm

The church will be open to all to see our Christmas Crib, decorations and other displays.
Do-it-yourself Christingles will be available to take away.

Cover illustration of the Nativity by Marie Mairs

Comfort
and Joy



Created by the National Church of England, this year's Christmas campaign, called 'Comfort and Joy' aims to bring some festive cheer to people and churches everywhere. At the same time, there is an acknowledgment by the church that we are still in difficult times and that people have lost loved ones and livelihoods.

Not all will be in the frame of mind for feeling celebratory or jubilant, and for those, and there will be many, the church has a great role to play, both nationally and locally in welcoming, caring, and praying for them. In the words of St Paul in Romans 12.15, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep'.

More information at <https://www.chester.anglican.org/news/comfort-and-joy--christmas-campaign.php>

In the time of any common Plague of Sickness

O ALMIGHTY God, who in thy wrath didst send a plague upon thine own people in the wilderness, for their obstinate rebellion against Moses and Aaron; and also, in the time of king David, didst slay with the plague of pestilence threescore and ten thousand, and yet remembering thy mercy didst save the rest: Have pity upon us miserable sinners, who now are visited with great sickness and mortality; that like as thou didst then accept of an atonement, and didst command the destroying Angel to cease from punishing, so it may now please thee to withdraw from us this plague and grievous sickness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

From the Book of Common Prayer, written in 1549

What is a Welsh Christmas to you?

The Dylan Thomas poem 'A Child's Christmas in Wales' speaks of a 'carol-singing sea', 'postmen with 'sprinkling eyes and wind-cherried noses', 'mistletoe hung from the gas brackets in all the front parlours', 'sherry and walnuts and bottled beer and crackers by the dessertspoons' and the mysterious 'parsnip wine'. Here, however, are some more traditions that I'm am aware of!

Y Gwyliau: Christmas in Wales used to be out-shadowed by the New Year celebrations. In the middle of the 19th century, Christmas Day marked the beginning of three weeks (Y Gwyliau) during which farm work was suspended. As a symbol of this, the plough was often carried home and placed under the table where the meals were eaten. Christmas Day itself was marked by a dinner of goose or beef at a large farm in each neighbourhood to which all the other farmers and cottagers were invited. They drank beer and 'wetted' the plough under the table as a reminder that they had not forgotten it.

Gŵyl Ystwyll: Traditionally Y Gwyliau lasted over 12 days and culminated in the Gŵyl Ystwyll (Epiphany), but often went on for much longer. Apparently there was a change in the calendar in 1752 and some days were omitted which led to some confusion and some events slowly fading away.

'Thomasing': Happened on St Thomas's Day (23rd December) when women went from house to house to beg for flour to make loaves and cakes for Christmas.

Mari Lwyd (Grey Mary): A custom in South Wales involving a horse's skull covered in a white sheet and decorated with colourful ribbons. A man hidden underneath would make the jaw snap. Others (usually dressed up as a 'Sergeant', 'Merryman', 'Punch and Judy') led the horse from house to house. At each door they performed a sort of 'poetry-off' competition with the occupants, which was often as long as fifteen verses. When they were eventually allowed to enter, they chased everyone by snapping the horse's jaws, and then there was feasting. It sounds a little creepy but in reality was done in jest. It seems like carol singing (or 'wassailing'), and often involved drinking wine or punch from a 'wassail bowl'.

Jackie Harness

The Rev writes ...

Dear Friends,

As we end one year and begin another, may I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a joyful and peaceful New Year. Most of us will be glad to see the end of 2020 and we hope and pray for better news for 2021. So much has happened and now with the prospect of a vaccine for the virus, it is enough to lift our spirits. We can see a pin-prick of light at the end of the dark tunnel. Let's hope that we are able to meet with our families and/or close friends over the Christmas period.

At time of writing this I am not sure of what we shall be able to do as a church this year. Whatever restrictions are lifted, it will be a Christmas that is much less organised, planned and activity filled than usual, we will have to be flexible! For some that may bring a sigh of relief, for others great disappointment. The government are making plans for regulations around Christmas although I expect they will be subject to change depending on the course of infections.

My thoughts turned towards Advent a few weeks ago. Traditionally at Christ Church we have a new Bible verse to use throughout the year – one that gives us hope and I felt that the following was appropriate, from Hebrews 12.1 *'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.'* I think I would add verses 2-3 as well, even though it is a bit long! There is this sense of us being in this life together with so many others – even those who have gone before us!

When I was 12 in my first year of high school, in the summer was the Cross-Country Run! Each class had to enter four girls and four boys. In my class we had some great runners and three girls were willing to run but we needed four. No-one else would. The teacher was waiting, and waiting! Finally, I put my hand up. I'm not a great runner. I can put my feet one in front of the other but not very quickly. I volunteered because no-one else would. I reminded them that I was not a great runner.

The day came and we set off. One girl in my class came first and the other two were ranked well too. I was second from last. I had run the whole way and I was shattered. I was so pleased though when my classmates – boys and girls

all came up and said well done to me! My class came first despite my low ranking. It meant that the average rankings put us in the lead. They were a very kind bunch of twelve year olds. I've never forgotten that.

This passage speaks to us of getting rid of weights and sin that we so easily hold onto. We are encouraged to get rid of these encumbrances – then we shall be all the more swift and our journey will be lighter. We are not racing against one another of course, but we are moving towards a prize and the Hebrew writer shows us the way to help make that journey an easier one. We are surrounded by one another as well as that great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us – cheering us on as we cheer one another on.

This coming year, let us as a church reflect on what weighs us down. We have a saviour who is able and willing to help us as we navigate the future and come to terms with life after the pandemic. In some ways it feels like the beginning of new race – what might that look like at Christ Church?

With kind regards and blessings for Advent and Christmas,
Revd Gerri Tetzlaff



The Oxton village Christmas tree
with decorations made by Oxton artists and Wellington Road artists.
Thanks to Marie Mairs

Today

The Year

**What can be said in New Year rhymes,
That's not been said a thousand times?**

**The new years come, the old years go,
We know we dream, we dream we know.**

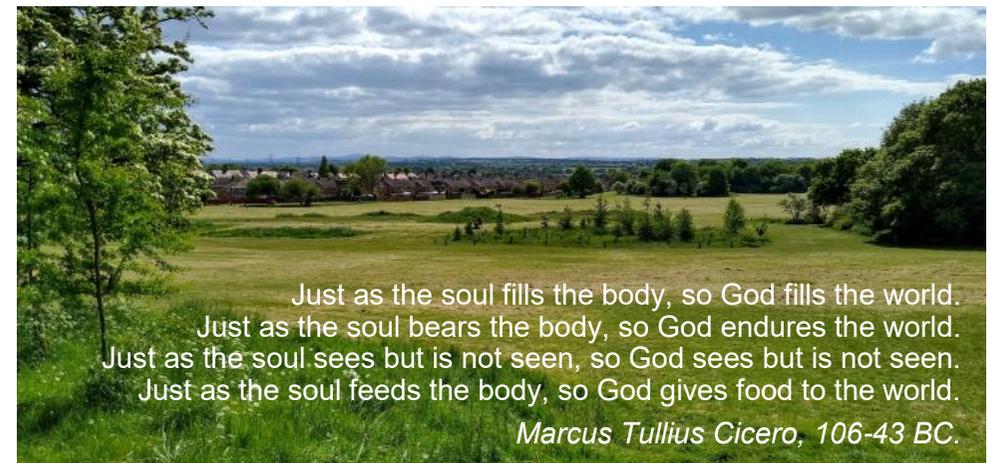
**We rise up laughing with the light,
We lie down weeping with the night.**

**We hug the world until it stings,
We curse it then and sigh for wings.**

**We live, we love, we woo, we wed,
We wreath our brides, we sheet our dead.**

**We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,
And that's the burden of the year.**

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, 1850 -1919



Just as the soul fills the body, so God fills the world.
Just as the soul bears the body, so God endures the world.
Just as the soul sees but is not seen, so God sees but is not seen.
Just as the soul feeds the body, so God gives food to the world.

Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106-43 BC.



The author of the preceding article.
Jackie Harness, aged 3



Three Kings by
Marie Mairs

Kathleen's Corner

I read an article recently pointing out that many years before the birth of Christ and the celebration of Christmas by Christians, there was a celebration around the 21st of December at the natural period of the winter Solstice. It was called Saturnalia when people knew that the year had turned towards the longer days and the increasing light. They hugged and rejoiced and exchanged gifts.

The fact that Christ was born many decades later does not detract from the spirit of kindness and gift-giving nor from the redeeming spirit of peace, goodwill and forgiveness brought to us by Christ. Slowly the message of Christmas overtook the former pagan celebration as mankind moved towards an understanding of a supreme creator.

The Christmas of my childhood was a very simple affair with preparations having been made well in advance: simple gifts often home-made, chutney and jam or pickles, the ingredients having been harvested months ago. Scarves and jumpers, socks and gloves were knitted and made ready to give as gifts. I wonder what the modern child would make of a scarf and gloves as a present? My mother would not allow us to go carol singing until Christmas week when we often were given a few pennies or hot mince pies.

Christmas was fun as well. The Nativity Play was invariably a cause for at least one moment of hilarity as either Mary or Joseph or the Inn Keeper would add their own words to the script. There is no doubt that Christmas in my childhood was colder, and there was often snow, frost and ice to provide fun and games.

This year Covid19 has caused a very different kind of Christmas. I like to think that for all the hardships and sadness, worry and anxiety, a great wave of giving freely of time, kindness, compassion and unselfishness has blessed it.

The true message of Christmas is being felt in abundance and we can look to the coming light with hope and trust.

Kathleen Stansfield

All you need is love? — ‘Living in Love and Faith’

I remember it well. Or it's more that I have this one strong memory of the event. It's June 25th 1967. *Our World* was the first live global television link, with live images, black and white mind, in real time from around the world being beamed by satellite into my front room. I sat eagerly through several hours on the settee waiting for the British contribution. My mum and dad had long gone to bed. Everything else has faded from my memory, other than the night seeming to drag on until after midnight when the announced British contribution came on. The Marseillaise opened the festive joyous rendition of “All you need is love” by the Beatles. It lingers in my memory fondly as joyous celebratory embracing welcoming hopeful.

The bible celebrates love as joyous embracing welcoming hopeful. The Church in its many manifestations –and with reference to the bible- has felt the need to speak of the boundaries to the expression of love. What is and isn't acceptable - within God's purposeful design. The Church of England's position at the moment is clearly restated in pastoral guidance recently issued by the House of Bishops (Dec 2020):

- * The Church of England teaches that ‘sexual intercourse, as an expression of faithful intimacy, properly belongs within marriage exclusively’.
- * It has always been the position of the Church of England that marriage is a creation ordinance, a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace. Marriage, defined as a faithful, committed, permanent and legally sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman making a public commitment to each other.
- * Sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage are regarded as falling short of God's purposes for human beings.

Pastoral guidance from the Bishops has sought to be sensitive to the implications of the Church's position. It is recognised that this position has sourced deep, and sometimes painful, disagreements within the church; that it jars with society's changing perspectives and practices, especially in relation to lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex people: and that it is a source of unease for many (within and without the church) because issues of gender and sexuality are intrinsic to our lived experience, our sense of identity, our lives and the loving relationships that shape and sustain us. Each of these impacts on the church's mission to the wider community.

church, and Louisa Alexandra Williams Wynn (1864–1911), the sole heiress of the Wynnstay estate, who also married her cousin, Herbert Lloyd Watkin Williams-Wynn (1860–1944), who succeeded him as the 7th baronet on his death in 1885. Sir Herbert, 7th Baronet inherited Bodelwyddan Castle from an heirless cousin in 1880 and made it the family's principal seat, refurbishing the castle in the 1880s. Additionally, Sir Herbert briefly represented Denbighshire in 1885 before the constituency was abolished.

However, the costs of maintaining the estates and the burden of death duties became too great, and Sir Watkin, 8th Baronet, was forced to sell Bodelwyddan Castle and estate by 1925 and Wynnstay mansion, five cottages and 150 acres of land was sold to Lindisfarne College in 1948 for £17,100. Most of the furniture and effects were sold at a three-day sale at Wynnstay in June 1947. The baronetcy was inherited by Sir Watkin's uncle, Sir Robert William Herbert Watkin Williams-Wynn (1862-1951), 9th Bart., of Plas-yn-Cefn Lindisfarne College was a private school or independent school. It was founded in 1891 in Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex, England. In 1940 Lindisfarne College moved from Westcliff to nearby Creeksea Place, but during the Second World War the building was requisitioned by the military and the school transferred to Newburgh Priory at Coxwold in Yorkshire.

In 1950 the school made its final move to Wynnstay in Ruabon. During the 60s I had the pleasure of attending a Summer Ball at the school when I was 16 years old and being a bit of a rebel, instead of wearing the usual long dress I decided to turn up wearing a navy pin striped suit with a rather short skirt [miniskirts being the fashion at the time]. I met a certain young man there, who shall remain nameless, due to his becoming one of the richest eligible bachelors, later in life. He and I spent some time together following our meeting and dated for a while. Things did not work out and our relationship ended with us going our separate ways.

The school itself closed due to insolvency in 1994, and its last home was converted into luxury apartments. Today, the family is represented by Sir David Watkin Williams-Wynn, 11th Baronet, who remains active in Welsh life in Denbighshire and Flintshire. In 2008 he was in the news because it was widely reported that his daughter Alexandra – a sculptor and student at the Royal Academy of Arts – had modelled nude for the famous artist Lucian Freud.

Jackie Harness

More from Wales ...



Following on from last month's story about Trevor Hall, I would like to tell you about another large private estate near to where I was brought up ... namely Wynnstay, near Ruabon.

Wynnstay was a country house located in a landscaped park 1.3km south-east of Ruabon. Wynnstay, previously Watstay, was a famous estate and the family seat of the Wynns. The Williams Wynn family inherited the estate in 1718 from Sir John Wynn of Gwydir. This prompted the second baronet, Sir William Williams of Llanforda to add the surname Wynn. The third baronet, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn was MP for Denbighshire from 1716 to 1741. A supporter of the Jacobite cause in North Wales, he died after a fall from his horse while hunting in nearby Acton Park.

He was succeeded by his son, the fourth baronet, in 1749, and like his father before him, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn was MP for Denbighshire from 1774 to 1789. Sir Wynn was well known for his understanding and appreciation of fine arts and built up a fine collection of paintings and artefacts.

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the fifth baronet was born in 1772. He inherited the Wynnstay estate in 1789 aged 17. He continued the tradition and was MP for Denbighshire from 1796-1840 as well as Lord Lieutenant of Merionethshire and Denbighshire. More interested in military issues than politics he raised a cavalry regiment in 1794, called the 'Ancient British Fencibles' which took part in the suppression of the Irish rebellion. He died in 1840.

He was followed by his son, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, sixth baronet 1820-1885. After Wynnstay was almost totally destroyed by fire in 1858, Sir Watkin rebuilt it on the same site, with Benjamin Ferrey as his architect.

Williams-Wynn had married his cousin, Marie Emily Williams-Wynn, youngest daughter of Sir Henry Watkin Williams-Wynn, KCB, on 28 April 1852. He had two daughters, Marie Nesta Williams Wynn (1868-1883) who is commemorated by a stained glass window in Ruabon



This is the background – a theological, historical, ecclesiastical and personal backdrop - to the Church of England's seeking to re-energise the debate as to the boundaries of the expression of love. It's called **Living in Love and Faith**. Each of us within the Church are invited to engage in a process of study and prayer to discern the way forward for the church in relation to matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage with a view to informing a further statement from the House of Bishops in 2022.



Allan Goode

Further reading at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

The Joyful Gift

A smile costs nothing but creates so much. It enriches those who receive without without without impoverishing those who give. It happens in a flash and the memory of it lasts for ever. None are so rich they can get along without it and none so poor but are richer for its benefits. It creates happiness in the homes, fosters goodwill in a business and is the counter sign of friendship. It is a rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad and nature's best antidote for trouble.

Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is no earthly good to anyone till it is given away. And if in the rush of life, some should be too tired to give you a smile, just give them one of yours. For nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none left to give.

Thanks to MaryJo Blades

In Earlier Years

I was born at St. Catherine's hospital and moved fairly rapidly to the house where I now live. My first memory was a coal fire in my parents' bedroom, then playing in the garden. When a plane passed overhead I remember running into the house crying. I must have thought that the Germans were at it again.

I went to school when I was four, to Woodchurch Road Primary with Jennifer Burgess who lived opposite me. The school had been bombed, so had the adjacent funeral directors and so had one half of Bennetts Hill. I can remember my father digging out bits of shrapnel from the hall window and telling me it was made in Germany. I didn't believe him.



My father had a new two-door Austin 7 and we went on holiday to Deganwy. I fell in the mud one day and had to be rescued and washed. We had a cat called Toots which had a hook in the end of its tail caused by a nasty accident with a tea trolley pushed by my mother.

I recall going shopping every Friday with my cousins who lived in Heathfield Road right to the bottom of Grange Road, and calling at Eddy Rice's shop and Trevor Jones' the greengrocer, and the air raid shelters being demolished in the road by Alec Green's cycle emporium.

At home I remember mother plugging the iron into the light socket in the ceiling, the dolly tub and washboard and heating water for a bath, Enid Blyton books, Kirin island and the adventure books, carpets with black stained floor board surrounds, mock turtle soup and condensed milk, and a lounge called a drawing room not "withdrawing room" and going by tram from Palm Grove to south Liverpool with mother to uncle Bill's house. He must have been posh as he lived in a detached house and coal being delivered by a horse and cart and frost on the inside of windows and lino floor in the bathroom. Those were the days!!!

Amen.

John Barrett

In memory of Olive Roberts

It has been our custom in Christ Church to make flower arrangements in church in memory of family or friends who have passed, but this year—as with all other things, due to Covid 19, we are unable to arrange such displays. I would like to share some Christmas-time memories with you; some fond remembrances of a beautiful and special lady, Olive Roberts, who would have been celebrating her birthday in December.



I miss Olive very much all year, but especially at Christmas when we would have been busy together making items for the Christmas fair and decorating the church with flowers for the Christmas services. Olive and I became friends when we were partners on the church flower group, ladies who volunteered on a rota basis, to arrange flowers each week. Olive loved arranging flowers, and would teach me flower arranging techniques: one I remember was 'always leave enough space between blooms for a butterfly to flutter between'.

Olive was always happiest when she was helping people, and had a lovely sense of fun. When it was the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and our pre-school children at Ladybird were having a party to celebrate, Olive agreed to be the 'Queen' for the day. She dressed like the queen in her finery, pearls, silk gloves and had even been to her hairdressers to have a style like the queen's. It was worth it to see our three-year-olds faces totally believing the Queen had come to our party, and the boys making a bow and the girls a courtesy. Olive was equally delighted and enjoyed it all. If Olive and I were flower arranging on a Friday, she would bring us packed lunch, before we worked side by side, often enjoying a private recital, as Paul was practising on the organ, and as we worked we sang along to the hymns and songs we knew.

We also enjoyed meeting socially, to go out for lunch or days out on coach trips, where we spent most of the time laughing together. I miss these special times together, but I am grateful to God for sending me a true and lovely friend, fond memories and lots of love.

So although there are no flowers to remember you by this year, Olive, we will remember you on your birthday, and be thinking of you with love at Christmas.

Rita O'Loughlin