

NEWS & VIEWS

***The Free Church
Hampstead Garden Suburb***



DECEMBER-JANUARY 2024

PLEASE TAKE ONE

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB FREE CHURCH

(United Reformed and Baptist)
Central Square, London, NW11 7AG
www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Services:	<i>11 a.m. (and 6.30 p.m. when announced)</i> <i>Holy Communion is celebrated at Morning</i> <i>Worship on the first Sunday of every month.</i> <i>The Junior Church meets at 11am every</i> <i>Sunday</i>
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Safeguarding Statement

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults). We expect all of our leaders, volunteers and those who use our premises to share this commitment and value the support of those who worship here in achieving this.

The Elders (Trustees), Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church
January 2016

NEWS & VIEWS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB
FREE CHURCH
Central Square,
London NW11 7AG



NO 793

DECEMBER-JANUARY 2024

Dear Friends

The Manse, Advent 2023

I'm so very grateful to the Free Church family for supporting the work here during the hectic round of activities in November. So many of you, for example, were present at St Jude's church for the concert given by Côr Llundain. As this choral concert was organised to welcome me to the Suburb at the start of my ministry here, St Jude's decided to make a generous gift to the Free Church.

Côr Llundain is a choir of around 40 members largely drawn from among the young professionals and students who have moved to London from Wales. Our expert compere and conductor was the choir's choral director, William Thomas. He introduced a variety of songs spanning the centuries, as well as reflecting both Welsh and World music traditions.

Coupled with this range of choir pieces – ably accompanied from the piano and harp by Manon Browning – was a number of instrumental interludes performed by members of the choir. Côr Llundain reflects all that is good in the ongoing Welsh mixed choir tradition. This choir are worthy winners of this year's principal SATB competition at the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales in Boduan on the Llŷn Peninsula.

The following day, 5 November, was our chance to remember during the Annual Bereavement Service those whose loss we continue to mourn. As I reflected last month, this All Saints' tide event is a means by which we name those whom we grieve, and commend them once more to God's loving care.

Remembrance Sunday, then, was a further opportunity to gather the wider community together at the Free Church. The ecumenical service included participants from the Golders Green Quakers and St Jude's, as well as Cllr Kath McGuirk who placed a wreath on behalf of the Mayor, Councillors and Burgesses of the London Borough of Barnet. The combined choir sang

two anthems, and after the conclusion of the service we joined in singing the National Anthem. Our organist, Paul Joslin was then joined by Pauline on the cello for a reflective postlude.

November 12th, moreover, was another busy day at the church. A full report on the bazaar is found elsewhere in these pages, but I am pleased to record that the final total takings from the day were £2,694.96. Thank you once again to everyone who made the fête such a resounding success. I am sure that everyone who visited the Free Church appreciated the industry and commitment of the church community.

Our minds turn now inexorably towards the winter festivities surrounding Advent, Christmas, New Year and Epiphany. As I write this, I haven't even started to think about buying a tree, nor hanging the decorations around the Manse. I'll have to turn my mind to it soon! I know, too, that Christmas will inevitably be different for us this year in our new city.

Despite the change of location, though, the truths we celebrate remain the same. God is at work in God's world stirring up a people to follow the Christ who entered our world, makes all things new, and reveals his glory to every nation.

A contemporary worship song poignantly captures the wonder of Jesus's incarnation. Tim Hughes opens his song with the words, 'Light of the world / You stepped down into darkness', and then — reflecting Paul's words in Philippians 2: 6–8 — marvels in worship at Christ's self-emptying act of coming into our world:

King of all days,
Oh, so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above;
Humbly you came to the earth you created;
All for love's sake became poor.

This is the gift we receive at Christmas; a gift to cherish as we rejoice that the Author of creation himself came to live among us. Whenever I read the prologue to John's Gospel at Christmas time, one phrase always strikes me: 'the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us' (John 1: 14). God Godself became one of us, and pitched a tent here in our fallen world. Is there anything more wondrous than that?

Pauline, the children and I wish you all the most blessed of Christmases, and a happy New Year for 2024.

Your servant in Christ Jesus

Aled Jones

Statement by Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF), Middlesex University IFN and Barnet Council on the current crisis in Palestine and Israel

BMFF is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in Palestine and Israel. No one should suffer the unacceptable and horrendous trauma and loss of life we are currently witnessing.

We mourn the tragic loss of innocent lives which have caused heartbreak and pain to those living in the region and its impact to families in Barnet and beyond; we are thinking and praying for all those personally affected.

We call for the immediate release of all the hostages and an end to the killing of innocent civilians, especially the children. We of all faiths are united in the pursuit of a lasting peace in the Holy Land.

Barnet has a strong and vibrant multi faith community. Our values, that bring together people of all faiths and none, cannot be underestimated. We celebrate and commemorate a diverse array of festivals and cultural events that educate and inform each other of the diversity and wealth this brings to the Borough.

We learn to respect the dignity of difference by building these resilient relationships. This is our core work and purpose that we need to pass on to our children.

We will continue to challenge antisemitism, islamophobia, and all forms of racial hatred, inflicted upon all faiths and beliefs, that generates division, hate and violence and which should not be allowed to infect our lives.

In Barnet there must be a collaborative and coordinated strategy to resist all those who seek to divide us by spreading blame and hatred in our communities.

BMFF will continue to work with all partners to create opportunities for debate, discussion, understanding, compassion, and justice.

BMFF Executive November 16th 2023



The Free Church
Hampstead Garden Suburb
Central Square, NW11 7AU



Carol Singing around the Suburb

Come and join us singing well known Christmas carols
Let's share the joy of Christmas with our neighbours

Monday December 18th 2023



6pm



Meet in the Free Church car park

Come and bring a friend!

Soup and mince pies
will be served in the church
after the carol singing



In memory of Lilian Coumbe 1959 – 2022

Guy Coumbe writes:

John Collclough Lackington has been a very close friend of mine from the age of sixteen, when we started our apprenticeships to become mechanical engineers. Not long after I met Lilian at the age of eighteen and soon after we were engaged.

We married in 1984. Tragically Lilian was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in May 2020 and throughout her illness John and his wife Sue were absolutely wonderful sending Lilian many parcels of gifts and treats, as visiting our home at this time was impossible due to Covid.

To commemorate Lilian's life each year John and Sue make a donation to the Free Church homeless shelter.

Furthermore, they had a donkey sick bay stable built at Hayling Island Donkey Sanctuary in memory of Lilian. This was most fitting as near the end of Lilian's life, when she was at home, she always loved to watch Paul O'Grady's Love of Dogs. Being gravely ill herself, it gave her particularly joy to see the vets make the many sick dogs better.

John writes:

We knew Lilian liked donkeys as she had mentioned them whilst talking about her childhood holidays in Ireland. Plus, the Donkey Sanctuary required a stable for the older donkeys that needed care and a safe quiet place where they could recuperate without being bothered by the younger donkeys. We also included in the donation provision for heat lamps to aid in the seniors' recovery etc. Something we did not know until we got involved in this was that a donkey shed requires a much higher specification than that of a domestic shed in terms of the timber quality and the flooring.

Thus, we thought it fitting to dedicate this donkey hospital stable in Lilian's name, as it was to be used for healing and the wellbeing of the senior donkeys.

Talking to the owners of Hayling Island Donkey Sanctuary the hospital stable is being put to good use and has made a significant and positive impact to the well-being of the donkeys.

Jo Morris writes:

This is the third year that we have received a remarkably generous gift for homeless people from John and Sue in commemoration of Lilian.

The picture shows the extent of Sue's work. 50 bobble hats, 25 scarves and 25 snoods all handknitted by Sue together with 50 shower gels, toothbrushes and toothpaste plus 50 pairs of socks. A very memorable gift which honours the person Lilian was.

*The gifts will be distributed to the homeless through **Homeless Action in Barnet, Together in Barnet** and our **Free Church night shelter** which will run on Tuesdays in the Church Hall from 9th January to 20th February 2024.*

We are grateful to Guy , Sue and John for remembering Lilian in this way.

Jo Morris



*Guy and John outside the
donkey sick bay stable on
Hayling Island*

*Sue's knitted gifts for
homeless people*



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2023



Church Bazaar 2023

Expectation in the air - things to buy, goodies to eat, friends to meet. People came and went - doors opened at 11, but the church was already thronged with helpers and early comers. Stalls all ready, tea and coffee cups assembled, hot water heaters waiting to go; juices ready for thirsty children.

What a hustle and bustle as the morning went on - people arriving, hoping to find that elusive last Christmas present, or perhaps a treat for oneself for a change; people departing pleased with their purchases, hugging memories of people met, new friends made, promises to meet again. Stall holders keen to know how much have we made? Will we have made sufficient to bolster our coffers, and also to give to the charities we support?

As a change from holding the Bazaar in the Church Hall, a good big area in two spaces, the Church seemed small, especially as the lunch tables at the back filled up a third of the hall, but the atmosphere was the same - busy, peopled, anticipatory, a pre-Christmas feeling, indulgence for oneself, indulgence on behalf of others.

There was a sizeable space below the choir stalls for the children to play, and happy sounds of bricks clattering, children chattering, small feet running, excited voices calling, came from that quarter all day.

Next to them, but not too close, was the cake stall. What an array of home-made (and also, it must be admitted, bought) buns and cakes, some iced in bright colours, some dark as treacle; cakes of all flavours, ready to be sliced and enjoyed, scones awaiting their ration of jam and cream.

Across to the stalls on the other side, but not forgetting the handy lines of chairs where tired shoppers could rest and recuperate, ready for another foray on stalls not yet explored.

So to the book stall - always a draw - there's always an excuse for pausing there. And next to it the bric-a-brac - what exciting finds might lie there? Someone's cast-off might be just what you wanted - who knows? But next door was the stall showing the talents of our sewing and knitting group - beautiful things, some hanging enticingly on elegant tree branches: pretty ornaments, brooches, sweet little decorations for the Christmas tree, crocheted by clever hands.

We've had a good look round, we've made a few judicious, and a few ill-advised purchases - is it time for a bite of lunch? On offer there were sandwiches of all varieties, sausages, salads, lots of cakes and scones,

Christmas Presents for the Acutely Mentally Ill

We will be wrapping presents for the 60 patients who will be in hospital over Christmas in the Acute Adult Psychiatric beds of the three wards of the Dennis Scott Unit, Edgware Community Hospital on Tuesday December 20th at 2.30pm followed by tea and mince pies. Do come and help and chat!



Penny Trafford

plenty of goodies to enjoy, with a friend or two, or make a new friend. Then go home with your purchases, glad to have contributed to a worthy cause, to have enjoyed time in a bustling atmosphere, friendly, welcoming - a time for new friends and old, for spending, for giving. **Joan Holton**

Penny Trafford writes:

Thank you to everyone who made the Bazaar such a success.

There was a lovely atmosphere in church with new and old friends coming to chat and eat.

Many items were sold and we made £2,694.96.



Jesus, the name given by the angel (Philippians 2: 9–11)

Elsewhere in this month's edition of *News and Views*, I refer to Paul's Christological poem or hymn of kenosis (self-emptying) in his letter to the Philippians. The Apostle, of course, does not end the section of the epistle with Jesus's human servanthood. He moves beyond Christ's humility in the incarnation and his sacrifice upon the cross to stress that God gives him the ultimate exaltation — he bears God's own Name, and Jesus himself becomes the object of ultimate worship. Here is the key section from Philippians 2: 6–11 (*Good News Bible*):

⁶ [Christ Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This text is one of those chosen for 1 January, not because it's New Year's Day, but because it falls on the eighth day of the Christmas season. The Gospel reading for that day ends with, 'On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived' (Luke 2: 21, *New International Version*).

We know about Gabriel's visit to Mary from a multitude of children's nativity performances and Christmas carol services. The angel told her that she would become pregnant and give birth to a son, and that she was 'to give him the name Jesus' (Luke 1: 31). This name is the Greek form, Ἰησοῦς of the Hebrew name Joshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ *Yeshua*), and means 'Yahweh, the Lord is salvation'.

When Luke records the event of Jesus's circumcision, the emphasis is not

on the religious rite *per se*, but rather on the naming of the child with the name given by the angel. God's purpose is to be seen in this name. This becomes explicit, of course, in Matthew's account of Gabriel's visit to Joseph: "[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1: 21).

The Bible's view of names and naming would be offended by the idea of mere coincidence or accident of parental choice: the link between name and person is both too close and also too dynamic for that. Jesus is the fulfilment of what his name declares; he is the Saviour. God does indeed save.

Our Philippians passage, moreover, sees Jesus's name as part of God's plan of exaltation for him. The final verses of the Christological hymn printed above describe the universal homage and acclamation that will be accorded the one whose name ranks above all others. In the Hebrew Bible, the bending of the knee was an expression denoting great reverence and submission. The worshipper who felt their need so keenly that they could not stand upright before God would approach God on their knees.

The usual position in prayer in both the Old Testament and the Gospels was that of standing, but in the honour of the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow (verse 10). The image created here reminds the reader of God's declaration in Isaiah 45, a fiercely monotheistic passage: "I am God, and there is no other ... Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear" (verses 22–23, based on the LXX Greek translation).

Here the uniqueness of the God of Israel is proclaimed and God's universal triumph is hailed. The Lord, who has already declared that he will not share his name or his glory with another, solemnly swears that 'every knee will bow before me'. Now Paul reiterates this language, but it is 'in honour of the name of Jesus' that everyone kneels.

The point which Paul makes, then, is that the God who will not share God's glory with anyone else has shared it with Jesus. Jesus is the perfect self-expression of the true God, and his name demonstrates God as Saviour.

It is little wonder, as Paul stresses in verse 9, that God gives him the name above all other names. In ancient thought, a name was employed not only as a means of distinguishing one person from another, but also as a means of revealing the inner being, the true quality of the individual. The name

News of the Family

As a church family we extend our warmest congratulations to Jo and David Morris and their family on the birth of their granddaughter Lilou Morris Poulleau in Muswell Hill during October.

We also send out best wishes to Pat Over following her recent stays in hospital. We know of a number of people who have been ill during November, and we know how they much they have appreciated the church family's concern and support.

Following our Annual Bereavement Service we continue to hold in our prayers all those who feel a sense of grief and loss.

Aled Jones



greater than any other name that God conferred on Jesus is his own Name, Lord, in its most sublime sense: that designation (κύριος) used in the LXX Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible to represent the personal name of the God of Israel, that is יהוה, Yahweh.

All authority in heaven and on earth already belonged to Jesus by his nature (see his words to the disciples in Matthew 28: 18), but now it is being given to him once more by gift. Jesus, the Saviour, is now seen by all people as the Lord in the sense of beginning fully included as part of the godhead.

The entire cosmos is brought under the lordship of Christ, and Paul's poem envisions the fulfilment of God's purpose in the end-time. Our joy during the season of Christmas is that we can join in that scene of worship and submission to Jesus's lordship today. The final acclamation of the universe is at the same time our earthly confession. The slogan of today's church throughout the world is 'Jesus Christ is Lord.'

Jesus's mother, Mary, prophetically declared in her song of praise, "[the Lord] has lifted up the humble" (Luke 1: 52). Her son's humility is rewarded by the Father with the ultimate gift: being given a new name — alongside the one given to him by the angel Gabriel, that of the Ever-living Lord himself: Yahweh, the all-excelling Name of God.

Aled Jones

Moving Forward

I finished last month's article with the fact that I had lost all my notes for that article which therefore had to be based on 'faith and trust.' This one is also deeply rooted in one of those two words – trust. The dictionary probably would use the word to describe somebody or something completely dependable, reliable, 100% believing.

This morning, as I look out of the kitchen onto the inside flower garden I can see a six foot mallow plant. It usually stands upright with large leaves but now after a heavy frost it looks rather bedraggled and stooping, almost as though it's had enough. But later on, in the pale sunlight, it will be as upright as a soldier! That is a bit how I feel this morning, having trusted some person on the telephone; trusted them enough to give them access to my laptop and, of course, you can guess the rest – yes, access to our bank accounts! In retrospect, how on earth can I have been so gullible – so stupid? Now I have to move on from what has happened and concentrate on the first of those two words – faith – what I believe and trust in. The mallow may be all droopy now – but the stem is still strong and thick and I realise more and more that beyond this broken confidence, beyond all the physical disruptions of our ongoing renovations, beyond all my insecurities when I can't put my hand on important documents, beyond all this, there is a God I can completely 100% trust. He cares for me, He loves me. As Psalm 139 puts it 'He knows all my thoughts', He knows me 'warts and all!'

Now to the saga of the house 'improvements.' It wasn't until I looked at my daily diary that I realized that we had had people in and out for the past eight weeks – but now it is 99% finished. Outside work is now done and beautifully rendered – almost an art in itself to obtain such a beautifully smooth finish; the scaffolding is still in position until the small flat roof is attended to but, more importantly, the blue plastic protective covering on the windows has gone and we can see out! It may be autumn but the hills and the sky seem far deeper in colour at this time of year.

Inside work is finished except for one radiator – but already there is such a difference in the warmth. The original hot water tank in the bathroom has had to be replaced by a massive round cylinder which reaches to the ceiling but, luckily, it has all been 'boxed in.' I say 'luckily' as it looks like a huge machine from 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' film and because I am a chocolate addict, it will be a constant reminder!

All the rooms are still in a 'higgledy-piggledy' mess and nothing is where

I would expect to find it; in many ways this affects my notion of tidiness and the security of knowing what's where, but these are all material things. What I see are far more essential things – the help and care from family and neighbours – the 'caring fingers of God.'

One of the grand-children recently asked me what was my favourite hymn and I gave him a very out of tune rendering of Stuart Townend's musical version of 'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want' - particularly the chorus 'And I will trust in You alone, And I will trust in You alone.'

John and I, to keep our minds 'stimulated' play that challenging game 'Scrabble.' I use that adjective as we have a dictionary each but, as the children remark, "very out of date with no modern words." Perhaps they are correct as the Collins Gem Dictionary was first published in 1902 with many reprints, the last being in 1987. My Oxford dictionary was printed in 1957 but is unique because it was given to me as a school prize.

The word 'trust' is defined as 'confidence, firm belief' by both dictionaries and perhaps at this time of Advent we should renew our trust once more in the Almighty One.

Rosemary Birch

PS I know what our Christmas present will be!!

Ode to an autumn leaf

Leaves on the ground are red-
gold and orange,
Branches of trees look shorn,
The sun is bright shining,
tempting me out:
Can't stay indoors when the sky is alight.
I walk by the brook, a fast-flowing stream,
There's a woody path, a nut-munching squirrel.
Then a colder wind blows, up goes my collar,
Thank goodness for my woolly scarf;
It's good to be out with nature and weather:
My life in an autumn leaf: windblown, colourful, blest.

Joan Holton



From the Archives

1943

This first extract recounts the events and services for Christmas and the New Year, much as we do today in 2023. Remember however, 1943 is still deep in wartime events. Services are having to be held still in the Hall and not the Church to save on fuel. Compared with today, the contrast in the numbers in the services and in the Sunday School is very stark



From HGS News Letter December 1943

My dear people, we plan to make this Christmas a memorable one in the life of the Church. The arrangements have been made: it needs only the cooperation of us all to make them complete. We begin with extracts from the *Messiah* by the choir on Sunday evening, December 12th. We gather young and old together the following Sunday morning for the Festival of Lessons and Carols. I wish we could be in the Church that day, for last year it was difficult to pack everyone into the Hall. Don't, however, stay away because there is likely to be a crowd. We are learning how to arrange the chairs with the maximum of comfort for the largest possible number. I don't think I can broadcast a general invitation for the afternoon, or space will really fail us, but I can assure you that the Primary Department and the Beginners will be there with parents and teachers and friends and Christmas Tree and other etceteras of the Festival. On Christmas Day there will be Holy Communion at 8.30am and Family Worship at 11am. Finally, on December 26th we hope to maintain the Yuletide spirit at both the services. Strictly speaking, there is no "finally" for after Christmas come the New Year celebrations, and I should like us to start 1944 with a record attendance at the Lord's Table. Not only is that a good way for Christians to begin what may very likely be one of the most important years in modern history, but there are new members to be received, and we should all be there to welcome them.

Frank Ballard

1944

The first extract tells us about the Minister's Fund used for discreetly helping those in need. And then the second extract recounts how one member of the congregation, a 'Church Officer' (which today we would call a Caretaker) is quietly back in church after military adventures in Italy and North Africa and escaping from being a prisoner-of-war.

From HGS News Letter, January 1944

..... There was a generous spirit abroad too, as I believe the collections would indicate. The money needed to send parcels to our representatives in the Forces was quickly given, and several people who could not be at the Christmas Day service remembered that the collection would be for "The Minister's Benevolent Fund" and sent gifts through the post. This is a fund of which little is heard, but it enables me to give privately where I believe help would be appreciated. I do not usually report to anyone what I receive and never by any chance do I say how the money has been distributed. But it will not be out of place here to say that so far I have received altogether over £170, and I have reason to believe that it has made a great deal of difference in many homes. Thank you for generous support in this and so many other ways.

Another thing that made the season so welcome was that so many young people were able to be home on leave. If I mention names I shall certainly omit some that ought to be included, but one at least cannot be passed over. Once upon a time we had a Church Officer named James Boxall. Little did we think in those days when he used to be seen around the premises with little Brian strutting after him that the time would come when he would be a sergeant in the artillery and see heavy fighting in North Africa and Italy. But that has been his experience for nearly two and a half years. Then suddenly he is found sitting modestly at the back in a morning service. Since then we have heard fragments of his thrilling story, the places he has visited, the battle in which he was engaged, how he was taken prisoner but was fortunate enough to escape. Hundreds of thousands will have the same kind of story to tell, but this was the first time I have heard it from one of our own congregation. *Frank Ballard*

1954

From the Manual and Year Book 1953-1954.

Some church statistics of interest:

Members 500, Sunday School Scholars 322, Sunday School Teachers 48. Cradle Roll 40.

1964

The first piece from January 1964 is from the New Year message of the then minister Peter Barraclough. And this is followed by an account of the previous December's Bazaar. (Barry Bucknell was the first DIY guru of those times on TV!)

From News and Views January 1964 Price Sixpence

From the Manse

A very happy New Year to you all! This is a greeting which a Christian minister can most sincerely give to his people because the source of joy is our relationship with God. "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." (Proverbs 16, 20) It has been my privilege across the years of my ministry to know many men and women who have illustrated this truth. Some were rich and some were poor; some were old and some were young; some were well and some were ill; some lived in favourable circumstances, and others experienced deprivation and frustration; but all of them remain in my mind because of the joy that was in their hearts, and which overflowed into the lives of those who encountered them. I salute them as a new year begins, and pray God to grant them "the royalty of inward happiness."

Peter Barraclough

Barry Bucknell at the Bazaar

Mr Barry Bucknell, "do-it-yourself king" and a Hampstead resident, was a welcome visitor to open the Free Church Bazaar.

Introduced by Mr Barraclough, Mr Bucknell complimented the organisers on the attractiveness of the display and the variety of merchandise, and emphasised the value of the bazaar as a common activity in which all could join. Mrs Bucknell was with her husband on the platform, and they were presented with flowers by Clifford Jamieson and Nicolette Druce. After the ceremony they spent some time touring the stalls.

There was a good attendance both at the opening ceremony and during the day, and the total sum raised amounted to £413. The Bazaar Secretaries wish to thank all stall holders and their helpers, Mrs Grant and her Catering Committee, the scouts and guides, the organisers of side shows, colour slide shows and cake competitions; "back room boys" who erected and dismantled the stalls; and firms in Market Place, Temple Fortune and elsewhere who contributed generously.

Anne Lowe



JOHN BIRCH'S DIARY

I started last month's Diary under the heading 'Hope for the Future' with the announcement of a new chapter in our lives about to start as Great-grand-parents. Yes, that is what we have become with the arrival of Caleb Harry (6lbs 4oz) to proud Mum Megan, and Dad Jack. Incredible to think that daughter Sally is now a Granny and that her five brothers have become Great-Uncles! Caleb means 'Devotion To God' showing his parents' commitment as Church Youth Workers. Rosemary and I are very proud of all our children's and grand-children's involvement in useful jobs within the wider community.

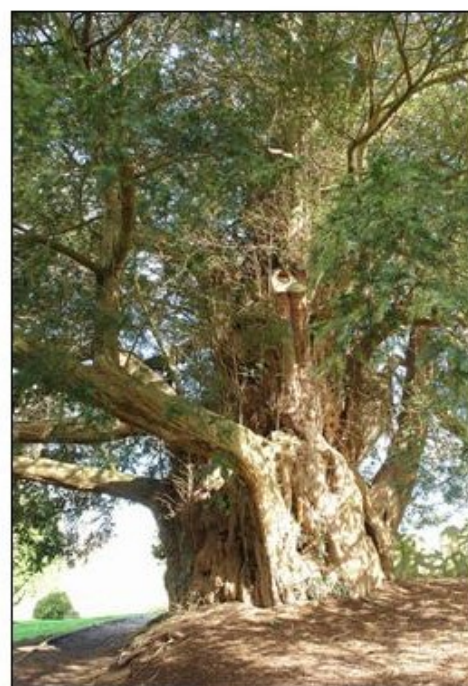


Logie Baird with a (very) early TV!

These days entertainment largely comes "out of the air" with television and stereo programmes on smart phones etc, all with little or no personal involvement. Last century, things were very different. In 1940, when I was just "a twinkle in my parents' eyes," my father Richard Birch was appearing in the Christmas Show – a staple in many theatres throughout Britain - at the Bootle Empire in Liverpool. His stage name was Rich Ard - much thought there! - and he was what was known as

a "stand-up" comic, giving an "off-the-cuff" performance where you either enthralled the audience or suffered - at the very least - boos, abuse and a hasty exit! Music halls and live theatres were the major source of entertainment at a time when Logie Baird had only brought about the concept of television some 20 years earlier. Television was just something for the future. I remember in 1948 my mum and dad taking me to visit friends who had a television - a 12" black and white screen picking up programmes from a station in Birmingham, (the first one in the country, except for Alexandra Palace which opened briefly in 1937) which was broadcasting to a small number of receivers, available in the South and around Birmingham. Apart from the programme being a drama, I have no recollection about it. I just remember sitting entranced - which was certainly a "wow factor!" How did it happen? I -aged 7- kept quiet for two whole hours,! My Mum regarded it as a blessing and a miracle!

“I’ll be seeing yew” Over many centuries what is now East Anglia was populated by vast forests comprised mainly of yew trees. Hundreds of tree logs have now been revealed as large areas were ploughed and brought into use. Such a concentration happens very rarely – these particular trees were growing on land which had been flooded by rising levels of salt water and later drained and used as farmland. It was described by one researcher as ‘like finding a pyramid’. The trunks had been perfectly preserved by the peat into which they fell. Yew trees are one of the longest-lived species of tree in Europe and can grow up to 20 metres in height. Other fascinating facts: drooping branches of old yew trees can root and form new trunks where they touch the ground - thus the yew came to symbolize death and resurrection in Celtic culture. Historically, native American Indians used to treat ailments such as rheumatism, arthritis and fever with yew concoctions. In modern medicine some are very effective against many forms of cancer but the needles and seeds are extremely poisonous to animals such as dogs, horses and sheep.



A Bloater

I’m uncertain how this came about but in my childhood ***Kippers (smoked herrings)*** were a treat which happened rarely but much looked forward to. A smokehouse in Craster (Northumberland) has been producing them for almost 170 years and now has Grade II listed status, ensuring a continuing life. One family, the Robsons, have been in charge for over 100 years, taking this almost dead skill into the future. Craster



A Kipper

Kippers are renowned as some of the best in the world. Kippers are split, gutted and then cold smoked; bloaters are



Bucklings

cold smoked whole whilst bucklings are hot smoked whole. Cold smoking means the fish is refrigerated at 38 degrees for as long as 14 days. The nickname for these stream-lined beautiful fish is 'Silver Darlings.' I hope this will allow you to have an even greater appreciation for your fish

dishes !

Life after you've sunk Wrecks have a life. Each wreck signifies a disaster but provides a safe space for a huge variety of marine species, the density of life being 240 percent greater than in areas dragged by fishing gear - researchers from the University of Plymouth have found. There are 37,000 known shipwrecks in English waters (the oldest being a C13th merchant vessel), thousands near the Welsh, Scottish and Irish coasts. Corals and other soft invertebrates soon attach themselves to the remaining structure and small shoals of small fish inhabit their new peaceful shelter until it becomes a haven for the occasional shark!



Across the Atlantic, on a flight from Amsterdam to Manchester, there was a delay of five hours when the **pilot was bitten by a mosquito**. He insisted that the entire plane was deep-cleaned "in case there were other bugs."

The delay was recorded as "due to technical difficulties."



In the US, in the perhaps appropriately but thankfully not completely accurately named, Death Valley, **a tarantula crossing the Californian State Route 190** caused a campervan, driven by Swiss travellers, to brake suddenly resulting in a motorcyclist hitting the back of the van. The accident report concluded "the spider walked away unhurt" - hopefully the motorcyclist recovered fully

and quickly but the report doesn't say this! (This is turning into a "nature causes havoc" section!)

John Birch

The Frans Hals Exhibition at the National Gallery



I recently visited the Frans Hals exhibition at the National Gallery. Fifty of his finest paintings, almost all portraits, are exhibited. The Gallery extols the artist's fluid brush strokes and his genius in capturing personalities and facial expressions, especially of joy.

The praise heaped on him by Van Gogh, Manet, Singer Sargent and Whistler and his influence on them is highlighted. He is said to equal, even to exceed, Rembrandt and Vermeer.

There are rave reviews of the exhibition in the national press, where it is said to be a celebration of light and laughter – even if the Laughing Cavalier in fact seems to be smirking, the impression of laughter being induced by his florid moustache.

The exhibition, like the reviews, are a lie.

They repeat a fabrication of history which masks the evil which underpins capitalism and has indelibly stained European culture.

All of the paintings portray wealthy Dutch merchants and their households. They are a celebration of a world in which white male supremacy is taken for granted. It is notable that the older men portrayed

are in black, puritanical, outfits – the uniform of a Protestant nation.

This was a period – the 17th century – when the Netherlands was a mercantile and colonial super power, rivalled only by Great Britain.

One of the largest paintings in the exhibition is entitled “*Family Group In A Landscape*”.

It is remarkable, the National Gallery’s explanatory note would have us believe, for the tender manner in which the man looks at his wife whilst holding her hand. He is a wealthy merchant. The family are dressed in finery which would have cost a fortune. Such a painting was, no doubt, commissioned to flaunt the wealth and status of the merchant.

The truth embedded in the painting is, however, the black child in the background.

The child does not have the happy face of the others. One wonders whether he still longs for the land and family from whom he was torn.

He is dressed in plain clothes – although adequate and clean in order to reflect the prosperity of the merchant who owns him.

He is shown in a subservient position, slightly behind the family. This is in marked contrast to the son of the family, of the same age, who swaggers with a mischievous grin and a stick with which, no doubt, he beats the black child.

The black child is a status symbol. He is a slave.

Huge profits were made by Dutch merchants and the royal House of Orange from the slave trade and slavery. Vast wealth was generated from the royal family’s shareholding in the Dutch East India Company, although not as great as the wealth generated for the British royal family from its shares in the Royal African Company. King Willem-Alexander recently apologized for his family’s and nation’s involvement in slavery, which is more than King Charles III has done, although the latter has expressed shame. In neither case are reparations forthcoming.

The exhibition is ironic too because the racism inherent in the painting reflects the current values of the Netherlands. The extreme right-wing party of Geert Wilders recently won the largest number of seats in their national legislature.

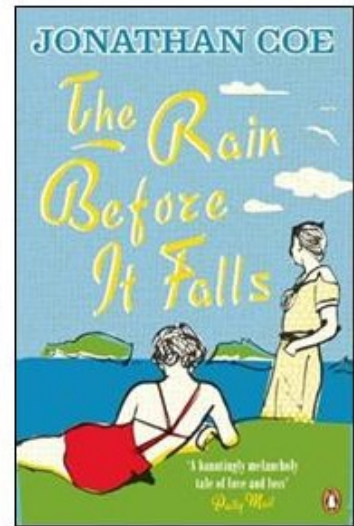
Ashok Ghosh



Book Review

The Rain Before It Falls by Jonathan Coe

If his name wasn't on the cover, you might never guess that *The Rain Before It Falls* was by Jonathan Coe. After seven wildly plotted and politically tinged novels - including his classic *What A Carve Up!* - Coe has written a brief, sad, often very moving story of mothers and daughters.



Gill's Aunt Rosamond has died in Shropshire. Predeceased by her longtime companion Ruth and leaving no children, Rosamond has made Gill her executor. To Gill's surprise, a large part of Rosamond's estate has been left to someone called Imogen, a blind girl who Gill met only once 20 years previously. Rosamond has also left a packet of cassette tapes for Imogen, recorded up to the very night she died, a death that Gill discovers wasn't due to heart failure after all but suicide. Unable to locate Imogen, Gill listens to the tapes herself, and they make up the bulk of the book, with Rosamond describing a series of 20 photographs that will tell the story of Imogen and how she was "inevitable."

Rosamond's story begins in the war when she was evacuated as a child from Birmingham to her aunt and uncle's farm in Shropshire. Immediately bonding with cousin Beatrix, she also can't help but notice the "murderous" way Aunt Ivy speaks to her only daughter, not yelling, just saying terrible things in a low voice. This is a legacy that continues, unfortunately, with the unreliable Beatrix growing up to leave one man after another and giving birth to the helpless Thea. Rosamond and her first true love Rebecca end up caring for young Thea for two years, and the rupture when Beatrix returns to reclaim Thea is never healed. "Man hands on misery to man," Larkin wrote. In *The Rain Before It Falls*, so does woman on to woman. Thea gives birth to Imogen and there is only more tragedy to come.

A theme of the book is that cruel mothers produce unhappy daughters, who in turn, act cruelly towards their own daughters, often by not noticing them at all. For example, Beatrix learns that she has 'a duty to remain invisible.' Rosamond, the narrator, comments: 'one should never underestimate what it must feel like to know that you are not wanted by your own mother. It is very hard to be a whole person after that.'

Another message seems to be that true happiness and joy can only be found fleetingly, as in effect most of the book recounts Rosamond's sad and lonely life where she is only truly happy with her true love Rebecca for two short years before the child Thea is reclaimed by her mother Beatrix and their loving lesbian relationship breaks down. Rosamond feels her long-term companion Ruth is a poor substitute: 'I don't remember that we spoke to each other much. Hardly at all. What was there to say? We were lifelong companions.' The other narrator, Gill, also seems to feel that her meeting with the seven-year-old blind Imogen was a high point, never to be repeated, in spite of the fact that she has a loving husband and daughters herself.

This book has divided critics quite dramatically into two camps. Some describe Jonathan Coe as 'a writer of extraordinary maturity, warmth and subtlety. This is an impeccable character study As a novelist, he has produced [here] his best work.' (Ed Wood, *Independent*) Other critics have disagreed, calling the character of the narrator Rosamond 'so cool as to be plainly bland' and saying that the author has made in previous novels even 'the most pallid existence shine brightly from the page One only hopes that in his next book, he will find the knack again.' (Erica Wagner, *New York Times*). My own view falls somewhere between the two extremes. The book is readable and also a page turner. One really wants to find out what happens to the characters, particularly the mysterious absent Imogen and why. It is easy too to identify with Gill going alone through her aunt Rosamond's house and belongings, something many people have experienced. On balance, a recommended read. *Marion Ditchfield*



Banks, Ealing Council and Techno-Feudalism

Some years ago I wrote a piece for News and Views in which I described the coming of 'hole in the wall' cash machines in the high street (it must have been some time in the late 70s or early 80s). At the time I thought, 'What a clever way of transferring the queue from inside to outside the bank.' Then somebody pointed out, 'But you can get money out at any time of the day' – true enough, but not true enough to expunge the uneasy feeling that this was the tip of a very, very large iceberg.

I recalled all this when Marion and I recently went to our nearest branch of NatWest in Ealing Broadway. As with all such visits nowadays we joined a rather bad-tempered group of people waiting to speak to someone (anyone?) about the queries we had regarding possible travel insurance and our reward account. It all took a very, very long time. Suffice to say, we came away dissatisfied on both counts. The assistant ('adviser'?) did his best to help, but all he could offer us were rather complex scenarios which involved making phone calls and down-loading apps (which I did but to no avail). As a result, we decided to stick with the current arrangements. *NB Please don't try and explain what I (we) should have done in these circumstances. I won't understand it and it would rather miss the point.* Which is that 40 or so years on from the excitement of the first cash dispensers and their supposed benefits, the banks have managed to transform us from customers receiving a service, to people who now have to work hard to even (a) find a bank and then (b) find someone to help them. From being inside the castle looking out we are now outside the castle looking in. From citizen to subject and from subject to supplicant!

The journey is complete

And now even the cash machines are disappearing – the profit margins apparently being insufficient to justify their continued restocking and maintenance. There is a kind of satisfying aesthetic in this disappearance, a closing of the loop between their coming and their going, their birth and their death – 'in their beginning was their end.' And in between a citizenry successfully herded on line, apparently grateful to do all the basic accountancy work themselves and - as an incidental - help swell the profits of the internet companies carrying their data. For example, in order to avoid certain charges, I was told that I would need to access my downloaded app at least once a month – but why? Presumably because of some kind of agreement between the banks, certain retailers and the online data company to guarantee a minimum number of clicks for advertising purposes. After protests (and a disappearance to a back office) the adviser did reluctantly provide us with a handwritten internet address we could go

to where we could check the status of our account in a normal way.

A few days later I had occasion to go to Ealing Town Hall. I had received a letter from the council informing me that the Close where we live was to be removed from our local conservation area and that I could discover the reason(s) for this by going to the town hall planning department or going online. I tried the latter but found myself in one of those endless loops whereby you follow any number of menus and sub-menus and sub-sub menus and finally end up at the menu you started from! So I went to the town hall instead. Just how naïve can one be? What world was I living in? No one has been allowed in Ealing Town Hall for the last three years. Except by appointment, ever since Covid. For years now, the entrance doors have been covered with scrappy dog-eared notices listing the different departments and how they must now be contacted by phone or email or going online.

I decided to try the staff entrance instead but was immediately stopped by two security guards. Contrary to what one might suppose, they proved extremely helpful. One of them (a bloke who must have been well over 50 but with abundant grey hair gathered into an enormous pony tail) looked at my letter and said: 'Oh they shouldn't have sent that very misleading ... we get a lot of that!' He then recounted the sorry history of Ealing Council – how they had been decanted from the actual town hall because of asbestos concerns, then the pandemic and how nothing went back to normal after lock-down, how they should have moved two years ago but didn't etc, etc. Meanwhile, the other guard had disappeared into the bowels of the building to see if someone could help – but came back empty handed! They made two useful suggestions; firstly, I could go across to the library where there was a group of council employees who dealt with housing and benefit queries and who might be able to help, or secondly, I could contact my local ward councillors and ask them. I went across to the library – true enough there were such people but they were at lunch! And, as far as I could see, I would have to make an appointment (lists and pro-formas were at the ready)! I called it a day but in the evening we round to our daughter's who kindly went online to find out who our ward councillors were. This was more difficult than might be supposed. There was a list of councillors and a list of wards but no way of marrying them up. Moreover, we suspected that one (or possibly) both lists were not up to date. Suffice to say that names have now been discovered – but that I haven't had the heart or sufficient energy to follow up.

Anyone reading this might well point out that my experiences are in no way exceptional, that they are more or less par for the course, part of daily life now and that they have experienced far worse. So why (as my

daughter tirelessly points out) am I being so tiresome? But that is the point – ie that these ways of dealing with our everyday problems and queries – and which take up such a surprising amount of our time and energy and resources - is now part of daily life. It has become normalised. We no longer query the efficacy or necessity of doing things this way, of making all these efforts, of expending such large amounts of our time and energy on these activities! We just do it like good soldiers – ‘Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die.’

Techno-Feudalism

Which raises a huge number of existential questions – not least of which is: ‘how on earth did we get to this point?’ One only has to recall the early days of the internet and the online world to remember some of the optimism that accompanied the growth of IT and the internet. Building on the huge wartime and post-war public investments in communication technology, the ‘world wide web’ seemed to offer whole new ways for people to access knowledge and interact with each other – to become the masters of their own destiny. So what happened? Basically, as the Greek economist and philosopher Yanis Varoufakis points out in a recent book, (*Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism* by Yanis Varoufakis) privatisation happened. The early internet, he argues, has given way to a privatised digital landscape in which gatekeepers “charge rent The people we think of as capitalists are just a vassal class now. If you’re producing stuff now, you’re done. You’re finished. You cannot become the ruler of the world any more.” It is now the mega-large tech companies that run the show. They have done this by capturing and putting ever larger portions of our daily life on line and then charging us ‘rent’ so that we can put ourselves back into a position to carry them out or, as is often the case, fail to carry them out. He calls this state of affairs ‘Technofeudalism.’

It means that what used to be a quick face-to-face transaction in a local bank now takes forever in one of the few banks that remain open or necessitates a trip online that may or may not succeed in taking you to the result you want. And it means that what was once a quick face-to-face query at the town hall now seems tantamount to impossible to answer.

Conclusion

There is much more that needs to be said on the subject but unfortunately I have just received a text to the effect that my phone is failing to ‘syn’ (I presume it means sync!) (not enough data). I need to sort it out at my nearest O2 store – but this will now mean a trip to Ealing as the local one has just closed! I will probably have to go online and make an appointment!

John Ditchfield

JOHN BIRCH'S COMPETITION

Competition No. 58: London's Famous Parks and Open Spaces *Part II*

London is made up of 40% green spaces including 3,000 parks. How well do you know them? Link up the Park or Open Space with the brief description.

1. This open space covers 321 acres and houses more than 50,000 types of living plants and millions of preserved ones. It has a 250 year history and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

2. This garden, set in 4 acres along the edge of the River Thames, is the oldest botanical garden in London, growing plants for medicinal use.

3. This large triangular urban park is one of London's largest and oldest open spaces. It's the starting point for the annual London to Brighton Bike Ride. Several famous people have homes over-looking this area and the author JK Rowling revealed recently that she started the Harry Potter series in a flat above some shops overlooking this space.

4. This ancient heathland spanning 791 acres sits astride a sandy ridge on one of London's highest points. It's an area of woodland and pasture and is home to a fine 17th century. stately home.



5. This minute space, in the City of London, is set in the remains of a former church destroyed in the Blitz but offers a haven of solitude and peace to Londoners.

6. This open space opened in 1842, is surrounded by Victorian terraces, and gives panoramic views over Regents Park. It was used as a background in the making

of the animated film *Paddington*.

7. This modern riverside park is lesser known but famous for a 54-metres sunken garden called the Green Dock.

8 This open space set on the Isle of Dogs is home to the largest urban farm in London.



John Birch's Joke-Can you work out a large unstable area on a stoney outcrop in North London?

Answers to Competition No. 57 London's Famous Parks Part I

1. Kensington Gardens
2. Hyde Park
3. Regents Park
4. Greenwich Park
5. Battersea Park
6. Richmond Park
7. Holland Park
8. Green Park
9. Bushy Park
10. Alexandra Park
11. St. James' Park
12. Crystal Palace.



We look forward to your answers - send them either by email to jbirch1821@gmail.com or by post to J. Birch, Pantgwyn, High Street, Borth, Ceredigion, Wales SY24 5HY



WORDSEARCH: VARIETIES OF EDIBLE NUTS AND SEEDS

M	A	P	S	D	E	E	S	E	M	A	S	E	S	A
A	S	C	I	B	E	B	L	H	A	D	A	U	M	R
B	I	D	A	N	W	E	I	I	A		N		P	A
O	S	R	N	N	E	C	S	Y	Z	F		I	S	U
L	U	T	Y	O	K	N	R	X	L	A	S		T	C
I	C	A	U	O	M	O	U	O	A	T	R	U	U	A
B	H	T	R	N	K	L	W	T	A	L	N	B	N	R
O	I	Y	U	C	L	E	A	C	S	T	F		A	I
G	A	P	I	N	R	E	H	A	S				C	E
K	S	H	E	S	L	I	Z	E	N				E	P
N	E		E	C	O	A	H	A		O			D	
I	E	E		S	A	C	W		H		C	A		
G	D		S	T	U	N	E	S	I	D	A	R	A	P
S	S						T	U	N	E	L	D	N	A
P	U	M	P	K	I	N	S	E	E	D	S			M

ARAUCARIA BARU BRAZIL BUNYA CANDLE-
 NUT CHESTNUT CEDAR CHIA-SEEDS FLAX-
 SEED GINKO-BILOBA HAZELNUTS HICORYx2
 MARCONA-ALMONDS PARADISE-NUTS
 PEANUTS PECAN PINENUTS PISTACHIOS
 PUMPKIN-SEEDS SESAME-SEEDS SUNFLOWER-
 SEEDS WALNUT



Put the remaining 9 letters together to find the name of the nut which is the most expensive nut to buy in the world as it takes 7 years for the tree to produce nuts

Compiled by Rosemary Birch

Answer: Macadamia

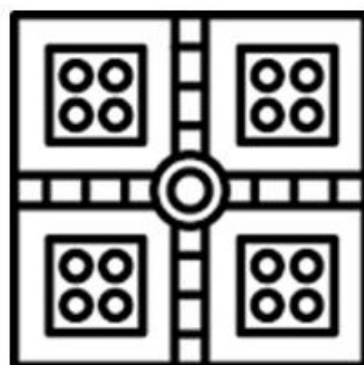
JUNIOR WORDSEARCH: BOARD GAMES

S	C	A	R	T	I	C	U	L	A	T	E
N	O	M	M	A	G	K	C	A	B	A	D
A	N	S	O	T	I	D	D	L	Y	X	I
K	N	T	S	C	R	A	B	B	L	E	R
E	E	H	S	I	L	K	L	G	O	T	O
S	C	G	Y	S	S	U	U	Q	P	R	T
R	T	U	W	I	E	E	E	O	O	I	T
E	F	A	R	I	S	H	D	D	N	V	E
D	O	R	F	S	N	U	C	Y	O	I	K
D	U	D	W	R	L	K	Z	J	M	A	C
A	R	H	T	N	I	R	Y	B	A	L	I
L	O	V	E	T	I	U	S	R	U	P	T

SCRABBLE
MONOPOLY
CHESS
BACKGAMMON
DRAUGHTS

SNAKES & LADDERS
GUESS WHO
CONNECT FOUR
TICKET TO RIDE
LUDO

CLUEDO
ARTICULATE
LABYRINTH
RISK
TRIVIAL PURSUIT



Compiled by Liz Alsford

DIARY

- Monday** 10.30am to 11.30am Study Group
- Wednesday** 10am to 12 noon Toddler and Parent/Carer group
- Thursday** 6.30pm to 8.00pm Choir Practice
Nov 23rd, Dec 7th and 14th
- Saturday** 10.30am to 12.30pm West End Café open



Audio - Visual Live streaming

Sunday Services and Friday Concerts are usually live-streamed on YouTube and these will remain on the Church's YouTube channel. If you are in the building, there is a chance you might appear on camera.

Seating in the side aisles is never filmed and the Stewarding Team can assist you if you would like a seat out of shot of the recording equipment.

DECEMBER

- 3 11.00 am Family Advent Morning Communion Service led by the Minister**
6.30pm Advent Carol Service at St Judes with joint St Judes & Free church choirs
- 10 11.00 am Family Service led by the Minister.**
- 12 7.30pm Elders & Deacons Meeting**
- 17 11.00 am Nine Lessons & Carols led by the Minister.**
- 18 6.00 pm Carol Singing around the Suburb with St Judes, meet in the car park. Followed by seasonal refreshments.**
- 19 2.30pm Wrapping Christmas presents for Dennis Scott Unit followed by tea and mince pies**
- 20 10-12.00pm Toddler Christmas Surprise!**
- 24 11.00 am Family Service led by the Minister.**
- 25 11.00 am Christmas Day Service led by the Minister**

- 31 11.00am Family Service led by Revd Derek Lindfield**
11.30pm Watchnight Service led by the Minister followed
by Fireworks on the Square

JANUARY

- 1 3.00pm Piano Concert by Duncan Honeybourne
followed by tea and mince pies.
- 7 **11.00am Family communion & Covenant Service led by**
the Minister
- 9 7.30pm Elders Meeting
- 14 **11.00am Family Service led by the Minister**
- 21 **11.00am United Service for Week of Prayer for Christian**
Unity at The Free Church
- 27 1.00pm Piano Recital by Eri Yamamoto in Free Church,
12.15 light refreshments served
- 28 **11.00am Family Service led by the Minister**



NEWS AND VIEWS



PRODUCTION
DISTRIBUTION
EDITORIAL PANEL

John Ditchfield
Jill Purdie and others
Joan Holton and Marion
Ditchfield

TYPESETTER
EDITOR

John Ditchfield
Marion Ditchfield

The next edition of News and Views will be published on February 4th 2024. Articles should therefore be delivered to the editor, Joan Holton or the typesetter, John Ditchfield (john_ditchfield@hotmail.com) by Sunday January 21st.

We welcome articles, as well as reviews of books, films, plays etc. from members and friends. These will not always represent the views of the editorial panel or of the Church. Publication is at the discretion of the Editors.

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