

St. Hilda's Newsletter

February 2024 – March 2024

Christmas at St. Hilda's



Photos courtesy of Pauline Milton

St Hilda's Entertainers - Jack and the Beanstalk

Firstly, a big "Thank You" to everyone who came to see St Hilda's Entertainers' 2023 Pantomime.

Looking back to a particular Thursday evening in July, having volunteered to direct *Jack and the Beanstalk* which needed a cast of 12 main characters, a cow, a chorus of villagers and minions and a ghost, I was rather taken aback when only 8 people turned up for the first reading (our informal auditions). We saw the evening through, with everyone being kept very busy, reading several parts, but even with doubling up or maybe even tripling up, I couldn't see how we would be able to put on a show.

Came the second reading. Being only a slight optimist, I started to put out 10 chairs. Sue Pinfold, our chairman, insisted we would need more so we put out 20 chairs, and one-by-one, 16 of them were filled. Hallelujah! What joy! We had a cast! It helped that the cow's costume would only need one person wearing it - not the more usual two. So, we had someone for every named part in the script, plus the luxury of a Chorus of four. What a relief. We had a show!

As always, our hard-working backstage crew spent the next four months pulling out all the stops to make and paint beautiful scenery, provide sound effects and lights, music and colourful costumes. Nearer show time they were further reinforced by our Prompt and the front of house manager and her team.

It was very reassuring to be able to welcome back so many experienced actors, Steve Smith, Neale Winter, Craig Entwistle, Sophie Gane, Sarah Poore, Lilly Poore, Jayne Taylor, Rosemary Greenwood and Rosalyn Young, who all knew how to play to an audience. I knew we were in excellent hands.

I was also delighted to be able to welcome back those who joined us for the first time for our 2022 Pantomime, *The Mermaid's Tale*, Diane Stahlmann, Lois Clark, Shannon Clark and Graham Sheath. They all took a leap up into even chunkier parts this time and, I am delighted to say, were superb.

And then there was the icing on the cake. Out of the blue appeared, for the first time, and we certainly hope not the last, Kath Shore, Leah Dent, Tyler Pannone and Rina Sachdeva. Tyler, as our Dame, had the audiences spellbound as they wondered how outrageous he would become. They were not disappointed. Kath and Leah were perfect as our Principal Boy and Principal Girl, and Rina was a very welcome member of our lively Chorus of Villagers and Minions. And I must give special credit to our scary Giant, essential to our show, voiced by Sadie van Dijk.

Throughout the rehearsals, each actor developed his or her own character brilliantly to make it their own. I wanted members of the cast to enjoy themselves, and I got the impression over three months of fun and laughter that they were happy to be part of a magical experience – performing in Pantomime.

As for our audiences, you all played your part, noisily booing, cheering, laughing, etc, as appropriate. In recent years, on the first Saturday, we have put on a morning matinee especially for the local Rainbow and Brownie Units (girls aged 5 to 10). 100 girls plus their Leaders came along. They were all absolutely brilliant all the way through. I am sure, for many of them, this would have been their very first experience of Pantomime. It can only have whetted their appetite for more.

St Hilda's Entertainers aim to provide fantastic entertainment for all our audiences. We hope you can agree that our performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* achieved that objective.

Mike Davenport

Christmas Decorations

Do you, like me feel that Christmas is coming earlier every year and finishing abruptly after Boxing Day?

I noticed that the Christmas decorations in Ashford High Street were up in the middle of November. The reason, I think was that they were taking down the poppies for Remembrance and whilst the ladders were in place, they put the decorations up. Fortunately, we had to wait until the first week of December for the lighting of the Christmas tree. One house nearby, but fortunately around a corner, has the decorations up before Halloween but that is still rare. Country Living magazine states that, according to tradition, Christmas decorations should go up on the first day of Advent, which is the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

Once the decorations are in place, you can enjoy the Christmas and New Year celebrations. Then you are faced with the question of when should the decorations come down? I have always thought the date to take them down is 6th January, the Feast of the Epiphany. The date when traditionally the Three Wise Men visit the stable. I have heard recently that decorations should come down on Twelfth night, which is January 5th. All depends on when you start counting your 12 days of Christmas – some believe it comes twelve days after Christmas Day - so on 5th January. Others say the counting should begin on Boxing Day, which puts Twelfth Night on 6th January. Either way it means that the decorations come down and the stable is put away just before the Wise Men arrive. This is why many churches now keep the stable in place until 2nd February, the feast of Candlemas.

The Feast of Candlemas commemorates the ritual purification of Mary, 40 days after the birth of her son, Jesus. This day also marks the presentation of the baby Jesus to God in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus was met by Anna and Simeon. Simeon held the baby Jesus and called him a Light to the World.

Ritual purification stems back to a Jewish tradition that women were considered unclean after the birth of a child. For 40 days for a boy, and 60 days for a girl, women were not allowed to worship in the temple. At the end of this time, women were brought to the Temple or Synagogue to be purified. After the ceremony, women were allowed to take part in religious services again.

The festival is called Candlemas because this was the day that all the Church's candles for the year were blessed. In some denominations, candles are blessed and processed to the church with the choir singing the Nunc Dimittis – the words said by Simeon when he took Jesus into his arms.

Candlemas is one of the oldest feasts of the church and there are records to show it was celebrated in Jerusalem as early as 380 CE. In 542 CE the Emperor Justinian ordered its observance at Constantinople as a thanksgiving for the end of a plague. It then gradually spread and began to be widely kept in the West and is now part of the Church's calendar of feast days.

Liz Brian

What season is it?

Over Christmas I was surprised by how many plants were in flower in my garden, so on New Year's Day I went for a walk to see what else I could find - and I was amazed. I just went from home to church, looked round the church garden, and came back by a different route, covering less than a mile and a half. I found more than 50 species in flower - trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and weeds; in gardens, in pots, in lawns and at the base of walls on the street. I could not identify two or three of them. Of the others, the ones in the following list marked with a cross were in the church garden.

Half of them were left over from summer and autumn: alyssum ✂, american fleabane, anchusa ✂, campanula, a different campanula ✂, centranthus (red valerian - the white variety!), choisya ternata ✂, chrysanthemum, cotoneaster ✂ (a couple of flowers among the berries), feverfew ✂, gaillardia, hebe ✂, japanese anemone ✂, jasmine, osteospermum, ox-eye daisy ✂, pot marigold, rose (several varieties), salvia 'hot lips', sedum spectabile ✂, tansy, yellow fumitory; and the weeds shaggy soldier, white deadnettle ✂, yarrow ✂.

There were a few one would expect to find flowering in winter: cyclamen, daphne, ivy, mahonia, primula, viburnum tinus ✂, winter jasmine, winter pansy, winter-flowering clematis, witch hazel.

Some species seemed to think spring had already come: anemone de caen, azalea, camellia, cherry, dwarf comfrey, hellebore, japanese quince, kerria japonica, pasque flower, periwinkle ✂, primrose (not the winter-flowering ones) ✂, rosemary.

And finally, there were the weeds which now seem to flower all year round: daisy ✂, dandelion, field mustard, groundsel, hairy bitter cress, herb robert, red dead nettle, shepherd's purse, sow thistle ✂.

I think this is clear evidence of climate change, and how it is happening too rapidly for the plants to adapt. It's good news for any pollinating insects which are about unseasonably, but bad news for birds or insects which rely on a plant being in flower at a particular time. One of the lilac bushes by the Stanwell Road railway bridge was in flower in October - will it have the strength to flower this spring?

What unexpected flowering have you seen?

Rosemary Greenwood

Update on Church Hall Roof Replacement

I met with Bob Wilson (Diocese Architect) and a team from Maguire Bros our contractor on 28th November.

To take off the existing roof and install a new roof will take 7 working days – we therefore need to put the hall out of action for up to TWO WEEKS. This also allows for a few days delay due to wet weather. We will have scaffolding up for approximately SIX WEEKS.

A compound will be set up at the top end of the car park protected by Heras Fencing and the scaffolding will arrive on 25th March and from that date the side passage and the top end of the car park will be out of action for 6 weeks. (3 weeks is covered by Easter Holidays). The contractors will use the toilets at the front of the hall during the holidays and the rear of the hall at other times.

Work will commence on the roof on Tuesday 2nd April. The first job is to remove the existing asbestos roof sheets and replace them with the new roof. This is specialised work and we have done the relevant preparation and have a specialist contractor to deal with the asbestos. The hall will be out of bounds while the contractors are exchanging the roof sheets which will hopefully be no more than two weeks from 2nd April and within the school holidays.

The scaffolding will surround 3 sides of the hall, meaning the main door will also be out of use for up to 6 weeks and we will need to make alternative arrangements for hirers to use the side door. Chris Davenport is dealing with this.

Some or all of the car park will be out of action for some or all of the 6 weeks – during the week. The ONLY exception being for funerals. This is due to plant and equipment being used and to ensure everyone's safety.

The remaining time is required to seal the roof, flashings etc and to install the solar panels.

We will need to create new signage for the halls and a new fire escape plan for the duration of the work – this action will be dealt with over the next few weeks.

Bob was happy with the plans the contractor laid out. He also approved of the suggestion that while onsite, we would save a considerable amount of money by having Maguire fix the issue on the lady chapel roof. More to follow on this, but please pray that after Easter we will have two watertight buildings!

Paula Gething, 9th January 2024

My Experience with Christianity

I wanted to share a bit about my experience with Christianity since getting introduced to it by my mom.

It's been a wild ride, and I'm excited to let you in on it! At Saint Hilda's Church right now, it's been like a safe haven for me, giving me the room I need to figure out this whole spiritual journey with Christianity. Something that's really caught my attention is how names differ between languages in Christianity. I come from a Persian background and seeing names like یهوذا اسخريوطی (Judas Iscariot) in Persian has been eye-opening. There's a fascinating link with Persian, Arabic, and the language of the Holy Land that I'm eager to explore further. It's like delving into my roots while unravelling something entirely new.

I'm excited to keep delving into these language differences and understand more about the Persian perspective on these names.

Also, big shoutout to the awesome friends I've made here! They've been a massive part of making this journey feel incredible. As I continue this journey, I'm looking forward to diving deeper and gaining a better understanding of this faith and its cultural aspects.

Take care, Nima ;)

Nima Fazli

Update on Vacancy

As you are all aware we have been looking for a new incumbent since Father Joseph left us to go to Acton last May. We had to wait until the official start date for filling the vacancy, which was the middle of June 2023. The PCC had several meetings to ensure that the Parish Profile had been updated and met the approval of both Bishop Emma (Area Bishop of Kensington) and The Rev. Jonathan Rust (Area Director of Mission). This was done over the summer and the post was advertised in the Church Times (both print and on-line) in October 2023. Unfortunately, there was little response to this advert and it was agreed that it would be better to wait until the New Year before advertising again. The new advert will be going out later in January with a view to interview in February. Elizabeth Bate and Chris Maddock are our Parish representatives and will be members of the interviewing panel, alongside Bishop Emma, Jonathan Rust and possibly the Archdeacon. Hopefully, they will be able to update us in March regarding progress and what will happen next.

The Vicarage

Some time ago Father Joseph asked the diocese for more living and storage space. The diocese have recently completed some work fulfilling this request. The original garage has now been converted into a study, with the entrance off the kitchen. The new study incorporates a utility cupboard with washing machine and tumble dryer and a large window overlooking the street.

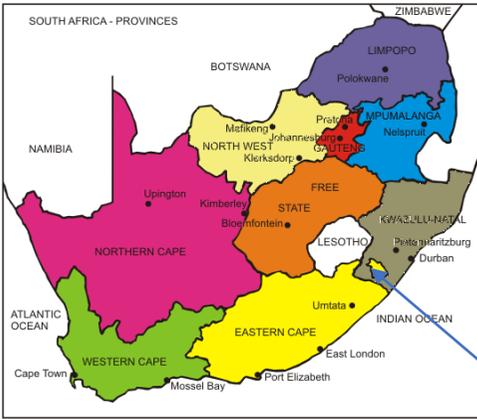
We are also waiting for a shed to be installed in the back garden.

Advance warning: we will need to freshen up the vicarage paintwork before any new vicar arrives!

Liz Brian

My Rural Journey

Where do I begin with a glimpse of my years spent in a rural area of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa? How many of the readers will have ever heard of this village? To understand what life was like there in the late 70's, I feel I must begin with the geography and history of the area.



Bulwer



Bulwer Mountain is 2083 metres (6834 feet) above sea level. It snowed on the mountain every month last year.

The quaint town of Bulwer, in KwaZulu-Natal province, about 90 km southwest of Pietermaritzburg, is nestled amidst the lush, rolling hills and indigenous forests of the uKhahlamba region, right at the foot of 'The Frowning One', or in Zulu, 'Amahwaqa Mountain'. Quiet country lanes and tree-filled plots shelter many original and lovingly restored houses, often dating back to the 1800s. The oldest house is called 'Back of Beyond' and is still a family home.

The charming Yellowwood Church in Bulwer, built in 1885, is constructed entirely of hand-sawn local Yellowwood.

Early Europeans – mostly farmers and foresters – settled in the region during the early 1860s, naming the town for Sir Henry Bulwer, the Lieutenant Governor of Natal (1875-1880).

Bulwer grew to become the magisterial centre for the Polela District and is for the most part surrounded by traditional Zulu land.

If you want to read more on this introduction, these sites are worth a peek!

[Yellowwood Church , Bulwer, KwaZulu-Natal, Natal Midlands | South Africa \(showme.co.za\)](#)

[Bulwer - KZN: A Photographic Historical Record \(kznpr.co.za\)](#)

After qualifying as a secondary school teacher, I taught for 3 years in what was then the Transvaal. The area is now called Gauteng. As far as I was concerned, my teaching days were over and I needed a new career. I moved from Pretoria to Pietermaritzburg to live with my mother. After 3 months of dithering, I telephoned a school advertising for a teacher of Biology, to start ASAP. I had no idea where Bulwer was and had no idea where I would be living. The Headmaster assured me that it would all be sorted when I arrived. Little did I know that when I left the urban environment where I had grown up, my life would change forever. To be continued

Wendy

To Save The Newsletter

I wanted to write a poem
To keep the newsletter alive
I sat down to think “ah um”!
We all hope it will survive

I sat with my pen in my hand
And thought of all we’d done
Thoughts trickled around like sand
But I couldn’t grab just one

Then I remembered my gratitudes
And my thoughts began to gel
Real gratitudes not mere platitudes
Into place they slowly fell

Our family arrived each safely
The plane was right on time
They all flew in from Italy
With hugs and smiles we headed home

We’ve been blessed in so many a way
Too many to put in rhyme
We’re thankful as and when we pray
Every day and all the time

Too soon they had to go
Resume their lives across the sea
Cases packed with expert flow
Thank fully leaving , our unity

News from the Junior Church

We have just completed our first Messy Church of 2024. Twenty children and their parents attended to hear part two of the Christmas story – The Epiphany- the coming of the Kings. However, we could have called it SHIP Sunday because the themes of our activities all included the word ship. We made fish pins from beads and pipe cleaners because it was the secret sign of the early Christians and represented DISCIPLESHIP. This theme continued in another activity where peppers, cucumber, tomatoes, raisins, and hummus were turned into sailing boats representing the occupation of some of the disciples- fishermen. Jesus said he would make them “fishers of men”. Our boats also reminded us of God’s beautiful creation, our Earth and all its bountiful gifts. We learnt the word STEWARDSHIP and that it is our responsibility to care for our wonderful world. We also learnt the word FELLOWSHIP when we made our cross with the names of our family at St Hilda’s.

Our younger members, apart from putting beads in places no bead should be, eating vital parts of your boat because you were peckish; coloured in the Kings to add to our nativity scene and made crowns which no self -respecting King (Or Queen) should be without.

Our parents were wonderful, helping, guiding, and supervising not only their own children but anyone who seemed a little lost.

Christine Taylor

Church Giving

There are several ways individuals can give support to St Hilda’s Church:

Giving our time to attend services, socials, bible studies and other events held in the church. Please ask The parish office – office@sthilda.org or a person handing out service sheets at the back of church on a Sunday.

Giving our talents/skills to help maintain the events that take place

and keep the church running: you may have seen in the weekly notice sheet requests for help with the church cleaning, altar servers and serving refreshments. We are also looking for another Church Warden and Church Treasurer. Are these roles that you could take on to help the congregation at St Hilda's to continue? Again, ask on a Sunday morning or e-mail the parish office. Giving financially is also something that needs to be considered annually, especially at a time when the costs to keep St Hilda's open and running effectively are increasing. Have you considered how much you contribute to St Hilda's and ways that you can do this most effectively for yourself and for those who are managing our finances now? There are ways that you are probably familiar with:- The weekly collection – you put in your contribution during the service.

The envelope scheme – you put your contribution in an envelope and put that on the collection plate during the Sunday service. Payment by Standing Order – you set this up with your bank or building society and a fixed amount is collected once a month. All of the schemes above require extra administration with counting the money, banking it and arranging for Gift Aid to be reclaimed.

Parish Giving Scheme

You may not be so familiar with the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). This is a simple and secure way for churches to receive regular donations. It is an established service for managing Direct Debit donations, designed to support churches to fund their mission and ministry. The service is freely available to all parishes and their churches and is available at St Hilda's Church. It involves setting up a direct debit with the Parish Giving Scheme and nominating St Hilda's Church as your chosen church. This can be made on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. There is an option for you (the giver) to commit in principle to increase your gift annually in line with inflation. This is entirely at your discretion on an opt-in basis. As a charity whose origins are within the Church, PGS is dedicated to serving givers and churches in a shared ministry of giving. Every pound donated through PGS can be put to Christian service at St Hilda's Church, free from time-consuming admin.

The benefits of this are:-

- You retain control of how much you give and how often
- St Hilda's receives regular financial support
- You have the option to increase your gift annually to protect against inflation
- You can remain anonymous if you prefer
- There is reduced administration and paperwork for the Church Treasurer (very important whilst we only have a temporary Treasurer)
- Time saving for both you and those who have to count the money from the plate and envelope collections every week.
- St Hilda's is able to reclaim Gift Aid more easily.

Giving regularly to church is not just about keeping the Sunday service going or looking after a building, it is an essential part of our Christian calling to mission. Giving to church allows us all to support the ongoing Christian ministry within our communities.

You will be hearing more about this in February but in the meantime please think, pray and ask members of the congregation about ways you can give your time, talents and money to continue the work being done here at St Hilda's Church

Church contact details

If you would like help or to speak to one of the ministry team, please contact the parish office:

Telephone 01784 253525

Email office@sthilda.org

Social and Fundraising Diary Dates

Event	Date	Location
Burn's Night	Saturday 27 th January	Church hall
Parish breakfast	Saturday 10 th February	Church, 9.30 am
Jumble sale	Saturday 17 th February	Church
Concert – Red Hot Strings	Saturday 27 th April	Church
Jumble sale	Saturday 11 th May	Church
St Hilda's Entertainers	Friday 14 th June	
	Saturday 15 th June	
St Hilda's Got Talent	Saturday 29 th June	Church hall, 7 pm
Summer Fair	Saturday 13 th July	Church
Jumble sale	Saturday 21 st September	Church
Quiz night	Saturday 28 th September	Church hall, 7 pm
Harvest Supper	Saturday 5 th October	Church hall
Harvest Festival	Sunday 6 th October	Church, 10 am
Christingle	Sunday 8 th November	Church, 4 pm
St Hilda's Day	Sunday 17 th November	Church, 10am
Bring & share lunch	Sunday 17 th November	After 10am service
Frost Fair	Saturday 23 rd November	Church
Pantomime	Friday 6 th December	Church hall
	Saturday 7 th December	Church hall
	Friday 13 th December	Church hall
	Saturday 14 th December	Church hall