

December 2011

# Sydenham Life

In and around the parish of St Bartholomew

[www.stbartssydenham.org.uk](http://www.stbartssydenham.org.uk)



## The Spirit of Christmas



Back in October, I happened to be walking through the Piazza in Covent Garden when I saw a sight that I can only describe as obscene. It was before 9 AM, but the Piazza was packed full of people. The screaming and squealing

was deafening, and I wondered what Hollywood film star or international pop star would be out and about at that time in the morning promoting their latest production. The crowds and the noise were at their worst by the *Apple* store, and then the penny dropped. These people were queuing to buy a new 'phone! The extreme expressions of adoration and excitement weren't even in anticipation of seeing a glimpse of a person, but in anticipation of buying a gadget.

Much of this year's news has centred on the desperate financial state across the rest of Europe. However, when we consider the unemployment figures released last month (at their highest rate for 15 years, with over a million young people out of work), it's no surprise that this desperate situation is also being felt at home, here in the U.K. We've seen signs of redundancy in our own Parish with Rookstone Nursing Home being closed-down, and more of the independent shops in the area shutting. It seems to me that there are very few people who aren't feeling the pinch financially at the moment,

whether this is caused by unemployment or simply the recession biting.

Christmas is always a difficult time if finances are tight, especially when children want the latest games consoles, football kits or trainers. In addition, the sofa companies are offering their usual tempting interest-free credit, guaranteeing a delivery by Christmas; yet how a new sofa helps to improve one's Christmas is still a mystery to me. I do realise how hard it is for youngsters who feel peer pressure to own the latest toy, but eventually we are all going to have to come to terms with the fact that material items are never going to truly satisfy us. There may be an adrenaline rush at the time of purchase, but it's not going to be a sustaining pleasure. The release of the fourth *Apple i-phone* in as many years surely proves that.

We're approaching Christmas, when Christians again commemorate the birth of Jesus, the gift of God, made man. It's right and proper that we rejoice at this time, and celebrate with feasting and exchanging presents, but this shouldn't be so excessive that we're still paying the bills well into the New Year. The reality is that God is the only thing that's really going to satisfy our lives. Once we've grasped that fact, we can confidently step-off the treadmill and stop falling for the marketing ploys that tempt us to overspend. It's going to take courage initially to make those changes, but in doing so we'll realise that the pleasure of Christmas actually comes from being with those we love. I pray that you will all have a peaceful Christmastide, and a happy and healthy 2012.

*Rev'd Heidi Huntley*

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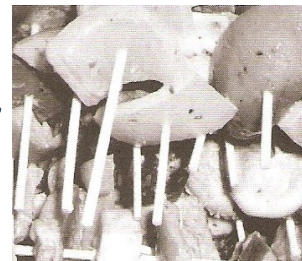
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# Blitzkrieg

Dennis Harrington

In the autumn of 1942 after two years of evacuation in Dorset my brother Ray & I returned to London. We came home to the nightly bombing raids of the blitz.

Although we went to bed it was not long before the wailing of the air raid siren woke us. Then it was overcoats over pyjamas and a quick dash to the Anderson shelter at the end of the garden. Our scramble into the shelter was often hastened by the throbbing drone of aircraft and the rapid bang-bang of anti-aircraft guns.

Dad - last in - closed the door which he had made from stout timber as the shelter did not have one. Then a time of listening for the whistle and explosion of falling bombs and wondering how near they had fallen. After an hour or so the din faded away followed by a period of silence then the all-clear sounded as we climbed out of the shelter and returned to the house. Our cat Tiger had sat on the Anderson during the raid. He followed us into the house. Mum made a pot of tea then we all went back to bed.

As the nightly raids intensified Mum and Dad decide it would be better to sleep in the shelter. We boys squeezed into one camp bed; our parents took it in turns to sleep in the other. A paraffin lamp gave us a low light and took the edge of the cold. Mum provided a flask of tea and a tin of biscuits as comfort when woken by the sirens. It was uncomfortable but safe - we hoped.

As the blitz continued into 1943 it was not confined to night raids. On January 20th I was on my way home from school at lunchtime with Ray when I heard the sound of aircraft behind me. We turned to see three planes approaching just above rooftop height. We backed into high hedge as the planes roared overhead. We hurried home as the air-raid warning sounded. After lunch mother would not let us return to school in spite of the all-clear. On the radio news that evening we heard that a school had been bombed killing several children.

The following morning a newspaper carried this report:

'23 schoolgirls were killed in raid yesterday as they waited to watch a play. 4 teachers also perished. The German planes were attacking SE England in daylight and experts believe they were testing British defences. The RAF are claiming 14 enemy planes destroyed.'

Most of the dead children were aged between 5 and 7. They had stayed behind to watch the play when German bombers swooped low scoring a direct hit. Frantic parents joined Civil Defense workers in a rescue operation through the night.

One of the first Civil Defense workers to reach the scene said, 'There were no balloons up and the air-raid warning had not gone. There was a terrific explosion and the school just fell to pieces. It seems like never ending job. Passing the dead and injured children out of the wreckage.'

The school was Sandhurst Road School in Catford. The final death toll was 38 children and 6 teachers.

Another massacre of the innocents.

*This is an edited extract of a reading given at the St Bartholomew's Blitz Night.*

## Looking forward to the New Year...

### Epiphany

Traditionally, Christmas was kept until 12<sup>th</sup> Night, the Feast of the Epiphany, when the church celebrates the arrival of the Magi to worship the infant Jesus (January 6<sup>th</sup>). This is in fact the day celebrated as Christmas in the Orthodox Church. To give it greater prominence, we keep it on the nearest Sunday, which is January 8<sup>th</sup>. At the parish Eucharist that day there will be the traditional Epiphany procession, bearing the symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

### Church Unity

Although there can be only one Body of Christ, and one Head of the Body, Jesus himself, unfortunately his followers have repeatedly wanted to do things their own way and separated off into different churches. Sadly this still happens even today, as people cannot find a church that is to their taste, so they set up new ones. Once a year, the Churches attempt to get together to admit their guilt in this sad situation and to pray for unity. I'm sorry if this sounds rather cynical, but honestly at the moment, there are no signs that anyone is going to make the sacrifices required for real unity to take place. One thing is certain; if unity is to happen, it will only be after much prayer. To that end, everyone is invited to the Unity Week Service sponsored by Churches Together in Sydenham and Forest Hill, on Sunday January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3.30pm in St Saviour's church, Brockley Rise.

### Candlemas Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February

Luke's Gospel tells us how, 40 days after his birth, Jesus was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem in fulfilment of Jewish Law for the first-born son. He was recognised then as "the light of the Gentiles" and so we re-enact that event with a candle procession. Candlemas is a turning-point from looking back towards Christmas to looking forward to Lent and Easter. The procession is at the end of the All-Age Parish Eucharist at 10 am.

### Confirmation November 2011

Confirmation is a very special occasion in a person's life; it's when they publicly profess the faith they were baptized into. It's so special that in the Anglican Church it cannot be presided over by a priest, but only by a bishop. So it was that Bishop David (an assistant bishop in the diocese, having retired as Bishop of Thetford) confirmed 27 people from four local parishes at a deanery service in St Augustine's, One Tree Hill, on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

No stranger to South London, having previously been Archdeacon of Lewisham, Bishop David brought calm to any anxious nerves by his gentle but assured manner. The climax of a confirmation is itself a moment of calm, when the bishop lays his hands on the head of each candidate in turn and prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We were fortunate to have nine candidates this year, and they had proved a stimulating group to work with, being a mixture of ages and experience. They were all female, though; where are you, men?

Because confirmation is such an important event in someone's life, we have a long period of preparation, and therefore only have one course per year. The next one will be starting in June 2012.

The Church has had some bad publicity recently and there are many in public life who are quick to rubbish the Christian Faith. But the 27 newly-confirmed in St Augustine's that evening and their families and supporters could see powerfully that the Church has not just a past, but a present and a future, and it is in their hands.

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# *Music at St. Barts*

*Dennis Harrington*

In the early days of our church, singing was led by children of the National Schools taught by organist W. J. Westbrook. In July 1871 Mr Westbrook began to train a full choir of men and boys. In April 1890 Mr Westbrook resigned after thirty years as organist and choirmaster.

George Grove, organiser of concerts at the Crystal Palace, recommended organist Mr Shinn to St. Barts. Frederick Shinn soon received the doctorate of Music for his scholarship. And George Grove was knighted for his services to music.



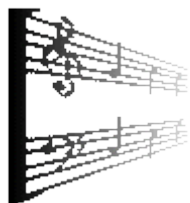
In September 1898 the organ, restored and cleaned, was played by Sir Walter Parratt, organist of St. Georges Chapel, Windsor and by Charles Villiers Stanford. Sir George Grove died in May 1900. Dr. Shinn developed the choir in quality and numbers, averaging twenty five singers.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, choir boys were evacuated and men conscripted. Twenty one ladies joined the choir and remained at the end of the war in 1945. Dr. Shinn died in November 1950, having served St. Barts for fifty seven years.

In 1981 an augmented choir gave a performance of Handel's 'Messiah'. The following year they sang Faure's 'Requiem' and later Stainer's 'Crucifixion'. Early in the nineties they sang Rutter's 'Requiem' and in July 2002 performed Vivaldi's 'Gloria' with soloists from the choir.

A new chapter in St. Barts music began in 1998 when violinist Nina Whitehurst and conductor Robert Trory heard an appeal in Westminster Cathedral for aid to the famine victims in the Sudan. They formed an orchestra led by Hugh Bean. They gave a concert in St. Barts called 'Symphony for Sudan' which raised £3,165.

This success led to the formation of 'Sydenham Music'. The Orchestra of St. Bartholomews gave a series of concerts before the annual Sydenham International Music Festival. The re-named St. Bartholomews Festival Orchestra brought distinguished soloists: Singers Susan Clarke, Eric Partridge, Susan Bullock and Sir Willard White. Violinists Jonathan Carney, Sergey Dogadin and cellist Maja Bogdnovitch, played music by Brahms, Tchaikowski, Beethoven and Sibelius. Pianists included Leslie Howard, Valerie Tryon and young musician of 2010 Lara Melda. Then memorable concerts by the Endellion Quartet and Baroque Music by Florilegium.



In 2010 a concert for Haiti's earthquake victims raised £5,500 with fine performances of Mozart's Horn Concerto No 4 and Tchaikowski's Symphony No 6.

Children's concerts have been most rewarding with a packed church of young children and parents enjoying 'The Carnival of the Animals' and 'Tubby the Tuba'.

The Festival Orchestra composed of players from leading London orchestras have performed consistently uplifting music conducted by Robert Trory. They have sent appreciative audiences home with glorious music re-laying in their heads. All supported by 'The Friends of Sydenham Music.'

As Father Michael Kingston said in his sermon at Hugh Bean's funeral in 2004: "A church is a wonderful venue for concerts. And not merely to do with acoustics, or the fact there are more interesting things to look at than in a concert hall. It's to do with the marriage of music and faith, which is a marriage made in heaven."

# Christmas at St Bartholomew's

*Because we are all different, we may be seeking different things in worship.*

*We try over Christmas to cater for many different people and age groups,  
all celebrating the same message of God-with-Us*

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A good Christmas preparation is the "**Star Service**" on Sunday December 11th at 10am. As we think about the light which drew the shepherds and the Magi, we pray that the light of Jesus will draw us too. We make stars, and fill them with money for the *SightSavers* Appeal, bringing light to people who cannot see in developing countries.

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If you like Christmas carols, then you should find something in the **Carol Service** on Sunday 18th December at 6.00 pm to please you. Here there are carols from a variety of sources, together with several popular ones to sing yourself. In between the music, we set the birth-story of Jesus side by side with that of John the Baptist, the great Forerunner. *Collection in aid of the Spafford Children's Centre in Jerusalem\**

*[Not suitable for very young children]*

If you are a young family, then we have something for you, too. On Christmas Eve in the late afternoon is an informal service with children in mind. It is based on the Moravian idea of **Christingle** - a decorated orange with a lighted candle, symbolising Christ, the Light of the world. 4pm Christmas Eve. (Saturday 24th)

*Collection in aid of the Spafford Children's Centre.\**

We hope that you will also find 10am Eucharist of **Christmas Morning** child-friendly, too, so do come along and celebrate Christmas joy in the family of the church (Sunday 25th)

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But if you can stay up late, and you would like to share in the traditional beauty and excitement of Christmas, then you won't want to miss the **Midnight Mass**. *This starts at 11.30 pm on Christmas Eve*, (Saturday evening) and is the highlight of Christmas for many.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth!

**Vicar: The Rev Michael Kingston** 020 8778 5290 [michaelkingston@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelkingston@btinternet.com) *Vicar's day off: Monday*

**Curate: The Rev Heidi Huntley** 020 8659 9598 [hahlive@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hahlive@yahoo.co.uk) *Curate's day off: Friday*

*The church is usually open every Saturday morning between 10 am and 12 noon for anyone to drop in. A member of staff is available to discuss weddings, baptisms etc.*

*email: [sydenhamlife@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sydenhamlife@hotmail.co.uk)*

## Services at St Bartholomew's Church

**Sundays** 8 am Eucharist (said) 10 am Parish Eucharist (Sung) *All-Age once a month*

6pm (some Sundays) Evening Service or Sunday@Six (Children's Eucharist) *check for details*

**Weekdays** Morning Prayer, Monday-Friday 9.10 am, Saturday 9.30 am

Evening Prayer, Monday – Saturday 5.30 pm

Eucharist, Wednesday 9.30 am Thursday 12.45 pm

**\*The Spafford Children's Centre** nestles against the city wall in old Jerusalem. It is a charitable institution that draws much of its support from the Church in its work with disadvantaged children and families who live in the West Bank. Many of their clients have difficulty in getting in to the centre, thanks to the Israeli security wall, but can access the facilities at outreach centres in places like Bethany, the Palestinian side of the wall. The USA government has threatened to withhold \$200 million in aid from the Palestinian Authority to punish them for seeking statehood from the UN. This could damage a programme to improve Palestinian health services and affect the Spafford Centre's work.

A group of us from St Bart's on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2007, visited the centre and were greatly impressed with its work in trying circumstances. So we commend this to you as our Christmas charity this year. The collections at the Carol Service and Christingle will be in aid of it.

The director of the centre, Dr Jantien Dajani-Wiellaard, has just retired after 35 years as a paediatric doctor, and was awarded a Dutch knighthood.

### From the Parish Registers November 2011

#### Baptisms

September 19<sup>th</sup> Charmaine Adegbite and Oscar Thomson

*We welcome them into the fellowship of faith*

#### Confirmation

November 8<sup>th</sup> at St Augustine's

Maame Ansah, Dragina Bannersman, Clarhys Corlis, Ann Dalton, Saffie-Jane Fofana, Alexcia Gerald, Melvaley Kocks, Sandra Mason, Natalie Stubbs Ananos.

*Defend, O Lord, your servants with your heavenly grace.*

#### Funerals

November 14<sup>th</sup>; Tony Morris (62)

November 28<sup>th</sup>: Lillian Green (83)

*Rest eternal grant them, O Lord*

### Floodlighting

**Unfortunately we weren't able to get December's floodlighting in this month's edition. They will appear as soon as possible.**

*Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special event you wish to light up? Maybe there is someone you want to remember. You can sponsor the floodlighting of St Bartholomew's church for one whole week for £10. Claire Adams: 020 8676 0608*

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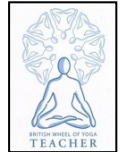
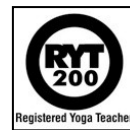


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