

St Augustine's Today Winter 2025/6



The Endcliffe Parish Church
of St Augustine, Brocco Bank

St Augustine's

Everyone is welcome at our morning service. It is an opportunity for calm reflection within a dignified setting with music led by our wonderful choir. St Augustine's stands in the liberal catholic tradition of the Church of England. Together we seek to express the Christian faith in liberal and inclusive terms. We are a member of the Central Mission Partnership. We are also a member of the Inclusive Church Movement.

Every Sunday

- The service is at 10:30am
- Children are welcome
- Refreshments are served afterwards in the Hall
- The service uses material from Common Worship
- The Bible readings follow the Common Lectionary
- The text of the readings is provided on a printed sheet

The Parish Eucharist follows the Common Worship order with hymns, sung sections and a sermon. Activities are provided for children led by our children's worker. Once a month there is a simplified service to give children a chance to participate more fully in the service. There are activities for everyone, children and adults, in the first part of the service. See the calendar for the dates of these services.

For details see www.achurchnearyou.com

Find us on Brocco Bank, 100m from Hunter's Bar roundabout. The church postcode is S11 8RQ.

Christ Church Endcliffe holds its services at St Augustine's. The services are informal, focused on Bible teaching.

For details see www.endcliffechurch.co.uk

Cover Photo by
Michelle Doran



Calendar

December 2025 to February 2026

We celebrate the Parish Eucharist every Sunday at 10.30. Activities are provided for children in the Hall led by our children's worker and materials for children of all ages is available at the back of church. Keep up-to-date with the weekly notices emailed to your inbox.

December

7th	Advent 2	Ela Nutu Hall
14th	Advent 3	Bishop Richard
21st	Advent 4	Mike West
24th	Midnight Mass	Ela Nutu Hall
28th	Christmas 1	Ela Nutu Hall
Said service of Holy Communion		

January

4th	Epiphany 1	Ela Nutu Hall
11th	Epiphany 2	Bishop Richard
18th	Epiphany 3	Ela Nutu Hall
25th	Epiphany 4	Ela Nutu Hall

February

1st	Epiphany 5	Mike West
8th	Epiphany 6	Bishop Richard
15th	Sunday before Lent	Ela Nutu Hall
18th	Ash Wednesday Evening	service tba Mike West
22nd	Lent 1	Ela Nutu Hall
At 2 pm Mi Amigo service		

Christmas Arrangements

Carols by Candlelight Sunday 21st December at 7pm

A service of carols and readings mixing the traditional and not so traditional followed by mulled wine and mince pies

Family Nativity Wednesday 24th December at 3.30pm

A short service telling the Christmas story. Come dressed as a shepherd, sheep or other character and join the action. Well-behaved pets welcome.

Midnight Mass starts at 11.30pm Christmas Eve



Message from Ela

Snow

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop,
and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
(Psalm 51.6-7)

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice,
rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come
now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow.
(Isaiah 1:16-18a)

They say we might have snow this winter. And I, for one,
am rather hopeful... I love snow, you see. All my childhood
winters were defined by snow. I never knew one single winter
without heavy snow... Such is the cold season in Romania.

In my early childhood we didn't have central heating. Instead,
we had ceramic stoves in each room, which functioned as
both lovely features and store heaters – you may have come
across them on the continent, perhaps in
Austria, where they were also common. Here
is an example of one, to give you some idea.

And we didn't have double glazing, either. All
houses had double windows, with a gap in
the middle – akin to secondary glazing in this
country, but the walls were thick and so the
gap between the external and the internal



windows was quite generous, each adorned with a draught excluder lovingly hand-made by the Grandmother. I always remember my Grandmother coming into our bedroom (my older sister and I shared a room growing up), first thing in the morning, when we were still in bed, getting the windows wide open whilst she cleared the stove and then made a fresh fire for the day. We hid under the duvets, shivering, but always welcomed the crisp fresh air. This happened every day in winter. And I'll never forget it.

The first time my husband and I went together to Romania for Christmas, he was rather taken aback, not by the snow (he'd experienced snow many times before), but rather by the 'busyness' apparent even on Christmas day. I've included below a picture of the day (25th December 2008), which also shows, as a bonus, Dracula's castle in the background (!). So, yes, everyone was busy functioning despite the heavy snow conditions. My brother-in-law even cooked a barbeque on the patio the following day (and the wolves did howl at the smell of cooking meat).



And when our first child was born, she arrived in a snowstorm – the very first one I'd encountered in Sheffield – and it was wonderful. Here we are in the Botanical Gardens.



You've probably gathered by now that snow is rather magical for me; and that is another reason why the biblical verses above have always had a positive impact on me. 'Whiter than snow' is hard to imagine... well, unless it's not fresh snow; unless it's melting and mixed with dust and mud and all manner of debris. Hmmm. Okay, so there are quite a few metaphors to unpick here. Suffice it to say that I imagine the texts referencing fresh, clean snow. Clean and fresh; without impurities. This is what God can do for us: God can wipe our tainted past and give us a clean fresh start. We can become like snow; whiter than snow. Quite something!

It has to be said, however, that my response to snow has a lot to do with the fact that my home has always been warm;

my larder full; my wardrobe equipped for the cold and the wet; I don't need to commute large distances every day; and most of the time I've had family and friends around me.

For those who lack the security of a home, who don't know physical or emotional warmth, who don't have thick coats and waterproof boots, snow is probably something altogether different. It's cold... and wet... and corrosive.

So, as we enjoy our privileges, we are called to remember those in need. In need of practical help and of emotional support; indeed of love.

As we prepare to travel through Advent and celebrate afresh the arrival of Jesus Christ amongst us, we also remember that, whilst he arrived as a 'helpless babe' who immediately became a refugee, Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. A new world, in which long-established values are turned upside down. Where the meek inherit the earth and the poor the kingdom of God, and where death is not the end. He came to bring us light and life, to make us whiter than snow, and to fulfil God's promises and reframe all the Law and the Prophets as predicated on love.

Jesus urges us, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. " (Mark 12.29-31; Mark 22.37-40; Luke 10.27-28)

And so, we do. Amen.

*With love and blessings,
Ela*

Who's who at St Augustine's

Ela Nutu Hall
is our
Priest-in-
Charge

She can be
contacted on
07595 087 441



Mike West is
retired and our
Associate Priest
He can be
contacted on
266 2188



Viv Smith and Christopher Hall are
Churchwardens, the elected leaders
of the congregation, with certain legal
responsibilities for the building and finance.



They can all be contacted on
staugustines.endcliffe@gmail.com
to enquire about banns, weddings and other
services.



Organ Matters

Organ Rebuild – Progress!

Finally, things are beginning to happen! It's been a long wait, and we still have to wait until next year for the major work to start. But behind the scenes Jonathan Wallace, our organ builder, is beginning to source some of the larger components which will be refurbished and eventually fitted inside the organ. He has now got for us a set of keyboards, a blower and a trombone rank.

The trombone rank

Our organ is a particularly good instrument, built by Sheffield organ builder Albert Keates. and one of our guiding principles is that we should not remove or alter any of the pipework Keates provided. At the same time, we do plan to fit three additional ranks of pipes, which will widen the organ's tonal range. One of these is a 'trombone' rank.

In an orchestra, the trombones make a brassy sound which cuts through the texture and adds clarity to the bass line. In an organ, the trombone rank serves the same purpose, but it looks nothing like an orchestral trombone!

In an organ, it is a set of 30 large wooden pipes, ranging in length from about three feet, right up to a massive 16 feet long. They are played by the organ pedals.

In this picture, you can see one of the shorter ones in the organ builder's



workshop – this one is about 5 or 6 feet long. It consists of a wooden conical tube, which is the ‘resonator’, and at the bottom you can see the metal ‘boot’. The boot contains a brass reed, a bit like the reed in a mouth organ but much much bigger! The other picture shows the reed close up with the cover removed. This is about six inches long. The actual reed is edge-on in this picture so not easily seen, but you can clearly see the tuning wire which presses on the reed and which can be moved up or down to alter the vibrating length of the reed.



These are second-hand pipes, which have come from a redundant organ in Ballymoney, Northern Ireland. Our organ builder, Jonathan, chose these because they are very close in style and vintage to what Keates himself would have fitted. They have already been shipped to his workshop in Ilkeston where they have been cleaned up and painted. Jonathan has also made the ‘windchest’ – a large wooden box which the pipes stand on. Inside the windchest are a set of 30 electric valves to let the wind into the individual pipes. The next step is to send the whole lot to a specialist in Leeds for refurbishment of the actual reeds and final regulation of the tone.

If anyone has any questions about the organ rebuild, I would be happy to answer them.

Peter Verity

10 things you didn't know about Bishops

With the recent historic appointment of Sarah Mullaly as Archbishop of Canterbury, it seems like a good time to reflect on 10 of the most eccentric prelates the Christian Church has ever produced.

1. St Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne (634-687) really didn't want to be a Bishop, preferring instead to live in a cave on a tiny island in the North Sea. He refused twice until the King of Northumbria, who was a personal friend, came to ask him to take the position. Even then Cuthbert stuck it out less than two years before retiring to his cave.

2. Marco de Dominis, Archbishop of Split (1560-1624) spent most of his episcopacy unsuccessfully bribing pirates to not attack the ships he was using to illegally trade with the Ottomans.

3. Speaking of pirates, Lancelot Blackburn, Archbishop of York (1658-1743) started his clerical career as chaplain to a crew of pirates in the Caribbean.

4. Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry (1730-1803) loved Italian holidays, but hated Catholicism. This unfortunate coupling came to a head when, on a holiday to Rome, a sacramental procession passed his window as he was sitting down to dinner. He promptly opened the window and tipped a bowl of spaghetti over the procession.

5. Edward White Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury (1829-



1896) and inventor of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, was a paranormal enthusiast, ghost hunter and noted collector of ghost stories.

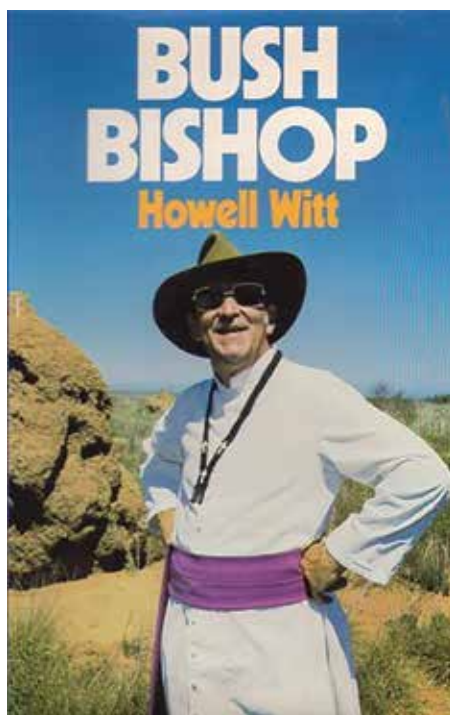
6. William Cecil, Bishop of Salisbury (1863-1936) used to forget what his bicycle looked like and would thus inadvertently steal the bicycles of others when out and about. His wife eventually solved the problem by painting his own bike canary yellow.

7. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury (1904-1988) liked to relax by playing a game where he would run around Lambeth Palace seeing how quickly he could touch all the walls.

8. Lancelot Fleming, Bishop of Norwich (1906-1990) was a polar explorer and naval enthusiast who once, upon realising he was late for a meeting with the Archbishop, commandeered a nearby naval helicopter and ordered it to fly to Canterbury.

9. In 1969, William Donald Borders, Bishop of Orlando (1913-2010), announced that, since the Apollo 11 lunar spacecraft had taken off within his diocese, he was now technically Bishop of the Moon.

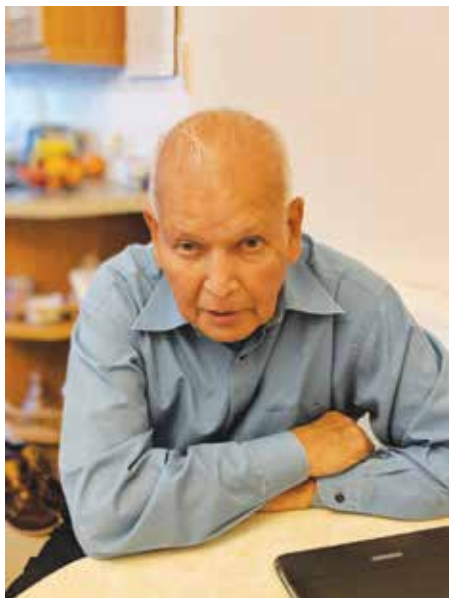
10. Alongside his ecclesiastical duties, Howell Witt, Bishop of North West Australia (1920-1998) moonlighted as a drag queen called the Dowager Duchess of Dingo Creek and enjoyed writing church-themed romantic novels.



Tom Pymer

Melvyn's War

As we shared the sad news of Melvyn's death in late September people reminisced about his long association with St Augustine's. He and his wife Joan had lived in the parish since their marriage in 1958. For a time he was a robed server at communion (as was John Eddershaw). Since Joan was admitted to a care home Melvyn visited her every day including Sundays. We knew that he, like his elder brother Bob, was born in Burma before the war. But how and when did they come to Britain? The story was told at his funeral and deserves retelling.



Mervyn's parents lived 80 miles north of Mandalay, where his father Norman was an official of the Burmese Railways. The Japanese began to bomb Burma in December 1941 and the evacuation of Rangoon started in February 1942. The Bridley family left their home in April hoping to reach the airport at Myriikynina. The family group consisted of his parents, Mervyn aged 8, his siblings aged 10 and 7. They travelled with their aunt Norma, her five children and their grandmother aged 65. The journey was hazardous. The withdrawal of the British army took priority on the trains and river boats, but Norman's skill as an engine driver may have protected this group of 12 British people.

The British army did take them by truck to Mandalay where they boarded a ferry on the River Irrawaddy Progress was

slow as the river level was low. They reached Kathka on May 4th where the ferry was scuttled with the loss of all their possessions. They hoped to take a train north, but the bombing of the city made that impossible. Norman drove a train full of refugees away from the station moments before it was bombed. Flights from Myriikyina were suspended and the Brindleys, now joined by Mervyn's Uncle Eddie and his family, were advised to stay where they were. But they chose not to, dressed as natives they made their way through the jungle on foot to the next village, only to find the Japanese army already there.

They were interned for three years in a local village with other Anglo- Burmese families. Norman continued to drive trains for the Japanese, which may have ameliorated some of the otherwise dreadful conditions under which they were kept. They were liberated by the British army in 1945.

The family left Burma for Britain in October 1947. Melvyn's mother Olive found the climate so cold and damp that in March 1948. they moved for a short time to India. They returned to Britain and settled in Sheffield in 1950. What a set of experiences Melvyn carried with him throughout the rest of his life, helping to shape his dedication to family life!



Mike West

S2 Food Bank continues to serve those in need

The S2 Food Poverty Network is based in St Swithun's church on the Manor estate and is now 11 years old and has made several major changes in its operations as it responds to the continuing high level of poverty in the area. In the first half of this year it served 275 households, adults and children; only 22% through the traditional food bank. The other 77% were users of the Community Shop, based across the road from the church. This gives users choice of subsidised fresh food including meat, fish and fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as the traditional tins and packets. In those six months Shop and Food Bank distributed 28 tons of food, 15 tons were purchased through cash donations, 6 tons from community gifts (including our small contributions) and 7 tons from supermarkets through the Fareshare scheme.

Above the Community Shop shoppers can access Debt and Benefit advice. The two debt advisers are supported by professionals in a city wide scheme. By negotiation with the holders of the debts (eg Credit card companies) so far this year 26 Debt Relief Orders totalling £218,000 were written off, one to the tune of £2,465. People relieved of such debt burdens often then manage to balance their budgets. There are four trained volunteers providing support to people negotiating the byzantine benefits system. One specialises in Personal Independence Payments and has recently won two cases at tribunal.

Demand has slightly reduced, matched by a 1.3 ton decrease in donations this year. S2 are researching why

this might be, as the national and local statistics show no such reduction. In a recent speech in the House of Lords the Bishop of Sheffield praised the work of Food Banks in South Yorkshire, and drew attention to the continuing needs of a large section of our society.

St Augustine's contribution via the box at the back of church are sadly small. If every household in church raided their store cupboard every week for a tin, packet or toiletry we could increase our monthly donations to about 50kg.

Mike West



Inside the S2 Community Shop.



Concert By Sheffield Chamber Choir

On October 11th, we were treated to an inspiring concert of sacred music by the Sheffield Chamber Choir, in aid of our Organ Restoration Fund. The programme began with Hubert Parry's wonderfully uplifting 'I Was Glad' and included some well-known pieces such as Mozart's 'Ave Verum Corpus' and Thomas Tallis's 'O Nata Lux'.

Other less well-known pieces nonetheless made our spirits soar with the melody and harmony so beautifully sung by the choir. They made use of the church's architectural acoustics by sometimes moving to the far front of the sanctuary, behind the altar, and sometimes splitting the choir into half, with one part in the sanctuary and one part at the back of the church. Each half of the concert also included an organ solo, first by the accompanying organist Adam Heron and then by the choir director Robert Webb.

Drinks and cake were served in the interval and the programme ended with the elegiac 'Bogoroditsye Dyevo' by Rachmaninov. The concert raised over £800 for the organ fund.

Joy Tobler

It is always an absolute delight to sing with such a talented group of musicians as Sheffield Chamber Choir and I readily look forward to every concert given and every service we lead. Filling St Augustine's with our blended choral sound to raise funds for our ailing Keates organ was heart-warming beyond measure.

One of my favourite pieces of the night was Herbert Howells's 'Magnificat Collegium Regale', a setting we've sung many times at Cathedral services and whose hauntingly beautiful melody was equally at home in my church home.

With such a warm response from the audience I really do hope we'll be able to do another concert at St Augustine's. Watch this space.

Michelle Doran



Memories of Winter

Freda Oxley

As a child I lived in the Meersbrook area. I went to Meersbrook Bank School and loved it. One year I was top girl in the class, (but only once). I hated PE and anything that involved running. I went home at lunchtime and then had to go back for more 'education'.

Meersbrook Park was our playground and where we went to let off steam. It was a very hilly part of the city so my brothers and I were delighted when our father made a sledge for us. We took it to the top of the hill in the park from where you could see all over the city. We took it in turns to sledge down. Many of our friends were sledging there as well. While we were waiting for our turn on the sledge we played at snowball fighting. We did not seem to mind the cold then. Now however I hate winter, hate the cold and most of all hate snow.

Heather Snowden

As children there was an air of excited anticipation about the coming of winter and all it entailed. It would mean snowing, sledging, skiing and, best of all, Christmas! As a child, I lived in Cockshutt Road, Beauchief and at the top of the road was a wood. Down 199 steps from the top of the road you came



upon a small farm, two ponds and Beauchief Abbey where I went to Sunday school. The ducks on the pond were always hungry, especially in winter.

One particular year it snowed very heavily – deep and crisp and even – and when the snow slid off the house roof it sounded like a heavy clap of thunder. I had a pet rabbit, (Rinty), whose hutch was at the top of the garden. Poor old Rinty was unable to go out into his 'sun' for a time because of the snow. I had to clear a path up to his hutch in order to feed him. It must have been very boring for him being confined in such a small space, but he survived.

I thought I would try to skate on one of the ponds. Sadly one of my wellington boots went right through the ice, filling my boot with freezing water and waterlogging my sock, so no luck with that. A couple of local friends and I, with our parent's permission, decided to go sledging on Beauchief Golf Course. There were no golfers because of the snow, so it was a perfect place to sledge, (no obstacles in the way!). We had a wonderful time going up and down the hill. Nearing a mealtime we went back up the 199 steps and at the top of the wood I just wanted one more little sledge. Unfortunately I ran into a tree and felt very shocked and dizzy. My friends took me home and that was the end of my 'winter sports' for a while. It was a quite dismal end to my winter sporting prowess, but enjoyable just the same. I don't think I will be applying for a place in the next Winter Olympics. I'm good at spectating though!

Pam West

My first winter memory is about school. We had to learn Carols as being a church school, we would have a Christmas service. We did not walk to the church for this as it was during the war and there was no air raid shelter at the church. The vicar came to the school to lead the service.



The vicar was a regular visitor to the school, so it was a very familiar occasion. Parents were invited but I do not remember anyone coming! We made Christmas cards to give to our parents and some decorations for our classroom although these were a bit sparse as we were not allowed to waste paper. Our decorations at home were familiar ones that came out every year. We had some old glass baubles to put on the tree (always a real one). My brothers helped me to make paper chains using strips of coloured paper.

My next memory is going into the nearby town, (Kingston-on-Thames) with my mother to buy Christmas food. We walked round the market looking for the best bargains and when our bags were full, we then went to a nearby butcher's where the turkey was on order. This was a complete bird still with feathers on! This all went home with us on the bus. The morning of Christmas Eve was spent plucking the turkey. All the feathers had to be removed. Some of them required

pliers to get them out properly. Then the inside was cleaned so that it was oven-ready. It was cooked overnight in a low oven. I am so thankful that I do not have to do all that these days, although I do shop in the market like my mum.

My next memory is of the sledge that my eldest brother and my dad made together. My father was a bit of a hoarder and so had various bits of wood in his garage which they used. My brothers then walked with me and the sledge across the common to Richmond Park to go sledging. This was a rare occasion as my older brothers, both keen footballers, usually ignored me. We walked through the park (about a mile) to an area at the top of a large hill where the snow was very deep and we spent a long afternoon with great pleasure sledging. There was a small gate at the bottom of the hill leading to the main road where we could catch a bus to take us part of the way home, damp, tired but happy. We also went on the pond on the common. My eldest brother, who skated regularly at the rink, had skates so he was able to show off his skills. The rest of us ventured onto the long icy slide which had been made across the pond. It was exhilarating, but not without many falls, which just seemed to add to the fun. I am not so casual about falling these days!

Mark Dixon

“Something about Winter or something about New Year,” said Pam.

Yes there is something about Winter!

Yes there is something about New Year!

Winter.

I dread Sheffield's Winter.

Is Dread too strong a word? Probably, but it gives taste of how I view this coming season.

The Cold. The Dark Days stretching out before Spring is reached.

Actually it's the Dark Days of November & December that



I wish away much more than the Cold of January and February.

Roll on Midwinter Solstice.

Days becoming longer rather than shorter. Thank God.

Roll on 1st of March.

Winter, of course, can linger much longer than 1st March but by that Great Day one hopes that Winter's back is broken.

The Dark Days are gone. The Cold is temporary. The worst is over.

I say to myself that if I had my time again I wouldn't live it in England; Sheffield's Winter is the culprit.

We didn't evolve to live in a place like this!

Snow; I'd be happy if it never showed it's face in Sheffield ever again.

New Year.

The Turn of the New Year is undoubtedly a Special, a Mystical time.

Whether the New Year arrives on 1st of January or Midwinter

Solstice I'm not sure.

Nothing but nothing represents to me the notion of New Year better than the wonderful poem

'The Gate of the Year' by Minnie Louise Haskins:

"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.' "

I have a lovely old framed print of it which I suspect is from the time King George VI read it in his 1939 Christmas broadcast during the start of World War I.

It's something I really value although it cost next to nothing. We sang William Blake's magnificent Jerusalem in church yesterday.

Blake is a very interesting character; a Christian certainly but of a different stripe to many.

Did Blake say anything about Winter?

Did Blake say anything about New Year?

I'm off to Google it.

Marjorie Jowett

As I switched off my electric blanket before getting into bed a few nights ago I was reminded of going to bed in winter in my youth. We had no double glazing, central heating, duvets or electric blankets then and I am sure the winters were colder.

In our house, a few hours before bedtime, clean bricks were put in the oven beside the fire in a kitchen range. These were left to heat through until a while before going to bed. They were then wrapped in pieces of old blanket and put into our beds. If you were lucky, you had a hot water bottle too. I had both so got a warm patch for my feet and another for my body. The rest was stone cold, so I usually put on an old cardigan and bed socks. When I woke in the morning it was

often with a very cold nose. This told me that the windows were covered with icy patterns. They were so beautiful. Whether it was frosty, snowy or foggy I knew it was going to be a struggle to get to my secondary school. I had a five-minute walk to the bus stop along a road used by few vehicles so it could be slippery, then a bus ride along a road unlikely to have been gritted so the rare buses would be late. After that a walk uphill led to the station to catch the only train for a fifteen-minute ride. This was usually late too. When we eventually arrived at our destination station, we had another fifteen-minute walk to school. Luckily by now we were quite a crowd so could not be accused of malingering .

Our school was very understanding and, knowing we had this journey in reverse at the end of the day, the secretary would ring Manchester Central station in bad weather to see what time a train would be leaving so we could leave early to catch it. This was good in foggy weather as the train services would be cut and there would be no buses. I would have a long walk in thick smog, (the name given to the smoky fog of the era).

A few years later I remember buying an electric blanket soon after starting work. They were new and therefore expensive and a luxury. It seemed very selfish to keep it for myself so I suggested to my mother that we could share it. As I was out most nights it could be put in my younger brother's bed. Then when he went to bed it went into my parents' bed and then into mine. This system worked very well, and my mother was happy to do the extra work. I also knew what to buy for my parent's Christmas present!

Looking back, life then, seems hard, but we knew nothing else and we were as happy then as we are now with all the luxuries of modern life.

The Incredible Journeys of Jonathon Powell Wiffen... continued

These are transcripts of his letters home. This time he is in Iran

Friday 22nd December Isfahan

Ronald Pont is a fully qualified doctor here, about 30 I should think, his wife is also a doctor and they make up 2/3rds of the qualified staff of the 90 bed hospital. They were very pleased to see me and are only too glad to extend their hospitality to me over Christmas. I have a very nice guest room and should be in really fine fettle when I leave them on Boxing Day.

Thank you very much for your three letters and Christmas cards. I must say now, and will no doubt say again, how wonderful it is to be here, as I am having a Christmas that is so much like home that it is hard to reconcile it with central Iran and the Muslim religion. There are Christmas cards up all over the lounge and there is a Christmas tree with lights on in the hall. This evening, as the two young children are in bed, presents are being wrapped and prepared for the stocking.

Saturday 23rd December 1967 Isfahan

Ronald is giving a sermon tomorrow which he is now working on. There is an Armenian Bishop here and the Iranians have built a Mosque right opposite his palace and have trained their loud speakers from the minarets straight at it. The minarets on some of the Mosques, especially in the villages, all have platforms for the storks to build their nests on. It is considered lucky to have a stork as they go south now for the winter and they are said to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Sunday 24th December 1967 Isfahan

We all had breakfast together this morning and put up decorations till it was time for Church at 11.00. There was a

congregation of around 30 and Ronald made a very good sermon, really pointing out that one did not have to have any intelligence to be a Christian. He used the examples of the fishermen on the Caspian Sea and the shepherds on the mountains around here who sometimes come to the hospital. These are terribly primitive people with only a vocabulary of about 1,000 words and cannot even describe their symptoms to the doctors and yet it was these type of people to whom Christianity was made known. It is the intelligent people who try and make something mysterious out of what is really a simple piece of history – the birth of Christ. After my walk, I came back for tea and have been improvising a Father Christmas outfit out of a red dressing gown, a red bonnet belonging to Heather, the little girl, some white operating theatre over-boots and lots of hospital cotton wool. You see, as I am unlikely to be known to most of the children here, I have been picked for the role! Should be a laugh. As far as I can see, I shall also be helping to fry eggs for breakfast, as over 30 are expected. We then had carol singers – all the blind girls from the hospital came into the living room and sang both in English and Persian. It was a very moving little ceremony. They all seemed so happy and laughed at my attempted 'thank yous' and 'very goods' in Farsi, yet they were all entirely blind and had to feel the Christmas tree and its decorations. One thing I must say now is how well the Christians and Muslims get on together. Many Muslims



have sent cards and presents to the Ponts and the servants all seem to have the Christmas spirit. Some of the cards are funny though, seeing Father Christmas and a Persian Hour together does not seem quite right!

Christmas Day 1967 Isfahan

I was up at 6.30 for a quick cup of tea and on with a red dressing gown, white operating theatre over boots, a red hood and loads of cotton wool beard and side whiskers for a tour round the children's wards with presents. After this I had a quick change for Communion at 7.30 and then back to the house to take charge of the frying of over 40 eggs. The Ponts give a Christmas breakfast for the staff and Ali, the cook, is apparently new to frying eggs and breaks most of them – although Ali knows no English, we got on very well in the kitchen together, he doing beans and bacon and me the eggs. There were about 30 for breakfast whom I joined after my work in the kitchen! Halfway through though, I again left and donned my Father Christmas outfit again to play the game for all the children present – about 10. We had a huge drum with all the gifts in which I doled out. Ever since then I have been trying to get cotton wool off my cheeks and chin as we stuck it on very well with Evo-stick! After this long tour round, I came back for tea at 5pm and played with the children till their bedtime. We then all went to a Christmas supper in the Church Hall and listened to the local youth club playing pop songs and also to one of the blind girls singing. She was very good and had actually performed on the radio. I was sitting next to a very nice Persian girl so I had a very pleasant evening. From this account you can see I must be counted as one of the luckiest voyagers in Iran. I have had a wonderful Christmas time, amongst the nicest people and have been made so welcome. Many of them are missionaries who have been here for many years – one lady since 1896 and one can really feel these are Christians with a definite calling.

Jonathon Powell-Wiffen



St Augustine's is proud to have become part of the Inclusive Church movement whose shared vision is:

“We believe in inclusive Church — church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality. We believe in Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.”





Uniformed Groups

Groups are sponsored by St Augustine's and meet at the HQ at 17 Botanical Road. Enquiries about any of the Scout sections should be made to the Group Scout Leader: www.59thsheffield.org.uk

Beavers for age 6-8 yrs
www.59thsheffield.org.uk

Wednesdays 5.30

Cubs for age 8-10 yrs
www.59thsheffield.org.uk

Wednesdays 6.45

Scouts for age 10-14 yrs
www.59thsheffield.org.uk

Mondays 7.30
Thursdays 7.15

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine and that it gives you a bit more of an insight into the life and work of this parish. If you have any comments or ideas please get in touch with Pam West (Editor).
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www.achurchnearyou.com