



February 2025
PARISH MAGAZINE

Candlemas

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and Christchurch, Rhydycroesau 50p**



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**THE PARISH CHURCHES OF ST OSWALD, KING & MARTYR, OSWESTRY,
AND CHRISTCHURCH, RHYDYCROESAU**

Vicar of Oswestry & Rector of Rhydycroesau

The Reverend Harvey Lloyd Gibbons, M.A.
St Oswald's Vicarage, Penylan Lane, Oswestry, SY11 2AJ. Tel: 01691 653467
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Hon Treasurer: Mr Paul Evison

Tel: 653315

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Organist:

St Oswald's: Josephine Sands email: joasands@hotmail.co.uk.

Christchurch:

Parish Office

S Oswald's: Church Street, Oswestry SY11 2SY.

Tel: 652861

Parish Administrator: Ms Carron Boulton

email: stoswald.office@gmail.com

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To be a pilgrim...

It is a year since I began my sabbatical in February 2024, during the three months that followed, I was able to experience many things for the first time since my ordination 24 years earlier. As you might expect, many of them involved weekend activities that had simply been impossible running a parish as a vicar. It was a joy to spend time in other churches, with and without members of the family; it felt like a reset for both me and my immediate family.

Now, twelve months later, I find myself reflecting on what happened when I returned; two parishes well run in my absence, a wonderful celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Victorian reordering of St. Oswalds, a fabulous Christmas with busy churches and great worship. There were sad and challenging times too, the loss of a colleague, saying goodbye to some old and much respected friends.

In some ways it has felt like a ministry reset with renewed energy levels, a sort of new chapter in a long running soap opera with nuanced changes made to a long running plot line. A new outlook on my long journey of faith as a pilgrim of Christ, an outlook that I find both challenging and hopeful.

The word pilgrim usually conjures up a strongly medieval image in most people's minds. Pictures of Chaucer's 'Merry England', a land long since disappeared. Yet pilgrimage existed long before the medieval period. It traces its ancestry through the Christian ages, into the long history of the people of Israel. In Genesis, God tells Abraham, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land, which I will show you'. It is one of the great themes of the Old Testament and became the very essence of Jewish religious life - walking with God. Adam walked with God in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden, Noah was a righteous man; Noah we are told, walked with God.

But perhaps the greatest example of 'walking with God', were the wilderness years of the Exodus, the momentous journey from slavery to nationhood. But it was more than just a great escape, for the people of Israel the journey was a time of testing. A time of walking with God who provided the miraculous heavenly manna and the spring of water struck from the rock. The Jewish people came to reverence their nomadic experience as the groundwork of their faith.

This great theme is reflected in own faith story. The infant Christ is visited by shepherds, the inheritors of the nomadic, pastoral tradition. John the

Baptist, the great prophet of the messianic age, emerges from the wilderness dressed in a coat of camel's hair, and Jesus himself wanders into the wilderness as a means of spiritual preparation for the ministry he is about to undertake. His earthly ministry ended outside the city of Jerusalem, crucified, symbolically back in the wilderness.

Christ's journey to Calvary soon took on a particular symbolic force. Events from the triumphant entry to the crucifixion replay in dramatic form the whole of his ministry leading up to that moment. The meaning of his earlier journey is finally made clear in the much shorter journey from the upper room to Calvary. Thus, all Christian pilgrimage identifies with Christ in his final journey to the cross; every pilgrim travels with Christ to the cross and to resurrection.

As the people of Israel discovered, pilgrimage is a time of testing. When Jesus sent his disciples out on a mission, he told them to *'take nothing for their journey except a staff... but to wear sandals'*. The Medieval pilgrim had this text in mind when they carried a staff as a symbol of their journey. Those medieval journeys, especially to Compostela and Jerusalem, were hard and dangerous, but they re-enacted Israel's walk with God and Christ's journey to the cross. In our own pilgrimage, we will find ourselves tested, disillusioned and at times probably tempted to throw up our hands in disgust at the frustration of the journey.

However, historically pilgrims rarely if ever, travel alone. The people of Israel travelled as a nation; Chaucer's motley crew of pilgrims travelled together. So do we, my pilgrimage is part and parcel of yours and above all else, we journey with God. Amid everything that might befall us, our gaze must remain fixed on the one who is both destination and journey's companion and guide, Jesus Christ. Not only has our Lord gone before us, he is also with us on the way, changing us so that we might become more like him; the way, the truth, and the life. Even when we make a mess of things, he remains with us to set us on the right path and point us in the right direction.

In his 1881 *Virginibus Puerisque*, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote 'Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.' In other words, 'the journey is the reward'. All journeys have the potential to expand our relationship with God, none more so than those we take together supporting and being supported, challenging and being challenged, because by it we are transformed.

So, I look forward to continuing my pilgrimage this year, alongside you as a pilgrim of Christ on our shared pilgrimage. May it be an opportunity for us all to learn new things about God and each other, to transform and deepen our faith in Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life for all of us.

May the Lord guide us and direct in safety and be our companion along the way.

Harvey



THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY HOUSE BOX COLLECTIONS

Thank you to everyone who continues to collect their loose change in their Children's Society House Boxes. As I write I am working my way through opening and counting your donations and will be returning your boxes to church for you to collect by the beginning of February. Please do contact me if you would like me to return box directly to you.

Your support for the Children's Society ensures they can provide specialist support that empowers young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope. Children and young people want a future they can look forward to and the Children's Society is there to make sure they get it. Working alongside young people, their families and community, they will not rest until together, step-by-step, they've created a society built for all children.

Young people come to The Children's Society when they have low self-esteem, when they're living in families who can't afford the next meal, the next size up in school uniform or when there's no one else to lean on.

By continuing to collect your loose change in a House Box you are ensuring this vital work can continue. However, if you prefer, instead of using a box to collect your change you may like to make a donation by direct debit. This could be an annual donation or monthly and can be gift aided. Please let me know if you would like to change to this way of supporting the Children's Society and I can let you have the appropriate forms or you can find them on the Children's Society website www.childrenssociety.org.uk where you can also make a one-off donation.

Liz Gibbons

St Oswald's House Box Co-ordinator
elizabethgibbons15@outlook.com

01691 653467

THURSDAY MORNING HOLY COMMUNION



This short service, using the old Prayer Book language, provides a time of quiet worship and reflection for a regular congregation. Since Covid we have been acting as stewards and assistants each week, and we now think that some other people might like to join the team occasionally. It is not onerous: it involves setting out the Communion table, Bible, microphone etc, and then clearing away afterwards. We try to welcome people as they come in, and one of us usually reads the Epistle or sometimes administers the chalice. Although the priests can do this all themselves, they certainly appreciate the support.

If you think you can help, please leave a note in the office.

Fiona Pearson and Anne Pilsbury

MOTHERS' UNION FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Our January meeting had to be cancelled due to the weather. We hope to meet next on February 13th in the Parish Centre, at 2.15pm, when our speaker will be Mrs Kay Cole.

Members please remember to send your membership subs, to our Lichfield office this month.

Pam Musson (656212)

Cover:

Candlemas, the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and also the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Luke 2, vv22-30 describes the visit of Mary, Joseph and Jesus to the temple as prescribed in Leviticus 12. 'Candlemas' comes from the old tradition of blessing candles, symbolising the Light of Christ, on this day.

One of the oldest feasts of the church; the pilgrim Egeria recorded how it was celebrated in Jerusalem in the 380s:

'But certainly the Feast of the Purification is celebrated here with the greatest honour. On this day there is a procession to the Anastasis; all go in procession, and all things are done in order with great joy, just as at Easter. All the priests preach, and also the bishop, always treating of that passage of the Gospel where, on the fortieth day, Joseph and Mary brought the Lord into the Temple.' (The Anastasis is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre)

Frances Major

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – 259 FINDING OUT ABOUT OUR CHURCH'S HISTORY

This feature, exploring month by month different aspects of the history of St Oswald's, commenced twenty-two years ago, in February 2003. The objective was to shed light on the church – its life, clergy, congregation, and buildings – through surviving historical records, from medieval times through to more recent days.

Right at the start, I remember commenting that we are fortunate at the records that have survived from earlier centuries, and it is true, too, that we are well-served by antiquarians and historians who have researched – and continue to research - aspects of the church's past, resulting in a small library of books and journal articles that we can call upon today.

Over the next three or four months, my intention is to outline the range of material that is available for anyone seeking to learn more about St Oswald's – material that I have used at different times to prepare these monthly articles. In the present article, I will focus on the written histories of Oswestry. Next month, I will focus on other books, booklets, and journal articles, which can assist us in our knowledge and understanding of our church's history.

Next, I will move to consider the range of original and contemporary records for our church's history. These include our church records, largely held by Shropshire Archives; other records held at the National Library of Wales or elsewhere; deeds and documents relating to Oswestry; and official records held at the National Archives in Kew.

A reasonable starting place for someone seeking to find out about our church history would be to consult the various written histories of Oswestry. Oswestry's first historian is considered to be John Davies of Middleton, who wrote a detailed history, in manuscript, in 1635, at the request of the earl of Arundel. This is preserved at the British Library, with the key parts published in volume 6 of *The History of the princes, etc. of Powys Fadog*, published in 1887. Davies focussed on printed works available to him, including the Venerable Bede, Stow's *Annals*, and Camden's *Britannia*, but has also provided us with a glimpse of the Oswestry of 1635, noting that August 5th, the feast of St Oswald, was celebrated annually in the town and parish as the wakes day, and later writing of the chapel built above King Oswald's well, "lately (in my memory) taken downe and demolished". A copy of *Powys Fadog* is available at Oswestry Library.

The first *printed* history of the town, *The history of Oswestry from the earliest period; its antiquities & customs, with a short account of the neighbourhood*, was published in 1815. It was the work of the Rev. Peter Roberts but is generally known as Price's *History*, after its printer William Price. A section of this book is devoted to the church, and includes a list of vicars, a transcript of the survey of the church's lands and assets of 1685, and details of notable church monuments. The author noted that "the church is dedicated to St Mary". A copy is available at Oswestry Library.

This was followed in 1819 by Edwards' history, entitled *Some account of the ancient and present state of Oswestry*. Also named after its publisher, this work was written by another local clergyman, the Rev. C.A.A. Lloyd, rector of Whittington. This was based in part on material from Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales* (1778), and included, for instance, Pennant's comment that "the present church is of no antiquity; is spacious, and has a handsome plain tower", but elsewhere Mr Lloyd added his own notes that a subscription had lately been raised for the purpose of endowing a Welsh chapel, and commented on the layout of the church, that "it is very inconvenient for the officiating minister, being full of pillars which very much obstruct the voice", and again "there is no space allotted for poor people to attend service, a circumstance much to be lamented". Readers are advised that "the church is dedicated to St Oswald". Very few copies of this book survive; however, a copy is held at Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury.

Next, in 1855, came the journalist William Cathrall's *History of Oswestry*. Reprinted in a spiral-bound format by Shropshire County Library in the mid-1970s, this is more widely known and available. However, it is a frustrating volume. Much of its history is not original, taken from Price's *History*, and much of the rest is not really local, with details specific to Oswestry blended into large chunks of long winded prose of a general nature. A chapter is devoted to the town's ecclesiastical history, much relating to our parish church; there is a list of vicars, and details of monuments. We are told that the church is dedicated to St Mary; and how the "ancient fabric, though having no pretensions to beauty of architecture, externally or internally, yet from its size and the massiveness of its ivy-mantled tower has a venerable and somewhat imposing aspect".

Finally, in 1920 came Isaac Watkin's *Oswestry, with an account of its old houses, shops etc*. Not a traditional history, being set out street by street, and house by house, it nevertheless contains a great deal of local history,

and is well worth persevering with. It has been reprinted on a number of occasions, and is available at the library. Watkin devoted pages 62-78 to the parish church, also describing St David's church in the New Churchyard, and the various buildings in the town centre that had served as the vicarage. The book includes photographs of the Yale monument, the old font, the Broad Walk, and the church nave prior to its restoration in 1872/74. In common with the author's style and approach, a great deal of information relating to the church is packed into a few pages; for example we are told that the north transept was extended courtesy of a legacy from William Price, printer, which became available on the death of his sister Marianna Robinson in 1885. Incidentally, Watkin had no doubt that the church was dedicated to St Oswald – any confusion on that point having been resolved at the time of the church restoration!

To be continued next month

John Pryce-Jones

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CHLOË AND JO'S SNOWDON FUND RAISING WALK

My name is Chloë and I am one of the Altar Servers at St. Oswalds.



This year in August I will be going up Mt. Snowdon with my very good friend Jo Sands who is the Organist at St.Oswalds to raise money for Parkinson's UK in memory of my Grandad, David Adams who passed away in March 2024.

My Granddad was a member of St. Oswalds for many years, and St Johns in Weston Rhyn, with my Grandma, Lynne Adams who used to be the Parish Safeguarding Officer before Carron took over.

A memory I have of my Grandad was at Christmas in 2014 when we all sang Imagine by John Lennon and Grandad was at the Piano. He always loved the Beatles and he saw them play at a gig before their careers kicked off!

Another memory I have is sad but happy... It was not that long ago in January 2024 two months before his passing. It was just after new year and we just had lunch at Grandma and Grandad's. We were all sitting in the living room and the Beatles came up in conversation about the new and very last song called 'Now and Then'. Grandad had never heard it before, even though it has been out for one month at the time so I played it on my phone. As he had Parkinson's, he was quite restless but soon as I put it on he was relaxed. Every time I hear 'Now and Then', I always think of him and to be honest I get a bit emotional.

He always had a love for music and it was him who kicked off my passion for it when I was a child. We both shared the same birthday, June 2nd, we both loved astronomy, poetry, organ music especially J.S. Bach, and we both loved watching Songs of Praise on BBC1.

Our target is to raise £500 but it would be amazing to SMASH THAT TARGET!

Any donations would be greatly appreciated, donations are made online on a site called JustGiving.com. Here is the Link: https://www.justgiving.com/page/chloe-fraser-jo-sands-walk-up-snowdon-1724267298086?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL

To donate, type the link above into the search bar of your browser, or

type JustGiving.co then type on the Just giving website search bar "Fundraiser in memory of David Adams".

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The link will also be shared on to the Church Facebook page near and during the time we go up Snowdon so please keep an eye on Facebook for that!

God Bless,

Chloë Fraser



THANK YOU!

It seems almost too long now since we closed the Charity Christmas Card Shop but I'm acutely aware, that until now, I haven't been able to publicly thank all those volunteers who stepped up each week to perform their duties behind the counter. Both the charities and our customers regularly remark about it being a huge pleasure to visit St. Oswald's and meet such a happy team for whom nothing is too much trouble – what an accolade!!

We were all concerned about how much our sales would be affected by the increased postage charges but despite a slow start and a final week of bad weather we managed raise just over £5,000 for the twenty charities who put their cards with us.

The charities were all delighted with the results and particularly thrilled to receive their cheques before Christmas, thanks to the efforts of Paul our Treasurer.

I've been quite overwhelmed by the number of grateful messages that I've received – all expressing their thanks to St. Oswald's and the team of volunteers both for the monies raised and for putting their charities '*on the map*' in the Oswestry area.

On behalf of all the charities and myself - thank you to everyone for your unwavering support and another successful year!

Chris. Abram



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ST. OSWALD'S LADIES GROUP

Unfortunately, because of the weather, our January meeting had to be cancelled but luckily Chris Birdsell-Jones has agreed to rejoin us as our speaker for our April meeting.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, February 3rd in the Parish Centre at 2.30 p.m when we welcome Justin Soper as our speaker to talk about 'Tales of Shropshire in the English Civil War'.

We are always pleased to welcome new members to our group and if you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 01691657903 or ann_sagar@btinternet.com.

We meet in the Parish Centre on the first Monday in the month, except bank holidays when it is the second Monday, at 2.30 p.m. We have a speaker each meeting followed by a cup of tea and a chat.



Ann Sagar
Hon. Secretary

LIFE BY CONTRADICTION

Little time with all the time
to be enough,
to play specious freedom's game,
which is no game,

or take freedom full fathomed,
Life reconnecting
our heritage through the gift,
unmerited,

such Dove anointing wisdom
trumps fun's sad hoax;
beyond optimism's scope,
this depth of hope:
*For the promise comes, has come,
The Light is given.*

December, 2024.

Mark Davis.



WHY SING

We are currently recruiting new choristers and in this edition of the magazine I want to point out the many benefits that come from singing and why singing in a choir is good for one's health and wellbeing.

"The only thing better than singing is more singing," said Ella Fitzgerald. Perhaps such a statement is to be expected from a world-famous artist with an era-defining voice, but she wasn't the only one to stress the benefits of a good vocal performance. "He who sings frightens away his ills," said Cervantes and John Harvey Kellogg of Kellogg's Cornflakes fame had this to add: "Singing promotes health, breathing, circulation and digestion."

There is an increasing interest in the physical, psychological and emotional benefits of singing. The research available on singing identifies some key physical benefits. It exercises major muscle groups in the upper body. It is an aerobic activity that improves the efficiency of the cardiovascular system and encourages one to take more oxygen into the body, leading to increased alertness.

Aerobic activity is linked to stress reduction, longevity and better overall health. Improved airflow in the upper respiratory tract is likely to lessen the opportunity for bacteria to flourish there, countering the symptoms of colds and flu. Singing also aids the development of motor control and coordination, and recent studies have shown that it improves neurological functioning.

Jacques Launay, Postdoctoral Researcher in Experimental Psychology at the University of Oxford has said:-

"There's also some evidence to suggest that music can play a role in sustaining a healthy immune system, by reducing the stress hormone cortisol and boosting the Immunoglobulin A antibody."

"Singing has also been shown to improve our sense of happiness and wellbeing. Research has found, for example, that people feel more positive after actively singing than they do after passively listening to music"

Enough benefits in health alone, you would think, to have people queuing up to join a choir.

Next month I will look at the particular benefits of singing in a choir and

especially a fine church choir.

Meanwhile if you know of a young person who would benefit from joining St. Oswald's Choir, please put them in touch with me: -

By telephone on 07779 917724 or email at michaeldonkin44@gmail.com

We are looking for young people from 8 years of age upwards but particularly between 11 and 13 years. We will also welcome adult soprano voices that can blend with the treble sound of the Choir.

We also have vacancies for singers in the adult choir especially tenors.

**CONCERT BY THE SCHOLARS & GENTLEMEN
SATURDAY 1ST FEBRUARY – 3.30PM AT ST. OSWALD'S CHURCH**

If you have bought your copy of the magazine early please note this concert to be given on the 1st of the month. In response to a suggestion that people would prefer to attend in the daylight hours in winter we will be starting at 3.30pm. We will be featuring the music of Palestrina, considered to be the greatest of the Italian Renaissance composers. Do come along; entry is free with a retiring collection for the music at St. Oswald's Church.

Mike Donkin
Director of Music

BONUS BALL

Congratulations to the December winners of the weekly Lotto Bonus Ball draw who have each received £29. The winners were:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ball Number</u>	<u>Winner</u>
7 Dec	18	Bill Bowen BEM
14 Dec	3	Val Hamer
21 Dec	8	Chris Lewis
28 Dec	55	Father Phil Hughes

As the Bonus Ball year draws to a close at the end of February may I remind members that payment for your Bonus Ball number(s) for either 12 months (£52), 6 months (£26) to the end of August or just 3 months to the end of May will be due at the beginning of March.

I know of one number which will be becoming available at the beginning of March so if you would like to join the St Oswald Bonus Ball please let me know. (Tel: 658606)

Paul Crosby

Services at S. Oswald's

February 2 08:00 Holy Communion
Candlemas 10:30 Parish Eucharist with sung setting
 18:30 Choral Evensong

February 9 10:30 Parish Eucharist with sung setting
4th Before Lent

February 16 08:00 Holy Communion
3rd Before Lent 10:30 Parish Eucharist with sung setting
Septuagesima 18:30 Evening Prayer

February 23 10:30 Parish Eucharist with sung setting
2nd Before Lent 17:30 Reflective Space
Sexagesima

Every Thursday 10.30 Holy Communion (BCP)



MORNING PRAYER is streamed online through the church Facebook page at 9 o'clock on Wednesday and Friday. Sunday worship is on the YouTube page.

Enquires for Baptisms, Marriages etc should be made to the Parish Office. Please email the Parish Administrator (stoswald.office@gmail.com) for an appointment.

Services at Rhydycroesau

First Sunday 09:30 All Age Service
 February 2

4th Before Lent 09:30 Holy Communion
 February 9

2nd Before Lent 09:30 Holy Communion
 February 23



Parish Church of St. Oswald, King & Martyr
MUSIC LIST - FEBRUARY 2025

Sunday 2nd February

**Presentation of Christ in the Temple
(Candlemas)**

10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Archer - St. Albans Service
Anthem: O thou the central orb - Charles Wood
Voluntary: Prelude in F minor (BWV 534) - J. S. Bach

18.30 Choral Evensong

Introit: Hail gladdening light - John Stainer
Canticles: Brewer in D
Responses: Smith
Anthem: Hodie Beata Virgo Maria - G. P. da Palestrina
Voluntary: Prelude in C minor (BWV 546) - J. S. Bach

Sunday 9th February

4th Sunday before Lent

10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Mathias - Communion Service in C
Anthem: Come my way, my truth, my life - Clifford Harker
Voluntary: Organ concerto in g major by Handel movement 4

Sunday 16th February

3rd Sunday before Lent (Septuagesima)

10.30 Parish Eucharist

(St. Oswald's Singers)

Setting: Shephard - Addington Service
Anthem: Fairest Lord Jesus - Martin How

18.30 Said Evening Prayer

Sunday 23rd February

2nd Sunday before Lent (Sexagesima)

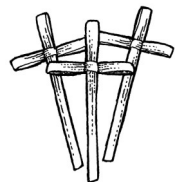
10.30 Parish Eucharist

Setting: Thorne - Mass of St. Thomas
Anthem: Ubi caritas - Maurice Duruflé

18.30 Reflective Service

(No Choir)

Palm Crosses – Ash Wednesday (March 5) is soon upon us so can you please return your palm crosses from previous years so we can use them to make the ash for this year. Please place them in the basket



CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY



Saturday 1	1530	The Genius of Palestrina—The Scholars & Gentlemen
Monday 3	1000	Clergy Eucharist and Meeting
	1430	Ladies Group—Parish Centre
Tuesday 4	1030—1230	Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 5	0830—0940	Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Friday 7	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Monday 10	1930	St Oswald's Book Club in Parish Centre Reading 'The Splash of Words' by Mark Oakley, exploring faith through the power of poetry
Tuesday 11	1030—1230	Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 12	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Thursday 13	1415—1600	Mothers' Union Fellowship Group
Friday 14	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Tuesday 18	1030—1230	Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 19	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Thursday 20	1915—2130	Bell Ringers AGM
Friday 21	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Monday 24	1930	St Oswald's Book Club in Parish Centre Reading 'The Splash of Words' by Mark Oakley, exploring faith through the power of poetry
Tuesday 25	1030—1230	Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 26	0830—0940	Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
Friday 28	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre



Date for your diary

Saturday, October 4th 2025 - at 7.00pm

**THE LONDON WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR AND
GUEST SOLOISTS AT ST OSWALD'S**

Ticket details to follow

Haydn Jones

**The Scholars & Gentlemen
at St. Oswald's**

Director: Michael Donkin

**THE GENIUS OF
PALESTRINA**



**St. Oswald's Parish Church
Oswestry
Saturday 1st February
3.30pm**

Entry Free

With a collection for the Music at St. Oswald's Church

I searched the internet for the word 'vocation'. The first result was Vocation Brewery (other breweries are available!) It's a business that I had never heard of but it immediately piqued my interest as I have been known to sample a few real ales in my time: in particular, the company's tag line - *Craftsmanship, Innovation & Patience Combine to Create Masterpieces*. Further intrigued, I then discovered that the brewery came into being when its founder 'left his job to follow his calling – to brew the big, flavourful beers he loves'.

Vocation is a word used often to describe a call for those who work in what we might describe as the caring professions – medicine and teaching amongst them, and in the church we use it often for those who follow a call to ordination. At its heart though, vocation is doing the thing that God wants us to do, which brings us joy and means that we might have something of life in all its fullness (John 10:10). In my work in supporting lay and ordained vocations I often describe it as the divine niggles, the thing that you just can't let go of, however much you might try.

I don't know if the founder of Vocation Brewery has a faith, but it seems he understands vocation. In the Christian tradition the Craftsmanship that we have is given to us by God as a gift and honed and shaped by learning and practice as we develop. Being open to the ways that God might be working in our lives and the lives of others brings about new ways of seeing the world and new ways of being (innovation), and patience means that we work at God's pace rather than our own, which can at times be hugely frustrating! These things combined mean that we might become or create 'masterpieces' within our own spheres of work, whether within the church or beyond. Each of us has a vocation, and our vocations are used in God's service and for the good of our communities. Again, perhaps the website sums it up well: in the 'About us' section there is a tale of overcoming obstacles to create the business, and the final sentence reads 'we pride ourselves on working together with shared purpose, on shared triumphs over adversities, born out of a love of what we do'.

There is real joy in doing what we love and so often people think that God is going to ask us to do the thing that we really dread or feel totally unqualified to do. It can take a huge leap of faith to follow a call and fulfil our vocation. One of the great joys of my role is seeing people grow and flourish in their vocations so if you or someone you know has a divine

niggle then be encouraged and encourage one another – who knows where it might lead!



Revd Preb Jeanette Hartwell leads Lichfield Diocese's Vocations & Training Team. Contact her at jeanette.hartwell@lichfield.anglican.org or visit her team's website at lichfield.anglican.org/vocations-and-training.



THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF LICHENS

Churchyards are the ideal place for a lichen enthusiast to while away many happy hours. Lichens can be found on walls, monuments, trees and, if you have ancient grassland there may be lichens within the sward as well.

To the uninitiated lichens can look broadly similar with subtle mosaics of colour, often greys and yellows forming expanding circles as they increase in size as the years go by. There is more to lichens than meets the eye however. Firstly they are two or more organisms living together as one, usually a fungus and an algae. Fungus forms the visible part of the lichen and within, protected by threads of the fungus, are cells of algae and/or cyanobacteria which photosynthesise. So the fungus provides a home and the algae provides food. Lichens reproduce through microscopic fungal spores which, if they find a suitable partner, can colonise surfaces which are not too shaded or too smooth. These spores are released from structures which look rather like tiny jam tarts, flasks or pimples!



Photo by Frank Dobson



Photo by Caring for God's Acre, Hope Bagot in Shropshire

Lichens are fantastic at surviving where other life cannot. Provided there is enough light and moisture lichens are able to grow on bare stone, not needing cracks or soil to root into. Some lichens grow very slowly, perhaps half a millimetre per year whilst others grow more quickly. Many lichens are long-lived so the lichen you see in a churchyard may be almost as old as the wall or gravestone it is growing on. Astonishingly there are over 2,000

different lichen species and it is not unusual for a single churchyard to contain more than 100 different types.

Churchyards are particularly rich in lichens as they contain so many old stones with a variety of types; limestone, sandstone, granite to name a few. Some stones are smoother, others rough and they may have differing amounts of shade, wind and moisture depending on where they are within the churchyard, which side of the monument the lichen is on, whether they are vertical, leaning or flat. The carving of the inscription itself provides microclimates with different amounts of light and moisture within the lettering. All of these changes in conditions will suit different lichen species. They are also found on trees, wooden fences and gates, grassy areas, pathways and even dustbin lids!

Most lichens offer protection to the surface they grow on and it may be easier to read lettering which is lichen-covered rather than bare, eroding stone. They do not need much care but do avoid the use of any chemicals near to lichens and definitely don't try and remove them. Lichens can die if shaded out so try and keep ivy or other climbers from encroaching over them too.

If you have never taken a closer look at a lichen then why not take a hand-lens or magnifying glass and give it a go. Lichen colonies have been described as minute, self-maintaining gardens, providing a natural cladding for the stone. They are beautiful and endlessly fascinating and if you like a challenge, why not look up the British Lichen Society website and find out more about how to identify them.

Harriet Carty,

Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor, harriet@cfga.org.uk,
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk - individuals and groups in the diocese receive 20% members discount on all CfGA materials. Use the discount code diomem22

COFFEE ROTA FOR FEBRUARY

2	Mary Jones	Natasha Bell	Sally Wright
9	Jane Mayne	Chris Abram	Jean Lawrence
16	Jane Wilkinson	Val Hamer	Carol Burke
23	Judi Neale	Babs Bone	Elaine Leek



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Come and see where we belong

The new term will soon begin, and as I wait in anticipation for what God will do in our schools this term, I can reflect on the blessings from last term. 14 Christmas in a Box workshops took place over November and December. These workshops were well received from both pupils and teachers as they discovered more about the Christmas story and the importance of Jesus. The children were delighted that they were able to take home their own mini box, full of activities from the session. Christmas in a Box, along with other Christmas lessons and assemblies saw 1503 pupils hear the message of Jesus' birth and the difference it can make to our lives today.

When schools return after the Christmas break I will be making bookings for assemblies, lessons, prayer spaces and Diary of a Disciple workshops. Please pray for schools as they book each activity.

Thank you for your continued support of the project.

Blessings

Jane Webber

Things to Pray For

- Bookings for the Spring Term
- Safety as pupils and staff travel to and from school in the winter weather.
- Opportunities to build deeper relationships with schools, staff and pupils.

PUBLICATION DETAILS FOR NEXT MONTH

Material required in the Office SUNDAY, 9 FEBRUARY

Make-up day for working party, and publication: Tuesday, 18 February

PLEASE COULD ALL ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS
IN THE CHURCHES TRY TO SEND IN SOME NEWS - EVEN IF
YOU'VE NOT BEEN IN THE HABIT OF DOING SO.

Why not nominate a Correspondent?

Email dianedawson15@gmail.com

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February opens with Candlemas – the naming of Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the love between men and women: Valentine cards and wedding fayres abound. ‘Love’ as in social compassion is also remembered: Fair Trade fortnight, Holocaust Memorial Day, World Leprosy Day, Education Sunday and National Nest Box Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

naming	N R S U N D A Y S I N R C N	coffee
Christ	A O F O R T N I G H T N H U	bananas
Candlemas	M M A T T H I A S A Y M R E	chocolate
Simeon	I A I O L E L M T N N O I P	justice
Anna	N N R O A H O F T N A A S O	poverty
temple	G C T T H O L O C A U S T V	nest box
love	C E R N E D U C A T I O N E	marriage
Valentine	T V A L E N T I N E C L E R	wedding
romance	W E D D I N G E D M O S S T	Holocaust
Matthias	H L E P R O S Y L P F E T Y	leprosy
Fairtrade	C M A R R I A G E L F L B T	education
Fortnight	J U S T I C E A M E E O O T	sunday
	C O C H O C O L A T E V X A	
	S M B A N A N A S I M E O N	

Solution on page 35

ALL IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

It was.....

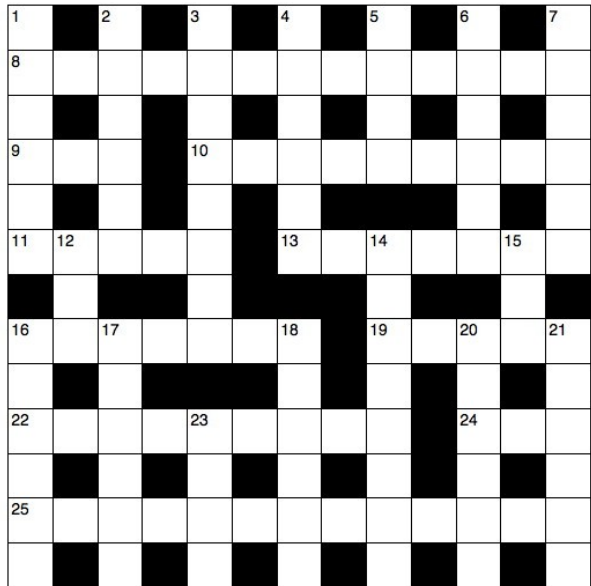
90 years ago, on 22nd February 1935 that US President Franklin D Roosevelt banned aircraft from flying over the White House – because the noise kept him awake at night. The ban remains in place today, but mainly now for security reasons.

70 years ago, from 24th February 1955 to March that Britain’s Big Freeze took place. Deep snow and freezing temperatures caused havoc, with many places cut off. The RAF dropped food and medical supplies to affected areas, while thousands of sheep died from exposure.

Follow us on Facebook at 'St Oswalds Parish Church Oswestry'

Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
- 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
- 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
- 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
- 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
- 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
- 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
- 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
- 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1)
- 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)



Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
- 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
- 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
- 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
- 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
- 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
- 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
- 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
- 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
- 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
- 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)

- 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
- 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
- 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
- 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
- 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

Sudoku

	5		9			7	2	3
2		4	3	8			1	
	3		5				6	
		6			9			
5		3	2		4	6		1
			6			5		
	4				8		3	
	2			6	3	8		9
3	8	9			5		4	

Easy

		1		6			8	
8			5				7	2
		9	2	4		3		
	5							
		3	7	1	5	2		
							5	
		8		7	9	5		
2	9				6			8
	3			2		7		

Medium

PUZ?LES

Solutions on
page 35



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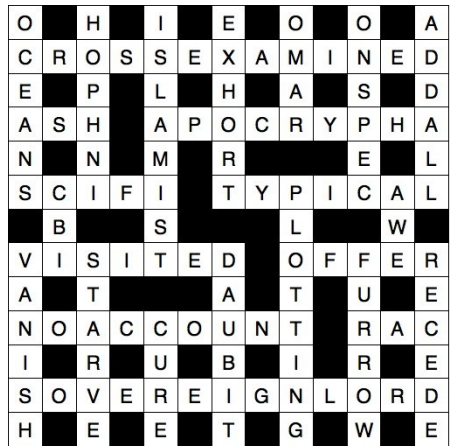
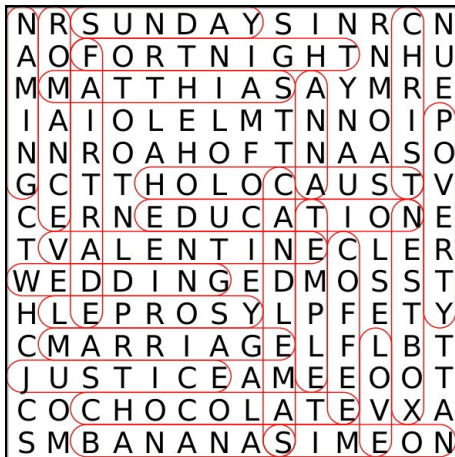
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Easy

Medium

1	5	8	9	4	6	7	2	3
2	6	4	3	8	7	9	1	5
9	3	7	5	1	2	4	6	8
4	1	6	8	5	9	3	7	2
5	9	3	2	7	4	6	8	1
8	7	2	6	3	1	5	9	4
6	4	5	1	9	8	2	3	7
7	2	1	4	6	3	8	5	9
3	8	9	7	2	5	1	4	6

3	2	1	9	6	7	4	8	5
8	4	6	5	3	1	9	7	2
5	7	9	2	4	8	3	1	6
7	5	4	6	9	2	8	3	1
6	8	3	7	1	5	2	9	4
9	1	2	4	8	3	6	5	7
4	6	8	1	7	9	5	2	3
2	9	7	3	5	6	1	4	8
1	3	5	8	2	4	7	6	9

SMILE LINES

Those notices which didn't come out quite right...

Notice in health food shop window: Closed due to illness.

Spotted in a safari park: Elephants, please stay in your car.

This coming Sunday our special service will be gin at 11:00am.

When parking on the north side of the church, please remember to park on an angel.

Jean will be leading a weight-management course on Wednesday nights. She's used the programme herself and has been growing like crazy!

REGISTERS



We welcome in HOLY BAPTISM

S Oswald's

January 19 2025

Jidechukwu Richmond Udemba

As God has lent them to us, so we say farewell and give back in HOLY DYING:

S Oswald's

December 17 2024

Billy Walters (baby)

December 20

Frederick Samuels

January 13 2025

Jonathon Douglas Davies, aged 68

Pauline Lilian Morgan, aged 94

January 14

Margaret Elizabeth Newnes, aged 103

January 20

Thomas William Bowen, aged 85



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UNDER 5's PLAYGROUP	Rev Jassica Castillo-Burley Email: stoswald.minister@gmail.com	07809 414747
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