

SAINT GEORGE'S CHURCH

PARISH MAGAZINE

an open door in the heart of the city
a place for prayer and peace

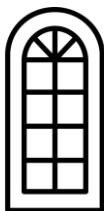


Iesu transfigurato (Mark 9:4f) (1964) by Salvador Dali



JULY & AUGUST 2026





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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

St George's Church Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the next month. Views expressed by contributors do not represent the views of the parish. Please send contributions (1000 words maximum) to the Editor, Martin Taggart, wmartintaggart@gmail.com.

THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Selby Nesbitt, for music, calendar and additional content.

Tony Merrick, for folding and binding.

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LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

The Reverend Brian Stewart

Dear Friends in Christ

I hope that each of you will manage to have some sort of holiday or break over the summer months. Even a few days away is good for us, as it takes us away from our usual routine and concerns and hopefully gives us a time for rest and reflection. Whether it is two weeks abroad or a few days somewhere more local, it can be a great boost to our well-being and outlook.

The daily services have now been running again Tuesday to Friday each week and the numbers attending are slowly increasing as word of them gets around. We usually have three or four at the lunchtime Eucharists. I think those who attend value the quiet celebrations and the chance to receive the sacrament in a reflective and simple service. They have an atmosphere all of their own and quite different from the more involved liturgies we have on Sundays.

I will be in Belfast for most of the summer with a few days away now and again. Please do contact me on 07902-792080 if you, or anyone you know, needs a pastoral visit or Holy Communion at home or in hospital.

We recently received four new Tunicles for use at the main Eucharist on Sundays and major Holy Days. These are the gift of a number of kind parishioners. They will be formally dedicated to God's glory on Sunday, 20th September at the 11.00AM Choral Eucharist.

The All Ireland Fleadh will be held this year in Belfast from Sunday 2nd to Sunday 9th August. St George's will be open and accessible throughout that week, and our services will all take place as usual. On Wednesday 5th August at 1.00PM there will be a recital of the music of Irish composers on the organ by Dr David Stevens. Then on Thursday 6th August at 7.00PM, there will be a short concert featuring Set Dancing with both Irish and French folk music. Enjoy your summer and remember to attend worship wherever you may be.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,

Brian Stewart



MUSIC & WORSHIP

Sunday 5th July

11am Eucharist

Psalm 45: 10-17

Processional Hymn 349

Gradual Hymn 414

Offertory Hymn 92

Recessional Hymn 408

Trinity 5

Sunday 12th July

11am Eucharist

Psalm 119: 105-112

Processional Hymn 440 (Omit *)

Gradual Hymn 342 (t. 178)

Offertory Hymn 272

Recessional Hymn 381

Trinity 6

Sunday 19th July

11am Eucharist

Psalm 139: 1-11, 23-24

Processional Hymn 436

Gradual Hymn 500

Offertory Hymn 339

Recessional Hymn 413

Trinity 7

Sunday 26th July

11am Eucharist

Psalm 105: 1-11, 45b

Processional Hymn 390 (t. 388)

Gradual Hymn 407

Offertory Hymn 295

Recessional Hymn 377

Trinity 8

Sunday 2nd August

11am Eucharist

Psalm 17: 1-7, 16

Processional Hymn 443

Gradual Hymn 385

Offertory Hymn 353 (Omit *)

Recessional Hymn 437

Trinity 9

Sunday 9th August

11am Eucharist

Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b

Processional Hymn 461

Gradual Hymn 480 (t. 15)

Offertory Hymn 378

Recessional Hymn 486

Trinity 10

Sunday 16th August

11am Eucharist

Psalm 133

Processional Hymn 234

Gradual Hymn 499

Offertory Hymn 431

Recessional Hymn 484 (Omit *)

Trinity 11

Sunday 23rd August

11am Eucharist

Psalm 124

Processional Hymn 379

Gradual Hymn 341

Offertory Hymn 408

Recessional Hymn 420

Trinity 12

Sunday 30th August

11am Eucharist

Psalm 105: 1-6, 23-26, 45c

Processional Hymn 345

Gradual Hymn 272

Offertory Hymn 360

Recessional Hymn 235

Trinity 13

JULY & AUGUST CALENDAR

Wed July 1st

10:00am

10:30am

Matins

Eucharist

THOMAS THE APOSTLE

Thu July 2nd

Fri July 3rd

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

5TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Sun July 5th

9:30am

11:00am

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Romans 7: 15-25a;

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

Reader: The Wardens

Intercessor: Anne McBride

Servers: Omolewa Akinyele , Mark Claney, Tony Merrick

Tea and Coffee: Linda McConnell, Dot Lutton, Betty Flynn

5:00 pm

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Readings: 2 Samuel 2: 1-11; 3: 1; Luke 18: 31 – 19: 10-28 (Janet Sandikli)

Tue July 7th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

FLORENCE OF WORCESTER

Wed July 8th

10:00am

10:30am

Matins

Eucharist

Thur July 9th

Fri July 10th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

Sun July 12th

9.30 am

11:00 am

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 25: 19-34; Romans 8: 1-11; Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

Reader: George Woodman

Intercessor: George Woodman

Servers: Steven McQuitty, Tony Merrick, Jonny Calder

Tea and Coffee: Valerie Roberts, Helen Crowe, Holly Ferres

5:00 pm

Evening Prayer:

Lessons: 2 Samuel 7: 18-29; Luke: 19: 41 – 20: 8 (Geoffrey May)

Tue July 14th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

JOHN KEBLE

Wed July 15th

10:00am

10:30am

Matins

Eucharist

SWITHUN, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

Thu July 16th

Fri July 17th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

OSMUND, BISHOP OF SALISBURY

Sun July 19th

9.30 am

11.00am

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 28: 10-19a; Romans 8: 12-25; Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

Reader: Karen Brett

Intercessor: Pam Tilson

Servers: Banji Akinyele, Janet Sandikli, Jonny Calder

Tea and Coffee: Steven McQuitty, Jack McCormick

5:00 pm

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: 1 Kings 2: 10-12; 3: 16-28; Acts 4: 1-22. (Paddy Sloan)

7TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Tue July 21st

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

Wed July 22nd

10:00am

10:30am

Matins

Eucharist

Thu July 23rd

Fri July 24th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

Sun July 26th

9:30 am

11:00 am

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 29: 15-28; Romans 8: 26-39; Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

Reader: Mark Claney

Intercessor: Fr Tom Layden

Servers: Banji Akinyele, Janet Sandikli, Mark Claney

Tea and Coffee: Mina Kelly, Richard Oldfield

5:00 pm

Eucharist: The Rector

Lessons: Romans 8: 12-17; Matthew 7: 15-21 (Jack McCormick)

8TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Tue July 28th

10:00am

1:00pm

Matins

Eucharist

Wed July 29th

10:00am

10:30am

Matins

Eucharist

Thu July 30th

10:00am

1:00 pm

Matins

Eucharist: The Rector

The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist – all welcome

Fri July 31st

10:00am

1:00 pm

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA - FOUNDER, SOCIETY OF JESUS

Matins

Eucharist

MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

Sun August 2nd

9:30 am

11:00 am

5:00 pm

Tue August 4th

10:00am

1:00pm

Wed August 5th

10:00am

10:30am

Thur August 6th**Fri August 7th**

10:00am

1:00pm

Sun August 9th

9.30 am

11.00am

5:00 pm

Tue August 11th

10:00am

1:00pm

Wed August 12th

10:00am

10:30am

Thu August 13th**Fri August 14th**

10:00am

1:00pm

Sun August 16th

9:30 am

11:00 am

5:00 pm

9TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**Eucharist:** The Rector**Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 32: 22-31; Romans 9: 1-5; Matthew 14: 13-21

Reader: The Wardens

Intercessor: Janet Sandikli

Servers: Mark Claney, Steven McQuitty, Jonny Calder

Tea and Coffee: Catherine Hunter, Rosejane Peck

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: 1 Kings 10: 1-13; Acts 13: 1-13 (Canon Tom Layden SJ)

JEAN- BAPTISTE VIANNEY**Matins****Eucharist****OSWALD, MARTYR****Matins****Eucharist****THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD****JOHN MASON, HYMN WRITER****Matins****Eucharist****10TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, MARY SUMNER -
MOTHERS UNION****Eucharist:** The Rector**Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28; Romans 10: 5-15; Matthew 14: 22-33

Reader: Anne McBride

Intercessor: Archdeacon Harte

Servers: Omolewa Akinyele, Janet Sandikli, Tony Merrick

Tea and Coffee: Judith Fawcett

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: 1 Kings 11: 41 - 12: 20; Acts 14: 8-20 (Janet Sandikli)

CLARE OF ASSISI**Matins****Eucharist****Matins****Eucharist****JEREMY TAYLOR - BISHOP, FLORENCE NIGHTENGAL****MAXIMILIAN KOLBE****Matins****Eucharist****11TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY****Eucharist:** The Rector**Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Genesis 45: 1-15; Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15: 21-28

Reader: Brenda Claney

Intercessor: Anne McBride

Servers: Banji Akinyele, Tony Merrick, Jonny Calder

Tea and Coffee: Julie, Issy Bannon

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: 2 Kings 4: 1-37; Acts 16: 1-15 (Geoffrey May)

Tue August 18th

10:00am

1:00pm

Wed August 19th

10:00am

10:30am

Thu August 20th

Fri August 21st

10:00am

1:00pm

Sun August 23rd

9:30 am

11:00 am

5:00 pm

Tue August 25th

10:00am

1:00pm

Wed August 26th

10:00am

10:30am

Thu August 27th

10:00am

1:00 pm

Fri August 28th

10:00am

1:00 pm

Sun August 30th

9:30 am

11:00 am

5:00 pm

Matins

Eucharist

Matins

Eucharist

**WILLIAM & CATHERINE BOOTH - FOUNDERS
SALVATION ARMY**

Matins

Eucharist

12TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Exodus 1: 8 - 2: 10; Romans 12: 1-8; Matthew 16: 13-20

Reader: Paul McLaughlin

Intercessor: George Woodman

Servers: Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick, Mark Claney

Tea and Coffee: Linda McConnell, Dot Lutton, Betty Flynn

Eucharist: The Rector

Lessons: 2 Corinthians 3: 4-9; Mark 7: 31-37 (Paddy Sloan)

Matins

Eucharist

Matins

Eucharist

Matins

Eucharist: The Rector

The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist - all welcome

AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO

Matins

Eucharist

13TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Eucharist: The Rector

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Exodus 3: 1-15; Romans 12: 9-21; Matthew 16: 21-28

Reader: Janet Sandikli

Intercessor: Pam Tilson

Servers: Banji Akinyele, Mark Claney, Tony Merrick

Tea and Coffee: Valerie Roberts, Helen Crowe, Holly Ferres

Compline: The Rector



NEWS & NOTICES

~ TRADITIONAL MUSIC CONCERTS: 4TH, 5TH AND 6TH AUGUST ~

Join us at St George's for three traditional music events: St George's women's voices on Tuesday 4th August at 1pm, organ music from David Stevens on Wednesday 5th at 1pm, and traditional French set dancing from Bal Feirste on Thursday 6th at 7pm.

~ ST GEORGE'S CHURCHYARD GARDENING ~

Thank you to everyone helping care for our churchyard and keep it attractive. The church and grounds are often visitors' first impression of St George's and a source of comfort and conversation for many.

Saturday morning groups have done sterling work, but gardens benefit from regular personal care. We are therefore dividing the churchyard into small plots for parishioners to tend in their own time. Access can be arranged; volunteers bring their own tools and take away anything removed or pruned.

We are already halfway to our aim but still need more help. Please contact me or the Rector for details.

~ Judith

~ ALL YE FOWLS OF THE AIR: BLESS YE THE LORD ~

Thanks to Sean and Doolittle's Animal Rescue who came to the rescue of two pigeon squabs whose nest fell out of a tree in our churchyard on Thursday 9th July. Their nest had dried out and crumbled apart in the extreme heat.

~ Jack





ST. GEORGE'S AT THE FLEADH

by Kieran McGlade

Belfast will host the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world's biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, from Sunday 2nd August to Sunday 9th August 2026. A minimum of 700,000 spectators, musicians and visitors from across the world are expected. It is therefore likely to become the biggest cultural event ever held in Belfast.

Breton, Scottish and Welsh Celtic music will also be represented. As well as street music, sessions in pubs and performances in theatres and concert halls, the core of the fleadh will be the competitions. Qualifying competitors from all over the world will showcase the very best of traditional music talent in All-Ireland competitions in several venues.

St George's on Belfast's High Street has an important connection with Irish traditional music. It's first director of music, Edward Bunting, was the first to commit traditional Irish melodies to paper thus becoming the earliest collector of ancient Irish Traditional music.

Between the 11th and 14th July 1792 a festival of harpers was organised in Belfast to rejuvenate interest in the ancient Irish harping tradition. Participants included 10 Irish harpers and 1 Welsh harper. Bunting attended and transcribed the music they played. Traditional Irish music had an aural tradition at risk of disappearing; therefore, Bunting's transcriptions were vital in the preservation of this ancient music and how harps were played.

In the present time, the church hosts the Bunting Festival of Harpers and the Harp Society of Ireland's annual concerts.

Belfast's heritage is greatly enhanced by the music at St George's church. Since the current building's dedication in 1816, St George's has been a bastion of the city's cultural life. We are therefore delighted to be able to offer during the fleadh week free fringe events in the church:

Throughout the fleadh we will have a **Bunting Exhibition** inside the Church entrance, for visitors to learn more.

On **Tuesday 4th August** at 1pm, there will be a short recital by the St George's womens' voices choir, performing a 30-minute programme of traditional music arrangements by composers such as Havelock Nelson, O'Cearbhaill and McGlynn.

Then on **Wednesday 5th August** at 1pm, Mr David Stevens, Director of Music at Brecon Cathedral and former organist at St George's, will give a different take on Traditional Music, with interpretations performed on the Organ.

On **Thursday 6th August** at 7pm, Bal Feirste, a group of Irish/French musicians will perform traditional French set dancing. Like a Céilí, the closeness of the traditions highlights the diversity of music and the camaraderie that all musical experience brings to the musicians and listeners across the world.

Do come along to one or more of these events and enjoy St George's place in history... and we do it all over again because, in 2027, Fleadh Cheoil will be coming back to Belfast!

SUPPORT ST. GEORGE'S BY QR CODE

You can now donate to church funds using the QR code printed here. Simply open the camera on your mobile phone and point it at the QR code. A link will appear on your screen — tap this to open the secure donation page. You may choose a suggested amount or enter your own donation, and decide whether to make a one-off gift or set up a regular monthly contribution.





ST GEORGE'S CHOIR TOUR

by James Little

Many readers will be familiar with the phenomenon of reflecting on a happy event with the memories of it being quite vivid, only then to realise that in fact it was decades ago! Such was the case with Cathy and me in the first week of July when driving down a couple of hours from where we now live to hear the St George's parish choir 'on tour' in Winchester and Salisbury. We thought back to being choir parents ourselves and going with a large party of choir members, parents and others, including those great supporters, the late Raymond and Agnes Cairns to Wells Cathedral where the parish choir sang the services for a week... in July 1999.

Such choir trips are immensely invaluable. The singers have the chance to work intensely over a more concentrated period than usual and also enjoy each other's company, as do choir parents and others who go along. There aren't the distractions of having to drive through heavy traffic to get to a church practice or service on time and then back home to look after the business of normal family pressures. Choir members are stimulated by visiting and singing in famous and impressive buildings in beautiful settings. Doing so brings home to them that what they do every Sunday in St George's is part of something that has been going on for centuries as the Opus Dei is carried out daily in 'Quires and places where they sing'.

One of the memories of that week in Wells was that Chris Gray from Bangor, previously a teenage assistant organist at St George's and at that time having just graduated from Cambridge came along to do all the organ playing. We knew that Chris was very talented but didn't then realise that he would go on to develop such a highly distinguished career, with his latest achievement being appointed to be Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge in 2023.

A more recent young St George's assistant organist, Dónal McCann was heavily involved in most aspects of the 2026 trip. After being an organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge and then two years as assistant organist at New College, Oxford, Dónal moved in 2024 to another prestigious post, that of Director of Chapel Music at Winchester College.

The St George's choir sang in three wonderful places:

Winchester Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral (Evensongs in both instances) and finally gave a lunchtime concert in the chapel of Winchester College.

Winchester is steeped in history and was at one time the fifth largest city in Roman Britain. The original Anglo-Saxon cathedral was started in 660. Just over 200 years later, King Alfred made Winchester the royal centre of the Kings of Wessex and later Anglo-Saxon England. A significant change occurred in 1067 after the Norman conquest and William the Conqueror made Winchester the centre of Anglo-Norman government and power. The current Winchester Cathedral, begun in 1079, is the longest medieval cathedral in the world. Dónal had put David Falconer in touch with the right person in order to arrange for St George's to be able to sing there in place of the 'home' choir and then played the organ for the service too.

Salisbury, about 25 miles away, was a consciously planned city dating from 1220 when the building of the cathedral began, rather than one growing naturally from ancient beginnings. Salisbury's central parts have a very distinct layout, based on a grid pattern. Each block of buildings bounded by four streets is known as a Chequer, and there are twenty of these with historic names, many derived from inns. The cathedral in Salisbury has the tallest spire in England at 404 feet. It has the largest cathedral close in Britain and quite a number of exceptionally beautiful buildings of architectural or historical significance. The Evensong there included Ralph Vaughan Williams' stirring 'Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King'. Again, Dónal was kind enough to play the organ for the entire service.

Everyone in the St George's party must have been inspired by spending time in both Winchester and Salisbury and then definitely finished 'on a high' back in Winchester, this time a few yards away from the cathedral in Winchester College. This famous school was founded in 1382 and still occupies the original site, though with many new buildings added over the years as it now has around 700 pupils. Originally it only had 70 scholars with a choir of 16 'Quiristers' who were up to age 12. The chapel is at the heart of the College's original medieval campus and has a wonderful and rewarding acoustic. For the concert there, the St George's choir was joined by the current Quiristers of Winchester College and Dónal's assistant organist, Ben Cunningham. Each choir sang some pieces on their own and finally joined together conducted by Dónal in Edward Bairstow's thrilling anthem, 'Blessed City, Heavenly Salem'.

I know that St George's parishioners are rightly immensely proud of their choir and grateful to David and Maeve Falconer for everything they have done for the past 11 years to uphold standards in an increasingly challenging environment. For decades now, a significant number of St George's choristers and organists have gone on to impressive careers in the world of music having had their talent stimulated and developed in St George's. All the above aspects were highlighted in Winchester and Salisbury so congratulations and thanks to all concerned. We were so glad to have had the opportunity to be there.



Inside Salisbury Cathedral



Outside Salisbury Cathedral

More photos of
the choir tour can
be found on St
George's
Facebook page.



BARE FEET AND BROKEN HEARTS by Paul McLaughlin

Picking a birthday card for a fella who was about to celebrate his 100th birthday was not the easiest of chores. There are few special cards with the number “100” on them, and even those historical ones, with the highlights of the year of the birth year captured like a newspaper front page, don’t start until 1918. But, luckily for my man in question, a “Happy Birthday from Belfast” did the trick and, hopefully, brought back a few memories.

“Well, here she is Uncle Tommy, Jennymount Mill, still waiting for you after all these years.” I watch the old man’s face crinkle and crease against the sunlight and I see the tears rise in his eyes. They are far away with a thousand thoughts and I intrude with every word. But the silence is deafening, so I blunder on. “That must bring back a few memories,” I said; urging him to break a kind of fast that has lasted more than 70 years. “Yeah, you’re right there, Paul, and not many of them good.” He stood slightly stooped, his shock of white hair swept back in the wind from the dock, but his defiance belied his ninety years. “I remember as a boy of twelve washing the windows up there on the fifth floor. Standing out on that sill with a bucket and chamois leather. I was a shoeless, ‘half-timer’ then and money was scarce, so we all had to work. But oh this was a hard place. A place of bare feet and broken hearts.”

This was his first trip back to Belfast since he was uprooted and taken to New Zealand by an ambitious mother in 1924. He says he has returned to celebrate his 90th birthday and to see the toddler nephew who was given his name. That boy was my late father. I felt like a link in an eternal charm bracelet. The obvious joy in their belated embrace was like a gift from heaven and had the power to lay the unwelcome ghosts of forgotten years. Tommy’s retirement home at that time, among priests and nuns in a modern fold, was tucked away in a quiet corner of a small North Island town; a hayseed town that has never seen a city and just the opposite of what the 17-year-old Tommy knew when he was press-ganged into emigration. He left Belfast’s dockland with a mother he still described as “tough and unforgiving, even for those days” and three sisters who feared her every word. My grandmother, his sister, was left behind to be married. His father had died prematurely young in

an Anzac uniform and the promise of a new life on the other side of the world had proved an irresistible magnet for the forty-something matriarch, Bridget Donaghy. "I don't remember much about my old fella," Tommy said without even a tinge of sadness. "He was at sea most of the time before he left for good and too fond of the drink for a "Dad of the Year" award. We hadn't heard from him for years before the word came that he was dead, so life just went on. His army pension came in handy okay, but the shock of the big move hit all of us." "You know, Paul. We were in the same boat all those years ago. Four of us under 21; that was the big age then, and none of us had a say when it came to leaving Belfast. I left the place I loved as a city boy and ended up a hick. Belfast was a sectarian hole in those years before I left with murder on the streets and hatred in the hearts of its people. I'm just glad that I've lived long enough to see the real hope for a just and lasting peace taking root in my old homeland".

I wanted his voyage to the other side of the world to be an adventure. I wanted his new life to bring wealth and land and opportunity, but I bided my questions. "Bloody awful trip, no Titanic for the likes of us, and an even worse arrival," he said; "My father's uncle owned a farm out in the sticks, but he wanted us only for cheap labour, free labour it was come to think of it, and our new home was a tin hut with no amenities. No light, no water and no hope. We were stuck in the middle of nowhere with literally nothing. As the man says, it wasn't the end of the earth, but you could see it from there". I laughed with embarrassed enthusiasm and urged him along. But, he was a quiet, thinking sort of man and what came out, came out slowly and only after a lot of thought. "I was so homesick for the only place that I had ever known and that Godforsaken place would never be home. I'd tried to get back to Belfast after just a few weeks. Planned everything to perfection. We had use of the pony and trap to get to Mass on a Sunday and the little village church and surrounding houses was the biggest settlement I had seen up until then. It was 12 miles from the farm and the start of my journey home. I slipped out of Mass one morning and headed off for the coast and a ship back to Ireland. I told no-one I was leaving, there was no one to tell who would not have suffered as a result. "Eight hours later, with sore feet and a heavy heart, I heard the first human being I had seen all day tell me that I had been heading further inland. It broke my spirit for a long time and dreams of home became just that."

I think Uncle Tommy hit the nail on the head with that one. An ordinary working man, he never made a million. He worked

hard all his life with little time for sentiment. Yet, his 90th birthday wish after a lifetime was to come home to Sailortown to see his family. Our interview ended with the joy of laughter and tears I posted that Belfast birthday card on the 12th July – it seemed appropriate somehow - just to make sure that the wishes arrived in time for Tommy’s big day on the 23rd of the month. Wishes, just like the memories he shared so unselfishly with me, that came straight from the heart.

~ SOLUTIONS TO THE JUNE DRAGON’S CHALLENGE ~

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

~ QUICK QUIZZ ANSWERS ~

1. Norway
2. Iron
3. Hadrian
4. The Peace of Westphalia
5. Egyptian hieroglyphs



TAXIDERMY

by Francis FitzGibbon

Taxidermy, from the Greek *taxis* (arrangement) and *derma* (skin), is the art and science of preparing, preserving, and mounting the skins of animals to create lifelike representations for scientific study, education, museum display, and commemoration. Modern taxidermy combines anatomy, sculpture, chemistry, and craftsmanship, but its roots stretch back thousands of years.

A traditional figure associated with the craft of taxidermy is St. Bennius, whose feast day is celebrated on the 3rd March, is regarded by many practitioners as the patron saint of taxidermists. Though little is historically documented about him, his symbolic role reflects the long-standing cultural identity of the profession and the sense of community shared among those who preserve the natural world through their work.

The earliest animal preservation practices appear in ancient Egypt, where cats, ibises, crocodiles, and other sacred animals were embalmed using natron, oils, resins, and linen wrappings. Though not taxidermy in the modern sense, these methods demonstrated early mastery of desiccation and chemical preservation. In Mesoamerica, cultures such as the Aztecs preserved animal skins, feathers, and remains for ceremonial and decorative purposes. Quetzal and macaw feathers were incorporated into elaborate headdresses and ritual objects, reflecting a deep cultural connection to the natural world.

Classical Mediterranean accounts, including those attributed to Hanno the Carthaginian, describe preserved animal specimens brought back from expeditions. These examples show that the impulse to retain animal forms—whether for curiosity, prestige, or study—has ancient roots.

During the Renaissance, European elites developed cabinets of curiosity, precursors to modern museums. These collections often included preserved animals, exotic skins, and mounted birds. Techniques were rudimentary: skins were dried, stuffed with straw or rags, and treated with salt or alum. A pivotal figure in this era was Emperor Maximilian II, whose extensive natural history collections included early stuffed animals and exotic specimens. His patronage helped establish the idea that rulers should maintain systematic

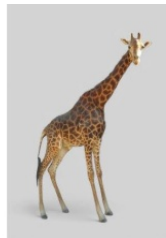
natural collections, influencing later collectors and laying the groundwork for scientific taxidermy.

The Age of Exploration and Scientific Taxidermy began in the 18th and 19th centuries marked a turning point. As European explorers travelled the globe, taxidermy became essential for documenting biodiversity.

Naturalists such as Joseph Banks accompanied Captain James Cook on voyages across the Pacific, collecting and preserving specimens that introduced European science to species previously unknown in the West. On the HMS Beagle, Charles Darwin used taxidermy to study birds and mammals, employing preservatives such as arsenical soap, spirits of wine, and alum. These specimens became foundational to his evolutionary insights. Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer of natural selection, funded his expeditions by preparing and selling thousands of specimens from the Amazon and Malay Archipelago. His meticulous taxidermy provided European scientists with unprecedented access to tropical biodiversity.

Meanwhile, Alexander von Humboldt collected preserved specimens during his expeditions across the Americas, contributing to early biogeography and inspiring generations of naturalists. By the late 19th century, taxidermy had become both a scientific tool and a cultural phenomenon. Museums across Europe and North America commissioned elaborate dioramas to educate the public about global wildlife.

At the same time, taxidermy became deeply intertwined with big-game hunting. Wealthy hunters, explorers, and colonial officers used taxidermy to preserve trophies from expeditions to Africa, India, and the Americas. Shoulder mounts, full-body mounts, and trophy rooms became symbols of status, adventure, and imperial reach. This demand helped professionalise the craft, pushing taxidermists to develop more accurate anatomical forms, better preservatives, and more lifelike poses.



The 20th century saw taxidermy evolve into a regulated profession. In the UK, the Guild of Taxidermists, founded in 1976, promotes high standards, ethical practice, and legal compliance. It supports both professionals and hobbyists, offering training, competitions, and guidance on wildlife law.

Taxidermy today is governed by very strict regulations, covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In UK, the Guild of Taxidermists, was formally established in 1976, in order to standardise professional taxidermy practices at a time when conservation awareness was rapidly growing. Its founding purpose was to provide accredited training, promote ethical acquisition of specimens, and modernise preservation techniques to meet new museum and educational standards. By uniting practitioners under a shared code of conduct, the Guild aimed to elevate taxidermy from a hobbyist craft to a recognised scientific and artistic discipline, ensuring that work produced by its members reflected accuracy, respect for wildlife, and long-term durability.

The practice of taxidermy involves a combination of biological knowledge, technical skill, and artistic interpretation. The first step is field care, where the specimen must be cooled and handled carefully to prevent decomposition. Next comes skinning, during which the taxidermist removes the hide with precision, preserving key anatomical structures. For birds, the wing and leg bones are often retained; for mammals, the skull may be cleaned and reused. The skin is then fleshed and cleaned, with all fat, muscle, and connective tissue removed. This is followed by tanning or chemical preservation, using agents such as borax or commercial tanning solutions. Once preserved, the skin is washed, degreased, and prepared for mounting. The taxidermist creates or selects a form, traditionally made from wood, straw, or wire, but now typically sculpted from polyurethane foam. Clay and epoxy refine facial features and musculature. The preserved skin is then mounted onto the form, positioned, sewn, and groomed. The final stage, finishing, involves painting, detailing, and correcting imperfections to achieve a lifelike appearance. Modern taxidermy blends scientific accuracy with artistic skill, resulting in mounts that serve educational, scientific, and commemorative purposes.

Ireland has produced several notable taxidermists whose work contributed significantly to museums, scientific collections, and private commissions. Among the most respected were James Perry of Belfast, a prominent Victorian practitioner known for high-quality

mounts; the Sheals family, whose multi-generational workshop supplied many of the specimens now held in the Ulster Museum; and Walter Bernard Dyer of Dublin, recognised for his finely crafted bird and mammal work. Other influential figures included Michael J. O'Callaghan of Cork, noted for his meticulous avian mounts, and naturalist A. W. Stelfox, who prepared numerous specimens for the National Museum of Ireland. Their combined contributions form an important part of Ireland's natural history heritage, with many of their mounts still displayed in museums and university collections today.

The largest and most significant taxidermy collection in Europe is held at the Natural History Museum at Tring in Hertfordshire. Founded on the vast private collection of Walter Rothschild, Tring houses tens of thousands of mounted specimens, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and numerous extinct species. Its holdings are unrivalled in Europe for both scale and scientific importance. Other notable collections include the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris and the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, but Tring remains the most comprehensive and historically significant.

Taxidermy today serves a wide range of scientific, educational, artistic, and conservation-focused purposes. In museums, taxidermy provides the public with lifelike representations of animals, helping to teach anatomy, behaviour, ecology, and biodiversity. Victorian dioramas now serve as historical artefacts, illustrating how scientific understanding and cultural attitudes toward wildlife have evolved.

In scientific research, preserved specimens are essential for comparative anatomy, species identification, and long-term ecological studies. This is especially important for endangered or extinct species, where preserved specimens may be the only remaining physical record for example in the case of the Dodo and the Nebraskan Turkey. Taxidermy also plays a role in wildlife forensics, helping investigators identify illegally traded species or determine causes of death. In the arts, contemporary taxidermists contribute to the growing field of wildlife art, exploring themes of nature, mortality, and environmental change. Overall, modern taxidermy supports education, conservation, scientific research, and cultural expression, reflecting its enduring relevance in the study and appreciation of the natural world.

Further Information: **UK Guild of Taxidermists**
www.taxidermy.org.uk



CLOUDS

by Paul McLoughlin

Breakwater clouds too-ing and fro-ing
Like waves in the sky
Ebbing and flowing
Puffed up like pillows
And fringed with fine laces
The candyfloss ramparts
From far distant places.

Continent shapes
Sailing and spinning
Like carousel friendships
That have no beginning
A myriad of myths
With innumerable graces
Disguises for dreamers
With everyman faces.

Covering my eyes
And creating horizons
Like ghosts in the day
They can't be relied on
I lie on my back
And when no sun is shining
In Nimbus and Cirrus
I seek silver lining.



THE CANDLE INDOORS

by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Some candle clear burns somewhere I come by.
I muse at how its being puts blissful back
With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black,
Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.
By that window what task what fingers ply,
I plod wondering, a-wanting, just for lack
Of answer the eagerer a-wanting Jessy or Jack
There God to aggrándise, God to glorify. —

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire
Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? Are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

Poem submitted by Geoffrey May