



WHO'S WHO AT WATTISFIELD

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Our website: www.wattisfieldurc.co.uk

Diss URC: www.dissurc.org.uk

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

“O Breath of life, come sweeping through us
 Revive Your Church with life and power;
 O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us
 And fit Your Church to meet this hour.”

Bessie Porter Head



(Contributions for the Spring edition of Contact to Frances, please, by Sunday February 16th.)



MAILING FROM JO

December 2024

Dear Friends,

There have been a lot of changes these last few months as we move towards the close of 2024. The season is changing and the weather too, and as we experience unexpected circumstances in our own lives, we are faced with the change of loss and endings. Our gardens are closing down ready for winter, and many birds and animals have migrated or entered hibernation. Suddenly life moves at a different pace.



The seasons of Autumn and Winter bring many changes but along with them the season of Advent begins for the Church. Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. Waiting to see what God will do and what He will bring. We celebrate Advent past - waiting for the birth of Jesus; and Advent future - waiting for God to send His Son again, the Second Coming.

Will it be soon, with all the world events that are happening so frequently; wars, disasters, famine, floods, fires? Sometimes the news from around the world sounds apocalyptic and these are signs that are spoken about in the Bible, that point to end times. But nobody knows for certain when or how these events will be, and we do not need to know. We just need to be ready in our own hearts.

Then there is Advent present; what does that mean for us? What does the season of waiting and preparation we are entering into mean for us in our daily lives?



Psalm 27 in the Bible says:

*Teach me how to live, O Lord.
Lead me along the right path,
I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.*

*Wait patiently for the Lord.
Be brave and courageous.
Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.*

The Bible tells us to wait patiently. Patience is a spiritual gift from God. We are to be brave and we are to have courage as we wait. God's goodness never ends and the beauty that is all around us in nature, is always there, even if we have days when we don't see it. New beginnings arrive in many different forms; new relationships, new birth, signs of the coming spring, kindness and generosity from others that bless our life. Good news and stories shared by other people; their achievements and talents to be celebrated.



Advent is about looking forward to what lies ahead but also intentionally living each day to the full, with an expectancy and excitement of what is to come, not just in our own life but in the world around us. Look out for the signs of God's goodness and be thankful. A life of gratitude brings us health, healing and joy. A life of worry and complaint brings only sadness and despondency.

So, as we wait for Christmas during the season of Advent, we celebrate at the Chapel with lighting candles on the Advent ring each Sunday and on the Christingles that we will make at the Carol Service on the 15th December. We will sing carols and share lovely food and fun. Please join us on a Sunday, or at the monthly Saturday Puddle Duck Café.

Everyone is welcome and we look forward to celebrating with you as 2024 closes and a New Year begins

Jo



**CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR SERVICES
IN WATTISFIELD**



December	1st	11am	Revd Robin Pagan, Diss - Holy Communion
	8th	11am	Keith Lewis, Coney Weston
	15th	11am	Carols & Christingle service led by Jo
		3pm	Carol service at St Margaret's
	22nd	10.45	United service at Diss (No service at Wattisfield)
	25th	10am	Christmas Day service - Jo
	29th		No service at Wattisfield



2025



2025

January	5th	11am	Jo
	12th	11am	Revd Robin Pagan, Diss
	19th	11am	United service of Reaffirmation and Holy Communion with St Margaret's led by Jo
	26th	11am	Graham Borley, Hopton
February	2nd	11am	Ron Wade, Thetford - Holy Communion
	9th	11am	Jo
	16th	11am	Pat Mottram, East Harling
	23rd	10.45	Visit to Diss URC
March	2nd	11am	Jo - Holy Communion



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



DECEMBER			
Date	Time	Event	Where
Saturday 7th	7.15pm	'Search for the Light'	Diss URC
Wednesday 11th	1-3pm	CrafTea Time	Connie's Room
Saturday 14th	10.30-1.30	Puddle-Duck Christmas Brunch	URC
Sunday 15th	11am	Carols & Christingles	URC
CHRISTMAS DAY	10-10.45am	Family service	URC
JANUARY			
Tuesday 7th	7.15pm	Church meeting	Connie's Room
Wednesday 8th	1-3pm	Craftea time	Connie's Room
Saturday 18th	10.30am	Puddle-Duck Café	URC
Wednesday 22nd	1-3pm	ScrabbleTea time	Connie's Room
FEBRUARY			
Wednesday 12th	1-3pm	Craftea time	Connie's Room
Saturday 15th	10.30am	Puddle-Duck Café	URC
Sunday 16th	Last date for contributions to Contact		
Wednesday 26th	1-3pm	ScrabbleTea time	Connie's Room

SAD ENDINGS & NEW BEGINNINGS

On 14th October 2024 we lost a very dear friend to Wattisfield Chapel, Mr Gordon Biden, who passed away at the grand old age of 95. His life was celebrated at services held at West Suffolk Crematorium and at Wattisfield Chapel on Friday 8th November, when many tributes, words and memories were shared by the family and friends who attended.

Gordon had been a member at Wattisfield for 4 years. He lived in Diss and when his health started to decline at the end of 2023, it became too difficult for him to attend services, so we began to visit as often as we could and brought the church to him! He gathered his friends and family to a wonderful garden party held at his daughter's house in August to mark his 95th Birthday. We all enjoyed a lovely, sunny day with him and he kept his guests talking until after dark. He was very well cared for in his last months with his family all around him, and so great memories were made for everyone. He will not be forgotten and all his achievements throughout his life are well documented on his headstone, which has been erected in the Chapel graveyard.

Another significant loss to us all is that Thetford United Reformed Church will close at the end of November. Wattisfield and Thetford have worked closely together for many years and we feel the sadness of the members, seeing the church they have belonged to for decades, come to an end. We hope and pray for them that this time won't be a difficult end but a good beginning, with new relationships and experiences ahead. Five of the members from Thetford have decided to transfer their membership to Wattisfield: Ron Wade, Dorothy Marshall, Ann & Willie McGarva and Kathryn Walter, and we look forward to enjoying their company and worshipping with them. We want to welcome them all and pray they will feel at home very quickly.

We have also recently welcomed another two new members to Chapel. Kathleen Wilson has been a part of the congregation since she moved to Wattisfield and joined us for the Christmas Carol Service 2

years ago. Sally Crisp is a long-term resident in the village and has been coming to Puddle Duck Café since it started 3 years ago, and to the Lunch Club before the pandemic. She came along to the Chapel's 370th Anniversary Service in the summer, and she has been with us every Sunday since!

So, welcome to all our new members! We are very privileged to have you join us and we value everything you bring and will continue to bring to the life of the Chapel.

Jo



AN INCREDIBLE TRIBUTE

Thank you very much to all those who kindly donated to the British Heart Foundation in memory of a dear Wife and my Mum Ruth Frost. A total amount of **£1,933.75** was raised including Gift Aid. Thank you again.

Hubb and Sharon



THANKS FROM MARY

I would like to thank everyone who sent cards, flowers, get-well wishes or said a prayer or two for me after my nasty car crash back in September. I really appreciated all of them.

I am pleased to say that I am recovering well, albeit a lot slower than I would like, but making steady progress. Hopefully I will be back to full fitness very soon. Thank you again.

Love from Mary



SHOP EARLY FOR CHRISTMAS?

It was Christmas and the judge was in festive mood as he asked the accused, "What are you charged with?" "Doing my Christmas shopping early," came the reply. "That's not an offence" said the judge. "How early were you doing this shopping?" "Before the store opened", the man replied.



INTO THE NEW YEAR . . .

. . . with a church meeting on **Tuesday January 7th at 7.15pm**
in Connie's Room.



Sunday 19th January 2025 at 11am

Joint Service with St Margaret's Church at the Chapel

To reaffirm the Covenant between the 2 churches
and to share Holy Communion



Join us at Diss URC Taizé Service

on Sunday 16th February 2025 at 3pm

*A quiet, reflective service of music and prayer
and a time to meet friends from the other churches in Diss*

'SEARCH FOR THE LIGHT' AT DISS URC

Saturday 7th December 1.30pm – 5pm

to coincide with

'Light up Diss' when the Christmas lights are turned on in the town.

The church will be transformed into a fun filled 'light' trail for children and adults to follow, with activities and games to help them to search for the light, in its many different forms at Christmas.

There will also be Santa's grotto, run by the council, in the church, with gifts for the children and free hot chocolate for everyone!



PUDDLE DUCK CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

Saturday 14th December 10.30 – 1.30pm

Coffee and Tea followed by a

Jacket Potato Christmas Buffet from 11.30am

Christmas Emporium, Quizzes and Music

Everyone Welcome!



CAROLS & CHRISTINGLES AT THE CHAPEL



**Sunday 15th December at 11am with
mince pies afterwards**



HARVEST HELPS THE FARMERS

Andrew has received a letter from RABI (the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) thanking us for the £260 raised at our Harvest Thanksgiving service and at the October Puddle-Duck café.

The letter goes on to say that the donation "will make a real difference to the farming community. Your support ensures that farmers across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland receive the vital wrap-around support they need, no matter the challenges they face.

As the charity at the heart of farming, RABI offers financial, practical, and emotional assistance. Our dedicated team understands the unique complexities that comes with farming and provides invaluable advice, emotional health support, help with paperwork, and so much more."

Angelina Sahota



SHELLS AND SHARDS IN GUERNSEY

We touched down at Guernsey Airport on the afternoon of 4 October 2024 for a one-week holiday. I had always wanted to visit Guernsey, the second largest of the Channel Islands, partly due to collecting their stamps, giving me some insight into the history, culture, geography and attractions of the island. We stayed in the Old Government House Hotel, once the residence of The Governor of Guernsey, sited in the heart of St. Peter Port. Our room had a wonderful view across the harbour, with Castle Cornet standing at the harbour entrance, and looking out to the smaller islands of Herm and Sark, which we visited on two wonderful day trips.

The beautiful Candie Gardens were just a couple of hundred yards from the hotel, set in the hillside overlooking the sea. The parkland there houses two imposing statues, of Victor Hugo and Queen Victoria – suitably separated as Victor Hugo was apparently rather critical of the Queen! These gardens also house the Guernsey Museum, well worth a visit and most informative. Next to the museum is a theatre where The Beatles performed two concerts on 8 August 1963 – as commemorated in mural style on the

outside wall. Other attractions in St. Peter Port include a bustling market square, a wide variety of shops and restaurants, Victor Hugo's house, a Victorian shop and parlour, the Guernsey tapestry and various museums documenting Guernsey's past as a strategic military point, particularly during the German occupation in the Second World War. I spent a couple of happy hours (and several pounds!) in an antique shop in the town, where I had espied a couple of sheets of Victorian stamps in the window on our first evening there. Inside, amongst the furniture, pictures, china, glassware, books, and general ephemera, was a huge array of philatelic delights to browse and choose from, and in long chats with Andy, the owner, I discovered he too is a Crystal Palace supporter, even though being Guernsey born and bred. Small world!

Whilst Guernsey has no trains, the bus service is brilliant – frequent, efficient, punctual and cheap. A two-day ticket allowed us to tour the island, hopping on and off to visit beaches, forts, small towns and places of interest (including more restaurants!). Saumarez Park was one such place, with a Victorian walled garden, the fascinating Folk and Costume Museum, and a gallery exhibition of exquisite traditional Japanese embroidery in silk.

One of my favourite visits was a couple of miles out of town on the No 71



bus. Nestled in a small wooded hillside is The Little Chapel. True to its name this building is certainly small – the chapel measures a mere 16x9 foot (and claims to be the smallest Church in the world) – but it is a stunning sight. Built in the style of the grotto and Basilica at Lourdes, in France, The Little Chapel is entirely clad, outside and in, with a multitude of pottery and glass shards, pebbles and seashells in mosaic-like splendour. These glint and glimmer in the sunshine, giving the Chapel in its woodland setting an air of rising from the pages of a

somewhat surreal nursery tale.

Brother Deodat Antoine, from the Order of Brothers founded by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in France, arrived in Guernsey in December 1913, and decided to create a miniature replica of Lourdes grotto and Basilica. His first version was soon built, with completion in March 1914. However, it was criticised as being too small (just 9x5 foot!) – so he demolished it overnight

on the night following its completion. His second version was finished in July 1914, and was to be blessed after the first World War by the Bishop of Portsmouth in September 1923. However, the entrance was rather narrow, and the somewhat portly Bishop could not fit through the doorway! So Brother Deodat had to demolish it once again, and in November 1923 set about building the third iteration, which is the one that stands today. In the hillside, integrated with the Chapel, lie a 'honeycomb' of small shrines and the crypt. These are very low-ceilinged, as underlying water mains prevented deeper digging. In each there is an altar dedicated to Mary, mother of Jesus.

The Chapel is a colourful, enigmatic and rather beautiful building; despite its bold and bizarre decoration. It is a place for peace, quiet, meditation, prayer and spirituality. The Chapel is not consecrated, as it is a model, but has been blessed. Today it falls under the care of The Little Chapel Foundation, given by the Brothers of the Order of De la Salle in 2017, and placed in trust for the people of Guernsey. To add to Deodat's work, further fragments of china, pottery and glass were brought in by local people, and through gifts from across the world, including some external walls in the terracing which were provided by Wedgwood Pottery in Bristol. We searched among the multitude of makes; but did not spot any from Watson's Pottery in Wattisfield – as yet!

Much further restoration and expansion (of the facilities, not of the Chapel dimensions) continues, very much a community project. Outside, in the landscaped gardens, is a Way of the Cross, with the Stations of the Cross depicted on handsome modern metal plaques.

It was a delightful afternoon. If you ever get to Guernsey, it's well worth a visit.

Incidentally, The Little Chapel is depicted on Guernsey stamps from time to time, and I was able to purchase, in presentation pack, a mint set of four views, issued to commemorate the centenary of the current Chapel in 2023, from the Guernsey Post Office. An aesthetic addition to my collection, and a lasting reminder of a memorable holiday.

Adrian Black

(Many thanks Adrian for your fascinating and informative account – and perhaps you could take some Wattisfield Ware next time!)