

St James's Day through the years



The Sunday School

Hampton Hill has always celebrated its Patronal Festival much more than many other parishes. This is probably because we remember how much the whole parish owes to the church and especially its first incumbent, Revd Fitz Wygram.

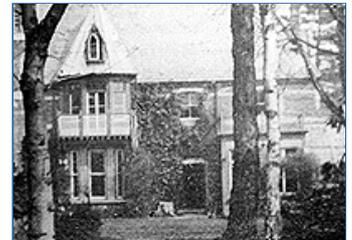
The 1892 September issue of the Parish Magazine reports on the reason our church is called St James's: *"Our annual Festival is a great day with us evidence that we are united together as a community, which claims to have its foundation resting upon the rock of the Church of Christ. Hence has been chosen as our watchword, the name of one of the foremost of her first*

bulwarks, the first martyr of the apostles, St James. Our Festival, perhaps, is the time above all others that we should be endeavouring to preserve and consolidate the unity of spirit which should exist in all communities" James appears to have been perhaps the first leader of the Jerusalem church, around which the very first Christians gathered to be nurtured, protected and encouraged in their faith.

From the earliest reports about St James's Day in the 1880s, it appears that the celebrations took part over two or even three days. What actually happened and when it happened seemed to vary from year to year but there was always one afternoon put aside mainly for the children. Their day started with their teachers, at the schools in School Road, the girls in clean white pinafores. Between five and six hundred children were formed into line and marched, following the Hampton Hill Brass Band, through the bunting filled streets to the church. A short but enjoyable service was held in the packed church with the children, having previously learned the songs, happily joining in.

After the service the procession was once more formed and the children marched round the race course staked out in the vicarage grounds, which at that time extended down the whole length of St James's Road. They then filed into circles of seats, arranged respectively for the boys, girls, and infants. The hundred flags, which had been carried in the procession, now decorated the race course and other parts of the vicarage grounds. As soon as grace had been sung, the children set to work in *"good earnest"* on the bread and butter, buns, cake, and tea.

At the end of tea, grace was sung again and the children then scattered in all directions to take part in the various activities and games arranged for them, including Punch and Judy, coconut shies, bell in the ring, jumping and tug-of-war. Some of the teachers *"kept guard over the swings"*, even then health and safety being important! There were races arranged according to age and sex in which every child in the school could try for a prize: wheelbarrow races, three-legged races, sack races and spoon races. There were maypole dances, recitations, presentations and prize giving, and the children put on drilling exhibitions.



The original vicarage

During the afternoon there were informative talks about mission and missionary sales of work including sales of plants and flowers. The adults also enjoyed the afternoon with various games including bobbing for sugar plums, bell in the ring, the basket trick, and quintain (jousting). The band played during the intervals and towards evening many people started dancing, *"delighted to trip it gaily en the green sward, when the shadows of evening fell"*. At that time more than 1,200 people generally attended the St James's Day celebrations!

On Sunday the celebrations were *"carried into God's House"* with festival services in the beautifully decorated church and they were always very well attended. *"We were enabled to join together in the spirit of love and unity, and to offer our united service of praise and thanksgiving unto God."* There were usually two morning celebrations of the Holy Communion and a choral service in the evening.



The Flower Festival in 1991

Revd Brunt introduced an *"At Home"* after the Patronal Festival Evensong in July 1952: *"After the St James's Tide evening service on July 25th, my wife and I will be 'at home' to members of the council and congregation at the Vicarage, and shall be very glad to see as many there as do not mind a squash!"* After eighteen years of this arrangement in 1969 a different way of celebrating St James's Day was introduced when, after the Parish Communion, there was the breakfast as usual and then another social gathering in the afternoon. The evening service was brought forward to 6.00pm so that it was not too late for the children.

Over the decades celebrations were gradually scaled down with St James's Day being held on just the Sunday nearest the actual date of 26th July. The morning service arrangements were as usual with 8.00am Holy Communion and 9.30am Parish Communion, and in the afternoon there was a special festival service followed by a celebration tea in the garden. At the beginning of Revd Brian Leathard's incumbency in 1991, the last weekend of July was marked by a special three day celebration, a Flower Festival, Open Day, exhibitions, trips up the spire, music in church, a barbecue and much else. On the Sunday the whole Parish worshipped together at 11.00am and then continued the celebrations with a shared lunch in the vicarage garden. 'Beating the Bounds by Bike' was introduced in the following year or so and ran for many years. It filled the gap between the service and lunch, the latter sometimes being a barbecue in the vicarage gardens and sometimes a picnic in Bushy Park. In July 2002 there was a [Festival Weekend](#) to celebrate not only our Saint's day but also to launch our new Jubilee year project - 'Opening our Doors', our project to develop the West

Porch.

St James's Day continued to be a special focus in the year. It celebrated our Patron Saint and also symbolised the relationship of our church and community that has existed since they were founded together over 150 years ago. From about 2007 the single main service of the day was at 11.00am and was generally a communion service. This was followed by a shared lunch of some kind in the vicarage gardens, after which the tower was open for visitors to explore and have a go at ringing the bells. There was usually a bouncy castle or slide and other games for the children. During 2013 our [150th Anniversary](#) celebrations were an opportunity to celebrate the beginnings of St James's, but also to do something now, with a legacy for the future. This was a significant year owing much to the impact of our first vicar, Revd Fitzroy John Fitz Wygram. A deeply spiritual man whose approach and own life displayed a practical spirituality, he not only preached the good news but also put it into practice. This has been a feature of the life of this church ever since.

The above information covers the period from when any records could be found until November 2016. This was when Revd Derek Winterburn became St James's tenth vicar and from this time onwards any new information can be found on the main site.

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