



Brian Timms sporting a flynet whilst reading his favourite publication on the beach. Photo by Sandra Timms

Christmas, Aussie style

By Brian Timms

As we sit beside our swimming pools at Christmas, sipping wine, we'd just like you to know we are thinking of you. Don't get us wrong: Finchley exiles in Australia still love their birthplace. It's just that Down Under all we do with ice at Yuletide is cool our drinks.

Temperatures range from 30 to 40C, skies are blue and we try not to think about possible electrical storms, bushfires, floods, hailstorms or cyclones.

As most of the population of 20 million live near the coast, beaches are packed with revellers from a mass of ethnic origins, tossing prawns and meat on barbecues.

But wait, Finchley tradition lives on. "Our Christmas is not that different to what we had in England. I still make my own puddings and we have roast turkey," says Hazel Astley, née Spooner, once of Leopold Road, now of Melbourne.

"We still eat turkey with all its trimmings," says Shirley Dinham, née Crane, of Brackenbury Road, now of Balingup, West Australia, confessing she did eat salad at Christmas for some years before "scurrying back to my roots".

But instead of huddling round the fire, Shirley and Hazel now eat in the comfort of controlled temperatures. "We sit around in funny hats and air conditioning."

Churches in Australia are

packed at Christmas, with about 70% of the population being Catholic, Anglican or Lutheran.

Keeping in touch

Around a dozen of us ex-Finchleyites in Oz bond with each other with phone calls and snow scene cards, discussing issues of interest, for instance park keeping in Cherry Tree Wood or the upgrade of East Finchley library.

Some claim a factor in our departure to new lands was the shock of the BBC radio episode in which Grace Archer died in a stable fire in 1955. Now we find clutching a copy of *THE ARCHER* at Christmas a great comfort.

But even sun, sea, sand and surf can't tempt some ex-Finchley girls to the beach. "The sand is so hot it burns your feet. And you cool off in the sea only to wonder if there are sharks about," said Hazel. "Walking across red hot sand, with or without sandals, is like taking your life in your hands," said Shirley.

Then there are the flies. Anyone seen my fly net? Oh, what have we done?



Fireworks at the display at Martin Primary School last month, supported by the Finchley Development Trust. Photograph by Roger Chapman.

Fireworks fiesta

A dizzying display of fireworks filled the night sky over Martin Primary School playing field as hundreds of spectators enjoyed the celebrations on 5 November.

The 25-minute show was a huge success with the crowd. The panoramic view from the field meant that spectators could also see dozens more rockets shooting high above Muswell Hill and Friern Barnet - a magical sight.

What do the clergy do at Christmas?

By Daphne Chamberlain

What is Christmas like for East Finchley's clergy? *THE ARCHER* has discovered our very own skating minister, a pal of Jeeves and Wooster, and a Santa who wipes his feet on newspaper.

Father Tony Pellegrini, from St Mary's Catholic Church, is still recovering from last year, when Christmas Eve fell on a Sunday. "Ordinary Sundays mean three Masses, but last year there were eight over the two days of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day! When it was all over, I was ready to drop. This year I think I won't inflict myself on friends. Instead, I'll curl up with a PG Wodehouse favourite. The man was a genius. With Bertie Wooster, Aunt Dahlia, Augustus Fink-Nottle, and, of course, the incomparable Jeeves, I won't lack for cheerful company."

Simon Dyke, at East Finchley Baptist Church, loves decorating the tree with Christmas music blasting out of the stereo. "The songs we sing at Christmas are focused on the birth of Christ and all that it means for us as Christians. Without Jesus we would be without hope. That's what makes Christmas so very special, the most joy-filled of all the Christian festivals." Part of the joy in his own family is his impersonation of Santa the night before, in exchange for sherry, a carrot, a mince-pie, and footsteps painted on newspaper leading from the fireplace.

For the **Rev. Michael Giles, of East Finchley Methodist Church,** the four weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas Day is like getting ready for a big party. "Magic moments" include Christmas socks hanging above the fireplace, a Boxing Day walk, an Advent Candle lit at each Sunday lunch leading up to Christmas, and ice skating in the open air at a famous London landmark. "I love leading the Christmas Eve 11.15pm service, where in the dark of the night you celebrate the birth of Jesus, 'Light of the World'".



The Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch (often known as *The Skating Minister*). Artist - Sir Henry Raeburn, c.1795.

Christmas Services in East Finchley

Holy Trinity Church

- Sunday 16 December, 6pm, Advent carol service by candlelight.
- Monday 24 December, 6pm, Nativity Play and Blessing of the Crib; 11.30pm, Midnight Mass.
- Tuesday 25 December, 10am, Parish Communion.

St Mary's Catholic Church

- Sunday 16 December, 2pm, Elderly People's Christmas Dinner.
- Tuesday 18 December, 7.30pm, Penitential Service and Confessions.
- Saturday 22 December, 9.50am, Morning Prayer and Mass, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; Confessions at 10.30am and 6pm; Vigil Mass at 6.30 pm
- Sunday 23 December, Mass at 8.30am, 10am and 12 noon; Carol Service at 6.30 pm, followed by refreshments in the parish hall.
- Monday 24 December, 9.50am, Morning Prayer and Mass; 6.30pm, Children's Christmas Mass; from 11.15pm, Midnight Mass, preceded by Carols.

- Tuesday 25 December, Mass at 8.30am, 10am and 12 noon.
- Wednesday 26 December, 9.50am, Morning Prayer and Mass.

All Saints' Church

- Sunday 23 December, 6.30pm, Christmas Carol Service followed by mulled wine and mince pies.
- Monday 24 December, 3pm, Children's Service with Carols; 11.30pm, Midnight Mass of Christmas with Procession of the Christ Child and Blessing of the Crib.
- Tuesday 25 December, 8am, Mass of the Dawn; 10am, Mass of Christmas Day with Carols.

East Finchley Baptist Church

- Sunday 16 December, 11am - 12.15pm, All Ages Together Carol Service (with presentation by the children and young people); 6pm - 7.15pm, Carols by Candlelight.
- Sunday 23 December, 11am - 12 noon, Christmas Carol Service.
- Tuesday 25 December, 10.30am - 11.15am, Christmas Morning Family Service.

East Finchley Methodist Church

- Sunday 2 December, 10.30am, Advent Sunday - lighting of the Advent candle ring.
- Sunday 9 December, 10.30am, Gift Service for National Children's Home.
- Sunday 16 December, 10.30am, Christingle service; 6.30pm, Carols by Candlelight service.
- Monday 24 December, 11.15pm, Christmas Eve Midnight Service of Holy Communion.
- Tuesday 25 December, 10.30am, Christmas Day Celebration service.
- Monday 31 December, 11.15pm, New Year's Eve Watchnight Service.

Pharmacies opening over holiday period

- **Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 December,** 11am-12.30pm: CW Andrews, 32 High Road, East Finchley. Telephone: 020 8883 1559.
- **Tuesday 1 January,** 11am-12.30pm: MCRX Ltd, 800 High Road, North Finchley. Telephone: 020 8445 0085.

Opening hours for East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact

Contact will be closed from Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 December and Tuesday 1 January. There will be someone in the office as usual on the mornings of Thursday 27, Friday 28 and Monday 31 December. Normal service resumes on Wednesday 2 January.

Please try to phone between 10am and 1pm. Tel. 020 8444 1162. If the phone is engaged, BT will ask you to wait for a few minutes and then will transfer you to the message service if the phone remains engaged. Do please leave a message, remembering to include your name.