

January 1, 2022

CNI
CHURCH
NEWS
IRELAND



Image of the day - Canterbury Cathedral

Overview

+Image of the day

Canterbury Cathedral

+News Reports

Tutu a man of courage and love, says former C of I Primate
Majority of Scotland presbyteries vote in favour of allowing clergy to perform same-sex marriages

Vatican pays tribute to 22 church workers murdered in 2021

Apply Bible principal of fair pay to farmers – C of I minister

Put climate crisis on parish agendas, urges Archbishop Farrell

Most popular stories of 2021 from Church of Scotland

Extreme weather driven by climate change cost the world billions in 2021

+Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Book - Solider, Spy and Monk - the remarkable life of Henry Coombe-Tennant of Neath and The Welsh Guards

+Poem for today

The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman

News Reports

Tutu a man of courage and love, says former C of I Primate

A former Church of Ireland Primate and Archbishop of Armagh has paid tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who died on Sunday aged 90.

Lord Robin Eames said his former Anglican Church colleague had done important reconciliation work in South Africa, Alf McCreary reports in the Belfast Telegraph.

He added: “Desmond and I became friends when we attended our first Lambeth Conference together as bishops years ago.

“Since then, we often communicated to compare notes on reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland and South Africa.

“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, in which he played such a leading role, forged the path for an end to violence through its emphasis on how to deal with legacy, and he often talked of the lessons it could hold for Northern Ireland.

“Desmond was small in physical stature but a giant in influence. I recall our conversations on the work of the church and on how he struggled to convince his people of the hope for a better future based on forgiveness.



“His courage was based on a life of prayer and a steadfast belief in the presence of a God of love. In private, he was a man of great humility.

“I valued his interest in the Irish peace process and his encouragement to see the opportunities for Christian witness in the face of violence.

“Humour was rarely absent from his conversations, and his wonderful memory for names and events gave him a genuine human touch.

“When history is written, Desmond Tutu will undoubtedly be the key figure of Anglican and Christian opposition to injustice and oppression.

“May this superb man of courage and love rest in peace.”

In the end what matters is not how good we are but how good God is. Not how much we love Him but how much He loves us. And God loves us whoever we are, whatever we've done or failed to do, whatever we believe or can't.

Archbishop
Desmond Tutu
1931-2021



Lord Eames was the Church of Ireland Primate and Archbishop of Armagh from 1986 to 2006, some of the most difficult years of the Troubles. In 2007, he was appointed as the joint chairman, along with Denis Bradley, of the Consultative Group on the Past. He also had a distinguished career in the worldwide Anglican Communion within which he regularly met Archbishop Tutu at successive Lambeth Conferences.

Courtesy Belfast Telegraph 31/12/2021



Majority of Scotland presbyteries vote in favour of allowing clergy to perform same-sex marriages

A majority of votes in 41 Church of Scotland presbyteries are in favour of allowing Ministers / Deacons to perform same-sex marriages.

January 1, 2022

The final count is 30 presbyteries in favour and 11 against/tied. All of the presbyteries have now voted ahead of the 31st of December 2021 deadline.

Since the presbytery votes are in favour, a report will be submitted to the General Assembly for May 2022. About three-quarters of Scotland are in favour of allowing same-sex marriage licensing. However, it will only become Church law in Scotland if the General Assembly agree to the legislation too. Link -

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/articles/general-assembly-approves-draft-legislation-on-same-sex-marriage>

Vatican pays tribute to 22 church workers murdered in 2021

In situations of extreme poverty, war or civil tensions, 22 Catholic church workers were murdered in 2021, according to Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Presenting its annual list of missionaries killed during the year Dec. 30, the news agency explained, “We use the term ‘missionary’ for all the baptized, aware that ‘in virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.’”

None of the 13 priests, one religious brother, two religious sisters and six laypeople “carried out striking feats or actions,” Fides said, but they gave witness to their faith “in

January 1, 2022

impoverished, degraded social contexts, where violence is the rule of life, the authority of the state was lacking or weakened by corruption and compromises and in the total lack of respect for life and for every human right.”

“From Africa to America, from Asia to Europe, they shared daily life with their brothers and sisters, with its risks and fears, its violence and its deprivations, bringing in the small daily gestures Christian witness as a seed of hope,” Fides said.

The 22 include Nigerian Father John Gbakaani Yaji of the Diocese of Minna, who was killed Jan. 15 by armed men who attacked his car; his body was found near the road, tied to a tree, Fides said.

And French Father Olivier Maire, provincial superior of the Montfort Missionaries, who was killed Aug. 9 in the provincial house of Saint Laurent sur Sèvre, in France, by a Rwandan migrant he had offered housing to.

The women on the Fides’ list are Sacred Heart Sisters Mary Daniel Abud and Regina Roba, who were killed in August, along with several other people, when their chartered bus was attacked on the road between Juba and Nimule, South Sudan.

In publishing the list, Fides said it was not looking only at church workers killed in traditional mission territories and it was not proclaiming any of them as “martyrs” in the technical sense of having been killed out of hatred for their faith.

January 1, 2022

While not included in the count, the Fides report also paid tribute to the 35 “innocent civilians, all of whom were Catholic,” who died Dec. 24, reportedly at the hands of the Myanmar military in Mo So village in Kayah state as they were fleeing fighting in the area. The victims, including elderly women and children, were shot and then their bodies were burned.

“The fact that the bodies of those killed, burned, and mutilated were found on Christmas Day makes this appalling tragedy even more poignant and sickening,” said Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon. “As the rest of the world celebrated the birth of Christ with joy, the people of Mo So village suffered death, shock and destruction.”

Courtesy CNS and Crux

Apply Bible principle of fair pay to farmers – C of I minister

A Church of Ireland minister has said that the biblical principles of fair pay and fair trade should be applied to farming.

Reverend Lester Scott, who is based in Co. Carlow, is the rector of the Fenagh-Myshall-Aghade-Ardoyne group of parishes in the Diocese of Leighlin, Ashley O’Brien reports in Agriland.

The minister, who grew up on a dairy farm in Cashel, Co. Tipperary, said he recently wrote on the subject of farming from a Christian perspective, including Bible extracts.



“People from a non-farming background don’t understand what it’s like to be a farmer,” he told Agriland.

Rev. Scott said he is very aware of the pressures facing the sector, with one dairy farmer recently telling him that his fertiliser bill for the coming year is €40,000.

Fair pay

The minister said that the Bible is clear that people should be paid for their work and if the principle was applied in the farming community, it would mean that farmers would at least get the national minimum wage of €10.20 per hour.

January 1, 2022

Rev. Scott said that this would translate to almost €25,500 per year based on a 48 hour working week; he noted that most farmers work longer than that.



He said the figure would be in line with the average farm income for 2021 outlined by Teagasc.

“The reality today is the only reason why most Irish farms are still in existence is because there is another source of income coming in the door from the outside employment of a spouse or partner,” Scott said.

The cleric claimed that the rise in material and production costs had little to do with Covid-19 or Brexit but the “greedy racketeering of individuals and economic actors who are manipulating current contingencies for the proverbial quick buck”.

Fair trade

Rev. Scott also believes that a fair trade symbol, similar to that used for farmers in the developing world, should be

January 1, 2022

applied to produce here to show farmers got a fair price for their work.

“Farmers who build up productive dairy herds, while cognisant of the necessary adaptations pertaining to climate change; farmers who raise fine livestock, and yet for all that end up losing money on all their efforts.

“There is something inherently wrong, inequalitarian and unethical about that,” the minister said.

“If there can be a Fairtrade mark to encourage us to buy tea, coffee and fruit in the knowledge that farmers worldwide have received a fair reward, could there not also be a Fairtrade mark here?”

“If we had fair trade in our own country, many of the current problems and fears about the future would disappear,” Scott noted.

Courtesy Agriland 30/12/2021

Put climate crisis on parish agendas, urges Archbishop Farrell

Cap - Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell told The Tablet that the climate crisis is both environmental and human.
John McElroy

Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin has urged parishes to put climate action on their parish council's agenda as a new year's resolution and to see what changes

January 1, 2022

parishes can make in 2022 in response to the climate crisis, Sarah McDonald writes in The Tablet.

Last August, Archbishop Farrell published his first pastoral letter as Archbishop of Dublin. The Cry of the Earth – the Cry of the Poor addressed the climate crisis just ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow and highlighted how environmental degradation is linked to poverty, suffering and migration.

Speaking to The Tablet at Christmas, the Archbishop said the pastoral letter had been “well received” and had turned out to be a more comprehensive text than had been originally envisaged.

“The more I worked on it, the more I began to appreciate the profound interrelatedness of the various dimensions of the climate crisis.”

The 67-year-old who is almost a year at the helm of the largest Irish diocese cited the direct link between clean water and attendance at school as an example of this interrelatedness as well as how the deterioration of the oceans has a direct effect on all.

“Without the oceans our planet would be as inhospitable as Mars: no meadows, no insects, no forests, no flowers, no birds, no animals, no humans. The title of the pastoral letter itself is the key realisation of this: the cry of the earth (climate change and all that comes in its wake) is intimately related with issues of injustice, exploitation, and exclusion,” he said.



Highlighting how the industrialisation of agriculture and the drive towards monoculture have wreaked havoc on the environment, he said this resulted in soils being depleted, sometimes in whole regions, while the ground became less productive to the point of desertification.

“This leads to mass migration of people in search of food. The climate crisis is both an environmental crisis and a human crisis. It affects our planet and our future, and has its roots in the way that we approach poverty and in the way that we treat the vulnerable and those on the margins of life, both here in Ireland, and across the world - not just in the developing world, but the hidden poor and disadvantaged in the developed world as well.”

“It affects every aspect of our lives, from the clothes we wear, to food we eat, to the cars we drive, to the options we

January 1, 2022

make for the types of homes we live in, and it affects everyone: urban dwellers, those who live on the land, and everyone in between.”

Archbishop Farrell, who is a former president of St Patrick’s College Maynooth, emphasised the importance of an “inclusive approach” to tackling the crisis because “an ideological approach will alienate the vast majority of people and will bear no fruit. Zealotry and commitment are not the same thing. It is vital that we seek an approach that empowers all people to take this necessary road.”

He also emphasised that the world is God’s gift to all God’s creatures.

“Seeing the world as God’s gift changes our perspective and renders possible all sorts of change. That is why significant sections of the pastoral letter are invitations to prayer for our wounded planet and the wonders of the extraordinary world, full of beauty and mystery where God has put us, in order that we may have life and have it to the full.”

He added, “True prayer is an encounter with reality, not a flight from reality” and he paid tribute to Pope Francis, who he said is “offering us wonderful leadership in caring for our common home” and has made care for creation “a central element in his ministry”.

Asked about his first year as Archbishop of Dublin and whether he was hopeful for the future of the diocese, he explained that the last year “has been busy, getting to know the people, priests, parishes and members of the many religious congregations in the Archdiocese. The warmth of

January 1, 2022

the traditional Dublin welcome, as well as the support of both the people and the priests that I have experienced in so many parishes during the past year, has been truly uplifting and assuring.”

“It has also been a hope-filled time, the initiation of the renewal journey for the diocese, as well as the announcement by Pope Francis of the synodal way. Hope is crucial in every person’s life, and hope is crucial in life’s faith dimension, because we believe that our Church is already being changed according to the plan of God. As Pope Francis constantly reminds us, hope ‘is able to see a tomorrow; hope is the door that opens onto the future.’ Hope changes everything.”

The strategic plan in development for Dublin seeks to address the collapse in revenue and the challenge of declining priest numbers as well as the drop in Mass attendances. The 'Building Hope Task Force Report' highlights three elements for a pastoral strategy – one of which is engagement between the diocese and individual parish communities.

“I look with hope to the future as all the baptised are called to deepen their faith, give witness to it and share it with others. We live our faith as a community. Like the air we share, which is intensely personal and profoundly communal, so faith has both essential personal and communal dimensions. To develop and mature, faith needs both dimensions; they go hand-in-hand.”

He noted that the taskforce report had noted: “true hope is best experienced when we support one another. To flourish

January 1, 2022

it requires solidarity which expresses itself in life-giving communities where everyone can participate in decision making.”

In the handing on of the faith, two of the most important communities, he believes, are the family and the parish.

“My years of experience at parish and diocesan level underpin the value of family. We have to constantly evangelise and share the good news, that is our Christian faith but there is also a huge role for re-evangelisation in our parishes especially amongst young people and families.”

“We need to re-discover anew the power, the consolation, the hope, and the new horizons that God gives us in Christ. As you can appreciate, this is not a road into the past, but a way into the new future.”

Archbishop Farrell believes a discernment of the Spirit will be required to find a way forward.

“As Christians we are called to bring Good News to our world, to accompany people at all stages of life’s journey towards an encounter with Jesus Christ.”

“Notwithstanding the immensity of these challenges, some of which have become even more stark as a result of the coronavirus crisis, I am hopeful for the future of the diocese because there are many people of faith in our parishes who constantly pray, are actively involved in their faith communities, do not deny their Catholic tradition and identity, and who have an understanding of the Church that is different from the one propagated by popular knowledge.”

January 1, 2022

“From my pastoral visits it is clear that Catholicism has a firm centre in the parishes of Dublin, but also peripheral circles which are culturally Catholic.”

Courtesy The Tablet, 30 December 2021

[[] <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14849/put-climate-crisis-on-parish-agendas-urges-archbishop>]

Most popular stories of 2021 from Church of Scotland

“As the second year impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic comes to a close, we look back on some of our most popular stories that have filled us with hope and joy during these difficult times”.

Sunflower field of hope

Visitors enjoyed days out at the 'Field of Hope' - a fundraising community project spearheaded by East Neuk Trinity Church linked with St Monans.

From raising our voices on caring for creation during this year's COP26 events to looking after the most vulnerable in our communities;



January 1, 2022

congregations across the Church of Scotland have rallied together to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, share in the joy of new believers, respond to human need through loving service, challenge unfairness and violence in society and generate substantial sums of money for charity in the process.

Pioneer minister called to serve the veterinary community

The Church of Scotland called its first ever dedicated minister for the veterinary community, Rev Allan Wright, who is a working vet himself. He hopes to be the social and spiritual glue that binds together people who work in clinical practice in the north-east of England.

Kirk a step closer to blessing same-sex marriages

Commissioners at this year's General Assembly



January 1, 2022

approved draft legislation which brings the Kirk a step closer to allowing ministers of Word and Sacrament and deacons to marry same-sex couples if they wish.

All Aboard – Moderator takes the helm of canal boat and sets sail

Lord Wallace took the helm of a new canal boat part-owned by Polwarth Parish Church in Edinburgh. Lord Wallace piloted the 'All Aboard' down a stretch of the Union Canal during a visit to learn more about how the church is using the vessel for community outreach work.

The Duke of Cambridge visits Kirk-supported charities in Edinburgh

During a week-long visit to Scotland, in his role as Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, Prince William spent time visiting a CrossReach care home, Queen's Bay Lodge, and the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh.

Church of Scotland Investors Trust announces disinvestment from oil and gas

After years of passionate debate, the General Assembly heard that the Investors Trust of the Church of Scotland has disposed of all its oil and gas shares, completing a switch over two years into sectors with better investment prospects.

'Wonderful' news as Guild project fundraising surpasses £638,000

The Church of Scotland Guild announced that members raised more than £638,000 throughout the 2018-2021



fundraising cycle, which was shared between their designated projects.

Harry, 81, completes epic cycle to raise £9,000 for Bothwell church

Harry Marsh, a church elder, raised £9,000 after completing a virtual bike ride between Land's End

and John O'Groats. Harry pedalled for a total of 62 hours in his garage to complete the 951-mile route which saw him hitting speeds of up to 40mph on downhill stretches.

Kirk announces winners of photography competition — 'Hidden in Plain Sight'

To mark the start of Lent, former Moderator Very Rev Dr Martin Fair launched a photo competition, with both children and adults alike invited to send in their photographs showing the Cross in our everyday surroundings. The winner in each category was awarded a gift to the charity of their choice.

January 1, 2022

'Field of Hope' raise £6,500 for good causes in Fife

A Fife church spearheaded a community project featuring hundreds of thousands of sunflowers and raised more than £6,500 for good causes. The money raised went on to benefit 15 local charities and groups and was generated through donations from visitors to the 'Field of Hope' on the banks of the Firth of Forth over three weekends in September.

Church of Scotland marks COP26 weekend with special services and activism

Church of Scotland congregations across the country took part in COP26 activities, including joining in the day of mass mobilisation and hosting an ecumenical service at Glasgow Cathedral with participants from all around the world.

Extreme weather driven by climate change cost the world billions in 2021

Study identifies ten extreme events, influenced by climate change, that each caused \$1.5 billion damage or more.

Hurricane Ida which struck the US in August cost \$65 billion while floods which ravaged Europe in July racked up \$43 billion in losses.

Floods, cyclones and drought also killed and displaced millions across the globe in places which have done little to cause climate change.



New Savanta ComRes poll shows UK public think climate change should be top priority for Government in 2022 above healthcare and the economy.

A new report by Christian Aid, Counting the cost 2021: a year of climate breakdown identifies 15 of the most destructive climate disasters of the year.

Ten of those events cost \$1.5 billion or more. Most of these estimates are based only on insured losses, meaning the true financial costs are likely to be even higher. Among them is Hurricane Ida which struck the US in August costing \$65 billion and killing 95 people. July floods in Europe cost \$43 billion and killed 240 while floods in China's Henan province caused \$17.5 billion of destruction, killed 320 and displaced over a million.

January 1, 2022

While the report focuses on financial costs, which are usually higher in richer countries because they have higher property values and can afford insurance, some of the most devastating extreme weather events in 2021 hit poorer nations, which have contributed little to causing climate change. Yet in addition to the financial cost, these extreme weather events have caused severe human suffering from food insecurity, drought and extreme weather events causing mass displacements and loss of life. South Sudan has experienced terrible floods which has seen more than 850,000 people forced to flee their homes, many of whom were already internally displaced, while East Africa continues to be ravaged with drought, highlighting the injustice of the climate crisis.

A new Savanta ComRes poll commissioned by Christian Aid has found that despite the pandemic dominating the headlines, the UK public think the climate crisis should be the Government's top priority heading into 2022, above healthcare, the economy, crime, social care and housing. The respondents were asked what issue should be the Government's New Year's Resolution for 2022, with 27% saying climate change, followed by 23% for healthcare, 14% for the economy, 9% for social care, 8% for crime, 6% for housing and 4% for education.

Some of the disasters in 2021 hit rapidly, like Cyclone Yaas, which struck India and Bangladesh in May and caused losses valued at \$3 billion in just a few days. Other events took months to unfold, like the Paraná river drought in Latin America, which has seen the river, a vital part of the region's economy, at its lowest level in 77 years and impacted lives and livelihoods in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

Four of the ten most costly events took place in Asia, with floods and typhoons costing a combined \$24 billion. But the impact of extreme weather was felt all over the world.

Australia suffered floods in March which displaced 18,000 people and saw damage worth \$2.1 billion while floods in Canada's British Columbia led to \$7.5 billion in damage and 15,000 people having to flee their homes. Insurance and financial loss data on the recent tornadoes in the US is incomplete, so is not included in this report but may be included in next year's study.

Worryingly such climate devastation is set to continue without action to cut emissions. Insurer Aon warns that 2021 is expected to be the sixth time global natural catastrophes have crossed the \$100 billion insured loss threshold. All six have happened since 2011 and 2021 will be the fourth in five years.

The report also highlights slow developing crises such as the drought in the Chad Basin which has seen Lake Chad shrink by 90% since the 1970s and threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of the world's poorest who live in the region.

These extreme events highlight the need for concrete climate action. The Paris Agreement, set the goal of keeping temperature rise to below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels, yet the outcomes from COP26 in Glasgow do not currently leave the world on track to meet this goal which is why much more urgent action is required.

January 1, 2022

It's also vital that in 2022 more is done to provide financial support to the most vulnerable countries, in particular the creation of a fund to deal with the permanent loss and damage suffered in poor countries caused by climate change.

Report author, Dr. Kat Kramer, Christian Aid's climate policy lead, said:

“The costs of climate change have been grave this year, both in terms of eyewatering financial losses but also in the death and displacement of people around the world. Be it storms and floods in some of the world's richest countries or droughts and heatwaves in some of the poorest, the climate crisis hit hard in 2021. While it was good to see some progress made at the COP26 summit, it is clear that the world is not on track to ensure a safe and prosperous world.”

Regarding the Savanta ComRes poll, Dr. Kat Kramer added:

“It is good to see the British public are aware of the threat caused by climate breakdown and want to see the Government making action on climate change its New Year's resolution. It's striking, that despite being in the middle of a pandemic, the public view this issue as a greater policy priority than both healthcare and the economy. If the Prime Minister wants to build on the legacy of COP26 he needs to ensure climate change is a government priority in 2022.”

Nushrat Chowdhury, Christian Aid's Climate Justice Advisor in Bangladesh, said:

“The climate crisis has not abated in 2021. My own country of Bangladesh has seen this first hand, suffering at the hands of Cyclone Yaas not to mention the ever growing threat of sea levels rise. I was at COP26 in Glasgow and while we heard lots of warm words from politicians, what we need is action that will see emissions fall rapidly and support given to those in need. Although it was good to see the issue of loss and damage become a major issue at COP26 it was bitterly disappointing to leave without a fund set up to actually help people who are suffering permanent losses from climate change. Bringing that fund to life needs to be a global priority in 2022.”

Dr. Anjal Prakash is research director at the Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business. He was the coordinating lead author in the IPCC’s special report on oceans and cryosphere in a changing climate. He said:

“It is the industrialised north that has contributed to much of the climate change we see today. Those countries had agreed to mobilise \$100 billion of climate finance per year by 2020 but failed to meet this goal. During COP 26, the countries of the global south came with an expectation that the gathering will show them a roadmap in achieving the global goal on adaptation funding which was a major constituent of the Paris Agreement.

“As this new report documents, India is one of the countries which is greatly disadvantaged by climate change induced disasters. Adhering to the principles of climate justice, the countries of the global south must call for technology transfer and adaptation finance for the countries that have

January 1, 2022

not contributed historically to climate change but are bearing the brunt."

Dr. Heidi Steltzer, Professor of Environment and Sustainability and Biology, at Fort Lewis College, Colorado, said:

"This is a powerful and important report. It is eye-opening to have these climate impact stories of 2021 collected together and the estimates for cost of lives, livelihoods and community, which is irreversibly altered when people are displaced. The loss of community and with it connection to the Earth, to culture, and to one another is a tremendous cost. From this, what can we learn? This movement of people can be an opportunity for new connections and understanding - an opportunity to listen to the stories of displaced people. In doing so, we can grow understanding by learning across cultures about practices that cultivate well-being and increase security during crises that take place during extreme climate years such as 2021."

Rachel Mander, a member of the Young Christian Climate Network, and took part in a walking relay to Glasgow for COP26. She said:

"Climate change will bankrupt us, and along the way, we will lose so much more than money. To avoid this eventuality we need to take courageous action - making sure that the burden of costs are distributed and do not worsen global inequality, while also making activities which drive climate change more expensive."

January 1, 2022

Mohamed Adow, Director of Nairobi-based think tank Power Shift Africa, said:

“This report gives a sense of the climate suffering which has taken place around the world in 2021. It’s a powerful reminder that the atmosphere will not wait for us to deal with the Covid pandemic. We need to act at scale and with urgency if we’re going to fend off these kinds of impacts into the future. Africa has borne the brunt of some of the most devastating, if not most financially costly, impacts, from flooding to drought. Right now East Africa is in the grip of a drought which is pushing communities to the brink. This is why it’s vital that 2022 sees real action to help such communities and why it’s good that COP27 will be held on African soil in Egypt. This needs to be the year we provide real financial support for those on the front line of the crisis.”

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

Solider, Spy, and Monk - the remarkable life of Henry Coombe- Tennant of Neath and The Welsh Guards

Henry Coombe-Tennant went from fighting Nazis on the front line to monkhood - rescuing a queen and escaping prison in between.

Few people in the world, never mind Neath, have a life story as impressive and boast-worthy as former Welsh Guard Henry Coombe-Tennant. Born in 1913 in Cadoxton, Neath,

January 1, 2022

Henry was something of a James Bond of his time.

After joining the Welsh Guards in 1939, he fought Nazis on the front line, escaped a prisoner of war camp and spied for MI16, and when all of this perhaps became a bit too much - he put down his rifle and became a practising monk. An uncommon choice for a Neath local, Henry attended Eton College and went on to obtain a double first degree from Cambridge University

before joining the Welsh Guards in 1936 - the same regiment that his older brother Christopher had served and died with during World War I.



Throughout World War II, Henry fought on the front lines of the Hook of Holland before being tasked with a monumental responsibility: ensuring the escape of the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. In a turn of events that sounds very much like a Hollywood blockbuster, Henry and his comrades kept open the road connecting the Hague where the Dutch government was based to the port at the Hook of Holland, allowing Queen Wilhelmina to roll up in a car to board a Royal Navy destroyer. Safely aboard the destroyer, the Dutch queen found safe passage to Britain, but for Henry

January 1, 2022



Coombe-Tennant, things took something of a dark turn. Queen Wilhelmina came to the Hook by car, boarded a Royal Navy destroyer and got her to Britain. Henry and his mates were

brought back by a different destroyer.

They had a short time in Britain but were then taken by ship to Boulogne, where he was captured. Rather than being rewarded for his good deed, Henry found himself trapped in the cellar of a bombed-out house in Boulogne with his Welsh Guard comrades, and he was taken as a prisoner of war. The Prison Break style escape Two years after his capture, Henry took part in a huge 30-man escape from the prisoner of war camp.

January 1, 2022

Unusually, the escape was achieved by going over rather than under the prison camp wire. Only three of the escapes made it back to Great Britain – and Henry Coombe-Tennant was one of them. This wasn't quite enough to put Henry off another military job, either. Instead of putting down his rifle for a quieter life, he went onto join the Specials Operations Executive, and in 1944 he was parachuted into occupied France where he helped a Resistance group fight the Nazis - winning himself a military cross from the King and a Croix de Guerre from the French.

He was not finished with soldiering, and served in Palestine during 1946-1948 where he tried to keep the peace between Arabs and Jews. On a visit to Jordan, he became the first non-Arab to climb the Jebel Rum mountain. He then served with the occupying forces in West Germany and Austria.

After rescuing a queen, escaping a prisoner of war camp and parachuting yet again into another warzone - Henry retired from the Welsh Guards and joined MI6 at the Hauge and in Iraq. It wasn't easy work for Henry with MI6 and he later wrote that he underwent "physical and mental suffering" during 1959, which was likely linked to his dangerous work with MI6 in a violent Baghdad.

After his MI6 stint, enough became enough for Henry. Battered, bruised and mentally drained, he exchanged his military garb for monk robes - putting down his rifle in exchange for the bible. The experience turned him to religion and, on leaving MI6 at the start of the 1960s, he became a Benedictine monk at Downside Abbey near Bath. He died there in 1989.

January 1, 2022

If you would like to read up on this incredible Welsh Guards Officer there is a great book out called "Wales' Unknown Hero: Soldier, Spy, Monk: The life of Henry Coombe-Tennant, MC, of Neath" available at Amazon now!

Poem for today

The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

+ Please share CNI with your friends
www.churchnewsireland.org

January 1, 2022

