

ETTINGTON AND FULREADY VILLAGE NEWSLETTER

December 2025 / January 2026

As the year draws to a close and winter settles in, it is often the small things that bring us the greatest joy - a smile from a neighbour, the glow of festive lights, or a shared cup of tea on a cold day. These moments remind us to be grateful, humble, and mindful of the blessings we already have.

This season is also a time to look outward. Many in our community face challenges, and a simple act of kindness can make a world of difference. Whether it's checking in on someone living alone, volunteering at a local event, or donating to those less fortunate, every gesture strengthens the bonds that hold us together.

Let us carry into the new year a spirit of generosity and togetherness. By supporting one another, getting involved in village life, and giving where we can, we create not only a kinder community but also a more resilient one.

May the months ahead be filled with gratitude for the little things, courage to face new challenges, and joy in the shared journey of building a caring, resilient village.

Rennie

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clerk@ettingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Ettington Church Churchwarden, Phil Knight,
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Eva Lowe 07975 682775 bookings@ettingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk

Ettington & Fulready Village Newsletter
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By WEDNESDAY 12th December 2025

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With thanks to Ettington Parish Council for their continued financial support.

Dear Friends,



The spirit of Christmas has nothing to do with gifts and everything to do with relationships and who we spend our time with. There are people who have lost their family and would do anything to spend their time with them again. There are others who have turned their backs on one another or have just let the family drift apart.



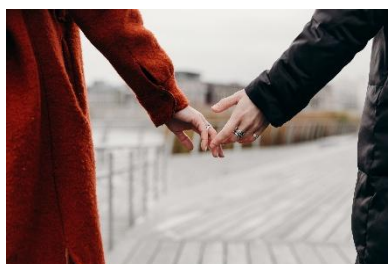
At this time of year, I'm reminded that love and family are truly one of the most important things in this world. That's what Christmas is meant to remind us. Christmas is about the birth of a child, a precious child that turned a couple into a family that grew to be the world wide family of Christ. But whether a child is planned or a surprise - happy or otherwise; born in unusual circumstances; to those with much or with nothing, a child makes a family, and both

should be treasured - the child and the family. That family love nurtures, sustains and supports. If we don't have each other, what do we really have?

I hope that you will be able to share this Christmas with family and loved ones. If not in person, then through social media, cards, letters and the phone. Get in touch, share that love and remember family isn't always just those related to us - we all have wider families who also mean much to us. Spread joy and love by joining in the various Christmas celebrations and services at church across our communities. Merry Christmas to you all.

God bless you.

Rev'd Nicki



Looking Back, Looking Forward - Celebrating Another Wonderful Year in Ettington

As we bring 2025 to a close and look ahead to the New Year, it feels only right to pause and reflect on what has been a truly remarkable twelve months for our village. Ettington has always been a place with a big heart, but this year has shown - yet again - just how vibrant, welcoming and energetic our community really is.

A Summer to Remember (Even If the Weather Tried Its Best!)

At the centre of our year was our inaugural Village Summer Party, a fantastic celebration which brought together the church, pre-school, primary school, scouts and the community centre for the very first time as one organising team. Despite the lousy, utterly un-summerlike rain, Ettington turned out in force - and what an afternoon it was! From the dog show with its 39 enthusiastic entrants to the crowning of our multi-talented Ettington Champion, it really didn't matter what the weather was doing. Spirits weren't dampened. People came, stayed, laughed, competed, chatted, and proved that good company outshines grey skies every time. A truly brilliant community day.

Our Regular Favourites: Bingo & Breakfast

Alongside the headline events, our much-loved Village Bingo and Village Breakfasts continued to thrive across the year. These weekends - four times a year in February, May, September and December - have become a real highlight in the village calendar. Bingo brings fun, food, prizes, chilli, laughter, and (occasionally) a bit of competitive tension, all washed down with something from the community centre bar. The breakfasts that follow are a wonderfully sociable way to start the weekend, serving up hearty plates made with local ingredients and Fairtrade coffee.

Most importantly, these events raise significant funds for the four pillars of village life: our primary school, pre-school, church and community centre. This year, the totals have been fantastic, and the efforts of the volunteers who plan, cook, clean, host and serve are appreciated more than we can possibly say.

Looking Ahead to 2026 - Even More to Look Forward To!

If 2025 was a great year for community life, 2026 is shaping up to be even better. Plans are already bubbling away for a wonderfully varied programme of events to bring us together again.

Among the early highlights:

- *An "Oktoberfest-style" evening (with just a sprinkling of irony!) is planned for February
- *A Summer Murder-Mystery Evening, promising mischief, melodrama and plenty of laughs
- *The return of our Halloween Party next October
- *...and of course, the full cycle of Bingo & Breakfast weekends returning next year, so please save the dates now for those: **6th & 7th March • 12th & 13th June • 2nd & 3rd October • 4th & 5th December** (festive edition!)

There's a lot to be excited about, and even more to get involved in. Ettington really is a place where ideas flourish – and where brilliant volunteers help turn them into reality.

Festive Events to Carry Us Through December

Before we jump into the new year, we still have a wonderfully festive run of events to enjoy throughout December. There truly is something for everyone:

School Christmas Fete & Santa's Grotto

Friday 5th December - Community Centre (afternoon)

A perfect start to the season, complete with festive stalls and a visit to Father Christmas.



Festive Village Bingo

Friday 5th December, 7 pm - Community Centre

Seasonal fun, prizes, raffle, and the famous chilli.

Always a huge village favourite.

Festive Village Breakfast

Saturday 6th December, from 8 am -

Community Centre

All the usual breakfast delights, all the usual great company.



Spa Chorale Christmas Choir Concert

Saturday 6th December, 7 pm - Ettington Church

A magical evening of glorious choral music in a stunning setting. Tickets still available - but going fast! (see page 7)

Primary School Christmas Performance

Monday 8th December, 4:30 pm - Community Centre

Our amazing pupils will be performing carols and festive favourites - a real seasonal treat.

Stratford Concert Band Christmas Concert

Saturday 13th December, 7 pm - Community Centre

A lively evening of excellent music from hugely talented performers. Tickets available at the door.



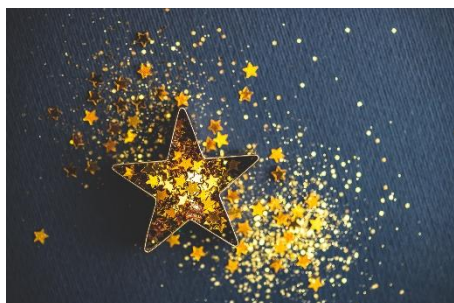
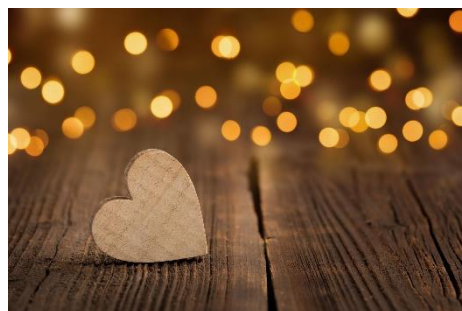
Ettington Church Carol Service

Saturday 20th December, 6 pm - Ettington Church

Carols, community singing and seasonal nibbles (including mulled wine and mince pies!) - a truly lovely evening for all ages.

Crib Service

Christmas Eve, 24th December, 5 pm - Ettington Church
A family-friendly retelling of the Christmas story with readings and carols. Always a cherished moment.



Christmas Communion

Christmas Day, 9:30 am - Ettington Church
A peaceful and meaningful way to begin Christmas morning.



A Final Word...

What a year it has been.
What a community we are.
Thank you to everyone who
organises, volunteers,
attends, donates,
contributes and supports.
Thank you to those who
turn up in the rain, who
bring cakes, who sell raffle
tickets, who stack chairs,
who serve breakfasts, who
tidy up afterwards, who
cheerfully do the behind-
the-scenes work that makes
everything possible.
Ettington is a special place
because of its people - and
2025 has proved that once
again.

**Here's to a joyful
Christmas, a restful New
Year, and an exciting,
community-filled 2026
ahead!**

STOURDENE BENEFICE SERVICE ROTA - December 2025

DECEMBER 2025	Time	Church	Service Type
TUESDAY 2nd	6pm	PILLERTON PRIORS Village Hall	PRAYER WALK
Wednesday 3rd	10am	Newbold	BCP Communion
Sunday 7th	8.30am	Ettington	BCP Communion
	9.30am	Halford	CW Communion
	9.30am	Newbold	Family Sunday
	10am	Alderminster	Morning Worship
	11am	Pillertons	CW Communion
	4pm	Butlers	CHRISTINGLE /ADVENT CAROLS
TUESDAY 9th	6pm	BUTLERS	PRAYER WALK
Thursday 11th	6pm	Newbold	NEWBOLD SCHOOL
Sunday 14th	9.30am	Butlers Marston	CW Communion
	9.30am	Halford	Morning Worship
	10am	Ettington	Morning Worship
	11am	Alderminster	CW Communion
	4pm	Newbold	CHRISTINGLE
	6pm	Pillerton	CAROL SERVICE
TUESDAY 16th	6pm	ETTINGTON	PRAYER WALK
Wednesday 17th	6pm	Ettington Community Centre	SCHOOL COMMUNITY CAROL SERVICE
Friday 19th	6pm	Butlers Marston	CAROLS SERVICE
Saturday 20th	6pm	Ettington	CAROLS SERVICE
Sunday 21st	8.30am	Pillerton Priors Village Hall	BCP Communion
	9.30am	Butlers Marston	Family Sunday
	9.30am	Alderminster	CW Communion
	11am	Ettington	CW Communion
	4.30	Halford	CAROL SERVICE
	6pm	Newbold	CAROL SERVICE
Monday 22nd	6.30pm	Alderminster	CAROL SERVICE

SPA CHORALE

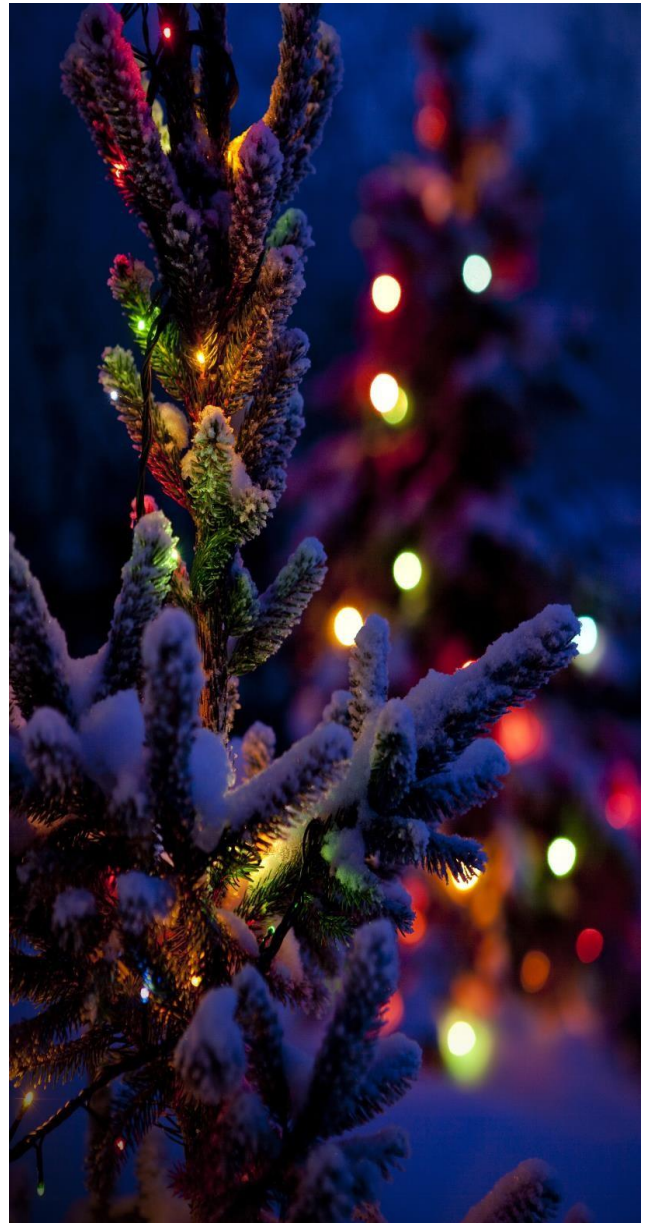
presents

**'HAVE
YOURSELF A
MERRY
CHRISTMAS'**

SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER

AT

ETTINGTON CHURCH



Musical Director: Kevin Stannard

Come & Join Us

Spa Choral will perform a selection of music and prose for Christmas.

Featuring carols, well-loved songs and some yuletide favourites.

Tickets £10 (including refreshments) available on the door or from Phil
phee100@btinternet.com & Steve ewolnevets@gmail.com.

Saturday 6th December at 7.30 pm Ettington Church, CV37 7TH

All enquiries to: spachorale2025@gmail.com Follow us: on Facebook

STOURDENE BENEFICE SERVICE ROTA - December 2025			
DECEMBER 2024	Time	Church	Service Type
Wednesday 24th CHRISTMAS EVE	3pm	Alderminster	CRIB SERVICE
	4pm	Newbold	CRIB SERVICE
	3.30pm	Butlers Marston	CRIB SERVICE / PANTOTIVITY
	5pm	Pillerton	CRIB SERVICE
	5pm	Ettington	CRIB SERVICE
	11.30pm	Alderminster	MIDNIGHT MASS
CHRISTMAS DAY	9.30am	Halford	CHRISTMAS COMMUNION
	9.30m	Ettington	CHRISTMAS COMMUNION
	10.30am	@ Pillerton with Butlers	CHRISTMAS COMMUNION
	11am	Newbold	CHRISTMAS COMMUNION
Sunday 28th	10.30am	ETTINGTON	BENEFICE SERVICE





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ETTINGTON CHURCH, PART OF THE STOURDENE GROUP OF CHURCHES

Visit the **Stourdene website** at stourdene.com, where you will find contact information for all 6 Stourdene churches and information relating to life events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.

STOURDENE

We Exist To Make Christ Known

Contact **Revd Nicki Chatterton**, Rector of Stourdene, on email chat2rev.nicki@gmail.com or call **07769 871237**.

The Bible study group continues to meet weekly on a **Wednesday at 7.30 pm** in each other's homes. They have just finished the book on Ezekiel and are now doing a study on The Apostles' Creed, which will take up to Christmas. Newcomers are always very welcome to join these groups. Contact Jane on 07802 348309 or janealisonevans@gmail.com for more information.

**In
Ettington
Church**

7th January	1st July
4th February	5th August
4th March	2nd September
1st April	7th October
6th May	4th November
3rd June	2nd December

**1st Tuesday
of the month
1.30pm**

**Bible
Book Club**

ETTINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ettington Community Centre is a perfect venue for parties, business meetings, workshops and self-catering christening/baptism parties, weddings and wakes. With three differently sized rooms available, space can be configured flexibly to suit your needs.

The centre is served by superfast broadband, which is available throughout the building.



Regular classes include:

*Cheeky Chimps Toddler Group *Keep Fit/Zumba/Pilates classes *Ladies' badminton *Mosaic classes *Tai chi classes *Brownies *Monday Club *Snooker Club *Slimming World

For Ettington Community Centre bookings and enquiries, please contact Eva Lowe on 07975 682775 or email booking@ettingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk.

The management committee usually meets on the **first Tuesday of each month at 7.30 pm** in the Community Centre Lounge. The committee are constantly searching for both help and people with new, good ideas on how we can organise and promote more events at our excellent, but rather under-utilised building - **it needs your support.**

We'd love to hear from you, so please do contact us, either on 07975 682775 or by email secretary@ettingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk.

We also have a separate events committee, which is tasked with creating and running various fundraising events taking place throughout the year. For more information or to get involved, please visit our website: www.ettingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk.

Ettington Community Centre - Maintenance Lead - Paid Role

Ettington Community Centre is looking to appoint a Maintenance Lead to help oversee and manage the building's ongoing maintenance needs. This is a brand-new, paid role, and we're hoping to find someone local who knows and cares about the centre as much as we do. If you're practical, organised, and interested in supporting one of the village's key community spaces, we'd love to hear from you. For more information or an informal chat about what the role involves, please contact steve.lowe@ettingtoncommunitycentre.co.uk.



Create and build with thousands of bricks, mini figures and accessories.

LEGO CAFÉ

Ettington Church

2 - 4pm

4th **SATURDAY** of the month

25th January	28th June
22nd February	26th July
22nd March	27th September
26th April	25th October
24th May	22nd November



Fun for all ages!




Christmas Tree Collection

Thomas Fox Landscaping, supporting Shipston Home Nursing, will collect your real tree from outside your property

- £10 minimum donation per tree
- Maximum of three trees per property
- Collection from outside your property w/c 5th January 2026
- Your donation will help to fund our hospice care at home
- Trees are chipped and used to create a nutrient rich compost, which will be used on local fields

Trees can be collected from the following areas:
CV35, CV36, CV37 and OX15 postcodes

Book online at

www.shipstonhomenursing.co.uk/event/treecollection





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Thomas Fox

Landscaping & Maintenance

STOURDENE BENEFICE SERVICE ROTA - January 2026

JANUARY	Time	Church	Service Type	Clergy	Readings
Sunday 4th EPIPHANY WHITE	9.30am	Newbold	Morning Worship	NC	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12
	9.30am	Halford	CW Communion	DJ	
	11am	Ettington	CW Communion	DJ	
	11am	Alderminster	Morning Worship	NC	
	11am	Pillertons	Morning Worship	AGP	
	6pm	Butlers	Evensong Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14	NC	
Wednesday 7th	10am	Newbold	CW Communion	NC	
Sunday 11th EPIPHANY 2 Baptism of Christ WHITE	8.30am	Pillertons Priors Village Hall	BCP Communion	NC	Isaiah 42:1-9 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17
	9.30am	Butlers Marston	CW Communion	NC	
	9.30am	Halford	Morning Worship	AGP	
	10am	Ettington	Morning Worship	AGP	
	11am	Alderminster	CW Communion	NC	
Sunday 18th EPIPHANY 3 WHITE	8.30	Ettington	BCP Communion	NC	Isaiah 49:1-7 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42
	9.30am	Halford	Morning Worship	NC	
	9.30am	Alderminster	CW Communion	DJ	
	11am	Pillertons	Morning Worship	NC	
	9.30am	Butlers Marston	Family Service	AGP	
	11am	Newbold	CW Communion	DJ	
Sunday 25th EPIPHANY 4 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity WHITE	8.30am	Halford	CW Communion	NC	Isaiah 9:1-4 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23
	10am	Ettington	Café Church	NC	
	9.30am	Pillertons	CW Communion	DJ	
	11am	Butlers Marston	BCP Communion	DJ	
	10 am	Alderminster	Morning Worship	AGP	



Dates and Church Venue

2026 6pm **TUESDAY**

Alderminster	January 6	Newbold-on-Stour	June 30
Newbold-on-Stour	January 13	Halford	July 7
Halford	January 20	Pillerton Hersey	July 14
Pillerton Hersey	January 27	Butler's Marston	July 21
Butler's Marston	February 3	Ettington	July 28
Ettington	February 10	Alderminster	August 4
Alderminster	February 17	Newbold-on-Stour	August 11
Newbold-on-Stour	February 24	Halford	August 18
Halford	March 3	Pillerton Hersey	August 25
Pillerton Hersey	March 10	Butler's Marston	September 1
Butler's Marston	March 17	Ettington	September 8
Ettington	March 24	Alderminster	September 15
Alderminster	March 31	Newbold-on-Stour	September 22
Newbold-on-Stour	April 7	Halford	September 29
Halford	April 14	Pillerton Hersey	October 6
Pillerton Hersey	April 21	Butler's Marston	October 13
Butler's Marston	April 21	Ettington	October 20
Ettington	May 5	Alderminster	October 27
Alderminster	May 12	Newbold-on-Stour	November 3
Newbold-on-Stour	May 19	Halford	November 10
Halford	May 26	Pillerton Hersey	November 17
Pillerton Hersey	June 2	Butler's Marston	November 24
Butler's Marston	June 9	Ettington	December 1
Ettington	June 16	Alderminster	December 8
Alderminster	June 23	Newbold-on-Stour	December 15



See church notice board for further details
In church in bad weather



County and District Council Updates

Councillors received a comprehensive briefing covering highways funding, home-to-school transport proposals, and ongoing discussions about possible local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. It was noted that £1,000 remains available in the delegated highways budget for small-scale safety improvements such as repainting road markings. Consultation feedback on future governance arrangements continues to show strong support for a two-unitary model, although further work is required before any decisions are made.

Highways, School Safety and Crossroads Concerns

Road safety remained a central theme. The long-standing concerns over the Fossway staggered crossroads were raised again, with councillors noting that a public petition has now gathered more than 1,100 signatures. Progress continues on the proposed 20 mph advisory zone outside the school, which is awaiting a formal safety audit, alongside calls to improve visibility at the zebra crossing and to upgrade reflective bollards near the Chequers.

Village Security and CCTV Feasibility Work

With recent thefts and security issues affecting residents, the Council discussed options for installing CCTV at key points around the village. The Community Safety Team and local police are carrying out initial feasibility work. Councillors agreed that the investigation should continue, though no commitment to installation has yet been made.

Dog Bins and Village Maintenance

Members agreed to explore installing additional dog bins following several requests from residents. The condition of village benches was also reviewed, and repairs will be scheduled where necessary, including the replacement of worn slats.

Planning Matters and Housing Supply Pressures

An update was given on the ongoing challenges posed by the district's sharply reduced housing land supply. The recent Borden Hill decision has brought Stratford District's theoretical supply down to 2.74 years, meaning planning decisions will be more tightly governed by national policy. This is expected to make it harder to resist certain applications, particularly self-build proposals, unless there are clear planning grounds to do so.

Community Centre Maintenance and Improvement Plans

The Community Centre's recent fire inspection identified work needed on fire doors and extinguishers. Quotes are also being sought for insulation improvements and a possible car park extension. The ageing solar panels, now more than 20 years old, were highlighted as a future cost that will need consideration.

Sports Facilities: Pitch, Lighting and Connectivity

Two quotes have been received for upgrading the football pitch and MUGA lighting, including the option for remote-control operation. The football pitch has been treated and fertilised, although

ground conditions are currently too wet for further spiking. Installation of Wi-Fi at the Community Centre continues, with councillors noting the need for a weather-sealed switch to protect equipment.

Budget Planning for 2026-27

Councillors considered the **first draft of the 2026-27 budget**, noting several areas where costs are rising and where responsibilities need to be more clearly defined. Members agreed that a more detailed review is required, and the **December meeting will focus exclusively on the budget and precept**, allowing councillors to work through the figures and priorities in full.

Next Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on **Thursday, 11th December 2025 at 7.30 pm**. The main item on the agenda will be discussions on the 2026-27 budget and precept.

Councillor David Hughes Awarded Freedom of the Parish

Long-serving parish councillor David Hughes has been awarded the Freedom of the Parish of Ettington, recognising nearly 15 years of commitment to the council and the village community. David was first elected in June 2010 and became Chairman two years later, a position he held until May 2023. He remains a serving Parish Councillor. He also served as Chairman of the Community Centre Management Committee for much of that period, including throughout the challenges of the Covid pandemic.



Freedom of the Parish is an honorary title granted only in exceptional circumstances to individuals who have given outstanding service to their community.

He was presented with a commemorative scroll by current Chairman Rich Smith at a small gathering attended by friends and family, including his wife, Rosemary.

Speaking after the presentation, David said he was “delighted, if a little overwhelmed” to receive the award. “I’ve really enjoyed my time on the council and being so involved in the Ettington community,” he said.

Rich Smith praised David’s contribution: “Freedom of the Parish is the highest honour a parish council can give, and it is extremely rare. It could not go to a more deserving recipient. David has been a tireless worker on behalf of the community, and his knowledge of the parish’s history and workings has been invaluable. He is greatly missed at our meetings while he recovers from ill health.”

Tea Dances with music to dance and sing to for all the different charities we support each year take place in **the main hall of the Community Centre every second Wednesday of the month from 2.30 pm**. Next session is on **10th December 2025 and 14th January 2026**. There's lovely CD music to sing to, listen to or dance to like Waltzes, Quicksteps, Cha Cha Cha and Rumba. It costs £5 per person, which includes tea/coffee and biscuits. Further details can be obtained from **Alan and Vivian** on **01789 204989** or by email to ilov2getherdancing@hotmail.com. **Everyone Welcome.**



Mobile Library in Ettington



The van will continue to visit on a **Wednesday** and stop at The Chequers at **11:05-11:25**. The dates are **10th December 2025 and 14th January 2026**. For all enquiries or to renew books, telephone **01926 851031** or renew online at Warwickshire.gov.uk/libraries.

Dial a Ride UBUS Service in Ettington

UBUS dial a ride community transport service operates in Ettington and surrounding villages on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 9.30 am-2.30 pm. Travel locally and into Stratford-upon-Avon to go shopping, visit friends or attend social groups. To register with UBUS or for more information, please **call 01789 264491** between 8.30 am-6 pm Monday-Friday. Return journey fare from £6.00.



ALDERMINSTER GARDENING CLUB

The Club does not meet in the Hall in December, but will be meeting in **the Fox at Loxley for a Christmas meal on Tuesday, 9th**, bookings for this closed on 30/11/25. The Club AGM will take place on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 13th, in the Hall at 7.30**. We will **be celebrating 25 years of the Club** with seasonal nibbles/drinks, a program for 2026 is in place, and subs can be paid for the year. The Club is continuing, but not with the same formal structure. For more information, ring Gill on 01789 621053 or WhatsApp 07790435870.





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www.annettegann.com

Carers4Carers - your local support group for family carers. We usually meet on the **fourth Friday** of the month (except December) from **10:30 to 12 noon** at **Kineton Village Hall**. Loved ones are welcome too - they can join our Companionship Group during the meeting.

**Friday 12th December -
Carers' Christmas Get-Together**

The festive season isn't always easy - that's why our Christmas meeting is a gentle one. Join us for a relaxed meeting with

refreshments, mince pies, and a few carols to lift the spirits. Whether you're feeling festive or not, you'll be warmly welcomed.

Friday 23rd January - Coping strategies for carers

Our January meeting focuses on coping strategies - ways to care for yourself while caring for others. We'll share ideas, experiences, and gentle techniques to help you navigate the ups and downs of the year ahead. Come along for a cuppa, conversation, and a little encouragement.

For further details about our group or help with transport arrangements to/from our meetings, please contact Gillian on 07947 893504, send an email to kcarers4carers@gmail.com, or explore our website www.carers4carersonthefosse.org.uk



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Astronomical Society News *by Adrian Wakeham and Dave Benton*

The Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society meets **every first and third Tuesday at 8 pm (doors open at 7.30 pm) at Alderminster Village Hall**. Everyone is welcome, especially beginners and those wanting to learn more. Usually, the first Tuesday is a club night, but in December, the club night is on the third Tuesday, which is on **16th December** and is our Christmas get-together. On the **first Tuesday, 2nd December**, the speaker will be Professor Clive Ruggles, from Leicester University, with a talk called "Stonehenge - sighting the sun". In January, the first **Tuesday on 6th January 2026** is a club night, and the speaker on the **third Tuesday, 20th January 2026**, will be Dr Imogen Whittam from Oxford University with a talk titled "Exploring the Universe with large surveys". Please note that the speakers usually start quite promptly at 8 pm.

Each month, one of our members, Adrian Wakeham, writes an article on aspects of astronomical observation.

A Possible choice of Christmas Present?

We are regularly asked, "Which telescope is best for a beginner?" There is no single, simple answer to this question, as the ideal choice depends heavily on several personal factors. These include what you want to view, your available budget, and the amount of time you are willing to dedicate to setting up the equipment.

Consider investing in a decent pair of astronomical binoculars. Handheld models, such as my own 10x42s, provide 10x magnification through 42mm apertures and are powerful enough to reveal Jupiter's moons, Saturn's rings, and the Andromeda Galaxy. They are also a great tool for learning constellations. Larger binoculars will require a tripod. Prices start at about £100.00.

Telescopes fall into two main categories: refractors, which use a lens to collect light and are ideal for planets, and reflectors, which use a mirror and are better for deep-space objects due to their larger light-collecting area. Hybrid designs, like the Schmidt-Cassegrain, are also available.

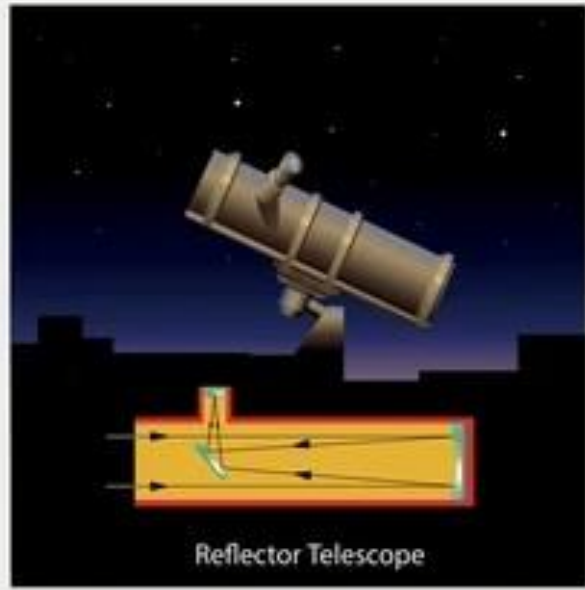
All telescopes need to be mounted on either an altazimuth (AZ) or an equatorial mount. You can choose a manual mount or a more expensive motorised "Go-To" mount, which automatically locates objects for you once set up. For reduced prices, consider searching for equipment on specialist second-hand sites.

Smart scopes are a new trend in amateur astronomy. These portable, lightweight "Go-To" devices transmit live views to a computer or phone screen. While the optics are acceptable, sophisticated software processing is what truly elevates the image quality (although you lose the 'buzz' of looking directly through an eyepiece!). Prices for smart scopes are dropping, starting around £400 but easily exceeding £1,000. Some models cleverly utilise your existing smartphone as the display unit. It's also worth noting that a mobile phone alone, mounted on a tripod with the right settings, can capture impressive astro-images.

At society, we have a selection of telescopes to give you an idea of what each setup can do. The choice is enormous, so hopefully this article gives you some ideas.

Now you've got that Christmas present, what do you point it at?

Telescope Diagrams



Credits to Anderson@telescopewatch.com

The January stars

Now we are in January, the nights are long, cold and clear (hopefully), which means we can observe at sensible times, which are also child-friendly, as many children love staring at the night sky (see below about the society's visit to Ettington School). It is also when some of the best stars and constellations are visible.

Probably the most famous of which is Orion, mainly seen due south. It is easily recognisable by the three stars in a line marking his belt. Below the belt is his sword - 3 stars going downwards. The middle 'star' looks 'fuzzy' when examined with binoculars or a telescope. This is the Orion Nebula, the nearest star-making nebula, but still over a thousand light-years away. Above the belt and to the left is a visibly red star; this is Betelgeuse. It's a red giant, 700 times the diameter of our sun. It is approaching the end of its life and expected to go supernova in the next 10,000 years, but at 642 light-years away, it may have already gone supernova, but we are waiting for the light to arrive.

Bottom right of Orion is Rigel, a Blue/White giant. This is another huge star, 74 times the diameter and 21 times the mass of our sun. It's a lot younger than Betelgeuse, but it's living the 'Pop Star's life', it will live fast and die young, in a few million years.

Back to the belt and follow it to the right, until you reach a 'V' shape. This is the Hyades cluster (or the head of Taurus), a local cluster at 150 light-years away. Top left is a visibly red star, Aldebaran. This is another red giant (though smaller than Betelgeuse). It's an interloper, as it is not part of the Hyades and is at 60 light-years. (That light set off, when I was still wearing nappies)

If you continue along that line, about the same distance, you come to another open cluster, the Pleiades, (or the 7 sisters). With binoculars, you'll see 15-20 stars; a larger telescope will show up to 250 stars. This is a star nursery, and they are very young stars (around 1 million years old). The stars are generally white or blue in colour. They are 450 light-years away. (Shakespeare was alive when this light set off).

Continuing further along this line, you'll head between Cassiopeia, (the 'W') and the square of Pegasus. In clear conditions, you might see a fuzzy blob, (if you look out the side of your eyes, it may become clearer and more visible). This is the Andromeda Galaxy, our nearest neighbouring Galaxy, at 2 million light-years away. That light started heading in our direction when my ancestors were trying to work out if it was a good idea to get down out of the trees. It's also on a collision course with the Milky Way. No need to worry, it won't happen for another 2 billion years (when the Earth will have already been swallowed by the aged Sun).

The visit to Ettington School in 2025

On Thursday, 6th February 2025, three members of Stratford upon Avon Astronomical Society, Adrian, Andrew and Dave, visited Ettington school to give a presentation and to offer the opportunity to do some solar and lunar observation. In the hall, Adrian did his inimitable presentation of the solar system, with toilet rolls, fruit and other items. The main part of the presentation was comparing the size of sun and planets using a yoga ball and various fruits, with interesting and amazing facts. Next was placing the planets in relative and appropriate distances from the sun, using toilet roll to measure the distance. The students were beautifully behaved with perceptive and intriguing questions,

Meanwhile Andrew and Dave ran an observation session in the playground, using a small telescope looking at the moon, a pair of binoculars, a solar telescope, Andrew's own solar projection set up and solar eclipse glasses. The children were given some instructions before observing began, especially with regard to never looking directly at the sun unless they have proper filters or equipment, and even then, care needs to be taken and should be with adult supervision.

The solar projection using just a bird spotting scope projected onto a hand-held sheet of white card, gave a good large image, with sun spots easily seen. The solar scope image is difficult to see for most people, but the children were generally happy once they found the image.

The Astronomical Society members commented that the children were extremely engaged and enthusiastic, but also that they queued politely, were interested in the scopes and passed around the solar eclipse glasses politely. The Society members were also grateful for the help given by the teachers.

It was a pleasure for the team to meet the pupils, who were a credit to the school and themselves. It is hoped they learnt a few things and will be inspired to follow astronomy, just as many of our members did when they were children.

The children then wrote a thank-you letter to the Society, which was greatly appreciated.

Club nights offer more information on what to look out for each month. If it is clear, we will do some observing just outside the Village Hall, so please join us. There is no charge initially to come along and find out more, but if you do want to become a member, then the fee is just £15 a year, and it's free if you are in full-time education. For more details, go to the website <http://www.astro.org.uk> or contact the Chair, John Waller, john.waller@astro.org.uk or on 07703 192188.

Happy Observing!



Dear Adrian, Dave and Andrew,

Thank you so much for everything you did for us last week; all of the children loved it immensely and found it deeply intriguing.

We know that they learned so much from your lessons and they came back with their eyes wide and jaws dropped.

After learning that the Moon's atmosphere could never hold life and knowing that the Earth's always could, they had so many questions to ask, which quickly got answered.

As well as the children greatly expanding their knowledge of the solar system, the teachers also learned many new scientific facts too.

All of Ettington loved this complex yet interesting day which was a great learning opportunity for many.

Best wishes,

Ettington C of E Primary School.

Matilda and Tabitha

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www.wellesbourne-lions.org.uk/

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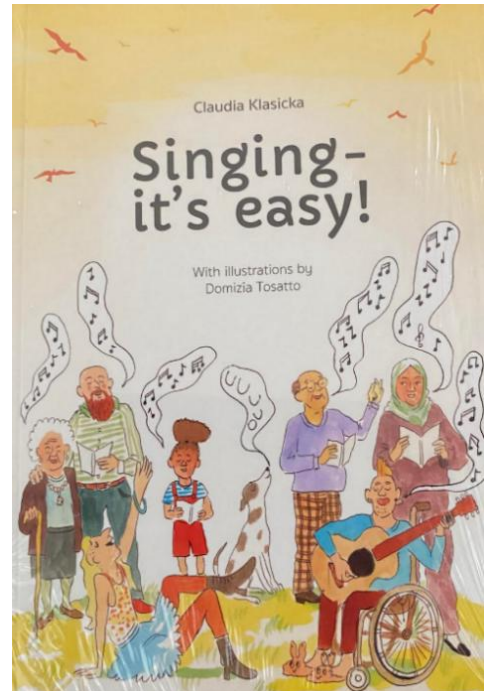
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Life is like a loaf of bread

adapted from Stuart Perkins, who doesn't bake

Arriving at Barncroft Gardens a bit early for dinner with friends, I walked across the grass area to wait by a set of benches facing the water.

The place bustled that evening, and I took the last empty seat on a bench beside an unassuming elderly woman. Her full attention was on a family busy tossing bread to ducks paddling in the water below.

As I sat down, she nodded a pleasant hello but quickly resumed her study of the family, seeming to focus mostly on a little boy.

Suddenly, the little boy broke from his mother's grip and bolted past us, missing the old woman's cane by inches. "Come back here!" the mother shouted as her unruly child chased some of the birds. "One. Two. I'd better not have to say three!"

The old woman nudged me with her elbow. "Bless her heart. She's already counted to three at least seven times," she chuckled and shook her head sympathetically.

I grinned. I have two children, both grown now, but the times that I myself counted to three were not that long ago. I started to say so just as the little boy zipped by us again.

"One!" The mother yelled as she ran behind him.

The old woman touched my arm and nodded toward the disobedient little boy now running in circles around a lamppost, oblivious of his mother's repetitive counting.

She leaned close and looked at me over her glasses, "That one needed more water in the dough," she whispered.

I didn't understand. "What does that mean?"

She tapped her cane hard on the ground, "He's too dense!" she clarified with a hearty laugh.

I don't bake, but for fear of seeming equally dense, I hesitantly asked.

"Did you just compare him to bread?" I grinned, unsure of where this was going.

She jerked her head towards me. "Oh, honey, all of us are a little like bread," she turned to gaze out across the river and began her explanation.

I wasn't sure I could listen.



"We're all born with the right ingredients. We're all pretty much made from the same recipe. What happens next, well, that's the tricky part," she said while mindlessly caressing the curved handle of her cane. I was listening. "Early on, we need some things to help us along, or we don't come out right," she continued. "Some of us just fall apart, like bread with too much flour."

Some of us never rise to our potential, too little yeast. That little boy, well, he needed more water in his dough so as not to be so dense!" She laughed again at her own harmless jab at the boisterous little boy.

This was getting interesting, but I glanced at my watch and realised I was now late for dinner. Still, I had to ask. "And then what?"

"Most important thing," she held a crooked finger in the air and continued, "is once all of the ingredients are mixed, we have to be kneaded. We all want to be needed!"

She laughed once more, this time at her play on words.

I laughed with her as I stood to leave, now even later for dinner. She held her cane up to stop me.

"So, hopefully in the beginning, all of us are set up with the right ingredients, right proportions and are always kneaded (she winked) because...". Her voice faded.

"Because?" I pushed. "Because life has a way of baking the hell out of us!"

She rapped her cane against the bench and threw her head back in laughter.

I grinned in appreciation of her humour. "You seem to have come out of the oven just fine!"

For the first time during our conversation, she stopped smiling. "

Well, you know a lot can happen to us in a lifetime," she said, staring wistfully at a paddle boat heading downriver. "Life sometimes holds us down, squeezes us tight, tries to shape us a certain way."

It dawned on me, "You mean like a loaf pan?" I almost shouted, so excited to prove I'd caught on.

"Now you've got it!" she giggled. "Whatever your loaf pans in life, rise above it!"

She raised her cane high into the air. "It seems you've done just that," I said.

"And all of that business about life baking us," she explained. "We need it to happen, even if it's rough. It's got to happen. By taking the heat, we become beautiful on the inside. Life baked me good sometimes, you see, but I didn't let what burned me on the outside ruin what I have on the inside."

"No, you seem to have handled the heat quite well," I agreed.

She stood slowly and leaned against her cane. "Too much crust and no one cares to find out how beautiful you are on the inside."

I nodded in agreement. Before slowly walking away, she smiled and patted my arm.

"Don't ever let life make you too crusty."



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