



Great Totham Parish Magazine

sent to every home in Great Totham
December 2025/January 2026

Sunday, 14th December
10am - Children's Nativity Play

Sunday, 21st December
6pm - Service of Nine Lessons & Carols followed by refreshments

Christmas Eve
3pm & 5pm - Christingle Services
10pm - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day
10am - Family Communion

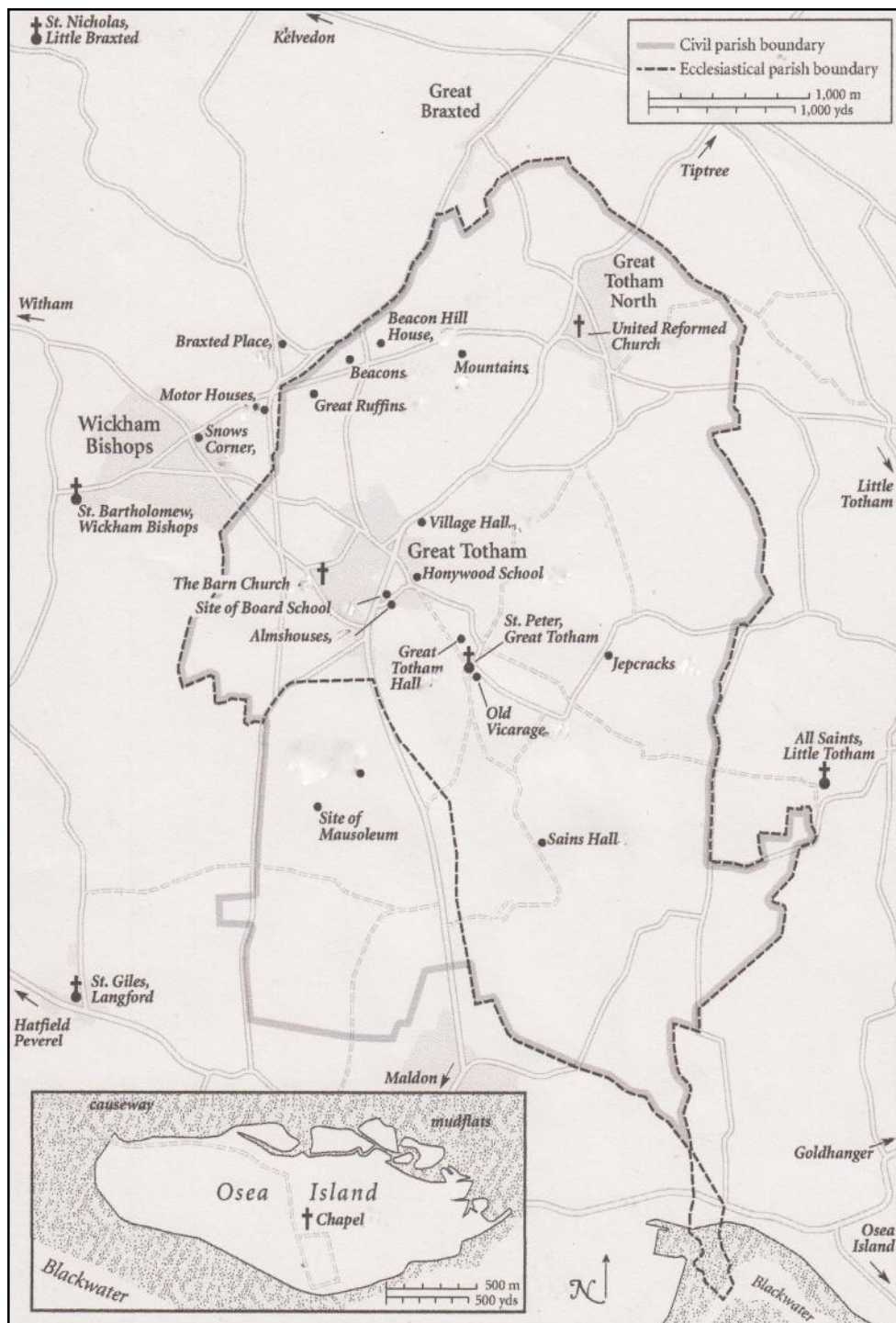
Sunday, 28th December
10am - Morning Service of the Word

All welcome to all services



Inside this Edition -

Christmas Fayre 6th December
Sponsor a Christmas Candle



St Peter's Church Contact Details



Blackwater
Benefice



Blackwater
Benefice

Parish Contacts:

Priest in Charge (*Vacant*)

Assistant Agricultural Chaplain

Andy Vince 01621 868415 / 07952 144613

Email: andrew.vince15@gmail.com

Associate Priest (*Vacant*)

Churchwarden (*Vacant*)

Please contact Rosie Pollock 07908 776750 with any enquiries.

Services

See pages 6 and 7 for details of services and online worship

Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals

If you are considering baptism for yourself or your children, weddings, funeral arrangements, Holy Communion at home, or you would just like a visit, please contact Rosie Pollock, Benefice Administrator, 07908 776750, email office.blackwaterbenefice@gmail.com

Rosie is generally available on Tuesday and Friday mornings. Messages left at other times during the week will be responded to at regular intervals.

Magazine:

Enquiries: Helen Mutton: 01621 891067

Jackie Masterson 07951 537206

Adverts: Sue Sharp 07548 826603

Deliveries: Cheryl Knott 01621 890940

Email (for all enquiries): parishmagazinetotham@yahoo.co.uk

St Peter's Church Website:

www.achurchnearyou.com/church/6657



Photographs

On many occasions, photographs are taken of adults and children for the Parish Magazine, Church Website and Church Facebook page to record the life and work of the church in Great Totham. If at any time you would prefer that a photograph was neither kept nor used, please indicate this to the photographer who will delete the image.

Church News



Blackwater
Benefice

Blackwater Benefice Ministry Team Message



Blackwater
Benefice

It is the middle of October as I sit down to write this Christmas message. Strangely, Advent calendars have been in our supermarkets since about 1st September. We have also started to see Christmas advertisements on TV.

For those of us who are Christians, Christmas Day is preceded by a time we know as Advent. This year, Advent Sunday was on 30th of November, when we celebrated together as a Benefice.

Advent means 'coming' or 'arrival.' There are many ways in which we can count down the days of Advent. Some people use Advent calendars to count down the time before Christmas, and there is a very wide selection on offer to us. Others may choose to count down the Sundays during Advent, of which there are four. However we choose to use this time, it is up to each one of us.

Whether you are aware of it or not, every year during Advent, we pause to reflect on the life of Jesus Christ by slowing down, listening, and anticipating, so we are better prepared to appreciate and enjoy our celebrations of Christmas.

As we all know, Christmas provides a rich tapestry for us to think about as we recall how God revealed Himself to us. The name of God has always been held sacred, not to be used lightly; it is a means of God's self-revelation to his people. Christmas is a time for rejoicing, remembering, and celebrating once again the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. A human being like no other, fully human and fully divine.

God sent his messenger, Gabriel, to a young woman called Mary. Gabriel's announcement was that she would have a baby, who would be called the Son of God, and his name would be Jesus.

Mary understood that this was God's plan to bring us back to God, and she said yes, 'Let it be with me according to your word.' Mary prepared the way for Jesus to come into the world.

Are we able to say yes to God in our lives?

Jesus was the Word of God, from the very beginning, the light of the world that could never be put out.

Jesus is God's answer to all that has gone wrong in our world, the one who came to set us free and lead us home.

From the very beginning, God has reached out to each one of us through countless generations who have prepared the way for Jesus to come.

/continued on next page

Church News

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Can we prepare our hearts to welcome his coming this Christmas?

And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Without Christ's presence among us, we would be lost. Through God's presence working within us, we are healed, transformed, reconciled, and made whole.

I pray that you have a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas.

*Revd Andrew Vince
Assistant Agricultural Chaplain.*

Rotas	Church Flowers	Church Cleaning
7th December	Pat Eaton	Jenny Barclay/Jean Grant
14th December	Sue Keyes	-
21st December	Christmas	Jenny Walling
28th December	Christmas	-
4th January	Sue Morgan	Mr and Mrs Campbell
11th January	Lucy Bettley	-
18th January	Mary Owers	Mr and Mrs Kemsley
25th January	Karen Tarpey	-

Church Extension and Kitchen Cleaning: December: Karin Mann
January: Jenny Walling

In your prayers at home this month, please include:

Our 'Friendship Church' - Bragernes Kirke, Drammen, Norway

John, Nina and Peter



Donations

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- scan the QR code;
- make a BACS payment to St Peter's Church (sort code 20-54-30, account number 20882739);
- send a cheque (payable to 'St Peter's Church, Great Totham') to:
17 Goat Lodge Road CM9 8BU

Church News

Services at St Peter's Church

St Peter's Church is open for private prayer
10am-3pm Monday to Saturday
11am-3pm on Sundays

Date	Time	Service	Readings
7th December Second Sunday of Advent	10am	Morning Service of the Word	Isa. 11. 1-10 Rom. 15. 4-13
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 3. 1-12
14th December Third Sunday of Advent	10am	Morning Service of the Word and Nativity Play	Psalms 146. 4-10 James 5. 7-10
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 11. 2-11
21st December Fourth Sunday of Advent	10am	Family Communion	Isa. 7. 10-16
	6pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	Rom. 1. 1-7 <i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 1. 18-end
24th December Christmas Eve	3pm	Christingle	Ps. 98
	5pm	Christingle	Heb. 1. 1-4, 5-12
	10pm	Midnight Mass	<i>Gospel:</i> John 1. 1-14
25th December Christmas Day	10am	Family Communion	Ps. 98 Heb. 1. 1-4, 5-12 <i>Gospel:</i> John 1. 1-14
28th December First Sunday of Christmas	10am	Morning Service of the Word	Isa. 63. 7-9 Heb. 2. 10-end
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 2. 13-end
4th January Epiphany	10am	Morning Service of the Word	Ps. 72. 1-8 1 John 4. 7-10
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Mark 6. 34-44
11th January Second Sunday after Epiphany	10am	Morning Service of the Word	Isa. 42. 1-9 Acts 10. 34-43
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 3. 13-end
18th January Third Sunday after Epiphany	10am	Joint Service for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Isa. 49. 1-7 1 Cor. 1. 1-9
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> John 1. 29-42
25th January Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	10am	Family Communion	Ps. 27. 1, 4-12 1 Cor. 1. 10-18
	6pm	Evensong by Zoom	<i>Gospel:</i> Matt. 4. 12-23

Church News



Benefice Worship



Visit the website or Facebook page for up to date information on services, or contact Rev'd Sue (891513), Karin Mann (891215) or Karen Tarpey (892122).

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/6657/>

<https://www.facebook.com/StPetersChurchGreatTotham/>



For details of Evensong by Zoom contact Rev'd Sue Godsmark

Book of Common Prayer Communion Services:

10am	Wednesdays	at St. Nicholas, Tolleshunt D'Arcy
5.30pm	Saturdays	at All Saints Little Totham

Visit the website or email blackwaterbenefice@gmail.com for details of other Benefice events and activities.

The Parish of St. Peter's Great Totham

Charity Number: XN 12862

100+ Club Draw Winners October

1st Prize: June Eaton
2nd Prize: Sheila Allen
3rd Prize: Philippa Hardy-King

Over the course of a year, 50% of subscriptions is returned in prizes. For every 100 members, the prize value will be £50 per month: 1st prize £25, 2nd prize £15 and 3rd prize £10. More members means bigger prizes.

Membership runs from 1st May to 30th April the following year, although you may join at any time. If you would like to join the scheme, whose proceeds benefit the church, please contact Roger Allen, 100+ Club Administrator, on 01621 892334, email: rw_allen@yahoo.co.uk

Subscriptions (£12 per year) may be by standing order, online bank transfer (sort code 20-54-30, account number 20882739, reference "100+ Club") or by cheque/cash to: Roger Allen, "Kimlee", Burns Green, Great Totham, CM9 8UL

Coffee Morning at The Honywood



Our next Coffee Morning will be held on Saturday, 24th January. We look forward to seeing you then for bacon butties, tea, coffee, cake and chat, 10am to 12 noon, in The Honywood, Hall Road.

Sheila Allen

Church News

News from the Belfry

I sometimes despair when I see Christmas cards for sale at the beginning of September. It is as if the true meaning of Christmas has been hijacked by commercialism. We all have activities that we enjoy the most over the Christmas season. It may be going to church on Christmas morning, decorating the tree or meeting up with friends and family members. My husband particularly enjoyed ringing the bells on Christmas morning, but sadly this year he will be unable to do so as he has, in bell parlance, hung up his sally. He would like to thank the members of the band for their friendship, support and encouragement throughout what has been a difficult and challenging time for him, especially Janice, our Tower Captain, for her patience and understanding.

I particularly enjoy singing Christmas carols and never tire of the traditional ones so beloved of church congregations. There are, however, many beautiful carols generally not sung in church, as their arrangements are not suitable. One of these is "The Carol of the Bells" based on the Ukrainian folk song "Shchedryk", traditionally sung at New Year and, translated, means "Little Swallow". The music for the song was written by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych in 1916. First performed by the students at Kyiv University and introduced to western audiences by the Ukrainian National Chorus during its concert tour of Europe in 1919, the song was then premiered on 5th October 1922 to a sellout audience at the USA's Carnegie Hall. The original work was intended to be sung in four parts a Capella, that is, without accompaniment. The English language version was written in 1936 by Peter Wilhousky, also of Ukrainian descent. The carol gained popularity when it was featured in the films "Home Alone" and "Harry Potter". If you are unfamiliar with the carol, you can hear it on YouTube.

The lyrics are set to a catchy four note repetitive rhythm reminiscent of the pealing of bells:

*Hark! how the bells, sweet silver bells,
All seem to say, throw cares away.
Christmas is here, bringing good cheer
To young and old, meek and the bold.
Ding, dong, ding, dong, that is their song
With joyful ring, all carolling.
One seems to hear, words of good cheer
From everywhere, filling the air.
Oh, how they pound, raising the sound
O'er hill and dale, telling their tale
Gaily they ring, while people they sing
Songs of good cheer, Christmas is here.
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas.
On, on they send, on without end
Their joyful tone, to every home.*

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Church News

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Congratulations to Dean Hallam and David Blake who both rang their first Quarter Peal ringing the tenor bell to Plain Bob Doubles on 9th June and 28th August respectively. You will be able to hear the bells of St Peter's ringing at the Christingle Services, the Midnight Service and on Christmas morning.

Would you like to celebrate the New Year by taking up a new activity? It doesn't matter if you are a complete novice as full instruction will be given. Please contact Janice, our Tower Captain on 07790 354338 or visit www.greattothambellringers.org.uk for further information. On behalf of the band, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Catherine Hood

Operation Christmas Child

Nearly 50 shoe boxes were beautifully packed with love and care this year by St Peter's Church, Knit and Natter, and friends, to take part in the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child.

After being taken to local drop-off sites, the boxes are delivered to regional processing centres where volunteers prepare them for their trip overseas. Hundreds or thousands of miles later, they clear customs, entering the care of Samaritan's Purse ministry partners, who plan distribution events at churches and other locations.

So, a big "Thank you" to all who took part.



Some of you will have put a bar code in your box and will get information as to where they have been sent. If not, and you would like to see 2025 Shoe Box News and videos of children receiving their boxes, visit

www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk and follow the links.



Church News

Decorating St Peter's Church for Christmas

We will be decorating the church for Christmas from 9am onwards on Saturday, 20th December. All welcome to come along and help with this fun task; you don't need to be an accomplished flower arranger. Any foliage or greenery, particularly holly, would be appreciated. Refreshments will be provided!

Sue Keyes

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families



We held our open meeting on 7th November and would like to thank those members of the community and church who joined us; our ranks were increased to 14 that afternoon. Our speaker was Maxine Paul, the Chelmsford Diocesan President, who spoke to us about one of our local charities (AFIA) Away from it All. This project sends families who have not been able to have a holiday out for a day trip or weekend/week away.

We are holding our Christmas meeting on Friday 12th December. Our first meeting in 2026 will be on Friday, 23rd January at 1.45pm in the Honywood Hall.

We would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

We warmly welcome any new members, for more details please ring me on 01621 981315.

June Eaton

Parish Magazine

We would like to thank all the volunteers who produce, distribute and deliver Great Totham Parish Magazine, in all weathers, throughout the year. We would not be able to provide this community facility without you, so thank you.

The support of our advertisers means that we are able to deliver the magazine free to every home in Great Totham. Please consider using their services and mention the magazine when contacting them.

We currently need distributors in Maypole Road, Plains Road and Totham Hill Green. If you can help, please contact Cheryl on 01621 890940, Helen on 01621 891067 or email: parishmagazinetotham@yahoo.co.uk

Helen Mutton

Children's Colouring Page



Sourced by June Eaton

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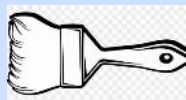
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Church News

Candle in Memory of a Loved One

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Total donation: £ _____

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Applicant's Name: _____

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Please send names by 18th December to:

Sue Morgan, 31 Hall Road; email Susanamorgan@aol.com



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(sort code 20-54-30, a/c no: 20882739) *
- ◇ send a cheque (payable to 'St Peter's Church, Great Totham') to:
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**Include your name and 'Candles' in the reference*



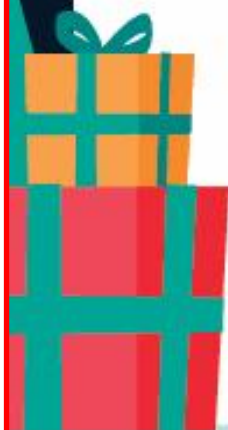
St Peter's Church, Great Totham

Christmas Fayre

featuring Elves' Workshop

Saturday 6th December at 11am to 3pm
Great Totham Village Hall

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| ◆ None Bar One | ◆ Human Fruit Machine |
| ◆ Pizzas | ◆ Fill a Jar |
| ◆ Refreshments | ◆ Wax Melts |
| ◆ Cakes | ◆ Jigsaws |
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Community News

News from Great Totham Primary School

www.greattotham.essex.sch.uk



Year 2 Visit to Call of the Wild Zoo

On Thursday 16th October, Year 2 visited Call of the Wild Zoo. We had a fantastic day and saw lots of different animals. We enjoyed having a talk about lifecycles and had the chance to stroke a lizard or a snake. We all liked watching a bird show and learnt a lot about owls.

Year 5 Visit to Daws Hall



On 6th and 7th of October, Year 5 went on an exciting trip to Daws Hall!

As we are learning about Rivers in Geography, we investigated the River Stour. We did orienteering (searching for different trees) which was so much fun. We measured the River Stour by checking for pollution, measuring the length and width, taking the temperature and so much more!

We also found different insects and fish by dropping a net into the stream and using magnifying glasses to look at them...some of us got a bit wet! We learnt about the history of Daws Hall and walked between two counties! It was so much fun and we were all very tired by the end of the day.

Written by Tamsin

Year 5 First Aid

Year 5 recently went to do First Aid training. We were taught how to do CPR and work with a defibrillator. Did you know that your heart beats 120 times a minute?

Firstly, we were taught about what to do if you see an unconscious casualty—call for help as soon as you can! We were taught about the rules of SLICER which means service, location, injury, casualties, emergency and repeat location. Next, we went over to the floor and practised putting people into the recovery position which is surprisingly easy.

After that we learnt about CPR. The mannequins that we were practising on made a click if you pushed hard enough. The CPR was probably one of the hardest bits as you had to push very hard for it to do a click. We also had to do mouth to mouth which was unsurprisingly disgusting.

Next, we focused on working on how to use a defibrillator. We had to get the machine out of the bag and turn it on which was quite easy but putting the pads on was harder. You had to smooth the pads down so that they were extremely flat which was challenging. Next, we had to follow the instructions that the de-fib gave us and although it was only a training de-fib it still wasn't the easiest.

We finished by watching a couple of videos and talking about what to do in different emergencies. Overall, we all had a great day and enjoyed it very much.

Written by Aphelia and Charlie

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Community News

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Year 4 Visit to Colchester Zoo

In October, Year 4 visited Colchester Zoo to learn more about endangered species and their habitats. The children had a great day and saw many critically endangered animals such as Komodo dragons, capuchins, orangutans, and chimpanzees. We finished the day by having a talk about why certain animals are becoming endangered and extinct in the wild.



Year 1 Outdoor Learning

On Wednesday 8th October, Year 1 had an outdoor learning day. The children really enjoyed pond dipping, making conker spiders and creating leaf collages. They also used their senses to complete a scavenger hunt and planted bulbs.



Year 6 Outdoor Learning



On Wednesday 15th October, Year 6 went outside to do outdoor learning.

We had lots of fun finding minibeasts, classifying owl pellets, identifying leaves and painting with watercolours at the pond. When we were finding the minibeasts, we all found something! We had to be very careful because if we turned anything over, we had to put it right back where we found it. I found the biggest spider ever!

Then, we uncovered what the owl had eaten by looking at the bones of the previous creature; there was a mixture of rodents, moles and small birds. Afterwards, we created a chart to identify different leaves including ivy, lambs ears, oak and holly. I really enjoyed that one.

Our final activity was painting with watercolours at the pond. We sat on tarps and painted a picture of what we could see. Most people chose the bridge or the reeds as their subject. Overall, I really enjoyed our outdoor learning day!

Written by Phoebe C

Hockey Club – Wednesday 15th October

Our Hockey Club was invited by Maldon Court Primary to take part in a friendly mini-tournament.

The children, equipped with shin pads and mouthguards, thoroughly enjoyed mixing with the Maldon Court pupils and experiencing play on a much larger pitch than they're used to!

Karen Wells, our dedicated Hockey Coach, encouraged the children on from the sidelines and was very impressed with their skill and teamwork—especially against such experienced players. It was a wonderful afternoon and a fantastic way to end our Hockey Club for the term.



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Community News

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Football Tournament Success!

On Tuesday, 14th October, we hosted our annual Local Schools Football Tournament at the Beacon Hill Rovers Sports Ground. Teams from Wentworth, All Saints, St Francis, and the current holders of the Shield, Tollesbury, joined us for an exciting afternoon of football.



Our first match against St Francis saw us create plenty of chances, but it ended in a 0–0 draw. From there, the team really found their rhythm, winning all remaining games and keeping a clean sheet, thanks to George's excellent goalkeeping! Our efforts were rewarded as we proudly lifted the shield this year. We were incredibly impressed with the boys' skill, determination and teamwork throughout.

Following our success, our School Games Organiser, Helen Dey, invited us to compete in the Colchester, Tiptree and Maldon Schools Finals, held on Wednesday 22nd October. We joined eight other schools and played eight matches, winning five, drawing one, and losing two. Our goals came from Ethan (4), Zachariah (3), Quinn (2), and Jude (2). With the competition based on a points system, we weren't sure where we had finished, so we were thrilled to discover that we came 2nd overall, just two points behind the winners!

It was an especially memorable day for George S, who celebrated his 11th birthday playing football with his teammates. Between matches, the children enjoyed testing the speed of their shots; Henry topped the leader board with an impressive 81 km/h! What a fantastic couple of tournaments for our team!

Colchester District Schools Football Competition



On Wednesday 15th October, we travelled to Colchester United with a talented group of girls, all of whom play club -level football, to compete in the Colchester District Schools competition.

We began our first group stage a little nervously, drawing our first two matches 0–0 and narrowly losing the third 1–0. With several teams level on points, the group was decided by a penalty shoot-out. Despite Isla R making a fantastic save and Tamsin confidently scoring with a powerful left-footed strike, we lost 3–1, placing us fourth in the group. This meant we moved into the second half of the competition, playing for positions 13th–16th. In our second group, the team truly came to life, playing some brilliant football. We won all three games: 5–0, 5–0, and 1–0, with every player scoring at least once, including Maddie from Year 4!

Annabelle captained the side superbly, leading us to finish top of our second group (13th overall), a result that was thoroughly deserved. Orla was named Player of the Day for giving her all throughout the competition.

A huge well done to all the girls, we are incredibly proud of you, and a special thank you to Rachel Harwood for her fantastic coaching and support.

Jo Mazzarella

Community News

A Bear and A Beatle (sort of)

This January marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of two famous people, although both are probably more famous for their association with others. Firstly, on 13th January 1926, Thomas Michael Bond was born in Newbury in Berkshire. However, as Michael Bond, he is celebrated for his creation of Paddington Bear.

Michael Bond created Paddington in 1958 as a refugee from deepest, darkest Peru, who was taken under the wing of the Brown family, and featured in 29 books telling of his adventures. It should also be noted that Michael Bond wrote many other books, including the Olga Da Polga series and the Monsieur Pamplemousse series, as well as other books, picture books, and television scripts. He died aged 91 in 2017 and is buried in Paddington Old Cemetery with an epitaph on his gravestone reading "Please look after this bear. Thank you".

The other famous man more associated with others born 100 years ago was George Martin. Born on 3rd January 1926, he was best known for his production work with The Beatles. He was also a musician, composer, and conductor in his own right. He joined EMI in 1950 and eventually became head of the company's Parlophone label, where he produced numerous comedy records, including recordings by such artists as The Goons, Peter Sellers, and the cast of *Beyond the Fringe*.

George Martin also formed a working relationship with Brian Epstein, the manager of a number of Liverpool acts, which ultimately led to Parlophone signing the likes of Gerry and the Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer and The Dakotas, The Fourmost, Cilla Black and, of course, The Beatles. The signing of The Beatles was not straight forward but that is a different story!

George Martin was known for his innovative and experimental recording techniques and produced all of The Beatles' original albums. He was also famed for many other productions, from film scores to television work, but it was his unofficial position as "the fifth Beatle" for which he is most remembered. He passed away aged 90 in 2016.

Chris Bingham



St Peter's Parochial Church Council (PCC), Blackwater Benefice,
and Magazine Team wish you all a very Happy Christmas and
New Year.

We warmly welcome you to any of our Christmas services.

Community News

A Brief History of the Christmas Tree



Long before the advent of Christianity, plants and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Tree worship was common among the pagan Europeans, who believed that decorating the house and barn with evergreens at the New Year would keep illness and the Devil away. The modern Christmas tree, though, originated in western Germany and was first recorded to be used by German Lutherans. The Germans set up a paradise tree in their homes on 24th December, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve, “a fir tree hung with apples”, that represented the Garden of Eden. The triangular shape reminded humanity of

the Trinity and how it points to heaven. They hung wafers on it symbolising the Christian eucharistic host. These wafers were later replaced by cookies of various shapes. An angel or star might be placed at the top of the tree to represent the Angel Gabriel or the Star of Bethlehem. In the same room was the “Christmas Pyramid”, a construction of wood that had shelves to hold Christmas figurines. The Protestant Christian reformer, Martin Luther, is said to have first added lighted candles symbolic of Christ as light of the world. By the 16th century, the Christmas



pyramid and paradise tree had merged, becoming the Christmas tree. After the Protestant Reformation, such trees were seen in the houses of upper-class Protestant families as a counterpart to the Catholic Christmas cribs. The custom became popular among the nobility and spread to royal courts as far as Russia. Under the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of state atheism in the Soviet Union, Christmas celebrations, along with other religious holidays including Easter, were prohibited. School children were encouraged to campaign against Christmas traditions, among them being the Christmas tree. In 1935, however, the tree was brought back as a New Year tree and became a secular, not a religious holiday.



Introduced into England in the early 19th century, the Christmas tree was popularised by German-born Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria. It's hard to imagine now, but at the beginning of the 19th century Christmas was hardly celebrated. However, by the end of the century it had become the biggest annual celebration and took on the form that we recognise today. Gift giving had traditionally been at New Year but moved as Christmas became more important to the Victorians.

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Community News

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In the Western Christian tradition, Christmas trees are erected on days such as the first day of Advent or even as late as Christmas Eve, depending on the country. Customs of the same faith hold that it is unlucky to remove Christmas decorations, such as the Christmas tree, before Twelfth Night and, if they are not taken down on that day, it is appropriate to do so at Candlemas. In Norway, many families decorate their trees on 23rd December, "Little Christmas Eve". The Victorians transformed the idea of Christmas so that it became centred around the family; they considered carols to be a delightful form of musical entertainment. A Norwegian ritual known as "circling the Christmas tree" encourages everyone to join hands to form a ring around the tree and then walk round it whilst singing carols.

In the 1930s, artificial trees made of brush bristles were developed in the United States and the 1950s and '60s saw the mass production of aluminium and PVC plastic trees. Artificial trees gained significant popularity, particularly in countries where fresh trees were hard to grow.

Karin Mann



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(Booking fee is applicable)

Wanted! Kings, Shepherds and Angels



On Sunday, 14th December, we will hold our lovely Nativity Service, when pre- and primary school age children dress up and act out the Christmas Story. All the costumes

are provided and there are no lines to learn. Just arrive at 9:30am in time to get ready, at St Peter's Church, Great Totham.

It would be wonderful to have as many children as possible for the morning.

Sandra Smith

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Church News

CHRISTMAS IN THE BLACKWATER BENEFICE		
<u>Laver de la Haye</u> Christmas Eve 4pm Crib service Christmas Day 10.30am Communion	<u>Salcott</u> Christmas Eve 3pm Instant Nativity Christmas Day No service	<u>Tollesbury</u> Christmas Eve 5pm Carol service with communion Christmas Day 10am Carols round the crib
<u>Tolleshunt D'Arcy</u> Christmas Eve 10pm Communion service with carols Christmas Day No service	Beacon and Waterside Parishes 	<u>Tolleshunt Major</u> Christmas Eve 4pm Christingle Christmas Day No service
<u>Great Totham</u> Christmas Eve 3pm and 5pm Christingle 10pm Midnight Mass Christmas Day 10am Family Communion	<u>Little Totham</u> Christmas Eve 4pm Christingle 10.30pm Midnight Mass Christmas Day From 10.30am Christmas Reflection	<u>Goldhanger</u> Christmas Eve 4pm Christingle 10pm Midnight Mass Christmas Day 10.00am Carols by the crib

You're warmly invited!

To A Church Party!

A social gathering for the church family to celebrate
the new year and to thank all those who help out.

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4-6pm

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Renters Reform Act

All private tenants and landlords need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Act. It has now received Royal Assent and will be rolled out over coming months and years. It is hoped that this long-awaited legislation will help level the private renting playing field, so people can have security in their homes and the confidence to challenge landlords without fear of retaliation.

Key elements include:

- **Abolish section 21 evictions** and move to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic, providing more security for tenants and empowering them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction.
- **Ensure possession grounds are fair to both parties**, giving tenants more security, while ensuring landlords can recover their property when reasonable.
- **Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction** by ensuring tenants are able to appeal excessive above-market rents which are purely designed to force them out. As now, landlords will still be able to increase rents to market price for their properties and an independent tribunal will make a judgement on this, if needed.
- **Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman** that will provide quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord.
- **Create a Private Rented Sector Database** to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance (giving good landlords confidence in their position), alongside providing better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement.
- **Give tenants strengthened rights to request a pet in the property**, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse.
- **Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector** to give renters safer, better value homes and remove the blight of poor-quality homes in local communities.
- **Apply 'Awaab's Law' to the sector**, setting clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which landlords in the private rented sector must take action to make homes safe where they contain serious hazards.
- **Make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children** – helping to ensure everyone is treated fairly when looking for a place to live.

/continued on next page

Community News

- **End the practice of rental bidding by prohibiting landlords and agents from asking for or accepting offers above the advertised rent.** Landlords and agents will be required to publish an asking rent for their property and it will be illegal to accept offers made above this rate.

If you would like advice about housing or any other issues, please contact Maldon & District Citizens Advice: www.maldoncitizensadvice.org.uk or phone 01621 875774.

*Lucy Bettley
Chief Officer, Maldon & District Citizens Advice*



MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Your District Councillors



We are expanding flexible plastic recycling to all properties, including flats, to the rest of the District over a rolling five month programme by March 2026. This is one year earlier than the government deadline of March 2027. Stickers will be applied to refuse bins promoting the expansion. We can be really proud of this cooperation between residents, the Council and our contractor which makes us the best waste collection in the county and one of the best in the country. I know from my own experience the difference this makes to the amount of waste going into the black bin. You can also now put this type of plastic into pink sacks.

A Parish review is being conducted on the Great Totham and Heybridge Parishes. This is due to the large number of homes being built at Westcombe Park, which are currently in the Totham parish, and perhaps should be in the Heybridge parish. If you want to have a say on the review, you can do this at: https://www.maldon.gov.uk/info/20067/elections_and_voting/10210/community_governance_reviews

Free car parking sessions are returning in the run-up to Christmas. This initiative aims to support local businesses and make it easier for residents and visitors to enjoy the town centre during the festive season. The first free session will be **from 4pm on Thursday 27th November** to support Maldon Town Council's annual 'Light Up Maldon' Christmas event which runs from **5pm – 9pm**. This includes a high street market, entertainment and the Christmas lights switch-on in the High Street at **6pm**. For the 'Light Up Maldon' event, free parking will be available in Butt Lane, White Horse Lane, Friary Fields, and Promenade Park Car Park. In addition, free parking will be provided in **Maldon's Town Centre car parks (not Promenade Park)**, from **2pm on Thursdays 4th, 11th, 18th December**, and **all day** on Christmas Eve.

We are upgrading the skatepark at Maldon Promenade Park. This exciting project is the final phase of the Council's Section 106 Youth Facilities Programme, which will see the current skatepark replaced with a larger modern

Community News

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facility. Last year, a public survey was conducted to gather views from users on the skateparks in Promenade Park and Riverside Park. The feedback received was instrumental in shaping the new designs for these facilities and saw the first phase completed with the construction of new skateparks at West Maldon Community Centre, and Riverside Park in Burnham-on-Crouch. The works will be carried out by Bendcrete Skateparks Ltd, and are scheduled to begin in December, with an expected completion date of spring 2026.

The Council is reviewing all of the open spaces and play sites which it owns across the District, how we can invest in them and improve the facilities.

Maldon District Council is delighted to announce that it received a 'Highly Commended' award at the Essex Housing Awards. These celebrate the best housing work across the county, from new builds and refurbishments to services that support residents. Maldon District Council was recognised in the 'Meeting Housing Need – Homelessness' category, which highlights projects that make a real difference to people facing homelessness. The award follows the successful refurbishment and occupation of emergency accommodation facilities within the District. This vital project has already helped individuals and families facing homelessness by providing safe, secure, and adapted temporary housing whilst longer-term solutions are found. It also ensures that provision is allocated in the District which avoids placements out of the area. The project was funded through a mix of Section 106 contributions, Local Authority Housing Fund grants, and capital borrowing. It supports the Council's goals to improve access to housing, reduce isolation, and promote health and wellbeing, whilst also backing its climate action work. We are developing the other prospects in housing, which will enable similar projects.

Finally I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy 2026.

Jade and I are always keen to help with any ward issues, or if you have any problems or questions about the Council's services. If at any time you need to contact us, please phone 01621 890809 or email:

cllr.richard.siddall@maldon.gov.uk

cllr.jade.hughes@maldon.gov.uk

*Best wishes
Richard*

Published by the PCC of St Peter's Church, Great Totham

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Community News

Little Princess Trust

Hello! My name is Jessica and I am 11 years old. Last month I decided to have my hair cut and donate it to The Little Princess Trust for children who have had some sort of illness and don't have any hair, so they can have a wig. The hairdresser cut about 15 inches off the back and about 13 inches off the front! I also decided to raise some money to go with it, as it costs £700 to make the wigs. Right now, I am up to £645.00 and just need £55 until I have completed my goal! If you would like to donate, please go to https://www.justgiving.com/page/jessica-pollock-11?utm_medium=FA&utm_source=CL

Before....



After...



Thank you to everyone who has already sponsored me so far! It is very generous and thank you in advance for any future donations!

Jessica Pollock



Essex Library Service

Santa Bus is returning this festive season, in partnership with the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service. Pop along and meet Santa in their Mobile Library bus this Christmas!

Visit <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/news/the-santa-bus-is-back/>

It's time for the **Winter Reading Challenge**, so let's meet **The Pawfessionals!**

They're a group of friendly animals who live in Essex and, with the help of Essex Year of Opportunity, will find their dream jobs this winter. Sign up and in join at your local Essex library. Complete challenges on your own sheet and collect stickers as you go. Complete the tasks and have a chance to enter our amazing prize draw!

Join in from Saturday, 10th January to Sunday, 22nd February.

Visit <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/news/winter-reading-challenge-2026>

For more information, visit: <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/>

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Community News



Great Totham Parish Council Report for November



Continuing my ploy of reusing areas of my 'old' computer (because I am still rather nervous of my 'new' one), I discovered that I was overtyping the Parish Council Report for November 2021. It was interesting to see what has changed and what has remained the same! County Councillor Mark Durham reported that 'due to delays, attributed to Covid', some of the LHP budget remained unspent and additional schemes could be considered. This year, he again mentioned the availability of modest funding for small local projects but, currently, County Council news is dominated by preparations for the proposed local government reorganisation and the devolution agenda. A mayor will be elected for Greater Essex in May 2026 and will preside over an interim combined authority, comprised of Essex County Council, Southend and Thurrock authorities, until 2028 when the new unitary councils will take over and the current district, city and borough councils will be abolished. Neither Parish nor Town councils were included in the Government's devolution paper, but I suspect we will be impacted. Watch this space!

Sadly, criminal damage to the Jubilee Recreation facilities was causing concern in 2021, necessitating, over the years, items of equipment to be refurbished and moved to Bull Green where children can once again enjoy them safely. New pieces have been added and the older, tired pieces still in 'The Pit' have been monitored and kept going by members of the Council. Ultimately it would, of course, be more pleasing to return The Pit to its original purpose. Meanwhile, the three playing fields are regularly inspected by independent agencies and their recommendations followed up.

It might be appropriate to mention at this point that the Jubilee Recreation Ground also suffers from that most frequently reported of all anti-social behaviour, dog fouling. Perhaps it is because the area is not overlooked and people think they can 'get away with it', perhaps it is just laziness on behalf of some dog owners or walkers, or perhaps it seems that such a natural function can't be harmful but, of course, canine faeces contain parasites which can cause illness in people and other animals, making places where children play most unsuitable locations for them. Admittedly, clearing up after an animal is not the most pleasurable of activities. Nor, indeed, is nappy changing, but parents accept responsibility for it because a baby can't, and those with whom the child shares space need to be respected! Local byelaws also require dogs to be kept on leads in children's playgrounds and any fouling to be cleared up so that 'the law-abiding majority can use and enjoy public amenities'; it is not much to ask.

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Community News

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Neither, of course, is keeping to the speed limit when travelling through the village, but results from the Protection Officers indicate that, with only slight monthly variations, there is little change in the habits of motorists using the B1022. Although the focus of the Officers' attentions can be varied, currently they have been asked to concentrate their surveillance on the Jubilee Recreation Ground. Questions have been raised as to the viability and benefits of the service and this will be discussed more fully in the New Year, together with proposals for future projects and their funding.

Despite the frustrations of some of the Parish matters, the November meeting was very lively and productive. Earlier in the month, many of the Councillors attended the Remembrance Service at St Peter's Church and it is pleasing to see the clearance made to the overgrown areas around the memorial bus shelter at Totham South, prior to replanting. We are as ever grateful to those residents who freely contribute their time and efforts for the benefit of all, undertaking such activities as litter picking and generally caring for our village. If you would like to offer your services or, indeed, if you know of some 'unsung hero' please let us know.

The next two Parish Council Meetings will take place at 7.30pm, in the Village Hall on 21st December 2025 and 19th January 2026.

Vicky Heaviside



Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Services took place across the country on Sunday, 9th November; some residents in Prince of Wales Road also commemorated the day in their own way.

Photo courtesy of Daphne Taplin

Community News

What's on in your Community

The Treehouse Club Pre-School
Monday to Friday, Village Hall

Rainbows
Monday, Church Extension

Carpet Bowls
630pm-830pm Tuesday, Village Hall

Baby Signage
9am Wednesday, Church Extension

Bible Study Group
1030am Wednesday, Honywood Hall

Community Choir
730pm Wednesday, Church Extension

Edward Bear Club
1030am Thursday, Church Extension

Great Totham WI
730pm 2nd Thursday, Village Hall

Wickham Bishops Gardening Club
730pm third Thursday,
St Bartholomew's Church Hall

Wickham Bishops WI
2pm last Thursday,
St Bartholomew's Church Hall

Knit and Natter
10am Friday, Honywood Hall

Bellringing Practice
745pm Friday, St Peter's Church

Mothers' Union
145pm some Fridays, Honywood Hall
Contact June Eaton 01621 891315 for dates

St Peter's Church Coffee Morning
10am 4th Saturday, Honywood Hall

URC, Great Totham North

Art Club
Monday, 2pm-4pm

Upholstery Classes
Monday, 7.30pm-9.30pm
Tuesday, 10am-12 noon;
12.30pm-2.30pm

Lunch Club
10.30am—2pm
2nd and 4th Wednesday

Craft and Chatter
1.30pm—3.30pm 2nd Thursday

Piecemakers
Patchwork and Needlework Group
1.30pm—3.30pm last Thursday

Church Coffee Morning
10am—11.30am 2nd Saturday

*See page 39 for contact details
To include your group here, email:
parishmagazinetoatham@yahoo.co.uk*

Future Events

**Friday, 9th and Saturday, 10th
January 2026**

Wickham Bishops Drama Club
Pantomime at the Village Hall:
'Cinderella and the Velvet Slipper'

Saturday, 24th January 2026
St Peter's Church Christmas Party



Covers created by
Purple Rabbit Designer



Community News



Great Totham WI



November was our members' meeting, with Brenda Steele and Margaret Frost overseeing the making of decorative Christmas angels.



At our Christmas meeting, we look forward to listening to the Goldhanger Sea Shanty Singers and enjoy a feast of Yuletide treats.

In January, Bryan Thurlow will be our speaker, with a talk entitled "Through the Green Baize Door".

We are always pleased to see new members and welcome you as a guest at any of our meetings held on the second Thursday in the month at Great Totham Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

If you would like any more information about our group, you can find us on our website www.greattothamwi.weebly.com or, alternatively, email greattothamwi@gmail.com.

Sue Pulford



Wickham Bishops WI



Despite road closures many members drove through narrow, winding roads to attend our October meeting.

Our speaker, Don, husband of a member, gave an interesting and in depth talk on communications from the first letter, telegram and phone call. His knowledge on British Post Office history was enhanced by his own experience of working with them from the age of 17 until retirement. The selection of telephones made some of us feel very old!

A group of ladies enjoyed a visit to Olivers Nursery and café near Witham. The food was excellent and some early Christmas purchases made.

News from Head Office left us with many things to consider over the coming weeks, not least the proposed Resolutions for 2026.

Our meetings are held in Wickham Bishops Church Hall on the last Thursday of the month 2–4 pm. We are always happy to welcome visitors and new members. Please contact Margaret on 01621 815161 for further information.

Margaret Curtis

Community News

Contacting the Police

In an emergency dial 999

For non-emergencies dial 101 extension 412335 / 01245 491491

Send non-emergency police related information/intelligence to your North Blackwater Neighbourhood Policing Team at:

<http://www.essex.police.uk/> or text 07624 80010

Maldon Police

0300 333 4444 or 101

Maldon District Council Offices, Princes Road, Maldon



**Your local
update**



Essex Police – Colchester



Follow @CInspHuddleston or
@EPColchester



<http://www.essex.police.uk>

Visit essex.police.uk/your-area for news and updates on:

- The work of the Community and Local Policing Teams
- Crime trends
- Crime prevention

Great Totham Neighbourhood Watch

Visit Maldon District Neighbourhood Watch website for up to date local crime reports, non-urgent news and links to the police and national NHW websites:

<http://www.maldondistrictnhw.co.uk/index.htm>

For Totham Hill Green, phone Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, Ian Barratt, on 891949, email: ianbarratt43@gmail.com

For local crime reports, visit <https://www.police.uk/essex/28/crime/>



Wickham Bishops Library

Monday: 2pm-5.30pm

Saturday: 9am-5pm

Wednesday: 2pm-5.30pm

Telephone: 0345 6037628

Baby and Toddler Rhymetime: Mondays 2.15pm-2.45pm.
Stories and rhymes for babies and young children.

Saturday Story Time: 10.30am-11am every third Saturday of the month.
Free sessions aimed at children aged 5 and under, but everyone is welcome.

Ancestry: Wednesdays 3.30pm-4.30pm. Help to research your family history.

Code Club: Saturdays 9am-10am.

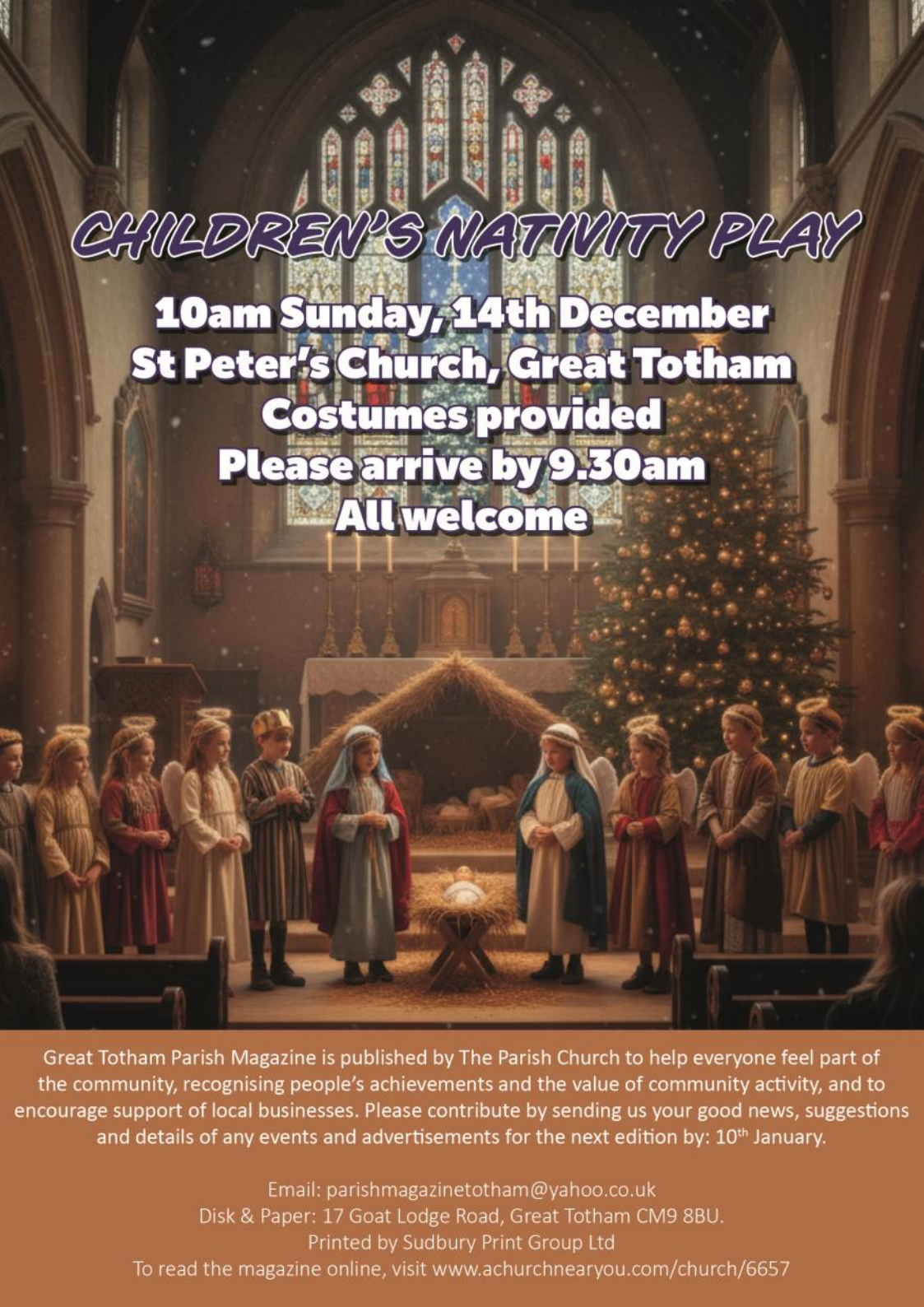
Learn how to make cool games, animations and websites.

Contacts for Community Activities (See page 3 for Church Activities)

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers		www.girlguiding.org.uk
Rainbows at St Peter's Church	Rosie Pollock	893168
Scouts, Cubs, Beavers at Prances	Brenda Heal	bjheal@btinternet.com
Great Totham Cricket Club Colts	Paul Marks	07709 793958
The Treehouse Club Pre-School	Village Hall	01621 468020
Edward Bear Club (Toddler Group)	St Peter's Church	Rosie Pollock 893168
Gardening Club	Village Hall	Pauline Wright 892855
Wl: GT Evening 2nd Thurs. 7.30pm	Village Hall	Sue Pulford 892063
GT & WB last Thurs. 2pm	St.B Church Hall	Di Mellor 892247
Day Centre Wednesdays	URC	Jean Johnstone 892293
Carpet Bowls Tues 6.30pm-8.30pm	Village Hall	Jean Cloughton 892286
Tollesbury Table Tennis Club	Paul Freeman	freemans21@hotmail.com
		862510 / 07855 204505
Maldon Croquet Club		maldoncroquetclub@gmail.com
Wickham Bishops Drama Club		www.wickhambishopsdrama.co.uk
Knit and Natter (Honywood Hall)	Sandra Smith	893153
Wickham Bishops Gardening Club	Stewart / Wendy	HortiClub@outlook.com 893360

Useful Telephone Numbers

Honywood Hall Hire	Karin Mann	929866
St Peter's Church Extension Hire	Karin Mann	929866
Village Hall hire	Sue Pulford	892063
URC hall hire	Sue Bowyer	893285
St Peter's—Interment of Ashes and Iron Crosses	Chris Munton	891817
Great Totham Parish Council	Clerk: Nikki Smith	07811400803
District Councillors	Jade Hughes	cllr.jade.hughes@maldon.gov.uk
	Richard Siddall	07979 853947 / 890809
County Councillor	Mark Durham	01245 227249 / 07850 967239
Great Totham Primary School		891091
Maldon District Council		854477
Maldon Citizens Advice	email: manager@maldoncitizensadvice.org.uk	875774
Police Community Support Officer		101
Water		01245 491234
Electricity		0845 6014516
Frank (Drugs Helpline) (free)		0300 1236600
Childline Helpline for children		0800 1111 (free)
Maldon District Health / Wellbeing advice	emily.fallon@maldon.gov.uk	
NSPCC 24 hour helpline for children		0800 800 500 (free)
The Samaritans		116 123
DIAL UK (Disability Information & Advice Line)		www.dialuk.info
Church of England, St. Peter's	Benefice Administrator	07908 776750
Totham Barn Free Evangelical Church	Contact Danbury Mission:	01245 227428
United Reformed Church		01376 500958
Wickham Bishops Church		
Maldon Methodist Church Office	Rev'd Clifford Newman	853423
Maldon Roman Catholic Church	Parish Priest - Fr. Jerold Savio	852259
Society of Friends (Quakers)	Clerk to the meeting - Sue Smith	854056
Salvation Army		853942
Christian Growth Centre (CGC), Maldon	Rob & Jeannie Saggs Pastors	855855



CHILDREN'S NATIVITY PLAY

10am Sunday, 14th December
St Peter's Church, Great Totham
Costumes provided
Please arrive by 9.30am
All welcome

Great Totham Parish Magazine is published by The Parish Church to help everyone feel part of the community, recognising people's achievements and the value of community activity, and to encourage support of local businesses. Please contribute by sending us your good news, suggestions and details of any events and advertisements for the next edition by: 10th January.

Email: parishmagazinetotham@yahoo.co.uk

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