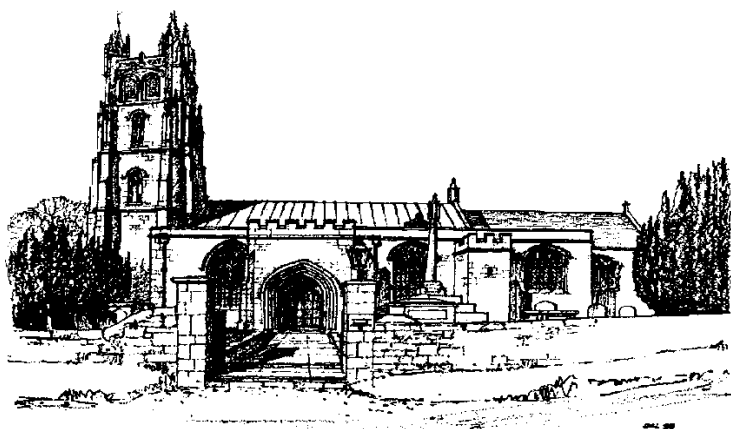


# The Parish Church of St Andrew

Backwell



## Informal Reports Booklet

2025

## **Backwell Church of England Junior School Church Days**

Backwell Junior School pupils have been visiting St Andrew's in their year groups for a day of activities for over 30 years. Church Days are designed to help the children learn more about Christianity in a fun and interesting way.

Each Day has a theme. In 2025 Year 3's theme was 'The Church' where they learnt about the wider church, the church building and looked at The Lord's Prayer. Year 4's theme was Advent and Christmas. Year 5 explored Holy Week and Easter. Year 6 focused on 'Moving On' reflecting on their time at the junior school, remembering past Church Days and looking forward to their move to the senior school.

The days included decorating stars and Easter eggs, discussing angels, making gardens and advent wreaths, clay modelling, writing songs, ringing hand bells, climbing the tower, walking to the Jubilee Stone. The children explored different aspects of the Christian faith and became more at ease in a church environment.

The success of running this important outreach work would not be possible without our numerous volunteers. Thank you all so much for all your help. The children really enjoy these sessions.

*Lesley Barratt*

## **Backwell Life**

Our main activity in this joint venture with the other churches in Backwell is the Meeting Point, which still runs every Tuesday in the Parish Hall. We offer tea/coffee/cake and a warm welcome as usual and the main uptake is in a set pattern.

Nina's seated yoga at 11am averages more than 20 participants on Tuesdays in term time, and over half of the participants turn up for a drink and a chat in the half-hour before the class starts.

The lunches that take place twice a month (on 1st & 3rd Tuesdays) have an average attendance of about 30 and half-a-dozen of them come to the monthly mid-day communion service on the first Tuesday. We aim to provide a lift for those who can't make it otherwise. All of this depends on volunteers, who seem to be in shorter supply these days. Of course we miss Martin and Jane Canning, as do all the other groups they were involved with. Without more volunteers we already having to curtail our activities and opening hours.

At the end of the junior school day we have a group of mums who come in for a drink and a chat whilst their children change for and go to the dance class in the W.I. Hall next door.

On the third Saturday each month, we hire the village hall from 9.00 to 11.30 and host Who Let The Dads Out? A time for dads to enjoy playing with their toddlers [and give mum a short break?] whilst enjoying bacon butties and a hot drink and getting to know other dads in the community. Since we restarted it this winter, we've averaged 9 adults and a similar number of children.

We occasionally host other activities too. Most recently a first aid session in November with St John's Ambulance so that we're ready for CPR and using a defibrillator if one's available.

In school holidays, we run events primarily for Junior School age children. These are popular, usually fully subscribed and, like all our other activities, require volunteers to run them. Sadly the number of people willing to volunteer seems to have reduced a lot lately. Could you spare 2-4 hours a month?

*Ian Wills*

## **Choir**

2025 was another busy year for the choir. As well as singing for the usual weekly services at St. Andrew's, we particularly enjoyed going to St. Bridget's for occasional services. In July, it was a privilege to sing our yearly evensong in St. Mary, Redcliffe, joining friends from other choirs and accompanied by Andrew Kirk on the magnificent organ. Advent and Christmas were busy as usual, with services in all three churches in our benefice.

We said a fond farewell to Jane, who moved away. Our enthusiastic junior choristers are progressing very well and it was a pleasure to award Ethan and Ruth their white medals. I am grateful to Jean Routley, Ann Heymans and Andrew Kirk, who have accompanied us for various services. Rehearsing from 7.10 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Fridays, we are keen to welcome anybody with an interest in singing church music. Finally, thank you to all of the singers, who have shown great dedication and added much to our worship over the last year.

*Andrew Colley*

## **Churchyard**

With a reduced number of helpers only 6 volunteers now make up the churchyard maintenance team, and they do exceptionally well to maintain the 19 plots which surround St Andrew's Church. In the spring mowing was reduced to encourage the daffodils, primroses, wild garlic, and other wildflowers to create wonderful swathes of yellow and white across the churchyard.

The long, hot dry summer which followed resulted in less grass cuts being required which favoured our small workforce. They still kept the churchyard looking fantastic.

Waste management continues to be a challenge, clearing away abandoned displays after funerals, and coping with the volume of material from tended graves. The green bins get overfilled and very heavy to move. Already 2 green bins have split and have needed to be

replaced. Visitors are asked to take their waste home where possible and definitely to refrain from putting soil in the bins.

It is wonderful to see so many people visiting the churchyard where they can find solace at the graveside of loved ones. We like to welcome them with a well-maintained churchyard where the peace and tranquility enhance the wonderful views over North Somerset and across to Wales.

Finally we are grateful to the family of the late Gerald Wilcox who in his memory continue to look after the plot beside the Bier House which he used to tend. This area always looks so colourful for anyone who enters the churchyard from this entrance.

If anyone out there wishes to help with the churchyard you will be made very welcome- please contact the church office.

*Tim Harland*  
*Churchyard Leader*

## **Deanery Synod**

We met, as usual, four times in 2025; two of the meetings (June and November) were deanery-wide meetings, open to anyone to attend, while the March and September meetings were full Synods.

**March** – This Synod was held at Holy Trinity Nailsea and saw the approval of the 2024 Deanery accounts as well as an interesting talk by Jenny Hollingsworth, Bath & Wells Diocesan Secretary with the unusual opportunity to ask questions directly to the Diocese’s CEO.

**June** – The venue for this Deanery-wide meeting was the Church of the Ascension, Keedwell. It was a very well-attended meeting and we heard a fascinating talk from Andrew Halestrap, the Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at Bristol University. Andrew gave a talk called “Faith in Science” and spoke about the relationship between science and his Christian faith.

**September** – The September Synod took place at St George’s Church Hall, Easton-in-Gordano, and provided an opportunity for Synod

members to meet each other and encouraged good conversation. It also saw Caroline Edwards being introduced as the new Deanery Secretary as well as being the Portishead Co-Area Deans and Lay Dean's PA, taking over from Rob Norman, who has been the Acting Deanery Secretary since Lesley Farrall resigned in September 2020. Caroline's email address is [portishead.deanery1@gmail.com](mailto:portishead.deanery1@gmail.com)

**November** – The venue for the November Deanery-wide meeting was St Mary's, Walton and saw a riveting presentation by Mary Colwell, who is an environmentalist, author and producer who previously worked for the BBC Natural History Unit. The presentation was called "Conservation, Spirituality and Faith", and made us think about wildlife conservation. The meeting also heard about the fact that St Michael & All Angels (Flax Bourton) had recently been awarded a Gold Award as an Eco Church from A Rocha.

We have enjoyed having Assistant Diocesan Secretary Peter Evans as our Deanery Accompanier and Claire Horton, the Bath Archdeaconry Deanery & Parish Adviser, has also been very helpful. The Deanery Mission & Pastoral Group has met every two months throughout 2025 while the Deanery Leadership Team has met every month, where possible.

We want to express our gratitude to the clergy and officials of all the deanery churches for their hard work and commitment during this year, especially to those churches which have been in vacancy.

*Rob Norman (Lay Dean)*

*Astrid Tiesema-Samsom (Co-Area Dean)*

*Rob Eastwood Dewing (Co-Area Dean)*

## **Mission & Outreach Committee**

During the last year the committee has been severely depleted with Martin, Jane and David moving away from the area. We continue to cover three main areas of work.

1. Continuing to service the Zambia Partnership Link

2. Promoting our four quarterly mission foci, USPG, the Connect Project in Nailsea School, 'CMS Gordons in Goma' link and the Sisters of the Church 'Loaves and Fishes Project' in St Paul's.
3. Resourcing our churches outreach in the village.

We would particularly welcome new members with an interest/connection in any of the above areas. We particularly need at least one person to support the events on the SPAR green. If you would like to know more, please speak to Peter, Heather or Anita.

*Peter Bailey*

## **Mothers' Union**

2025 has been a successful year for Mothers' Union in Backwell. Our membership remained at 23 with a regular attendance of 16 at our meetings.

During the year we were entertained by a number of interesting speakers including Revd Carol Edward's from Wraxall on her trip to Iona and Lindesfarne, Revd Joan Rowe from Backwell ministry team spoke about her journey to Ordination and after, her life as a vicar. Later in the year our new Rector Sam Norton spent time with us answering our many questions about his life. Our member, Jean Routley entertained us on several occasions throughout the year with her musical memories and at our Harvest lunch joined with Margaret Best and together they delivered Autumn reflections in words and music. We all enjoyed a lunch out at the Failand Inn in November.

We raised money for MU projects both at home and abroad through our coffee morning, Deanery and Harvest lunches and our cream tea. We attended Cathedral Prayers in Wells and the Deanery service, this year at St Nicholas, Portishead. In February each year all branches in the Diocese hold a special Wave of Prayer service when we pray for our overseas links. These are False Bay in Weston Cape of South Africa, Vellore in Tamil Nadu South India, Shinyanga in Tanzania, Umuahia in SE State of Abuja, and Ijebu SW sate of Ogun in Nigeria for the Bath and Wells Diocese.

We receive news of their needs through our World Wide links leader, Gay Curtis.

The Mothers' Union Vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships. This is not a vague hope but a goal we actively pursue by praying, campaigning and enabling.

*Marie Bale*

## **Safeguarding**

The PCC continues to give safeguarding the highest priority, recognising that the care and protection of children, young people, and vulnerable adults is integral to the mission and ministry of the Church.

Safeguarding remains a standing item on PCC agendas and we work to ensure that good practice is maintained across all areas of church life. During the past year, we have continued to engage with the Diocese of Bath and Wells' safeguarding initiatives, including the use of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. This tool enables the PSO to track training and DBS status, and identify areas for action, helping ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.

In addition, we have begun making use of the Safeguarding Hub which works alongside the dashboard to support safer recruitment and people management. The Hub provides tools such as role templates, recruitment tracking, and reminders for training and DBS checks, strengthening our ability to manage safeguarding responsibilities effectively across all church activities.

Recent developments at diocesan and national level, including the 2025 independent safeguarding audit, have reinforced the importance of maintaining a strong safeguarding culture. The audit highlighted the positive progress made across the Diocese of Bath and Wells while also encouraging continued vigilance and ongoing improvement. The PCC is

committed to engaging with this learning and responding to recommendations as appropriate.

Safeguarding is understood to be everyone's responsibility. We are grateful to all those who contribute to this vital work and remain committed to ensuring that our church is a safe and welcoming place for all.

*Beth Ansell, Parish Safeguarding Officer*

## **St Andrews Art Group**

Another enjoyable year with a varied programme including visiting tutors teaching us new and interesting aspects of art, including Gelli printing, Dry Point printing, timed sessions of drawing with pencil and charcoal and still life painting using inks and pastels, interspersed with sessions of doing what we choose, and always ending with a discussion and display of our work.

In July we held our annual Exhibition, a popular event in Backwell, and were able to donate £1,900 to St. Mungo's, our chosen charity for the year. Lots of hard work but worth it! We have moved our summer open exhibition this year to the end of May, opening on the Friday evening May 22nd until 4.00 pm on Sunday 24th May. This year we have chosen St. Peter's Hospice for our charity. In the summer we also had a trip to Bristol harbourside to paint *en plein aire*.

Our membership remains good but unfortunately we have lost two of our valued members this year, so always welcome new members who are willing to become involved in all aspects of the club. We ended 2025 with a lovely Christmas lunch, with all the members bringing food and drink to share.

*Pat Jones*

## **St Andrew's Bellringers**

We have had another successful and enjoyable year. We have rung before the Sunday morning service each week and normally have enough to ring at least eight bells. We have also rung quarter peals before most Evensong services; these longer pieces of ringing have enabled some of our less experienced ringers to make significant progress over the year. The usual peal for the Patronal Festival was again successful and we also rang a peal to welcome the new Rector and one of Norton Delight Major immediately following his wedding. A special peal was also rung in memory of Alan Strong, a long-time member of our band.

Backwell ringers were again the core of the Chew Branch team which won the Bath & Wells 8-bell striking competition for the 8th consecutive time. Our ringers help and provide training for ringers from a number of other local towers and we also ring for Sunday services at Barrow Gurney. We hold a practice on Monday afternoons which helps ringers from the area progress from bell handling to basic method ringing. Our main practice on Wednesday evenings is for more advanced ringing and is usually well attended, sometimes with over 20 ringers present; we aim to provide an opportunity for anyone to develop their ringing skills in a supportive, encouraging and sociable environment.

Bell ringing can be a life-long hobby as well as providing a service to the church, if you would like to learn to ring contact Rebecca on 07788748324.

*Rebecca Cox, Tower Captain*

## **St Andrew's Ladies Group**

Members of the group meet on the second Monday of each month from September to June. We meet in church house at 7.30pm and the session usually lasts up to two hours. Many of our members support St Andrew's church, some worship at other local churches but there are

about a third of the ladies who have no such affiliations. As we have no meetings in the months of May, when we have a quiz which is open to non-members, June, when we organise a summer outing, July and August which are considered the holiday period, and December when we meet, usually in the Masonic Hall in Nailsea for our Christmas lunch. So the committee aim to find speakers for the six of the seven months left, because on the January meeting we encourage our members to bring items for our bring and buy stall which is followed by the very popular literary evening where members read aloud or recite their favourite poems or read a passage from a famous book, in fact anything which is historical, amusing, enlightening or just entertaining in a literary way. Although some members are reluctant to stand up and perform, there are always those who love to entertain. The joining fee for the ladies is £15 for the year which is payable on the first meeting of the year in September when we have our AGM and a charity for the group is revealed. There are five members on the committee, the leader, the secretary, the treasurer and one member organises the coffee and general refreshments and rotas for servers and one member organises any trips we may make over the year. We always try to encourage ladies to come and join our group, we do have a slow trickle but not enough at the moment to keep this group going in the long term.

*Gillian Vasey*

*Ladies Group Leader*

## **The Village Magazine**

The Village Magazine seeks to serve the local communities of Backwell, Chelvey and Brockley by providing information about events past and future. It remains at heart a church magazine but also looks to inform people about local civic events such as Parish Council meetings. We have retained our A4 format with coloured covers and it continues being distributed all around the village. Our digital presence remains steady showing consistent interest in our online archives. The magazine is funded by donations from readers (thank you all who contribute) and advertising. To increase our income and ensure the

publication remains financially stable, advertising costs were increased slightly in 2026. This was a necessary step, and we remain grateful to our lovely printers, Adroit, whose reasonable charges and collaborative approach have helped us for many years.

Articles and notices continue to flow in every month thanks to dozens of contributors. We are pleased to report a smooth committee transition recently. Simon Russell has taken over as Advertising Manager from Hilary Power, and Allan Rhodes has transitioned into the role previously held by Jane Canning. Our dedicated team includes Lesley Barratt as Treasurer, Simon Russell, and Julia and Mike Phillis handling distribution. My thanks go to them for their hard work, and to Ann Belcher for her beautiful front cover photos as well as new contributors sending their high quality images.

If you haven't yet delved into this local publication, please visit us online at [www.BackwellVillageMag.co.uk](http://www.BackwellVillageMag.co.uk)

*Allan Rhodes*

*(Editor and Chair of the Magazine Committee for The Village Magazine)*

## **Worship Group**

The St Andrews Worship Group lead the sung worship three times a month. We play during our Informal Communion service on the first Sunday of the month, and also our two Cafe Churches on the third and fourth Sundays. We have a number of regular musicians; keyboard, guitars, bass, singers and drums. We meet to practice and pray together before each service to prepare for worship. Each service begins with a block of worship to welcome God's presence and to provide a space for the Holy Spirit to move and dwell in our time together. We then close with a further time of sung worship. We are very grateful to all the group members for their commitment, time, practice and prayer.

*Claire Wilmott*

*Band Leader*