

WHEATLAND NEWS

December 2025 – January 2026



News from the Diocese of Hereford and the 17 parishes
around Ditton Priors, Stottesdon and Highley

Contents

Contents	2
Editorial.....	3
Wheatland Diary- December	3
Brown Clee Benefice	4
December Reflection	4
Services in Brown Clee Churches during December and January.....	5
Brown Clee Benefice News	6
Service on the Home Front	7
Brown Clee Benefice Choir.....	7
Ditton Priors Local History Group	8
Update letter from Cllr George Hollyhead, Brown Clee Division	9
Ditton Priors News	10
Wheathill & Loughton News	11
Aston Botterell News	12
Neenton News	12
Cleobury North & District Village Hall.....	12
Cleobury North & Burwarton News	12
Burwarton & District WI.....	13
Chetton News.....	13
Obituary – Bobbie Jarvis	14
Living Well - with Sight Loss Shropshire.....	15
Blooming lovely!	16
The Severn Valley Group of Parishes.....	17
Glazeley News.....	17
Billingsley News.....	18
Christmas Letter from Gulu.....	18
Severn Valley Benefice Christmas Message & Services	19
Molecule of the Month: Huntingtin.....	20
The Stottesdon Group of Parishes.....	21
December message.....	21
Services for December and January in the Stottesdon Benefice	23
Stottesdon News.....	23
Stottesdon and District WI.....	24
Farlow and Oretton News	25
Middleton Scriven News	25
Sidbury News -	26
To wreath - or not to wreath??	26
Obituary - Chris Tibbits	27
Wheatland News - what you need to know for 2026!.....	28
Yes please! Subscribing to Wheatland News for 2026.....	29
Diocese of Hereford	30
Bishop Richard's Weekly Video Message.....	30
Readings for December and January	31
The Mystery of Mistletoe	32

Editorial

Another calendar year draws near to its end – and the Church prepares to celebrate the great festival of Christmas.

Has it been a more eventful year than usual? Probably not – overall – though the Wheatland News parishes have perhaps been harder hit than we might have expected. Obituaries for Bobbie Jarvis and Chris Tibbits appear this month – two people whose loss has been felt keenly by their parishes, their families and friends, by all connected with Wheatland News, and with the many, many people whose lives they each touched over the years.

You'll be expecting full details this month of how to subscribe to Wheatland News again for 2026. Or maybe not 'again' – maybe the lure of a real magazine to read at leisure with your morning coffee is finally winning over the quick skim on the iPad? Try it!! At only £18 for 11 editions, it really is amazing value! You'll find all the information about future arrangements, the Committee, the Coordinators and Distributors, within this edition. Some aspects of distribution have taken us by surprise over the last three months – there is still a distinct haziness about what happens to all the copies after Tony Brown has delivered them to the various Distributors and how they reach each of our readers – so please, if you don't get your expected copy, give your Coordinator a shout quickly! And the team will attempt to de-haze the process so that it is more reliable in future!

Still seeking inspiration for that ideal Christmas present? Why not take out a Gift Subscription to Wheatland News? The subscription, if you want your gift copy to be sent by post, is of course a bit more (just ask Charles for a price on this) – but what a unique present!

In this edition we have our regular features, plus an article from a local charity **Sight Loss Shropshire**, which may well be of use to people in our community and of which they have not heard, and which provides help and practical understanding for the visually challenged – and for their nearest and dearest.

Finally, then – thank you to all our Readers, our Supporters, and especially to everyone who has Contributed to WN over the years, for making the role of putting it all together such a pleasure. Every good wish to you all for Christmas, for 2026, and of course to the New Wheatland News Team who will be taking the reins for the future as from the February edition. **With warmest good wishes for Christmas and for 2026 to you all.**

Wheatland Diary- December

The complete Diary, and the Local Contacts, are inserted into the web and email versions of this Wheatland

Sat	6	Dec		Coffee morning, St John's Church, Ditton Priors, 10:30 – 12:00. All welcome – see page 10
Wed	10	Dec		Chetton & Glazeley WI – 7:00 for 7.30 pm Chetton Village Hall – Christmas Festivities
Fri	12	Dec		Choirs concert, 7:30 pm, Ditton Priors VH – see page 10
Fri	12	Dec		Ditton Priors Senior Citizens' Christmas Dinner – see page 11
Sat	13	Dec		Punch, Pies and Carols – Ditton Priors Village Hall
Sat	13	Dec		Chetton Heritage Museum open day – Lower Cockshut Farm, WV16 6RF.
Sat	13	Dec		Wreath making – Ditton Priors Pavilion, 10:00 am – see page 12
Sat	13	Dec		Coffee morning – Middleton Scriven Church – 10:00 am – 12:00 noon – see page 25
Mon	15	Dec		Farlow & Oreton VH – "Everything Christmas", for Crisis, 5:30 – 7:30 pm – see page 25
Fri	19	Dec		Carols on the Street – Brown Clee Young Farmers – see page 10
Sun	21	Dec		Aston Botterell Christmas Extravaganza Carol Service – see page 13
Sun	21	Dec		Christmas table Arrangement Workshop – Cleobury North VH – see page 13
Sun	21	Dec		Aston Botterell Carol Service Extravaganza – 5:00pm - see page 12
Sun	21	Dec		Cleobury North VH – Christmas Table Arrangement Workshop – see page 12
Mon	29	Dec		Make a mini-booklet! Chetton VH, 10:00 – 12 noon – see page 15
Tue	6	Jan	13	SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE FOR YOUR 2026 WHEATLAND NEWS!!! See pages 28 & 29 of this edition.



Brown Clee Benefice

Rector - Revd Joe Simons

The Vicarage, Ditton Priors, Shropshire, WV16 6SQ
01746-599217 07872-464276

St John the Baptist, Ditton Priors, and Holy Trinity, Wheathill and Loughton

CHURCHWARDENS:

Carole Smith

Mark Smith: 01746-712394

St Michael & All Angels, Aston Botterell

CHURCHWARDENS:

Anne Preece: 01746-787237

Ben Upton: 07870-160039

St Giles', Chetton

CHURCHWARDEN

Sheila Millington: 01746-789443

SS Peter & Paul, Cleobury North

CHURCHWARDENS:

Mike Bradbury: 01746-787676

Jane Bufton: 07716-877421

All Saints', Neenton

CHURCHWARDENS:

Dot Cartwright: 07854-559474

December Reflection

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light – Isaiah 9.2

I can remember a service which I was leading a few years back and when I arrived there had been a power cut. It was winter and the whole church was in darkness. There was much muttering and consternation, people not knowing what to do. I made my way gingerly to the back of church where the vestry was, I can't tell you how many trip hazards I tripped on or narrowly avoided. I was able to open the door and found a single candle.

As I lit it and sat in its feeble glow, about to give up hope of having a service, someone else came into the vestry, then another and another.

They came up to me one by one these faceless forms emerging from the darkness. As they approached, they were each holding a candle, which I lit from my candle.

They lit their candles one by one from the one in my hand, we soon had a myriad of little orange lights with guttering flames illuminating the church.

This is the light that came down to us all at Christmas: one small light igniting others until the World knows that the darkness can no longer prevail.

As we move through the season of Advent, waiting and preparing for Christ to come once again, we can reflect that we live in a World where the darkness can seem to be all encompassing. But this light which we carry in our hearts, in our homes, in our community and in our World will not be extinguished. The darkness will not prevail.

We pray as Christians that the light of our faith may shine into our lives and those who need it most this Christmas and beyond.

Amen

Revd Joe Simons

From the Registers – funeral services

Wednesday 29th October – Mrs Roberta (Bobbie) Jarvis – Service of Repose at All Saints, Neenton

Thursday 30th October – Mrs Roberta (Bobbie) Jarvis at All Saints, Neenton and Telford Crematorium

Saturday 15th November – Mr Gerald William Hodnett – Interment of Ashes at St. John the Baptist, Ditton Priors



**We do hope that you
can join us at
Brown Clee
Benefice's Services
during December**

Saturday 6th December

4.00pm – Christingle – Ditton Priors. A very special Service for all ages!

Sunday 7th December

9.30am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11.30am – Holy Communion – Aston Botterell

4.00pm – Carol Service – Neenton. Followed by light refreshments at The Pheasant

Sunday 14th December

9.30am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11.30am – Carol Service – Cleobury North (either at The Church or Village Hall – building works dependant!) Please watch the pew sheet & notice boards. Followed by light refreshments

4.00pm – Carol Service – Chetton. Followed by mulled wine & mince pies

Friday 19th December

7.30pm – Carols in the Street with Brown Clee Young Farmers who will be raising funds for their chosen charities Midlands Air Ambulance, Shropshire Rural Support, Lingen Davies, and Severn Hospice – Ditton Priors, with mulled wine and mince pies. Please come along and support this very popular evening!

Sunday 21st December

9.30am – Holy Communion – Neenton

11.30am – Carol Service – Ditton Priors

5.00pm – The very popular Festival Carol Service – Aston Botterell with Father Christmas, Cleobury Brass Band, a design a Father Christmas Competition and light refreshments. Please contact Anne on 07966 459806 if you would like to book a place to visit Father Christmas!

Wednesday December 24th - Christmas Eve

4.00pm – Crib Service – Ditton Priors **7.00pm – Carol Service** – Wheathill. Followed by light refreshments. **11.15pm – Midnight Mass** – Ditton Priors

Thursday December 25th - Christmas Day

10.00am – Group Holy Communion – Chetton

Sunday December 28th

10.00am – Group Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

Brown Clee Benefice Services during January 2026

Sunday 4th January – second after Christmas – Epiphany – Gold or White

9:30 am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11:00 am – Coffee & Prayers – Middle House Farm, Aston Botterell

Sunday 11th January – first after Epiphany – Gold or White

9:30 am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11:30 am – Holy Communion – Chetton

Sunday 18th January – Second of Epiphany – White / Second after Epiphany – Green

9:30 am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11:30 am – Holy Communion – Neenton

Sunday 25th January – Conversion of St Paul. Third of Epiphany – White

10:00 am – Group Holy Communion – Cleobury North

Sunday 1st February – Fourth of Epiphany – Gold or White – Presentation of Christ in the Temple

9:30 am – Holy Communion – Ditton Priors

11:00 am – Coffee & Prayers – Middle House Farm – Aston Botterell

Brown Clee Benefice News

We have had a very full month of activities within the Benefice. Each of our seven churches held Harvest Festival services and all were well attended. The churches were adorned with harvest produce and hospitality extended afterwards to make everyone most welcome. Brown Clee School attended their Harvest Service at Ditton Priors and were in good voice, joining in with their own prayers for our community.



We then held our very special All Souls service to remember those departed on Sunday 2nd November. This is always a touching time when candles are lit and prayers said.



Remembrance

This year we have been trying to tell the back story of those that have died and are remembered across our various war memorials in the benefice of Brown Clee. The stories of such young lives given in service to their country really brings home the loss and the reality of all that might have been for them had they survived the war. We can look beyond the names to the person and life that lies behind them.

In addition, the pupils of Brown Clee Primary School have made such beautiful poppies which now adorn our memorial. They have demonstrated that today 80 years on from VE and VJ those that made the ultimate sacrifice are not forgotten.

All of our remembrance services have been so well-attended and to have these story boards and the work by the school along with their

prayers has made it all very personal and memorable.



We held a **Pirates and Pumpkins Party** for the toddlers and Little Explorers (pre-school) children for one of our joint ventures bringing the young people and the church together. Much fun was had with dressing up and devouring the goodies in the treasure chests.



Last of all we have to **thank Paul Brennan** who has fitted us a splendid handrail for the steps at Loughton Chapel. Revd Joe and Marjorie gave it a test run!

Service on the Home Front

Service did not end when the wars ended. As well as the thousands who served overseas, WN is proud to share the story of a local lady who served here at home, in the Ditton Priors Women's Section of the Royal British Legion. Lavinia Brown tells the story:

In November 1953 the RBL Ditton Priors Women's Section was formed, to run in conjunction with the existing men's section. The female members were predominantly locals who were either relatives of, or former serving members of, the military engaged in the first or second world wars.

The aims of the women's section were both social and fund-raising for RBL charities, including providing monies to safeguard the interests of widows and families of ex-servicemen. They would raise funds by arranging coffee mornings, bingo sessions, and also through sponsored swimming by a few of the very elderly members!

On joining, all members of the RBL Women's Section were issued with the treasured lapel badge that is still worn to this day by former members with tremendous pride in memory of a past generation that gave their all so that we can enjoy the freedom we have today.

The section would attend all local Remembrance Services, and their standard would be paraded forefront by a local younger RBL member.

As all good things must come to an end, the Women's Section was disbanded in the early 2000's as most members had either passed on or were too aged to continue. No new blood was forthcoming.

Accordingly, and with great reverence, the Ditton Priors Women's Section standard was 'laid up' in a very moving service at St John the Baptist Church, where it still remains on the wall behind the choir stalls – **clearly visible** behind the choir in the picture overleaf!

Brown Clee Benefice Choir

New Choirmistress Ragni Whitlock writes:

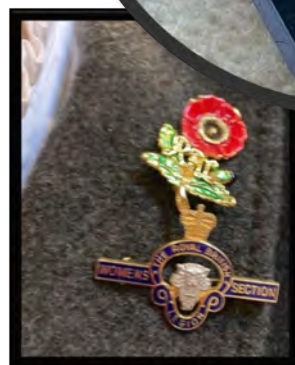
We are a small friendly group of singers who sing for monthly group services and seasonal services such as Easter, Harvest Festivals and Carol services. We share a love of singing but also a commitment to helping lead worship through music and churches across the churches of the benefice. We share a sense of purpose but also a sense of fellowship and friendship.

Right now we are busy rehearsing for Christmas services and you will see us and hear us when you come to one of the Benefice carol services.

In the summer we rehearse at 7:00 pm on a Thursday evening and in the winter we rehearse at 3:00 pm on a Thursday afternoon.



Lavinia's RBL badge – still always worn with pride on Remembrance Days



Continued on next page



We are keen to expand our numbers so why not come and give us a try if you like to sing?

You do not need to read music, you only need to have enthusiasm for singing and an understanding that the purpose of the choir is to serve the congregation in its worship.

Also, there is much research to show that singing together is good for both our physical and mental health.

If you are interested in coming along to try it out and see if you would like to join us, why not come to a **rehearsal at St John's Church, Ditton Priors?** Don't think that your voice will not be good enough, all voices are welcomed, singing can be taught, and everyone can learn how to sing better. Do phone me and let me know you coming so that we can welcome you. Ragni Whitlock- 07890-911992

And Cliff Gutteridge adds:

Only half of the choir is pictured – taken on the coldest night of the year in St John's Church! I, Cliff, am not represented. I am the latest member of the choir and get untold pleasure, both from our attendance at services and our practice sessions during the week, rehearsing hymns and anthems. None of it new to me as I was first a chorister at 7 years of age – until my voice broke - and of course then followed my studies. But church has never stopped. I look forward to a more complete choir photograph in the New Year, which will bring more singing enjoyment!

Ditton Priors Local History Group

Robin Greenwell writes:

Lots of interest in Remembrance Day Display at Ditton Priors History Centre

It was a very successful open day weekend at the Ditton Priors History Centre on 8th & 9th November and there was a lot of interest in the special display assembled to mark Remembrance Day. **We welcomed around 60 visitors over the course weekend with some travelling from as far afield as Welshpool and Stafford!**

Special thanks to young local blacksmith Felix Nelson (Felix Forge) for loaning his Remembrance Day 'Poppy & Cross' sculpture, which was on display at the entrance.

It was also very rewarding to receive visitors who brought along and provided additional family information and photographs relating to the display; this led to some fascinating conversations about family connections to those from the village lost in the wars. There was also interest in all areas of the history centre and we received a lot of positive comments regarding the new display panels. It was also very interesting to listen to folk who were Ditton born and bred about their childhood memories (one of whom is putting these recollections down on paper for us!). This was a great example of what we believe the Ditton Priors Local History Group is all about. We would like to thank everyone who came along, it really was a pleasure for us to meet people and hear their stories and equally, we hope they gained something from their visit.





Ditton Priors Ladies' Friendship Group - Programme 2025 - 2026

Meetings begin at 7.30 unless otherwise stated, usually on the first Wednesday of the month at The Pavilion, Ditton Priors Playing Field.

1st October - Social evening with wine & nibbles

5th November - Craft Evening, led by Sue Robinson. Raffle night

4th December (Thursday) - Christmas lunch, 12 for 12.30 at The Boyne. Book & pay by 22nd November please. There will be a collection for our chosen charity.

7th January - Games evening. Bring and Buy night

4th February - 'My life as an author - so far!' by local author Rob McNeil. Raffle Night

4th March - Favourite recipe, sharing and tasting. Raffle Night

1st April - An introduction to Tai Chi with Jenny Joyner. Raffle Night

6th May - To be arranged

3rd June - Visit to Linda Clarke's Garden, Ruthall Manor, WV16 6TN. Meet at 2.00

1st July - Treasure Hunt, led by Margaret and Gill. Bring & Share supper & raffle

Membership for 2025-26 is £15 plus £2 per meeting to include refreshments and raffle when applicable. Visitors always welcome - £3 per evening. Outings to be paid for on booking, payment may be forfeited for late cancellations.

Group contacts are: Gill Severn: 01746-712231 or Margaret Bill: 01746-712030

Update letter from Cllr George Hollyhead, Brown Clee Division

It has just been the six-month anniversary of my election on May 1st, and I'm proud that—even from the opposition benches and despite the administration's difficult financial position—I have been able to deliver on a number of the commitments I made to residents during the campaign.

The issue I heard about most on the doorstep was the appalling state of our roads: potholes that had been ignored for months or even years, dangerous verges, blocked gullies, and a highways repair system that was painfully slow. I promised I would fight to improve things, and over the last six months I have made real progress.

By persistently raising individual cases and chasing officers, I have been able to secure and expedite the repair of multiple potholes and road defects (both new issues and long standing ones).

This includes finally getting Criddon Road resurfaced and back into a safe, driveable condition after it had been left in a shocking and unacceptable state for longer than anyone should ever have had to tolerate.

There is still a huge amount of work ahead but the progress so far shows what's possible. Please keep reporting potholes or any other local issues to me (or via your Parish Council) and I'll work hard to get them sorted.

I try to attend as many local events and parish meetings as I can so feel free to come chat with me in person or you can contact me on george.hollyhead@shropshire.gov.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.



George

Councillor George Hollyhead



From the Registers – Marriage

Revd Joe Simons writes:

The marriage of Frederick Gustavus George Hamilton-Russell and Annabel Lucy Hainault-Mundy at St. John the Baptist, Ditton Priors

We were delighted to marry Annabel and Fred at St John the Baptist, Ditton Priors on Saturday 1st November. It was a lovely service, and the weather behaved itself, which is always a welcome bonus.

The church looked beautiful. The hymn choices, organist, including a trumpeter along with wonderful singers from the Birmingham Conservatoire, acted as a catalyst to the most beautiful singing. It was a real pleasure to lead a service so full of joy and beauty: it will live long in the memory of those that attended.

The icing on the cake was the piper who played as the confetti rained down on the heads of the happy couple. We all wish them peace happiness and good health in their future together.

Ditton Priors News

Marjorie Jones writes:

We're on a countdown to Christmas now - I hope the puddings have been made and the cake is maturing. I love to see the Christmas lights in our Churchyard and so good to see so many people in Church as we switched them on, enjoying the Carols, Mulled Wine and Mince Pies.

Christmas Fair – Saturday 29th November

Always a happy occasion and well attended. Our thanks to all who helped in any way.

First Saturday Coffee Mornings

Continue from 10am - 12 noon in Church, on 6th December (miss out January), 7th February, 7th March and 4th April. There is no charge for this popular community event, and everyone is very welcome.

Christingle – Saturday 6th December at 4pm in Ditton Priors Church.

This informal, happy Service celebrates the work of The Children's Society who work alongside children and families who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. We shall be making Christingle oranges with the children taking part and it is always fun. There will be a collection entirely for the Children's Society.

Open the Book

We went into Brown Clee School on 12th November and presented the story of Noah's Ark. Our next visit is on 10th December when the story will be of the Nativity.

The Residential Homes

We went into both homes on 17th November for our usual Service and Hymns. At our next visit on 8th December we shall be singing Carols. We start the New Year visiting on 19th January and 16th February.

Brown Clee Community Choir

Invite you to

A Christmas Concert



Friday 12th December 2025 at 7.30pm

at Ditton Priors Village Hall

**Raising funds for Alzheimer's Research UK—
Shropshire Fundraising Group & Brown Clee School**

One of Shropshire's best mixed voice choirs, Of One Accord, will be performing a variety of songs, joined by

Brown Clee Community Choir and Brown Clee School Choir

Tickets £10 per adult (Under 16's free) - includes tea/coffee and cake/biscuits

Raffle

Tickets available from Ruth (01746 712029, evenings), Ditton Priors

Post Office, Brownclleechoir@gmail.com and

www.ticketsource.co.uk/brown-clee-community-choir

Senior Citizens' Luncheon

A big Thank You to the Ladies who provide an excellent lunch for us in the Village Hall. It is so good to sit down to a prepared meal, and in the company of others we may not meet otherwise. We look forward to our **Christmas Dinner on Friday 12th December**.

Concert - Friday 12th December in the Village Hall

Featuring the mixed voice choir 'Of One Accord', the Brown Clee Community Choir and Brown Clee School Choir. Tickets available from Ditton Priors Post Office.

Crib Service - Wednesday 24th December - 4pm in Ditton Priors Church

Coffee Morning - 'Not Socks Again'

Saturday 24th January, 10.30am in Ditton Priors Village Hall. Bring and Buy Stall and Raffle. Join our first fundraiser of the year and bring along your 'surplus' Christmas gifts to boost our funds.

Lent Lunch

Thursday 5th March in the Village Hall. 12.30pm - 2pm. Soup, Rolls and Cheese. No charge but donations welcome to go to Charity.

Easter Coffee Morning

Saturday 28th March -10.30am at the Pavilion Ditton Priors. Easter Egg Hunt in Church and Easter Bonnet Competition.

Cleaning rota for December and January

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday 7th December Mr & Mrs John Ballard• Sunday 14th December Mr & Mrs Tony Brown• Sunday 21st December Mrs Jutta Langham & Mr Steve Allen• Sunday 28th December Mrs Carole Hancox & Mrs Maureen Lloyd | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday 4th January Mr & Mrs Graham Russell• Sunday 11th January Mrs Shirley Wall & Mrs Anita Casswell• Sunday 18th January Mrs Debbie Jones & Mrs Anne-Marie Shilling• Sunday 25th January Mr & Mrs Dennis Griffiths• Sunday 1st February Mr & Mrs John Ballard |
|---|--|

St John the Baptist 100 Club results for November 2025

- £20. Sally Green
- £10. Joan Millard
- £5 each to Carol Roberts (Bent Lane), Eleanor Walker, and Neil Colebatch

Wheathill & Loughton News

We had a lovely Remembrance service at Wheathill church on 16th November to remember all those who have fallen in the wars. The church looked stunning, thank you Joyce for all your decorations. We would like to thank those that provided the refreshments, on a very cold day. We'd also like to thank Alan, for quietly going about looking after and maintaining the memorial in tip top condition. Wreaths were laid at the memorial after the service.

Next Services

- ✙ Sunday 30th November – 4:00 pm Carol Service at Loughton Chapel, followed by Mulled Wine etc at Loughton Hall.
- ✙ Wednesday 24th December – 7:00 pm Carol Service at Wheathill Church.
- ✙ No services during January.
- ✙ Sunday 15th February – 2:30 pm Evening Prayer at Wheathill Church.

**Wishing you every
blessing for Christmas
and the New Year.**

Aston Botterell News

Anne Preece writes:

- ✝ December 7th is a Holy Communion,
- ✝ then on December 21st we have our **Carol Service Extravaganza**. The church will be decorated; with our lights and winter wonderland outside and more added inside the church ..any help would be appreciated please for refreshments and mulled wine etc. Father Christmas is coming and the children will be taking part in the service. Please let us know if children are coming for Father Christmas...thank you. Cleobury Mortimer Brass Band will be playing and also our choir singing, with Chetton bell ringers making a guest appearance. It will be a lovely start to Christmas and the community spirit. Everyone welcome.
- ✝ **Church services will be in my home** in January and February - in the warm! 11:00 am till 12 30 pm as a coffee morning and prayers....weather permitting.

November draw

- £20 - Edwyna Bennett no 210
- £10 - Brian Price no 74
- £5 - Sarah Fisk no 204
- £5 - Marjorie Jones no 19

Neenton News

Dot Cartwright and Jo Willetts write:

- ✝ Our carol service at church this year is on 7th December at 4:00 pm, followed by mulled wine and mince pies in The Pheasant. We look forward to seeing you there.

We had a great night at The Pheasant on 6th November, with fireworks and BBQ. Everyone enjoyed themselves.

In Neenton village we have a **Fun and Fundraising group** (FAF). We meet at varying intervals to organise fundraising for the church and other causes. If you are full of energy and enthusiasm, or even if you just want to meet other folk and would like to join us, please contact Jo Willetts on 07885-671335

Cleobury North & District Village Hall

Sharon Jenkins writes:

On behalf of my colleagues on the Cleobury North Village Hall Committee, I would like to send Seasons Greetings to all readers and may I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and healthy 2026.

November and December bookings include Birthday Parties, Shropshire Community Health Trust, a Wreath Arranging Workshop on 30th November and a Christmas Table Arrangement workshop on 21st December.

As we move forward to 2026, the Village Hall is looking to put on some local craft events, to support local crafters and makers and will continue to fundraise to ensure that the village hall continues to thrive.

May I take this opportunity to thank all of our regular and new customers whose bookings help keep this vital service for the local community. Remember if you wish to book the hall, please contact Sharon on sharonjenkins1605@yahoo.com or 07854-538645. I look forward to seeing where 2026 will take us!

Cleobury North & Burwarton News

Jane Bufton writes:

The Remembrance Sunday service was well attended, with a nice walk to the cenotaph. Many thanks to Sandy Bennet for making the lovely wreath. The collection was **£239** to be donated to the Poppy Appeal.

On **Tuesday 2nd December** we are holding a **Coffee Morning at The Old Rectory** from 10:30am to 12:30pm. Entry is £5 for tea and coffee, mince pies and cakes, with all proceeds going towards the Church Roof Building Project.

Burwarton & District WI

We have an interesting programme for 2025 with speakers, social afternoons and outings and would welcome everyone to come and have an enjoyable time with us. We have monthly meetings at Cleobury North Village Hall on Tuesdays, from October to March at 2.30pm and from April to September at 7.30pm. Visitors pay £3. For more information, please ring Helen Groves on 01746 712466 or e-mail me on groves.helen5@gmail.com

Chetton News

Shelia Millington writes:

Church Services

- ✝ Sunday 14th December, Carol Service at 4:00 pm, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.
- ✝ Christmas Day, 10:00 am - Group Holy Communion.

Flowers & cleaning
Volunteers please!!

Hundred club

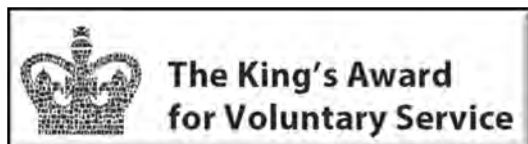
- £15.00 to Cynthia Smith no 45 – and £10.00 to Jill & Mike Lindley no 49.

Looking back to last month, we enjoyed a super evening at the Hills', many thanks to David and Anne for their hospitality. It was good to see so many there on a damp November night. Thank you to Harriet and Hugh for helping so ably with the canapes!

This is the time of year to thank everyone who helps to keep our lovely Church as it is. All who give their time to clean and arrange fresh flowers each month. Those who work in the Churchyard and care for it. The Bellringers who brighten each service, the choir who delight us with old and new music. A special thank you to Andy Johnson who turns out in all weathers to play the organ for us each service, we wish him a belated happy 80th birthday from last month!

Finally, we wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Chetton Village Hall



The hall has recently been granted **The King's Award for Voluntary Service**, equivalent to an MBE, so many thanks to all members of the Committee past and present. Without their contribution over many years this would have not been possible. The hall is in use more than ever and

your support is much appreciated, and once again we would not have achieved this honour without it.

<https://kavs.dcms.gov.uk>

The hall will be closed from 22nd December until 19th January for indoor redecoration. We have grant awards from Tesco, The Rank Organisation, Edward Cadbury and 'Awards for All' to thank for this undertaking: it would never be possible from our funds.

Flicks in the Sticks

'Downtown Abbey, The Finale' will be screened on Sunday 15th February 12:30 pm, with lunch served in the interval. Please book on 01746 789239.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year. We look forward to 2026.

Chetton Village Hall

Chetton Active Friends – exercise and recreational sessions

Village Hall Diary for 2025

- Pam's Pilates on Mondays and Tuesdays 9:30am, and also on Tuesdays 11:00am.
- Chetton Active Friends, Monday afternoons from 2pm.
- Chetton and Glazeley WI meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm.
- Zumba with Lisa Beards – Tuesdays - 2:30 pm
- Ballroom and Sequence Dancing, Tuesday evenings, 7:00pm.

Village Hall enquiries – for activities or hire, please contact Sue Bayliss on 01746-789239.



Obituary – Bobbie Jarvis

A country girl at heart, Bobbie was born and spent her childhood in Shobdon, Herefordshire, where her father ran a farm and her mother was a teacher.

Too young, when she left school, to start her physiotherapy training, she first qualified as a nurse, gaining a prestigious award for her work as well as invaluable background knowledge for her life's real work as a pioneering physiotherapist in the treatment of children with arthritis. Without her and the NHS team of which she was later a part in Berkshire, many youngsters would have been condemned to lifelong complete disability and great pain. She treated everyone, including the children of famous people. She lectured abroad, and had patients in several countries. Many kept in

touch with her throughout their lives and hers. You'll be familiar, perhaps, with the character Clarissa in *Silent Witness*, played by Liz Carr. Without Bobbie and her team, Liz and many others could not have fulfilled their own career and family dreams and ambitions.

Working in Berkshire meant for Bobbie that, like many who live in our wonderful county, a weekly commute. Returning at the weekends meant packing in a lot of living into a small window of time, enjoying life with her husband Nick, supporting him in his business – now carried on by his son – of restoring vintage cars. Bobbie herself had enjoyed racing vintage cars too. Many of those cars were of French manufacture, which took them frequently to distant and unknown parts of France – where they eventually bought the house that she treasured and enjoyed so much, with Bebert as their next-door neighbour.

Bobbie retired from the NHS over 20 years ago, from the post of Director of Rehabilitation at a big Berkshire hospital. Gradually things locally landed on her kitchen table, and she took them on. Bobbie was the editor and energy behind *Wheatland News* for a long time. At 83 she was still a Governor of Brown Clee School, the Churchwarden of All Saints' Church, the guiding mind behind Neenton Fete and Duck Race and many other community events, Company Secretary to Neenton Community Society, a member of Cleobury North & District VH committee, having handed over the bookings only 3 months ago. A steadfast friend to me and to many.

The final ceremonies of Bobbie's time on earth were conducted by Revd Joe, at All Saints' Church, Neenton, and at Telford Crematorium, and arranged by her family – her own niece and nephew, Nicola and Jeremy, and her stepson Nick and his wife Jackie. The day was a fitting and beautiful memorial to Bobbie, and a memorable opportunity at lunchtime in the Pheasant to meet and chat with other friends from far and wide.

Pix – clockwise from top left:

Relaxing during a break in Devon, March 2024

*Hard at work editing *Wheatland News*, pre-covid*

As guest at a local wedding in 2019

Field-testing some playground equipment for its suitability for the Pheasant garden

Welcoming Bishop Richard to the Celebration service for the 150th anniversary of All Saints' Church in 2021

Church in 2021



Living Well – with Sight Loss Shropshire

Practical help, friendly advice, and local support for anyone affected by sight loss



**Sight Loss
Shropshire**

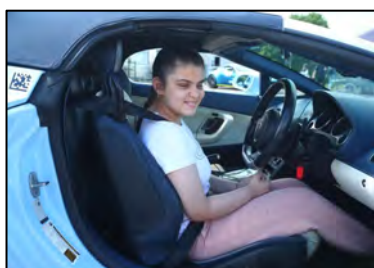
Sight Loss Shropshire, founded in 1922, is the county's leading sight loss organisation, helping people with any type or stage of sight loss to live confidently and independently.

Whether you're newly diagnosed, your vision has changed over time, or you're supporting someone close to you, we're here to help. Our friendly team offers free, confidential advice and a wide range of services designed to make everyday life easier and more fulfilling.



Our support includes:

- Living Well with Sight Loss courses – friendly group sessions to share experiences, build confidence, and learn practical tips.
- Tech training – one-to-one help with smartphones, tablets and accessible apps, all in the comfort of your home.
- Young people's activities – an exciting programme of events for visually impaired youngsters (aged 14 – 25)
- Grants for equipment – funding towards useful aids like magnifiers or assistive technology to enhance quality of life.
- Social groups and events – information about monthly peer support groups and an annual social get-together, offering friendship and connection.
- Sight loss equipment rehoming – donated or unwanted items like magnifiers, talking clocks or scales and so much more.
- Sight loss awareness training - specialised training and support to help organisations, businesses and groups make their services more accessible.
- Information and advice – guidance on everything from daily living to local services.
- Advocacy - raising awareness of sight loss issues and helping improve local sight loss services.



Caroline John writes:

I'm taking this final liberty with WN!

The Chair of Sight Loss Shropshire, Arwyn Jones, is a good friend and former colleague from 30 years ago in the Environment Agency, who has personal experience of the challenges of sight loss. He kindly agreed to provide an article for Wheatland News because I hope it could be useful to our readers. He and his team will be very glad to hear from WN readers and share the support that the organisation offers.

We also host an annual Sight Loss, Hearing Loss and Dementia Exhibition, where you can explore the latest technology, aids and support available locally, with the next one taking place on Tuesday 16th June at Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury.

As a small independent charity, we rely on local funding and the generosity of people, businesses, and community groups to help us reach more people with expert advice and practical support.

Losing sight can be daunting, but with the right advice and guidance, it's possible to stay active, independent and connected.

We're here for anyone living with sight loss in Shropshire – as well as their families, carers and professionals.

Call or text: 07778 956096

Email: admin@sightlossshropshire.org.uk

Visit: www.sightlossshropshire.org.uk

Helping people across Shropshire live well with sight loss – every step of the way.



Blooming lovely!

Burwarton & District Gardening Club

Bev Harris writes:

If you have ever journeyed along the B4368 through the village of Monkhopton and been delighted by the view of a field of glorious blooms, then you have almost certainly passed Katie Briggs Thomas's business; The Petal Passion Flower Farm.



Katie came to our November meeting to tell us how she set up her business and went from beautician to flower farmer. When COVID shut down Katie's beauty business in March 2020, like many of us she spent time in her garden and found that she was rather good at growing flowers. An unlikely flower farmer, Katie had suffered debilitating hayfever until the wonders of modern medicine made working with flowers a possibility. So to develop her passion, Katie bought one and a half acres of the field behind her home, and a polytunnel. She began creating flower beds and planting 1000 bare root roses, dahlias, peonies and many other varieties of perennial flowers as well as annuals like cosmos and zinnas, to create stunning floral arrangements.

It is Katie's mission to help reduce the carbon footprint of cut flowers by offering beautiful blooms locally and sourcing other materials as close to home as possible. She provides seasonal flowers for funerals, weddings, birthdays and other occasions, beautifully arranged in her casual, unique style. In addition Katie

supplies florists and shops with seasonal, sustainable locally grown flowers, with no added chemicals or pesticides.

Katie is extremely keen on protecting the environment and only uses peat free compost and natural fertilizers. She uses sustainable materials in her floral arrangements and made a plea to us to stop using oasis because it is made of plastic which does not biodegrade, but breaks down into microplastics that can harm wildlife. Katie suggested using moss in compostable bags wrapped in twine which I am definitely going to try. Katie has plans to develop her business further and has planning permission for one more polytunnel and a large workshop from



where she can run events. If you are interested in Katie's work or events then visit her website; www.thepetalpassionflowerfarm.com or Facebook page to find out more.

During the Q and A session which followed Katie's talk, she prepared a stunning bouquet of mixed flowers which was given as a raffle prize.

Our next meeting of the gardening club on 11th December has a slightly different format. We will be listening to talks by members about projects that they have undertaken in their own gardens and this year we will hold a Desert Island gardening tool demonstration. We also have Christmas afternoon tea, a quiz and a Christmas decoration competition. If you would like to join us

then do come along to Stoke St Milborough village hall at 2.00pm to join in the fun.



The Severn Valley Group of Parishes

Rector: Revd Kina Robertshaw - Revkinarobertshaw@gmail.com

www.stmaryshighley.co.uk/st-marys-highley

Revd David Poyner, Assistant Curate - email D.R.Poyner@aston.ac.uk,

Tel 0980-100-9693 (mobile) or 01746-861121

Revd Angie Foster – Assistant Curate (in training) revangiefoster@icloud.com

St Mary, Highley

CHURCHWARDEN

Carl Hinkinson

St Mary, Billingsley

CHURCHWARDEN

Vacant

St Peter, Chelmarsh

CHURCHWARDEN

Vacant

St Bartholomew, Glazeley

CHURCHWARDEN

Vacant

Glazeley News

The Revd David Poyner and Marion Corfield write:

We held our usual **Remembrance Sunday** service on the 9th November, starting in the church at 10:15 and then at the War Memorial at 10:45 for the two minutes' silence at 11:00am.



We were joined by friends in church from Chetton; there were also people who joined us at the War Memorial just for the act of remembrance.

The war memorial is now looking very smart thanks to the work of the parish council who have cut the

hedge and also planted new flowers and shrubs in the adjacent garden (with a memorial theme); they also gave a wreath for the memorial.

At the service a second wreath on behalf of the church was laid by George Morley. Our normal wreath-layer, Roger Gabb, could not be with us this year as he was required at the Cenotaph in London where he had been asked to march with, and lay a wreath on behalf of, the Paratroop section of the Guards that he led. We are delighted that he and his men have been honoured in this way! The font was also decorated with a model of a battle scene, made by Anita Morley.

We are pleased that the trees in the churchyard have been dead-wooded. There are now piles of logs; anyone is welcome to help themselves. If you want to give a donation to the church that would of course be welcome, but our main aim is for the wood to be cleared.

Our **Christmas carol service** will be at 10:00 am on Sunday 21st December. In addition to carols, in the service we will celebrate informal Holy Communion. Following that, we will meet again on Sunday 18th January for our usual service of Holy Communion.



Billingsley News

Revd David Poyner writes:

Our most recent service has been **Remembrance Sunday**. Due to a prior commitment (see Glazeley news...), the assistant curate was unable to take this, but the congregation responded magnificently. Before the event, the church had its monthly clean, with the poppy display on the altar and fresh flowers inside.



A new development this year were poppies on the gate, which contrasted beautifully with the autumn colours in the hedges and trees.

Dave and Amanda who usually take care of the act of Remembrance were away this

time, but arranged with congregation members Bob and Judy to take

over. So, the bells were rung just before 11:00 am, the names of our local men who died in service in the First World War were read out and the two minutes' silence was observed and the bells were rung again to honour them. Another of our regulars, Sue, came to support. Best of all, the whole community could hear the bells, to know that we were remembering. Who needs a vicar?

By the time this article comes out, we will be in December and so looking to our Christmas services. We have our **carol service at 6:30 pm on Friday 19th December**; on Christmas Day we will have carols and a short communion service at 10:00 am. After that, our next service will be the 8:00 am communion on Sunday 25th of January – the fourth Sunday of the month.

Christmas Letter from Gulu

Sarah Cawdell writes from Uganda

Greetings from Simon and Sarah in Gulu. We are thinking of you in the darker months of the year, lighting the log burner, or turning up the central heating. Someone has turned up the heat here. Normally the dry season starts in December but last week the temperature went up by about five degrees, and the air has become so dry that it feels as though it may never rain again: not good for my beans and maize which could have done with another two weeks of rain to be really fruitful. The Diocesan coffee garden is now well irrigated thanks to the government grant. Each plant can be watered regularly thanks to standpipes and hoses throughout the field.

Tomorrow (November 26th) is a great festival in the church here as we remember the building of the first mission station in this region in 1904 at a place called Musalaba. All the local churches will gather there tomorrow for a celebration, for a mass wedding (cheaper to do than in the home, and for some the only way to afford the church wedding). Most excitingly for us some of the students that we have been working with since we came out will be ordained. It is wonderful to see them come to the fulfilment of this part of their journey. It will be a long hot day, most of it incomprehensible because we still don't speak the language fluently, but full of joy and delight. Our lay reader students are in the exam week, but have been given one day off. The first years will go home on Friday, and the second years will be commissioned on December 4th and go home to take up their ministry with more confidence and knowledge after their studies here. We give thanks to God for all the blessings and provision of this term. Our latest litter of piglets have ventured out through the bars of their sty and are helping to keep the grass down, running home to Mum for a drink from time to time. Our chicken are keeping healthy and the latest hatch are growing nicely. Please continue to pray for us as we prepare for our final term from January 5th, and for the nation as the General Election is planned for January 15th. Sarah and Simon.

Revd David Poyner – please note new phone numbers:

Tel 0980-100-9693 or 01746-861121

Email D.R.Poyner@aston.ac.uk

Glazeley & Deuxhill: St Bartholomew

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10533/>

Marion Corfield – Tel 01746-764585

Email Marion.corfield@talktalk.net



Severn Valley Benefice Christmas Message & Services

Wishing you a blessed and peaceful Christmas

from the Benefice of Highley with Billingsley, Glazeley and Deuxhill, and Chelmarsh Family Churches

Sunday 7th December – PEACE

9:30 am – Morning Worship – St Peter's, Chelmarsh

10:30 am – Holy Communion Service – St Mary's, Highley

Sunday 14th December – JOY

10:30 am – Holy Communion Service – St Mary's, Highley

5:00 pm – Nine Lessons & Carols – St Peter's, Chelmarsh

Wednesday 17th December

6:00 pm – Carols on the Green

Friday 19th December

6:30 pm – Carol Service – St Mary's, Billingsley

Sunday 21st December – LOVE

9:30 am – Morning Worship – St Peter's, Chelmarsh

10:00 am – Carol Service – St Bartholomew's, Glazeley

10:30 am – Holy Communion Service – St Mary's, Highley

5:00 pm – Candlelight Community Carol Service – St Mary's, Highley

Wednesday 24th December – Christmas Eve

3:30 pm – Crib Service – St Peter's, Chelmarsh

4:00 pm – Crib Service – St Mary's, Highley

11:00 pm – Midnight Holy Communion – St Peter's Chelmarsh

11:00 pm – Midnight Holy Communion – St Mary's, Highley

Thursday 25th December – Christmas Day

10:00 am – Family Service – St Mary's, Highley

10:00 am – Holy Communion – Billingsley

(No services at Chelmarsh or Glazeley)

Sunday 28th December

9:30 am – Holy Communion Service – St Peter's, Chelmarsh

10:30 am – Morning Worship – St Mary's, Highley

The Greatest Journey

Every Christmas, many of us set out on journeys — to visit loved ones, to share meals, to exchange gifts, or simply to be together. The Christmas story too is full of journeys.

We remember Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

We remember the wise men travelling from the East to worship the newborn King.

We remember the shepherds leaving their flocks to hurry to the stable.

But the greatest journey of all — the one that began every other journey — is the journey God made in Jesus Christ, from heaven to earth.

A journey born entirely out of love for us. The carol "*Once in Royal David's City*" describes it so beautifully:

*He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all;
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.*

Whether or not you receive visitors this Christmas, remember this: God has already come to you. He came down from heaven for each one of us — because He loves us. The message of Christmas is simple yet profound: God with us. God with me. God with you.

Life's greatest journey begins with one simple step — discovering God's love through Jesus.

This Christmas, take that step. Come along to any of our family churches, where you'll find a warm welcome, uplifting worship, and a message that brings peace, joy, and hope to everyday life. Whether you're new to church, returning after some time away, or a familiar face, we'd love to walk this journey of faith with you.

Wishing you a joyful and blessed Christmas,

Rev'd Kina

"Come and join us this Christmas as we celebrate the greatest journey of all — God coming to us in Jesus Christ."

Molecule of the Month: Huntingtin

Revd David Poyner writes:

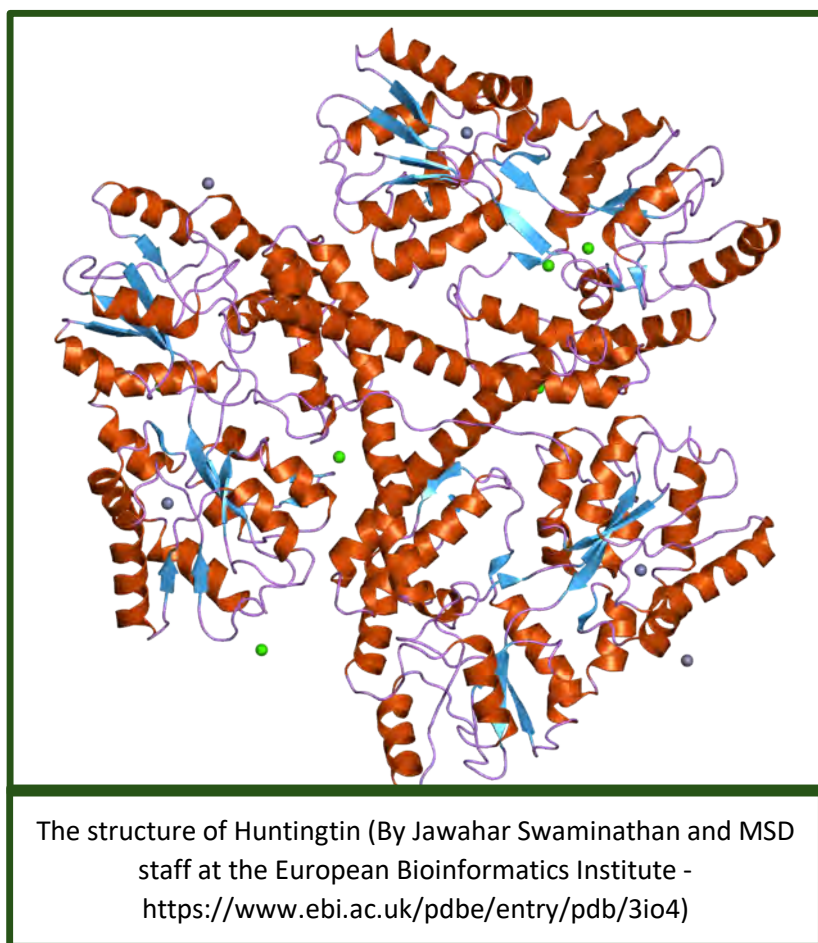


As I write this, the BBC are leading with a story of a new treatment for Huntington's Disease, a progressive and fatal neurodegenerative disease. It is typically inherited and results in uncontrolled movements. For over thirty years we have known that in the disease one particular protein, called huntingtin, becomes faulty.

Huntingtin is a very large protein, found naturally in many cells including nerve cells. It is essential for their normal development. We now know the shape of this protein and we also know that in Huntington's Disease, one part of this protein becomes enlarged. Proteins are made of amino acids; one of these, glutamine is repeatedly added to the protein and this stops it from working. Sadly, nobody is quite sure what huntingtin actually does in healthy cells. Trying to treat a disease where the function of the key protein is unknown is not easy....

What we do know is that too much of the abnormal protein is made in patients with Huntington's Disease. The research reported by the BBC attempts to reduce its production, in anticipation that this will at least reduce the severity of the disease. The "blueprint" for any protein is held in our DNA; this tells the cell how to connect individual amino acids to make the protein. A copy of the instructions in the DNA is made by another molecule called messenger RNA; the cell then "reads" the messenger RNA to make the protein. The more messenger RNA, the more protein the cell makes. Cells use various tricks to regulate the amount of messenger RNA; one of the most important is the use of "micro-RNA". As its name suggests, a micro-RNA is a very small fragment of the same molecule as the messenger RNA; if it has the correct structure, it can bind to a specific messenger RNA to stop it being read by the cell and turned into a protein. In the research reported by the BBC, a micro-RNA that targets the messenger RNA for the abnormal huntingtin is injected into the brains of patients, using a specially adapted virus. It does indeed reduce levels of the abnormal huntingtin and is reported to markedly slow the rate at which the disease progresses. If this result is repeated in larger trials, it will be a very important breakthrough.

There are however other approaches to treating Huntington's Disease which are being followed. One relies on an observation that the abnormal huntingtin activates another protein in cells called PAPD5. PAPD5 causes cells to die. It is very important that the body has ways of removing unwanted cells, but if this process is not controlled, the consequences can be very serious. It is possible that huntingtin causes inappropriate activation of PAPD5, thereby killing nerves and so triggering Huntington's Disease. The real significance of this is that there are drugs that can stop PAPD5 from working. If PAPD5 is really behind at least some cases of the disease, these drugs represent another way it could be treated.



DRP

The Stottesdon Group of Parishes

Rector: pending the arrival of Revd Sally Wallace-Jones, please contact the relevant Church Warden / Parish rep as shown below:		
St Mary, Stottesdon CHURCHWARDEN Clare Tibbits: 01746-718007	St Giles, Farlow CHURCHWARDENS - VACANT – please contact the key holder, Pam Phillips – 01746-718475	Holy Trinity, Sidbury CHURCHWARDEN – vacant – please contact the key holder, Andrew Sierakowski - 07934-714149
St Mary, Cleeton St Mary CHURCHWARDEN Sue Dolphin: - 01584-890583	St John, Middleton Scriven CHURCHWARDEN - vacant – so contact Parish Rep Ann Constable 01746-789420	St Michael, Silvington CHURCHWARDEN - vacant – so contact Parish Rep Katie Hickman
In an emergency, please call Revd Jeannetta Stokes, on 01746-716698		

December message

Julia Evans writes:

Keeping the Show on the Road during the vacancy – part 25

Whilst this won't be quite the last time the above title will be pressed into service, we know it will soon be able to find its hat and wander way into the faint grey distance of an autumn afternoon. As many of you will know the Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones has been offered the combined post of Rector of the Stottesdon Benefice and Rural Church Missioner in the Severn Borders Deanery, and has accepted. This offer has been made subject to satisfactory completion of all post-interview procedures including DBS clearance.

Sally is currently Vicar of Hartshead, Hightown, Roberttown and Scholes in the Diocese of Leeds, and prior to that served in a large rural multi-parish benefice in the Diocese of Norwich. She is very much looking forward to leading the parishes of the Stottesdon Benefice in the next phase of their lives, and to witness and work with clergy and laity across the Severn Borders Deanery as Rural Church Missioner. The interview panel was unanimous that God is calling Sally to this combined role, and were delighted when she accepted the offer. Assuming all the post-interview procedures are satisfactorily completed we are planning, God willing, for Sally to move to Stottesdon and be licensed to her new role in the New Year. Further details will follow in due course. Please be praying for Sally's current parishes as she prepares to leave them, and for Sally and her husband John as they prepare to move to Stottesdon and start this new chapter for them and for the parishes and wider deanery. There will be more information to come as we draw closer to the arrival of Sally and John and Sally's licensing.

Information about Christmas celebrations was included in the November issue of Wheatland news but it's repeated in here in case you missed it.

And although the conclusion of the vacancy now comes closer there are still a number of months during which we continue to be hugely grateful to the visiting clergy, amongst others, who can now see their sojourn in the Stottesdon Benefice drawing to a close. We thank Revds David Poyner, Val Smith and husband Keith, Justin Bailey and wife Sarah, John Daniels, Neil Dunlop and Mrs Ann Constable with the Rural Dean Jeanetta Stokes and Arch Deacon Fiona Gibson for their wonderful support over the years but most especially during the vacancy, they have indeed kept 'the show on the road'.

Also, in the November edition of the Wheatland news there was an explanation of the new process being introduced to keep producing the Wheatland News following the deaths of Chris Tibbits and Bobbie Jarvis.

Wheatland News

This edition will be the final one led and edited in the finest of styles by Caroline John who has been editing and producing the Wheatland News behind the scenes for many a long year. Thankyou Caroline from all of us.

So just a reminder about what's happening from February 2026 and the part we all need to play in keeping the Wheatland News in its current fine shape.

The new Wheatland News committee members are;

- Revd Joe Simons, also acting as Chair of the Wheatlands News committee and Rector of the Brown Clee Benefice.
- Mrs Julia Evans, also acting as co-ordinator for the Stottesdon Group.
- Mrs Karen Simons, also acting as co-ordinator for the Brown Clee Benefice.
- Revd David Poyner, also acting as co-ordinator for the Highley Group parishes of Chelmarsh, Glazeley & Billingsley.
- Mr Cliff Gutteridge – photographs adviser
- Mrs Denise Knightley who is the incoming Editor.
- Mr Charles Gill - Treasurer.
- Mrs Caroline John who is the Current and imminently retiring Editor.

We will be working in a different way because we cannot replace the knowledge and experience of Bobbie, so please bear with us and we hope that you can help us to make this a truly community wide magazine with YOUR active help and support.

The new arrangements mean a number of things including the need to send material for inclusion to your co-ordinator by at the latest the cut-off date which is about the 15th of every month for inclusion in the following month's edition. It may not be possible to add any material received late.

Then Co-ordinators need to assemble material for onward transmission to the Editor who in turn has the task of assembling the magazine in the most streamlined way before it goes off to the printers. Printers then return material which goes to churches and other distribution points and a wonderful team of people who kindly get the Wheatland news out to readers. Wheatland News should be in churches and communities by the first Sunday in every month, so time is tight.

'Meanwhile' as Chris and Clare would say 'we continue to strive for a flourishing Christian presence in our parishes, our two schools and the wider communities we serve, please -

- Cherish and support the volunteers who work so hard to sustain the church here -the Church Wardens, the parish reps and the members of the PCCs.
- Remember to thank the volunteer visiting clergy who are routinely and willingly facilitating our Sunday worship and other services as needed'.

Pastoral Visits and support

If you or someone you know need a visit or communion or other support at home or elsewhere during the interregnum, please contact your churchwarden or other volunteer (see above) who will endeavour to help you to arrange this.

Benefice website (A Church near you: Stottesdon) We are trying to keep this updated during the vacancy, so if you need something added – or spot an error - please get in touch by email with juliaevans278@gmail.com

Wheatland News –the deadline for the February 2026 edition (Stottesdon Benefice Parishes) is to get copy to Julia (PCC) by first thing on Monday 15th January 2026. Thank you!

Services for December and January in the Stottesdon Benefice			
Date	Celebrant	Parish	Time and Service
Sunday 7 th December	Neil Dunlop	Farlow Stottesdon	9:00 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Morning Prayer
Sunday 14 th December	No services in the Benefice		
Sunday 21 st December	John Daniels	Stottesdon	10:30 am Holy Communion
Wednesday 24 th December	Ann Constable	Middleton Scriven for the Benefice Service	6:30 pm Christmas Service
Sunday 28 th December	No services in the Benefice		
Sunday 4 th January 2026	Neil Dunlop	Farlow Stottesdon	9:00 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Morning Prayer
Sunday 11 th January	Justin Bailey	Cleeton SM Stottesdon	9:00 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Holy Communion
Sunday 18 th January	Neil Dunlop	Stottesdon	10:30 am Informal Worship
	David Poyner	Stottesdon Sidbury	11:45 am Holy Communion
Sunday 25 th January	Justin Bailey	Silvington Stottesdon	9:00 am Holy Communion 10.30 am Holy Communion
Sunday 1 st February	Neil Dunlop	Farlow Stottesdon	9:00 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Morning Prayer

Stottesdon News



Memorial to commemorate the unofficial Christmas football truce in Dec 1914, designed by 10 year old Spencer Turner and dedicated by HRH The Duke of Cambridge on the 100th anniversary of the event

Stottesdon Bellringers *Clive Jackson writes*

The Stottesdon bellringers, partners and friends had a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffs. Not having been before I was expecting a small number of memorials only for the armed forces. In fact there are over 400 memorials in a 150 acre site and although around 80% are for the armed forces there are many commemorating civilian organisations.

We booked two tour-guided buggies and because the ground was relatively dry they could venture off the main paths to see nearly all of the memorials. A “full-day” tour consisted of a morning and afternoon trip in

the buggy with a tasty lunch in between.

Having very knowledgeable guides was brilliant, there is so much symbolism in the memorials that, when pointed out made you look at them in a different light. And speaking of light, several of the memorials were designed so that sunlight hitting them on the 11th hour of the 11th month for Remembrance Day forms shadows of a shaft of light to highlight areas. Both very clever and very poignant.

If anyone has a small group wishing to visit the Arboretum, the buggies can seat up to 7 people and I can thoroughly recommend them.

If you are interested in joining the Stottesdon bellringers please contact me at clive.jackson@mac.com



The Armed Forces Memorial is carved with the names of all those who have given their lives in the service of the country since the end of the second world war.

A gap has been left in the wall which allows sunlight to penetrate to the heart of the memorial at 11 o'clock on the 11th of November.

Latest from The Fighting Cocks, Stottesdon

Roger Cook writes:

The Parish Council have recently completed the application to the Planning Authority for Asset of Community Value (AVC) status for our much-loved village pub. This will now be considered by Shropshire Planning, with a decision due before Christmas.

An AVC formally acknowledges the importance of a building or institution (in this case the pub) to the local community (us). It lasts for five years and helps protect the asset (the pub) from any fundamental change of use. It also allows locals to get together to try to buy up an asset that may be at risk.

Watch this space!

Any questions? please contact Roger Cook at rogerbcook@btinternet.com

Stottesdon and District WI

Debbie Haynes, President, Stottesdon & District WI, writes:

Stottesdon and District WI had their annual general meeting on the 19th of November 2025.

We met at Farlow village hall on a very cold evening; despite this I think we had a record number of attendees! We elected and re-elected our officers and committee members who all work very hard to make our WI enjoyable and well organised.

We then had a fascinating insight into the life of bees by Lucy Shier. Lucy has been bee keeping for 10 years and has 15 colonies where she lives in Farlow. This has now become a full-time job and business, and she is kept very

busy.

Fun facts that I learnt, Bees can fly up to 15mph, worker bees live for 6 weeks in the

summer, bees need to gather 2 million flowers to make one pound of honey! Everyone was enthralled by the talk and by Lucy's enthusiasm and passion for her bees.

Clare then shared our amazing programme for 2026 to which we are all looking forward.

We finished with homemade cakes and tea and coffee.

If anyone is interested in joining our WI group, then please contact Debbie Haynes (07780-113869) who will be happy to give you more information.

Debbie Haynes debbiehaynesflp@hotmail.co.uk



Farlow and Oreton News

December 2025

Church building repairs to the roof and guttering will commence at the beginning of December, every care will be taken to protect the gravestones. We apologise for any inconvenience during this period of works.



On Monday 15th December 2025 between 5:30pm and 7:30pm **"Everything Christmas"** in aid of Crisis at Christmas, a community event, is being held at Farlow and Oreton Village Hall and is supported by Farlow Church of England Primary School, Farlow Parish Church, Farlow and Oreton Village Hall and Melville Methodist Church.

Our **Carol Service** will be on Thursday

18th December at 6:30pm led by Ruth Downes, followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies. Everyone welcome. Sadly, there will be no Christmas Service this year, but we wish you all a very happy, healthy Christmas and New Year from the P.C.C.

January 2026

Thank you to everyone who has supported our services and events during 2025 - and we look forward to your continued support for 2026.

November 100 Club winners

- £20 to Doris Price, No 70 -
- £10 each to Pam Phillips, No 02, and to Louise & Andrew Killey, No 75
- £5 each to Richard Jones, No 65, and to Ben & Emily Innes, No 86



This painting of Farlow church is by Ken Davies of the Parish of Oreton who went to Farlow School and sang in the church choir. Ken's Aunt Emma Poyner was a Midwife of the Parish and is remembered in 1917 by the water jug on the font.

Middleton Scriven News

Ann Constable writes:

✠ **Christmas celebration- Carol service** - Wednesday 24th December at 6.30pm, followed by wine and mince pies. **This is a community event - please choose your favourite Carol and / or Christmas reading or poem (replies to Ann by 18th December).** Donations of wine and mince pies very gratefully received. Everyone is most welcome to join us.

Christmas coffee morning- Saturday 13th December, 10:00 am -12 noon in church with Christmas Bake sale. (Bring and buy Homemade Christmas foods). Come and join us for Coffee/ teas/ hot chocolate and mince pies. Plus, a Christmas raffle. Please note – there will be no coffee morning in January.

Look out for our first community event in the New Year – **Burns' Night on Saturday 24th January.** More details to follow on our community WhatsApp and posters/ invitations.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our church and community events this year. A huge thank you to everyone on the grass cutting rota, hosting coffee mornings or organising community events. We look forward to seeing you at events in 2026. Our community events planning group (Fun Raisers) have been busy putting together a range of social events for us to come together, share friendship and have fun.

"A Merry Christmas and a Happy and peaceful New Year to all."

In a new departure, Sidbury held a short act of **Remembrance** on the 9th November at the soldier cut-out, next to the drive to the church. As far as we know, Sidbury suffered no casualties in either war; it has always been a small community and most men of conscriptable age were required to work on the land: in the First World War, the army actively redeployed men with farming experience back to this country to assist with harvesting. Some of us also had family and friends from elsewhere amongst whom there were casualties or those who suffered as a result of war. We therefore felt it was right that there should be an act where the village could remember those who fought and suffered and also those who now serve; particularly those from amongst our own families. We were also aware of the work of the Women's Land Army, who were billeted at Sidbury Hall in the Second World War. Consequently, Andrew Sierakowski led a short act of remembrance on the 9th, including the silence. We were delighted that seven people came to support this; six people were named and commended to God for their service and sacrifice. After the service, there was a working party in the churchyard, until rain stopped play.

Our **Christmas Carol service** will be on Monday 22nd December at 6.30pm in the church, followed by refreshments; please join us if you can.

To wreath – or not to wreath??

Anni Holden-Calver writes:

I am house hunting at the moment as Dr Bob and I downsize and move closer to one of our daughters. No it's not the best time of year to be doing this but there it is and here we are!

The other day we were in our future town with a list of "suitable" homes. We had a bit of a drive to get there and I spent my time wreath spotting. I noticed earlier this year that some people had chosen to put a wreath on their door at Eastertide - generally a collection of artificial spring flowers. When Autumn came a month or so ago, there they were again - wreaths featuring leaves and fruits with yellow, green and brown hues. As Halloween got closer, small pumpkins took their place on the decorated doors.

I counted more than 20 doors with wreaths as we approached our destination. The interesting thing was how the Christmas wreath was appearing with fir and holly and ivy and the occasional gold bauble. Again most were artificial but still nice.

I helped out at a wreath making event at my grandson' school in November. From my present home I filled bin bags with holly, ivy and branches of fir, which make the base of a Christmas wreath. Ribbons and baubles were added and an amazing number of very individual wreaths in a



variety of shapes were taken home to adorn a lot of doors.

Holly and ivy are very connected with Christmas. Holly represents the crown of thorns and the blood of Jesus from medieval times but the contrast of shiny green and red berries is very pleasing to look at. Ivy, like most evergreen plants, has been revered since pagan times onwards for keeping its leaves over winter and therefore associated with eternal life. It was also thought to help the recovery of sick animals and in the County of

Shropshire a thousand years ago, a piece of ivy would have been fed to animals before midday on Christmas day to keep the evil spirits away for the coming year. Do any local farmers still do that today?

Traditionally the holly and ivy would be brought into the dwelling on Christmas Eve and would last until either epiphany or twelfth night as we know it on the 6th

January or be kept until Candlemas at the beginning of February. We decorate our house with the best we can pick and cut from the garden.

It will be our last Christmas in this happy home but it is time to move on. In the new year I will make a wreath here to take to our new home. I will put it on the new front door and join the modern wreath update.



Obituary – Chris Tibbits

With Clare's permission, Julia Evans has adapted this eulogy from that given at Chris's funeral by his former colleague Brian Johnson.

Capturing the essence of a person on paper in a way that breathes life into the written word is an impossibility. Recording birth and death and major events signals some basic facts but rests too heavily on the spirit of the man. Nevertheless the eulogies given by David Tibbits and by Brian Johnson at Chris's funeral reached profoundly into the essence of this man in a way that cannot be done in this short piece.

Those eulogies painted a picture of purpose, endeavour and understanding of the human condition that prevailed throughout Chris's life, be that in the railway industry both in the day to day and in times of crisis, and as a family man and stalwart - a badge he wore with pride - of the local community.

Brian Johnson said Chris never shied away from challenging situations. One Friday evening in September 1986, two InterCity trains were in a 100mph, head on collision near Stafford. Nearly 900 people were on board, although mercifully just one fatality. Chris was one of the first to arrive back at the office to establish and answer phone lines, publicised to the media, which anxious friends and relatives could call – a difficult, harrowing task that nowadays would be undertaken by the Civil Police.

Then in 1994, during the run-up to privatisation, Chris was appointed Director of CrossCountry. He had to establish an entirely new train operating company. Facing an unknown future, it was a difficult, unsettling time. Stretching targets had been set for train punctuality, customer satisfaction and financial results. Around 850 CrossCountry staff required reassurance, support and encouragement. Over many months they all attended residential customer service workshops in Derby, a dozen at a time. Chris participated in virtually every one of them, twice a week, for a no-holds-barred open forum session. Following this he joined participants for dinner - and later was often last man standing at the bar. Also, by being frequently out and about on trains, he knew almost everyone in the company. He realised that people are at the heart of making the railway work properly.

Virgin won the CrossCountry franchise in January 1997, then acquired West Coast three months later. Many

thought Richard Branson would bring in one of his star managers to run Virgin Trains. But he appointed Chris as Managing Director, giving him responsibility for every aspect of day to day delivery of all Virgin train services.

It was one of the biggest jobs on the railway at that time. There were many challenges. In the midst of all this, customer service had to be maintained and improved. Through all these challenges, Chris remained outwardly calm and focussed; a truly inspirational leader.

Sadly, in December 2002, the first day a new Pendolino train ran with passengers from London to Manchester, Chris tragically suffered a brain haemorrhage at work.

Early retirement followed. He was a massive loss to the industry but retained connection with it. We last enjoyed his company at a reunion lunch in March.

Chris was an exceptional railwayman of a kind rarely seen in my 40 years in the industry; deeply knowledgeable, unflappable, honest and straightforward; - an intensely hard-working role model. It was desperately sad that his

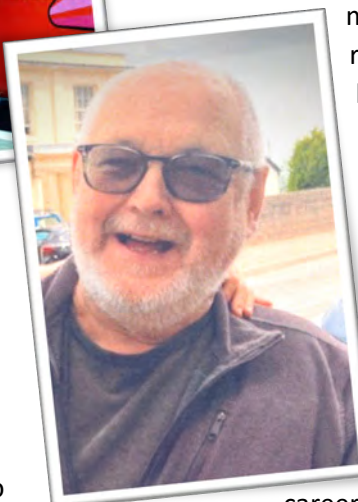
career was cut short at such an early age. I know I speak for very many colleagues when I say it was a huge privilege to have known him.

And, reflecting on his recent years, a friend added

My regret is that I knew him for only a few years - but what I saw him pack in to those years was extraordinary. Thanks to Chris and Clare, not only is the fabric of St Mary's church going to give joy to its community for decades, probably centuries, to come, but it will be a welcoming place for that community, enriching minds and lives with the history it embodies, and honouring the many generations that have gone before. The bells will ring. The congregation will not shiver, and can enjoy refreshments from the splendid kitchen and servery.

The eulogies given at Chris's funeral, by his son and by former colleagues, surely revealed unsuspected facets of his career and achievements to everyone present. The setting for the gathering for refreshments afterwards reflected his association with the rail industry. Saying goodbye was a sad occasion and I feel his loss keenly - but my life has certainly been better for having known him.

Thank you, Chris!



Wheatland News – What you need to know for 2026

As many WN readers will already know, Denise Knightley is taking on the role of WN Editor as from the February 2026 edition, supported by the newly reformed Committee and the revised arrangements. **The information set out here may well change as things settle down during 2026!**

SUBSCRIPTIONS – a note to ALL our readers – we hope a growing number for 2026!

Please find your subscription form for 2026 on page 29. The form also contains some revisions to the subscription information that appeared on the back cover of the November WN – information that was not to hand when we went to print. The bank account name is very long-winded but has been tested and it does work for setting up a payment from phone app or online banking! Please complete the form and submit it – either soft or hard copy – as set out on the form. Charles Gill is now Treasurer for Wheatland News – but if you have any questions or problems about your WN subscription then please contact your LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR in the first instance – see Distribution, below.

DISTRIBUTION

Printed hard copies – Tony Brown will continue to collect these from Badger Print, package them in parish-sized bundles and deliver to the appropriate places. Tony can be contacted at anthonybrown100@icloud.com.

For now, until clarified, please assume that either Tony is your distributor, or that the current person will continue with the role.

Parish / Benefice	Distributors – as known	Electronic versions
Severn Valley - Billingsley - Glazeley - Chelmarsh - Highley	Glazeley – Marion Corfield Billingsley – Julia Evans	https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10415/page/72249/view/ https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10533/page/72247/view/ https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10462/page/84233/view/ https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10558/page/55350/view/ The Highley Forum is also on these web pages
Stottesdon	Stottesdon – Julia Evans	A Church Near You - Stottesdon https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10731/page/44749/view/
Brown Clee	Chetton – Charles Gill Aston Botterell – Anne Preece Neenton / Cleobury North / Burwarton – Sue Hale Ditton Priors – Tony Brown	A Church Near You – Ditton Priors https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10502/page/83071/view/

Electronic copies will continue to be available on parish and benefice websites, and by email on request to your Distributor.

CONTRIBUTORS

Please send your reports and photos to your Benefice Coordinator, who will prepare them for submission to the Editor. The Coordinators are:

Benefice	Coordinator and contact information
Severn Valley	Revd David Poyner - d.r.poyner@aston.ac.uk
Stottesdon	Julia Evans - juliaevans278@gmail.com
Brown Clee	Karen Simons - walkthedogs@mac.com

The DEADLINE for contributions for the FEBRUARY 2026 edition is NOON on 15th JANUARY 2026.

Any contributor who is not aligned with a specific Benefice – please send your items direct to the Editor, Denise Knightley, denwills1@aol.com

"Yes please – I want to receive a printed copy of the Wheatland News each month during 2026!"

To receive eleven editions, from February to December 2026, please fill in the form and follow the instructions below!

Payment The subscription for this year is £18. Please pay either

- By direct transfer – eg from your phone or online - **PREFERRED**; or
- By cheque – please post to Charles Gill, Church House, Chetton, Bridgnorth, WV16 6UF or contact him at CharlesEGill@aol.com
- By cheque or cash to your Distributor.

Bank = Barclays Bank

Sort code = **20 53 22**

Account name = **Wheatland Group Of Parishes Wheatland News Account.**
This is a Business account.

Account number = **50 94 20 65**

Insert YOUR NAME AND SURNAME as the payment reference

Please print – then cut along the dotted line and return the completed form to Charles Gill CharlesEGill@aol.com or to your Distributor:

Your name (as per payment reference)

Your email address.....

Your postal address and postcode.....

Your phone number.....

Are you a new subscriber? **Y / N.** or renewing? **Y / N.**

With which Church or Group are you connected?.....

Your Distributor – ie the person and their phone number or email address from whom you receive the Wheatland News – if known.....



Diocese of Hereford

December letter from the Dean of Hereford

Not Christmas!



I'm not going to wish you a merry Christmas even though this is technically my last opportunity before the great day to infest the whole diocese with my festive cheer, at least in print. Please understand that it isn't that I DON'T wish you a blessed and happy Christmas – that would be unusual and distinctly unclerical, (not to mention untrue). But as I write this, the thoughtful season of advent has not even begun – the time when we God-Botherers ponder how much we need a Saviour – so I don't want to ho ho ho at you just yet. I do hope that despite the chill in the air caused by national and global events you will avail yourselves when the time comes of all the hope and joy that your local church and community can muster.

Advent is about looking at ourselves and at the world and realising just how much we need a Saviour. Christmas would be pointless if we didn't - just a marketing ploy cooked up by sellers of toys, perfumes and frozen party nibbles to get us all to spend as much money as possible. Let's face it, if a fire engine screeched to a halt outside your house with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing you might wonder what it was doing there if your house was not on fire. You might be mildly interested but you would hardly celebrate your salvation! In the same way the baby whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day and who we hail as Saviour is similarly baffling and underwhelming if you cannot see anything that we need saving from!

Sometimes it seems easier to believe in evil than in God. But if you do believe that evil exists – if you see it in all its brutality in our daily news, if it touches you in grief, fear, loneliness, hatred, jealousy- then you may dimly begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at the impact on individuals of national, international and corporate greed then you may begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at the wars devastating communities across the globe you will understand why we need our Saviour. If you dare to look into the devices and desires of your own heart you may begin to ruefully understand why you need a Saviour.

Perhaps deep inside we all vaguely sense the need for a Saviour because we can all see what is wrong. It is only a step- a stride admittedly- from faintly sensing the need for a Saviour to considering that salvation might come from God and not human endeavour and then another step again to truly recognizing Him from the Christmas story repeated every year for 2 millennia by those persistent folk in the churches and deliciously enacted by our tiny children with tea towels on their heads.

Very Rev'd Sarah Brown
Dean of Hereford

Bishop Richard's Weekly Video Message

This week, Bishop Richard reflects on the freedom that comes from honesty about ourselves, concluding that "it would be wonderful if our church communities were places where honesty, acceptance and forgiveness were practiced. The sort of safe places where it was ok to confess our sins to one another as James advocates in his letter".

You can see the video and read the transcript at

<https://www.hereford.anglican.org/news/bishop-of-herefords-message/20-11-2025.php>, or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4df0cgL-Nk>



The Archdeacon of Ludlow moves on

It was announced on 21st October that the Venerable Dr Fiona Gibson is to be the next Bishop of Taunton in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Fiona is currently the Archdeacon of Ludlow in Hereford Diocese, where she has served as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education and was elected as one of our House of Clergy representatives to serve on General Synod.

Before coming to the Diocese of Hereford, Fiona served as a vicar in the parishes of Cople, Moggerhanger and Willington in St Albans Diocese where she was ordained in 2011.

Fiona said of her appointment. "I am deeply honoured to have been chosen to be the next Bishop of Taunton, and am very much looking forward to working alongside Bishop Michael and the team and learning how God is at work in the churches, schools and communities of the Diocese of Bath & Wells as I move to Somerset in the New Year. I can't pretend it won't also be a wrench to leave the Diocese of Hereford. This is a very special place to live and serve God, and I have come to love the people and places here. I am deeply grateful to Bishop Richard, my colleagues and all the clergy and laity of the Diocese for having made me so welcome and taught me so much. Those lessons will go with me into my new role as will many happy memories. As I look forward with hope and excitement to all that lies ahead, please be praying that I will always and only seek to abide in Christ and to serve and lead in the strength of God and the power of the Holy Spirit."



Readings for December and January	
Sunday 7th December Second of Advent - Purple	Psalm 72. 1 – 7, 18,19 (or 72. 1 – 7) Isaiah 11. 1 – 10; Romans 15. 4 – 13; Matthew 3. 1 - 12
Sunday 14th December Third of Advent – Purple	Canticle: Magnificat Isaiah 35. 1 – 10; James 5. 7 - 10; Matthew 11. 2 - 11
Sunday 21st December Fourth of Advent – Purple	Psalm 80. 1 – 8, 18 – 20 or 80. 1 - 8 Isaiah 7. 10 – 16; Romans 1. 1- 7; Matthew 1. 18 – end
Wednesday 24th December Christmas Eve – Purple	As Christmas Day readings
Thursday 25th December Christmas Day – Gold or White	Psalm 96 Isaiah 9. 2 – 7; Titus 2. 11 – 14; Luke 2. 1 – 14 (15 – 20)
Sunday 28th December The Holy Innocents - Red	Psalm 124 Jeremiah 31. 15 – 17; 1 Corinthians 1. 26 – 29; Matthew 2. 13 - 18
Sunday 4th January Second after Christmas – Epiphany – Gold or White	Psalm 72 (1 – 9) 10 - 15 John 1. (1 – 9) 10 – 18; Isaiah 60. 1 - 6; Ephesians 3. 1 - 12; Matthew 2. 1 - 12
Sunday 11th January First after Epiphany – Gold or White – the Baptism of Christ	Psalm 29 Isaiah 42. 1 – 9; Acts 10. 34 – 43; Matthew 3. 13 – end
Sunday 18th January Second of Epiphany – white – Second after Epiphany - Green	Psalm 40. 1 – 12 Isaiah 49. 1 – 7; 1 Corinthians 1. 1 – 9; John 1. 29 – 42;
Sunday 25th January Conversion of Paul – Third of Epiphany - White	Psalm 67 Jeremiah 1. 4 – 10 or Acts 9. 1 – 22; Acts 9. 1 – 22 or Galatians 1. 11 – 16a; Matthew 19. 27 – end
Sunday 1st February Fourth of Epiphany – Gold or White – Presentation of Christ in the Temple	Psalm 24. (1 - 6) 7 - end Malachi 3. 1 – 5; Hebrews 2. 14 – end; Luke 2. 22 - 40

Mistletoe

From Suzanne and Jake Thomas - Winter 2025

As I walk down the stairs, I gaze at the dried, dusty leaves and twigs hanging from the beam.

Mistletoe. Gathered on the Winter Solstice and brought in to replace the bundle from the year before. Soon, it will be time to replace this one. This brittle and cobwebbed combination of male and female mistletoe will be taken down and burned with thanks given for the year that has been, its gifts and challenges, lessons and blessings. Then the male plant will be brought in the front door by myself, and the female through the back by my husband, they meet in the stair well, are tied with a green ribbon, and attached to the beam. A first kiss beneath the Mistletoe and our tradition continues.



In Shropshire Folklore a Sheaf of Gleanings, published 1882, the editor Charlotte S Burne, states that in Montgomeryshire, "a correspondent ... tells me that he and his wife have never been without a piece of mistletoe in the house since they have been married." And it is so with us.

Jake grew up with mistletoe adorning a beam in the kitchen, refreshed every Christmas time. I grew up with a plastic replica dangling from the brass light fitting in the hall, but it intrigued me. Imagine my delight when I moved to Shropshire and found it literally dripping from the trees.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not terribly poisonous. Obviously ingesting a large amount of the berries or leaves is not recommended as the toxic Lectin is present throughout the plant. In recent years, parts of the plant have been used in the aftermath of cancer treatments, under the strict guidance of health practitioners.

Neither is it a parasite. It is a hemi parasite relying on nutrients from the sap of the host tree yet draws its water supply from the air and rain and energy from sunlight by photosynthesis - something which starts very early on in the development of the plant, while the green embryonic seed is surrounded by "sticky white stuff" - that gives the plant its botanical name "*Viscum album*"- inside the berry on the female plant.

English mistletoe is dioecious - there are male and female plants of the same species. The females have the berries and the males have the pollen. Both flower in late winter, the time between Candlemas and the Spring Equinox, and it is also at this point where the berries are ripest and the seed is most viable.



This green seed needs sunlight to germinate, and when wiped by the beak of a blackcap, or excreted in sticky strands by the mistle thrush, it sticks to a branch, sends out holdfasts at the Spring Equinox and a tap root that penetrates the bark of the host tree. Locally its most common hosts are apple, hawthorn, rowan, lime and poplar.

So hang it with intent and when you share a kiss beneath a bough, remember that you're in the presence of a very special plant indeed.

