

IGHTHAM MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026

**PUBLISHED FOR THE COMMUNITY
BY ST PETER'S CHURCH**

£1.00

Services in the Benefice in February 2026



Ightham

Sun 1st Feb 9am Breakfast@Church

6pm Evensong

Sun 8th Feb 10am Holy Communion

10:30am Service of the Word

Sun 15th Feb 10am Service of the Word

6pm Evensong

Wed 18th Feb 7:30pm 4-parish cluster Ash Wednesday service Holy Communion at Platt Church

Sun 22nd Feb 10am Holy Communion 9am Breakfast@Church
10:30am Sung Matins

Wednesday services

4th February 10am Holy Communion

11th February 10am Morning Prayer

18th February 10am Holy Communion

25th February 10am Morning Prayer

Wrotham

10:30am Holy Communion with Healing Prayers

9am Breakfast@Church

10:30am Service of the Word

10:30am Holy Communion

ST PETER'S EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT

We are delighted to announce that Rev Stewart Gibbs will be the next Rector of the Benefice of Ightham and Wrotham. It is hoped he will be installed in May following DBS.

Stewart served his curacy at St John's, North Grays (Diocese of Chelmsford) after training for ordination at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Stewart has been incumbent of two parishes in Essex – Hatfield Heath and Sheering, and currently High Ongar with Norton Mandeville. In addition, Stewart has been looking after the parish of Willingale. Stewart has also been Chaplain to St Mellitus Theological College and a teacher at Bancroft's and Brentwood Schools.

Stewart writes - *"I am really looking forward to joining you as we begin this new chapter together, and discern how God is calling us to be his people in Ightham and Wrotham.*

I am committed to making everyone feel welcomed and accepted as we reach out to those in our village communities. I hope that we will grow in faith together, deepening our reliance on God and his good purposes for our lives in Christ. I am excited about the opportunities to engage with the local school, community groups and village events to show and share the love of Jesus."



Please pray for Stewart as he gets ready to move, the churches and communities he leaves behind and our own parishes as we prepare to support and welcome him in his leadership at St Peter's and St George's.



Penny for your thoughts...

The feeling in starting work each year on a February Magazine is one of excitement. So much is new – local groups announce new year programme, nearby attractions roll out new events, adverts arrive from new local enterprises or existing businesses amend their customer offerings. This year, 2026, St Peter's has topped it all! Their new announcement is not about a new service, home group, or a

churchyard initiative but of a new Rector! How wonderful is that and what a brilliant answer to many, many months of prayer. So read on as there is much that is new in this edition but do hurry to find the page with the most important announcement of all. It goes without saying that the Magazine team are thrilled to share in the bliss of this good news and send warmest congratulations to our Benefice churches of St Peter's and St George's. Hurrah and onwards into 2026!

Penny Cracknell

CONTACTS

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Copy deadline for the March edition is 15th Feb

MEDITATE

Winnie the Pooh and Lent 2026

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.

It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A Spring-clean of the soul, if you like.

Baby Roo (and Piglet on the one occasion he was subject to it) found Strengthening Medicine not to their liking, and we may groan inwardly at the thought of 'giving up something for Lent'. Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, our prejudices examined, our junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passontide and Easter more fit to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things. And instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which

this year falls on 18th February. Many Christians go public with their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed' - the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in a mixture of ash and holy oil at a special service that day. The ash is usually the burnt remains of the palm crosses from last year. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to maintain a steady course closer to God, symbolised by the giving up of something - like chocolate - which has a hold on us. We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul has it, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

Parish Pump Editor: Rev Roy Shaw



Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. . . . It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

I Corinthians 14.7

PLAXTOL LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Researching House Histories

Melanie Backe-Hanson is an independent historian, writer and speaker. She specialises in the social history of houses and was the research consultant of BBC2's *A House Through Time*.

She came to talk to us about the pleasures of discovering the stories of our own houses and to launch our house history project. Using examples of houses she has researched, including some nearby in Kent, she explained that some of the most exciting discoveries relate not so much to the house architecture but the intriguing stories of the occupants. She gave us examples of what she had discovered including an execution, a scandal involving Lord Byron and a well-known local gambling house in Tunbridge Wells. The first story is of Dr Lopez, the personal physician to Queen Elizabeth I, who was living at Holton House when he was accused of plotting to poison the Queen, was subsequently arrested and shockingly executed. He is the only physician to a monarch ever to have been executed, and is thought to have been the inspiration for Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. At Paramour Grange at Ash in Kent, Thomas Paramore, Mayor of Canterbury in 1607 may have been responsible for the unique painted room that is behind the doors of this ordinary house. Painted in bright

heraldic colours are roses and ovals beneath a frieze of The Beatitudes biblical verses. During the Civil War it was painted over and not rediscovered until 250 years later.

The scandal involving Lord Byron took place at Burgate House, Southwell, Nottingham when a young Byron became very involved with Julia Leacroft, the daughter of friends. The young people set up a makeshift theatre and performed plays and enjoyed a bohemian lifestyle. Nearer home in Tunbridge Wells in 1690 people came to take the waters and rented lodging houses. The c18th dandy Beau Nash was Master of Ceremonies in Tunbridge Wells and used one of these houses as a private gaming club so that it now bears his name as Nash House.

Melanie Backe-Hanson emphasised the rewards of researching houses and encouraged us to research our own. The ultimate reward is finding out what secrets might be revealed.

V.Dussek

Our next meeting is on ZOOM, Tuesday 10th February at 8pm with Jonathan Fenner on Plaxtol Houses
For information visit
plaxtollocalhistory.wordpress.com



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Dear Friends and Parishioners,

Early in January we have had a taste of winter. Temperatures down to zero, with winds sometimes adding a chill factor. On other days some fog, hiding the sun. Days to stay inside in the warm, enjoying an open fire if you have one. But the respite is only temporary – shopping still needs to be done, friends to visit – perhaps at the coffee morning at church. And the weather forecast offers the prospect of more cold days.

But we still have hope – that the weather will improve. Even in winter the appearance of the sun with a blue sky lifts our spirits, despite the day being cold. We are past the shortest day and in the next couple of months the temperature will rise and days will lengthen. The flowers will start to appear, adding some colour to the brown earth.

Winter can be difficult for another reason, as the cycle of life continues to turn and sometimes it brings an ending. Something that many of us will be familiar with. My oldest friend died a few days ago. It was unexpected and there is an element of shock as well as inevitable sadness. A natural unwillingness to accept that earthly conversations can no longer take place; and sympathy for everyone who knew and loved my friend and will miss him. It also raises the question of hope – given our finite lives, what do we hope for? Certainly peace – for the person who has died, also for family and friends who have lost the company of a loved one. But can we hope for more?

I believe that we can, because I believe that our Father God is a God of love. He will know that we are hurting when someone that we

love dies. And I feel that he will also have loved and continues to love my friend. My hope, for each of us, is that God will have a place where our loved one is at peace and safe.



And what can we hope for in our busy world? Perhaps for a little space and some peace, where we can pause and reflect, putting aside the need 'to do' the regular things which can feel like a treadmill. What might we do that is better, not only for ourselves but for others? It is a time of year when the early nights and cold can increase a sense of loneliness and isolation. Might someone we know benefit from a call or an invitation to coffee? Someone with whom we could share hope for the future?

Words from St Peter seemed to fit here: Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. I Peter 3:15. Amen

John Webster



Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4:2

IGHTHAM IGHTHAMS

Valentine's Men's and Ladies Breakfast

As is our custom ladies are invited to join us in February for breakfast and this year it is actually on Valentine's Day - Saturday February 14th.

Everyone is welcome to join us at the George and Dragon pub at 8.30 am for a full English Breakfast (continental also available). Price £13.

Please book you place by contacting John Webster jnhjk.webster@btinternet.com

MEN'S AND LADIES BREAKFAST

SATURDAY FULL ENGLISH



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10.15am **Church**
to 11.45am **Centre**
every
Wednesday

*The charity for February is **Spadework** at Offham, which sows the seeds of opportunity for adults with learning and other disabilities.*

Thank you to everyone who supported us in 2025. Due to your generosity we raised £3,025 for external charities (including £1,000 at the Macmillan Coffee Morning) and £2025 for St Peter's Church.

50% of our takings are given to our nominated charity and 50% to St Peter's Church.

MORE IGHTHAM IGHTHAMS

Welcome to Ightham Booklet

New to the village? Please contact the Parish Administrator for the latest edition of this useful booklet. E: admin@ighthamchurch.org.uk

A YUMMY SURPRISE!

Jonty's Little Feasts has opened at Chart Farm! Treat yourself to breakfast through to brunch on Fridays and Saturdays. More days are planned shortly. Watch out for March's updates on this exciting new local enterprise.



Ightham Magazine

Subscribe to the Ightham Magazine and keep up to date with local news and events; read the latest Parish Council deliberations; and find contacts for local trades. The annual subscription is £10, for 10 issues delivered free to your door. Payment can be made by standing order, cheque or cash. To subscribe, please contact E: magazine@ighthamchurch.org.uk

St Peter's Church

Parent, Baby & Toddler Group

New to Ightham? New mum at home? New child carer?



**Thursday
10 - 11.30 am
(term time only)
in St Peter's
Church**

From napping newborns to toddlers on trikes, this friendly and welcoming group would love to see you! Come along to meet local Mums and carers over coffee/tea, and yummy home-baked cake.

Need to know more?

The Group's leader, Kirsty Mitchem, will be delighted to hear from you. T: 01732 885072.

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Thursday 14th May 2026

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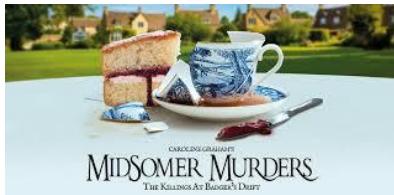
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PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Ightham Parish Council Casual Vacancy

Following the resignation of Cllr Clark, Ightham Parish Council has a vacancy for a Parish Councillor. If you live or work in the village and would like to become a Councillor, please contact the Parish Clerk with a short resume by 28th February 2026.

Parish Archive

Ightham Parish Council is looking for a volunteer to manage the archive in the lower Village Hall. If you are interested in taking on this role, please contact the

Parish Clerk:
ighthamclerk@gmail.com



We're planning a
Community Picnic Saturday 11th July 2026
Ightham Recreation Ground

Would you like to contribute?
Can you run a stall? Provide
entertainment? Help on the day?

We'd love to hear your ideas ...

Please contact Paula 07753 408755 or
Kirsty 07818 342816 for further information

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ALL LOVED UP FOR FEBRUARY!

- We all LOVE a book so head for Sevenoaks Bookshop. Be intrigued by Alex Preston's talk on his latest book, A Stranger in Corfu, 23 February, 7pm. Tickets from £12.
- A novel Valentine's Gift? A fishing voucher from Chiddingstone Castle!
- A Valentine's outing for a green fingered loved one? Great Comp Snowdrop & Plant Fair, Sunday 15 February. Fair 10am – 2pm; garden and tearoom open until 4pm.
- Ready to tie the knot? Hever Castle Wedding Showcase, 8 February, noon – 1500. Pre-register now!
- Wuthering Heights – the classic love story! At Sevenoaks Stag, 13 – 19 February
- Starry, starry night at Bore Place Astronomy Evening Thursday 26 February, 630 – 8pm.
- A Valentine's treat with a difference? A Murder Mystery Dinner (& optional Leicester Arms B&B night). February 27th, 7.30 pm at Penshurst Place
- Check websites for full booking and ticket details.

Check websites for full booking and ticket details.

All book worms should head to Borough Green and Sevenoaks Libraries where they'll find a cornucopia of literary delights, including children's activities! Check the Kent Library service website <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries> or call

T: 03000 41 31 31 for opening hours and up to date information.

Ramblers -

February 2026

Stroll or stride . . .

...with our friendly group of Kent Ramblers, part of the national Ramblers walking organisation.

You don't have to be a Ramblers' member to sample a few walks to help you decide if you'd like to join. If you're new, we suggest contacting the walk leader beforehand to check their walk's suitability.



New Year and new resolutions! Perhaps trying a ramble might be one? Full details can be found on Upcoming Walks link or Facebook page or E: info@tonbridgeandmallingsramblers.org.uk

We look forward to welcoming you!



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The President welcomed all (including two guests and those on zoom) and wished everyone a very happy New Year. She reported that the Christmas party was a great success due to the welcoming ukulele band, excellent raffle, food, games, quiz and of course, excellent company. The Treasurer reported our current bank balance remains in a healthy state. Members were then asked to vote by show of hands on five shortlist resolutions - the most popular (just) being "Action on Women's Homelessness".

After the usual reports and numerous social activities, the President introduced our speaker Claudia Goodman, talking about autism.

Claudia has three sons and has worked for the majority of her life as a special needs teacher. Claudia couldn't understand (despite her knowledge) why her second son at the age of two years old, was very different. He wasn't socialising, was non-verbal but keen to learn and enjoyed learning numbers/letters. Now at the age of 37 he is still progressing, he has a talent for music, playing guitar and piano, athletic, artistic especially when it comes to exact copying, and he's very affectionate.

When Claudia retired in 2020 she set up West Kent Autism Parents' Support Society (WKAPSS) mainly to provide support for other parents in the same situation, but also to bring children with



autism together as they find it difficult to make and maintain friendships. At the first meeting one parent showed up, but today there are 450 families registered. WKAPSS is run totally by volunteers together with funds donated by the Sevenoaks and Tonbridge Lions.

Everyone agreed it was a very informative presentation.

New members and visitors are always welcome. Any enquiries, please contact Helen Johnson, President, Ightham WI.
E: happyflowersgs@live.co.uk

February meeting:

**Naresh Katnoria talking
about Spices and Saris.**

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ITC Ladies Team Tennis
Open Morning on Saturday
7th February, 9 am – 12.30 pm**

Ever thought about playing team tennis for your local club in ladies singles, ladies doubles or mixed doubles - but not too sure what is involved?

Why not come along to our Open Morning here at Ightham Tennis Club to find out more? Members, friends and prospective members welcome.

- Have a hit with some of the current lady team players.
- Learn about the format of matches, how to complete the scorecard, how to host visiting clubs, rules and etiquette for match play.

- Chat about our club sessions, skills pathways and group sessions.
- Enjoy some tea and cake in a friendly atmosphere.

Drop in any time between 9am and 12:30pm.

We look forward to seeing you there!

For any further information please contact Jody Ledger on 07715 347642 or email ledgerjody@gmail.com.

**** The Club Annual Dinner is on Saturday 7th March at the George & Dragon ****

FROM YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

At Christmas many of us were lucky to spend time with family, friends and our loved ones. For some of us, distance makes that harder and that's where technology comes in, but that relies on having fast and reliable broadband. That's a long way from universal. As so many of us know, there are still many areas in our community where the signal is appalling and a very real challenge for those of us living here.

Last year I started a survey to understand the extent of the problem affecting our rural villages. I have had around 1,000 people get in touch with me. Thank you if you have shared your experiences. It has informed my work and allowed me to map best where the issues are.

The frustration of having no data, even when your phone indicates you should have coverage, can be a daily struggle. This affects us whether we are making calls from our phones or using unreliable Wi-Fi.

The technology phone companies use allows for high-speed capacity across our area. Phone companies can make our signal better if they want to invest in our community. In every meeting I have held with operators since launching the survey, I have made this point. It is simply a failure to act from the companies who provide the service. That's why we need to keep the pressure on them.

Whilst EE and Vodafone Three are both expecting significant upgrades in the next few years, Virgin Media O2 are working

on timelines of 8 years. This is far too long to wait.

I've escalated this in Parliament because, sadly, it isn't just our community which is affected. Rural areas across the country suffer from slow broadband and poor connectivity. Even in our towns, the issues are seen. Many people can't even get a phone signal to pay for parking or access shopping apps in the middle of Tonbridge. Train journeys are often disrupted by lost signal.



As I continue to build the picture to present a case to the mobile phone companies, I would appreciate your help in telling me your experiences. Please fill out the form on my website and share it with neighbours so we can keep the pressure up and secure the improvements our community deserves. You can find it at www.tomtugendhat.org/mobile-phone-survey

Contact details:

E: tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk T: 01732 441563

Post: 130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1SP

Web: www.tomtugendhat.org

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Best wishes

Tom

Tom Tugendhat MBE MP - Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

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TMBC Refuse Collections: Click on the link below for all refuse questions: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/bins-waste/check-waste-collection-updates>

Highway problems including potholes, drainage and overgrown roadside foliage: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>

Community Police Contact:

Our local contacts are: Inspector Terry Newman;
Sgt Nick Atkinson; PC Dylan McElligott and Irina
Mgebrisvili, Community Liaison Officer - PSE.



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CHURCHYARD

IMPROVEMENTS - your chance
to get involved

Having opened up the vista in the churchyard, we are planning to plant new native trees and hedgerows in several locations within the churchyard to support our local biodiversity and would welcome volunteers to help with planting in early March. We are hoping to get some of the children from Ightham Primary School to help shape the plans for the new trees and where they should go. Anyone who would like to be involved, please get in touch with the Church Warden, Naomi Webster, churchwardens@ighthamchurch.org.uk

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NEWS FROM IGHTHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

What a fabulous Autumn term end, filled with festive celebrations and joyful moments! Our Christmas tree assembly was wonderful, with every child placing decorations on the stunning tree while singing festive songs and listening to a story about the Christmas tree. We are very grateful to Greenacres for their generous tree donation.

Our school choir brought festive cheer to the community by performing at St Peter's Church Coffee Shop. Their beautiful singing

brought smiles to many faces and was followed by another shining performance at Ightham Mote. I am incredibly proud of the choir's enthusiasm and the wonderful way they represented our school.

The Key Stage 1 nativity, Children of the World, was a heartwarming success. The room was filled with Christmas spirit, and the children's enthusiastic performances plus beautiful costumes, moved many to tears.

We were delighted to welcome many families to our Christmas dinner and



festive evening, where a delicious meal, Christmas quiz, and a special Santa visit - with kind gifts for every child - made the event truly magical. Everyone had a fantastic time celebrating together.

The festive cheer continued with our whole-school Christmas lunch. The hall buzzed with the cheerful sounds of crackers popping and festive music - a perfect atmosphere for the children to enjoy their meal.

Reception Class also delighted parents with their Christmas show. It was wonderful to see their confidence shine on stage as they performed their songs with great joy. The children have settled well into school life and have even started to join the whole-school assemblies.

Our school community remains active and engaged in sports, participating in several competitions with Sevenoaks schools and other schools within the Pioneer Academy. Alongside PE lessons, the children continue to enjoy forest school and swimming sessions.

This term, all classes have begun exciting new topics, with children eagerly learning new skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Years R, 2, and 4 kicked off the term with a thrilling Space Dome visit.

We are also pleased to be collaborating with Sevenoaks School this term. Year 4 worked with Sevenoaks' students to explore where Roman roads were built in Britain. Plotting the routes with discussions on where to build a defensive

wall to protect against invasion made for an engaging and thought-provoking project.

Looking ahead, we will be participating in Safer Internet Day to ensure the children understand how to stay safe online. We will also hold a Valentine's Wear Red Day

and cake sale, as well as special events for Roman and Book Days. What a busy and vibrant school community we are!

Sue Earl, Headteacher
Ightham Primary School
01732 882405



FRIENDS OF IGHTHAM SCHOOL

If you would like to know more about Friends of Ightham School, make a donation or see how you can get involved please do get in touch by contacting Mark Keenor on
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SHIPBOURNE FARMERS' MARKET



As we move into February, the wintery days are lengthening and new growth is starting to make an appearance. It's a great time of year to shop at the Farmers' Market, catch-up with friends over a warming cup of coffee and stock-up on the best of the winter season's produce. Local farmers and food producers need your support at this time of year even more than ever.

There's an abundance of great fish on Will's fish stall. Colder seas attract lemon sole, halibut, skate, turbot and monkfish close to our shore as well as scallops.

For meat eaters, game is an excellent choice for seasonal healthy eating. Modern game is lean and is best enjoyed griddled, quickly stir-fried or in a meaty stew. Venison, guinea fowl, wood pigeon are all good in February. Serve your meat with cabbages and brassicas; you'll find them at their freshest and crunchiest at this time of year. Savoy cabbage, cauliflower, kale, sprouts, sprout tops and purple sprouting broccoli all work perfectly in stir fries and curries, or perhaps serve them simply shredded and steamed tossed with a little seasoning and a dash of cold pressed rapeseed oil. Main crop potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, parsnips and turnips provide the starch

that keeps us going in the cold so mash them together with a little seasoning and butter as a side to your game dishes.

There are still apples to be enjoyed – the storing varieties keep well until April. Early forced rhubarb available from Roughway Farm is wonderful in traditional crumbles, and pies, but it also goes well with rich flavoured meat and fish so serve a rhubarb sauce with grilled mackerel and slow cooked belly pork.

To stay up to date with "what's on" at the Market, request our weekly e-newsletter by visiting www.shipbournefm.co.uk or email lindsay_miles@btinternet.com

To stay up to date with "what's on" at the Market, request our weekly e-newsletter by visiting www.shipbournefm.co.uk or email lindsay_miles@btinternet.com

COOKERY CORNER

JAM DOUGHNUT PANCAKES

A pancake twist for Shrove Tuesday or a delicious dessert to woo someone on Valentine's Day.

Serves 6 / Prep: 10 mins / Cook: 30 mins

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 300ml milk
- 250g self-raising flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 25g caster sugar
- 50g unsalted butter (melted)
- 75g strawberry jam
- Granulated sugar to serve

Method:

1. Whisk the eggs and milk together in a bowl until smooth. In a separate large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and pinch of salt.
2. Pour the egg mixture into the flour mixture and stir until combined. Stir in the caster sugar. Pour in the melted butter and stir until combined. Set aside for 30 minutes to rest.

3. Melt a generous knob of butter in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. When it is frothy, add a ladle of batter. Cook for 30 seconds, then spoon 2 tsp jam onto the middle of the pancake, spreading it slightly (using two spoons will help). Ladle over enough batter to cover the jam.

4. Cook the pancakes on one side for two minutes until bubbles appear on the surface and the edges begin to set. Turn with a fish slice and cook for a further 1-2 minutes until golden. Repeat with the rest of the batter, wiping out the butter between each pancake. Sprinkle over granulated sugar to serve.

Stallholder Shopping List

Eggs – Edward Nut Farms

Strawberry jam – Winsford House Produce

Taken from bbcgoodfood.com



‘ We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

BRAIN MATTERS... companionship matters . . .

We've forged ahead into a cold and wet January and are now propelling ourselves into February. We're still in winter's icy grip with a need for warmth and comfort. So how does animal companionship help us, more specifically the feline variety?

Ahh the afternoon cat nap, the short restorative nap you take when you're feeling fatigued physically or emotionally or both. Now what happens if we add a feline companion into the mix?

An afternoon nap isn't laziness, it's a good tool to help regulate your brain, hormones and nervous system. You may think resting with a cat is either cute or mad but it does have biological benefits. When we rest with a cat we experience emotional regulation, stress relief and a nervous system reset and no it's not your imagination, it's biology.

When our brains have too much cortisol - the stress hormone - it can increase anxiety, tension and mental fatigue. Short naps have been shown to lower cortisol and restore balance. Sleeping with or near a cat not only boosts our bonding and



safety hormone- oxytocin but the close contact with pets also lowers blood pressure, reduces anxiety and increases emotional stability. The rise in oxytocin helps the brain to relax; enabling our brains to shift from survival mode to peace mode.

Cats' purrs are not a random frequency - they're between 25-150Hz. This frequency helps soothe the nervous system and induce relaxation states and potentially tissue healing support. Cats bring warmth, rhythm and vibration, signalling the brain to relax and feel safe.

Naps and special cat naps help our brains to shift into restoration mode; it's why you wake up feeling calmer. It's not just a nice feeling, it's an activity that has supported your brain to help with immune regulation, emotional resilience and energy recovery.

A tiny habit with a great regulatory effect! Yet it's not just you who benefits, your furry companion does too with their attachment and emotional regulation. So on these cold winter days why not take advantage and snuggle up with that special companion.

Chantal Montebello-Ealey

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Cllr Carol Clark
Cllr David Emmett
Cllr Stephanie Gunson
Cllr David Hall
Cllr Tamsin Hogarth
Cllr Kirsty Mitchem

AN EXTRACT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES December 2025

(Full Minutes can be found at www.ightham.org or by emailing the Clerk)

REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR & BOROUGH COUNCILLOR:

Councillor Betts reported that the Local Plan consultation was open and TMBC gave approval to extend the deadline to 2nd January 2026. Councillor Betts opined that the Government-set housing target of 1,100 homes was undeliverable; the most homes ever built in Tonbridge & Malling in one year was 650. Councillor Betts suggested challenging this number and also urged as many people as possible to respond to the consultation.

In November, TMBC submitted their proposal for their preferred option of 3 Unitaries in Kent as part

of local government reorganisation. The West Kent Unitary would comprise Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Maidstone. The split of the 3 Unitaries aligns with NHS, police and Parish boundaries and each Unitary has a population of around 500,000. Therefore, it was felt that a 3 Unitary model was the best fit for Kent.

Councillor Betts recently attended a cabinet meeting with Jeremy Whittaker who announced a new round of green business grants available from 6th February 2026. The grant is for a maximum of £5000 and a 50% contribution which could be used to reduce utility costs or carbon emissions. It is open for expressions of interests now. Unfortunately there are no more grants available next year; the West Kent rural grant scheme has been withdrawn by the Government.

Some good news regarding AQMA's: at a November Council meeting it was decided that Tonbridge and Borough Green could be removed from the air quality management area (AQMA) as there has been improvement in air quality in these areas.

Councillor Betts recently visited the Allington Recycling Centre and Blaise

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Farm Composting Plant. A wide range of materials can be recycled including chemicals, paints, petrol, diesel, and cooking oil. There are also normal recycling streams and a reuse shop where all money raised goes to local charities. There are PV panels on the roof and the whole facility is carbon neutral. At Blaise Farm, garden waste is going to good use as it is processed into fine compost. Food waste supplies all the gas requirements for King's Hill. There is currently a food waste campaign to encourage people to use food caddies rather than dispose of food waste in black bins.

Councillor Mitchem reported that she had asked TMBC to clear the verges along Fen Pond Road and A25. However, the response was that road closures would be required which would take at least 3 months as they are 40mph roads. Councillor Bett said that recent health and safety legislation is prohibitive for litter clearing.

Councillor Willingham added that the weeds on the A25 and several central reservations were out of control; Councillor Betts said that he would also raise this with TMBC.

County Councillor Rayner reported that for food waste, the disposal authority pays £345 to dispose of each ton of black bin waste compared to £85 per ton from the food waste bin. On grey belt, Councillor Rayner had spoken to Pete Gillin at Wrotham Parish about the recent court hearing for the MOTO application. This is an important test case as the definition

on grey belt is being considered. Wrotham Parish Council is alleging that the Inspector wrongly interpreted the meaning of grey belt.

Councillor Rayner reported that he had received an email from the Clerk about the mega flecta bollards at the Common Road/A25 junction. The Clerk has written twice to Highways to say that the bollards are too large and are restricting visibility turning into Common Road which is dangerous. Highways have replied to say that they are no larger than the original bollards and visibility is okay. Cllr Rayner agreed that visibility was restricted and that the Highways Officer is wrong; he suggested bringing in a Highways Advisor to look at the sight lines and do a separate report. Councillor Rayner reported that the KCC budget is expected tomorrow and will dictate how much is available for spending.

Councillor Rayner reported that A25 sweeping is being arranged.

Highways & PROW Matters:

KCC closure – Oldbury byway for reinstatement works. Mega flectas/ Common Road: The Clerk suggested that we contact Velocity to look at these - agreed. **HIP update: Old Lane** - we have been asked to contribute £3,400 (a third of the cost) of clearing the lane of vegetation before the resurfacing works can commence -



Ideas for Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day was begun by Pope Gelasius the 1st in 496, in honour of St Valentine, the saint who had shown such kindness and love to all who crossed his path. It has become the day when we celebrate the joys of human love.

If you have a romance in your life, Valentine's Day is easy: you can celebrate your shared love with everything from a candlelit meal to red roses to love letters, to revisiting the place where you first met each other.

But even if you do not have a romance in your life, that need not stop you enjoying Valentine's Day (after all, the saint had no romance in his life). Instead, why not seek out and show love and kindness to several people? How about hosting a Valentine's meal to enjoy each other's company and to share God's love for us all? At the very least, why not be on the 'look-out' to do people a random act of kindness this month? Ask God to help you be sensitive to even a stranger who needs a helping hand.



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this was agreed on the basis that it comes from this year's budget.

It was reported that the sign on Spring Lane/A25 junction was still down; the Clerk will re report. The Clerk reported that a bollard was down at Leather Corner and Councillor Willingham will ask James Hayward to repair it. The Clerk reported that the mirrors at the end of Back Lane are awaiting installation; Councillor Willingham reported that he was awaiting manufacture of the posts. The Clerk and Councillor Emmett will meet at the site to discuss the mirrors' location.

MATTERS ARISING

Recreation Ground: Sovereign quote to carry out additional repairs £1,796.65 – agreed. The Clerk reported that she has contacted Wrotham Parish Council about their fitness equipment. They replied that it was installed in 2022 at a cost of

£12.5k. The Clerk reported that there were 2 new potholes in the car park and was asked to get a quote. There was a short discussion about resurfacing the car park but given the cost (estimated at £100k) it was decided that an annual budget to fix potholes was preferable to resurfacing the whole car park. Sign: Councillor Mitchem reported that we had received planning permission for the new Recreation Ground sign.

Village Hall: Update – Survey: Councillor Holden reported that a survey has been arranged with Sheffords for 8th January and would take about half a day.

Oldbury Annexe: The Clerk reported that we are awaiting signed documents but had received confirmation that the lease had been agreed and signed with electronic signatures. The Clerk



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will ask Warners if this is acceptable for us to proceed and prepare the invoice which should be backdated to 1st September as we understand the annex has been used since then.

Village Fete July 2026: Update - Councillor Mitchem has spoken to the school and the PSA about organising a village fete next summer. Councillor Mitchem suggested that the Parish Council fund the marquees, toilets, generator and insurance. Other members of the village such as the WI, Tennis Club, Scouts and Ightham Mote could participate. Councillor Emmett said that the Rotary Club could provide marquees. Councillor Mitchem suggested keeping it simple, styled around a village picnic. Date: 11th July 2026 which coincides with the Gardeners' Club show. Everyone agreed that this was a good idea. Councillor Mitchem will start to organise the event in the new year

Casual Vacancy: Cllr Clark has unfortunately had to stand down so we are looking for a new member. The Clerk has informed TMBC and put vacancy notices up. Assuming no more than 10 people come forward to TMBC before 7th January 2026, we will be able to co-opt a new Councillor.

PLANNING

Tonbridge & Malling Local Plan – Regulation 18 consultation. Discussion about our response: In summary - objection to the sites put forward in Ightham on the grounds of access,

greenbelt and Kent Downs National Landscape. We will also comment on the Dark Hill site which was not put forward and we will comment to say that if it comes forward at a later date that we would object on the grounds of National Landscape which should be held in highest regard. Our comments on the Borough Green site will involve the relief road construction, which is imperative before any development takes place. We will comment on the volume of traffic, J5 Slips, infrastructure, schools, water and drainage, and the adverse impact on the landscape of the village. We will also suggest consultation with Sevenoaks as they also have plans to develop on the A25. The Clerk will draft a full response and circulate for agreement before the deadline.

Update regarding IDOX return for Planning and Building Control: Return to Agile System from January 2026.

9 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

were received and 1 objection raised. TMBC approved 5 applications.



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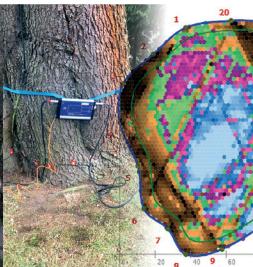
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Borough Green and Wrotham u3a

This is to remind readers that Borough Green and Wrotham u3a monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 2 pm in Borough Green Village Hall, with tea, coffee and biscuits. Parking/disabled access available.

At our meeting on 9th February at 2 pm we will welcome Captain Brian Biggs (retired) who will entertain us with an account of his experiences on tugboats, from a boy of 15 to Captain on the Thames and at sea. He will tell us how the Thames has changed over the years, from steam to diesel, and will talk about his experiences from the East End of London to Oman. We look forward to

seeing his coloured slides of London, which will no doubt evoke memories for many of us.

We look forward to welcoming existing and new members, and guests (£5). Parking is free for Village Hall users, so please remember to register your car in the Village Hall lobby when you arrive. For further information, or to join your local u3a, please contact: info@bgwu3a.org.uk or visit our website <https://bgw.u3asite.uk>

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For any questions about Ightham Scouts generally, volunteering your time to support us or for a young person wishing to join one of our sections please email enquiries@ighthamscouts.org



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HALF TERM CAPERS

Kick off the season with National Trust's Ightham Mote free February Half Term Garden Trail, designed to get young explorers outside and discovering nature as spring approaches. Follow the trail through the gardens and tackle fun activities along the way.

Afterwards, make sure you visit our café for a warming cup of hot chocolate!

Available 14 – 28 February, free with standard admission. Pick up a free trail sheet from Visitor Reception on your way in.

Get creative at Sevenoaks Bookshop Mini Designers Workshop.

Friday 20 February, 2 – 3 pm at The Drive, Methodist Church, Sevenoaks. Led by Josephine Seblon, the creators of Mini Architects return to run a children's workshop for their latest book, *Mini Designers*!

Age 6+. Tickets £15 - to include a copy of *Mini Designers*.

NEW YEAR, NEW READ!

Why not join National Trust Knole's Book Club for a chance to enjoy great literature in glorious surroundings? This year's theme is 'from page to screen' with a selection of titles that have been adapted for the big and small screen.

Book titles and Thursday dates for each month: 26th February - *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë; 30th April - *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen; 25th June - *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde; 27th August - *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell; 22nd October - *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro; 17th December - *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie.

The Book Club takes place in the Hayloft Learning Centre, with drinks and biscuits provided. A free event but booking is essential with the first date available to book now. The subsequent dates will be available to book from the day of the preceding meeting, eg Book Club on 30 April will be available from 26 February.

Book Club members receive a 20% discount if they buy the chosen titles from the Knole Bookshop. Information on how to redeem this discount is available once you've booked your space. Please contact Knole.events@nationaltrust.org.uk if you are unable to attend so we can open to space up for others.

A Puppy for Christmas?

A Best Behaviour School for Dogs class might be what you're looking for. Two new 2026 workshops have just been launched; contact details for Best Behaviour can be found in their advertisement in our Magazine.

WEEKLY

8.30 - 11.00am
every Thursday
St Giles' Church,
Shipbourne

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Are you organising a
children's party? A talk?
A disco? A yoga class? A
wedding reception?

If so, why not think of using the
IGHTHAM VILLAGE HALL?

Hire charges are highly
competitive, and the space is
perfect for all kind of gatherings.
There is also ample and well-lit
parking.

For further information contact
Jenny Elliot
E: ighthamvillagehall@gmail.com



IGHTHAM & DISTRICT GARDENERS' CLUB

**INVITES YOU TO OUR FIRST MEETING
FOR 2026 TO START OUR YEAR
WITH A QUIZ NIGHT & SOCIAL GET TOGETHER.
WHY NOT COME ALONG, MEET US & FIND OUT ABOUT
THE CLUB & WHAT'S ON FOR 2026.**

TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2026

at

**IGHTHAM VILLAGE HALL,
Sevenoaks Road, Ightham TN16 9HA
Arrive for 7.15pm**

We welcome members & visitors

**For further information contact the Club Secretary
Dee Samways – 0779 900 2129**

Any Old Bras?



Seeking a vaccine against breast cancer

For some years now the ladies of Ightham WI have been donating unwanted bras to the charity Against Breast Cancer. They are recycled, in partnership with a varying range of partners. Some may be sent to areas of the world where they can be used as they are, some are sent to textile recovery projects. Funds raised go towards research.

Helena is happy to accept your old bras – whatever their condition – and take them to a local collection point in Mereworth.

Helena Jenkins hcvjenkins@yahoo.co.uk



DIRECTORY

St Peter's Church

Rector	Parish in Vacancy	
Church Warden	Naomi Webster	T: 07421 832919.
	E: churchwardens@ighthamchurch.org.uk	
Parish Office (Mon/Tue/Thur/Fri 9am-1pm)	Administrator	T: 07940 547310
	E: admin@ighthamchurch.org.uk	
Licensed Lay Minister	John Webster	T: 884819
Lay Readers	Michelle Lawson	T: 01634 240598
Hon. Treas/Gift Aid Sec.	Bryan Harris (honorary)	T: 07733 228048
Safeguarding Officer	Max Robinson	T: 885966
PCC Secretary	Finley Lawson	T: 01634 240598
Church Flowers	Sarah Reid	
St Peter's Choir & Music	E: pccsecretary@ighthamchurch.org.uk	
Bell Ringing	Judy Debenham	T: 882640
Coffee Shop	Carol Kennedy	T: 884764
Men's Breakfast	Judith Robinson	T: 0788 0507066
Oasis	Jenny Webster	T: 884819
Parent & Toddlers	John Webster	T: 884819
Prayer Group	Bridget Kelsey	M: 07789 692967
	E: oasis@ighthamchurch.org.uk	
	Kirsty Mitcham	T: 885072
	John Webster	T: 884819

Ightham Magazine

Editorial	Penny Cracknell	T: 07811 066253
Advertising	E: stpetersadverts@btinternet.com	
Subscriptions/Distribution	E: magazine@ighthamchurch.org.uk	

Community Groups & Events

Autism Parents Support Soc.	Claudia Goodman	T: 07773 599543
Ightham Club	Mark Brenta	T: 882104
Ightham Gardeners' Club	Pippa Coulthard	T: 883041.
Ightham School	Dee Samways	T: 07799 002 129
Ightham Village Hall	Sue Earl, Headteacher	T: 882405
Ightham Scouts Group	E: ighthamvillagehall@gmail.com	
Beavers, Cubs, Explorers & Scouts	E: enquiries@ighthamscouts.org	
Ightham WI	Helen Johnson	
PCSO	E: happyflowersgs@live.co.uk	
	PC Dylan McElligott	T: 101 (non emergencies)
Sports		
Badminton Club	Nick Dennis	T: 882078
Cricket Club	Geoff Preston	T: 01474 812594
Football Club	Tom Bentall	T: 07712 566772
Tennis Club	Martyn Reardon	T: 07725 896 886
	Max Robinson	T: 885966

