

Wethersfield Parish Magazine

MAY 2026



**Parish Church of
St. Mary Magdalene**

in the benefice of

~Pant Valley Churches~

WETHERSFIELD PARISH CHURCH

St Mary Magdalene

Pant Valley Churches Benefice of
Finchingfield with Cornish Hall End, Wethersfield, Shalford, Gt. and Little Bardfield

* * * * *

Parish Priest

The Reverend Alex Shannon
The Vicarage, Bardfield Road, Finchingfield, Braintree CM7 4JR
Tel: 01371 810309 / 07483 878659 rev.alex.shannon@gmail.com

Associate Minister

The Reverend Canon Janet Nicholls
Park House, Braintree Road, Shalford, Braintree CM7 5HQ
Tel: 01371 851317 jnicholls@chelmsford.anglican.org

Reader

Mrs Sarah Pilgrim, Fieldside, Lombard Street, Finchingfield
Tel: 01371 850781 pilgrim511@btinternet.com

Churchwardens

Mr David Seacombe, Ivanhoe House, Wethersfield
Tel: 07801 868278

Mr Ben Walmsley, Wethersfield Hall, Wethersfield
Tel: 07939 030833

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Hon. Sec.

Mr Brian Muir, The Manse, Wethersfield
Tel: 07775 675701 hon.secretary@wethersfieldchurch.org.uk

Hon Treasurer

Mr Bob Harris, Top Shop, Wethersfield.
Tel: 07817 379099 hon.treasurer@wethersfieldchurch.org.uk

Ringling Master

Mr Roy Threadgold, Plumley, Braintree Road, Wethersfield
Tel: 01371 850481 roy@boydellsdairy.co.uk

Please contact the Parish Priest for Baptisms, Marriages and when you are in need of help.

He is very happy to bring Communion to the homes of the sick and housebound.

Would newcomers please make us aware of their presence.

Services for May 2026

Sunday 3 May – Fifth Sunday of Easter

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Cornish Hall End
9.30am Morning Prayer – Shalford
10.30am Sung Eucharist – Great Bardfield
11am Prayer & Pilgrimage (Celtic Morning Prayer) – Wethersfield
5pm May Devotion (Evening Prayer, Procession and Benediction in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary) – Thaxted (*joint service*)

Sunday 10 May – Rogation Sunday

10.30am Benefice Eucharist – Shalford
followed by lunch at The George
2pm Rogation Walk – *setting off from the George,*
returning to St Andrew's by 4pm
5pm Sung Evensong – Shalford

Thursday 14 May – ASCENSION DAY

10.30am Sung Eucharist – Little Bardfield
8pm Said Eucharist – Finchingfield

Sunday 17 May – Sunday after Ascension Day

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Finchingfield
9.30am Morning Prayer – Shalford
10.30am Sung Eucharist – Great Bardfield
11am Community Celebration Service – Wethersfield

Sunday 24 May – PENTECOST

9.30am Parish Communion – Shalford
10.30am Morning Prayer – Great Bardfield
11am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Wethersfield
5pm Sung Compline – Little Bardfield

Sunday 31 May – Trinity Sunday

10.30am Benefice Eucharist – Finchingfield

Regular Services and Events during the week

Monday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Finchingfield 1.30pm 'Faithful Fiction' book club (this month will be the second Monday because of the Bank Holiday) – Between the Lines, Great Bardfield
Tuesday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Great Bardfield 10am Baby & Toddler Group – Great Bardfield 'St Mary's Munchkins' story & song time with refreshments
Thursday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Wethersfield 10am Prayer Group (1st, 3rd & 5th weeks) Coffee Morning (2nd & 4th weeks) – Shalford Coffee Morning (3rd week) – Cornish Hall End 10.30am Eucharist – Little Bardfield
Friday	8.45am Morning Prayer – Shalford
Saturday	10.30am (3rd weeks) Coffee Morning – Wethersfield

From the Vicarage...

One of the delights of living in this part of the world is how lovely it is to be outside. Those of us who live here are understandably keen to talk about the beauty of our local countryside. And while we are blessed to have beautiful church buildings in our villages, it is worth remembering that there is an honourable history of taking the life of the church out into the countryside too. In the past, as soon as spring began to arrive, our people would go in procession, taking prayers and blessings out into the life of the land around the church. As Easter approached, Palm Sunday would be the first such opportunity, but then, as spring took root, other occasions were also traditionally celebrated with church processions.

In this month of May, we will be looking back into this treasury of tradition to revive two such opportunities to take our prayers out into the outside. The first of these is in recognition of the long-standing traditional association of the month of May with the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We are joining together with our friends in Thaxted Parish Church to honour this custom on the evening of **Sunday 3 May at 5pm**, with a procession of the statue of Mary with music and dancing, preceded and followed by a service in Thaxted Parish Church. As the signs of spring surround us, we remember how Mary's consent to her part in God's plan was a beginning of the coming into the world of the divine life we see in the earthly life of Jesus.

The second of these traditions is that of the Rogationtide Procession, also known as 'Beating the Bounds'. Historically, this involved walking around the boundary of the parish, and literally beating with sticks the boundary markers. The procession would include prayers for the fruitfulness of work on the land, effectively enclosing the parish in a net of prayers. With our collection of six parishes, walking around the entire boundary is not possible, but on the afternoon of Rogation Sunday (which is always the fifth Sunday after Easter, this year on **Sunday 10 May**) we will be reviving the tradition of walking prayerfully, taking a route which follows part of the course of the River Pant, from which our group of parishes takes its name, and which symbolically and geographically connects them together. Our walk will begin at The George in Shalford, setting off at 2pm and returning by 4pm to St Andrew's, with services there in the morning and evening that day. If you are someone who likes walking, or has a particular appreciation or care for the land on which we live, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to join us – all are welcome, as is always the case to all our services and other events.

Rev'd/Fr Alex

COFFEE AND CHAT

10.30am – 12 noon in church

Saturdays: 16th MAY and 20th June

Meet up with old friends, make some new.

ALL WELCOME



Churchwarden Update

Our annual Plant Share was as enjoyable as ever, going from strength to strength with each passing year, and with many more people bringing along plants to share and getting into the swing of the full-collaboration concept. Many of you visited the Church and saw the pews full of young plants, just ready for you to select and to fill the font with cash.

As we enter the new financial year, it is incumbent on us as churchwardens to spell out our situation. Our parish Church now runs at a significant deficit every month and events such as this raise much needed funds - but it is simply not enough, and brings our viability into question.

We all own the village resource which is the Church, so please do consider making a regular standing order. Or indeed consider a lump-sum be-it large or small to our church's charitable endowment (professionally managed, team of trustees, no running-costs), this way your gift will give in perpetuity and there are no set-up costs or hassles to consider. We need to meet full running costs plus the vicar's stipend, and receive no income from any other source than parish donations. To add to our challenges, we of course need to preserve (ie repair) the building, for example we have a £70k repair bill for roof repair in front of us this year. This will, hopefully, be funded almost entirely by generous grant providers, however it is still necessary to fund a fraction of this, and also be able to keep up with the stipend in order to qualify for such grants.

Please let us know if you may like more details.

We benefit from the Wethersfield Chamber Concerts season, and in April we enjoyed a wonderful programme by the popular 8-piece Kammerphilharmonie Europe, based in Cologne, Germany. At the end of the month, we hosted Maxim Calver, Cello, with Kumi Matsui on Piano.

Our annual Fine and Affordable Art Exhibition is on 9 & 10 May. We are showing work by a number of very talented local artists which I curate – paintings, sculptures and decorative pargetting, spanning all price-points. We have 16 artists showcasing their work. Half are professional artists. The others are gifted amateurs, mostly doing it for the love of it, and many of them making their own frames, enabling their special price-point. These artists rarely if ever exhibit, and thus are the event's secret-weapons. We are also entrusted with art from Charles Debenham RIP's collection.

The art event dovetails with the final Chamber Concert. Details also on both of the event's social-media. The art event should I hope be a significant fundraiser for the church.

Do, please, come along and support them.

DS & BW

The Rhythm of Tending

There is something quietly insistent about May. The garden does not wait for us to feel ready. The weeds arrive whether we planned for them or not, the seedlings need water, and the first roses are already forming buds that will not be hurried. If you have ever grown anything - a window box of herbs, a row of beans, a tub of geraniums on a back step, an unexpected bonus picked up at our Plant Share event - you will know that tending is not really optional. Life, once invited in, makes its own demands.

And yet most of us who garden will admit, if pressed, that those demands are rarely resented. There is something in the act of kneeling down beside a plant, of pressing soil around a fragile root, that quietens the noise inside us. Gardeners across many traditions and none have noticed this for centuries. It is not magic, exactly. It is more like attention; the particular kind of attention that living things require, and that, in requiring it, they teach us to offer.

Tending is one of the oldest human activities. Long before we built cathedrals or wrote theology, we were growing things, learning the patience of seasons, discovering that you cannot force a seed to become what it is not yet. The spiritual traditions of the world have always known this. Christian mystics wrote of the soul as a garden. Buddhist teachers speak of cultivating inner ground. Jewish teaching holds that the first human task given in Eden was not to worship, but to tend and to keep. There is a kind of wisdom here that predates doctrine: that care, offered faithfully and without drama, is itself a sacred act.

What strikes me most about tending is its ordinariness. It is not heroic. Nobody writes headlines about a person who watered their tomatoes every morning, or noticed that a neighbour's window box was looking dry and quietly attended to it, or spent a Saturday morning clearing an overgrown grave in a Churchyard that they had no connection with. Yet these are the acts that bind communities together, that communicate without a word being spoken that a place is cared for, that someone noticed, that life here is worth tending.

In our parish, as in every community, there are people who tend quietly and without recognition. They serve tea and cake on a Saturday morning, not knowing who will turn up. They arrange flowers in the Church, not knowing who will see them. They give a lift when it is needed. They check on a neighbour who has been ill. They plant bulbs in autumn for a spring they cannot entirely predict. They show up. And in showing up, again and again, they create something that no single grand gesture could: a culture of care, woven into the ordinary fabric of daily life.

May is a good month to notice this, and perhaps to ask ourselves where we might offer our own small act of tending. It need not be grand. A kind word, a shared cutting from the garden, a few minutes given to something that needs attention. The rhythm of tending is not urgent. It is patient, repetitive, and cumulative. And like all good growing things, what it produces in time is greater than anything we could have planned at the outset.

Whatever you are nurturing this May - a garden, a friendship, a faith, a neighbourhood - may it grow gently, and may you find in the tending of it something that tends you in return.

DS

Easter flowers arranged by quiet, faithful hands

- for anyone who might pass by, and for everyone who did. Your work is admired and appreciated.



Everything about the Church - the open door, the flowers, the welcome - is made possible by those who give regularly. If you would like to participate in the rhythm of tending on an ongoing basis, we gently invite you to consider the details below.

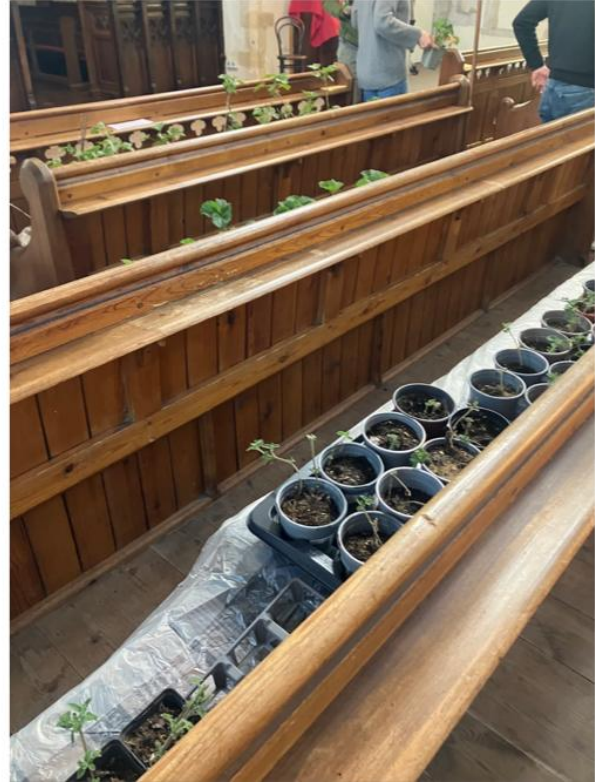
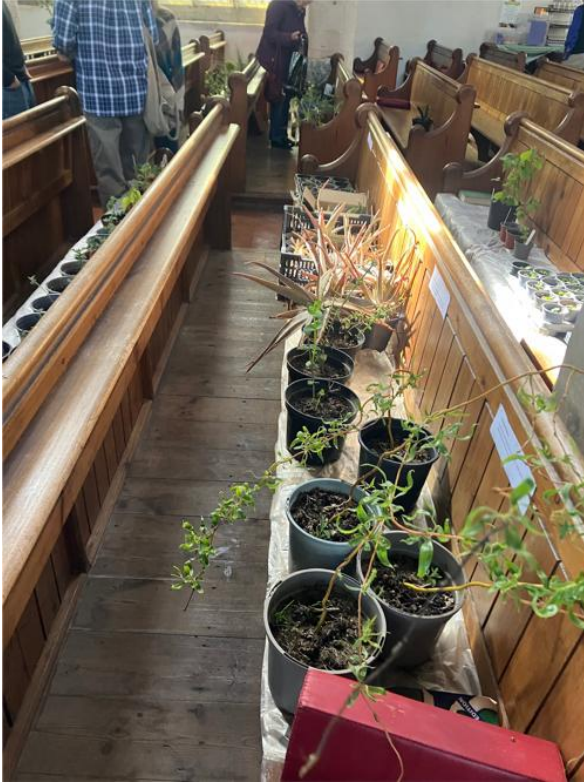
The Church Bank Account is with NatWest.

Name	St Mary Magdalene Wethersfield
Sort Code	60-03-22
Account No.	96304227
Type of Account	Business

Thank you

Plant Share

Another friendly and enjoyable fund-raiser; expertly organised by Ben Walmsley and attended by many. Particular thanks to those with came bearing the plants they had grown and tended themselves, and to those who came to socialise and eat cake.



WETHERSFIELD ANNUAL FINE & AFFORDABLE ART EXHIBITION

Saturday 9th May 5-7pm drinks

Sunday 10th May 10-3pm

Free entry St Mary Magdalene Church CM7 4BY



PROUD SPONSOR
JACKSON-STOPS

WETHERSFIELD CHAMBER CONCERTS

www.wethersfieldchamberconcerts.org.uk



Sunday 12 April 2026, 3pm

KAMMERPHILHARMONIE EUROPA

Corelli, Rachmaninov, Ponchielli, Bach, Faure, Mozart

=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=

Sunday 26 April 2026, 4pm

MAXIM CALVER – cello

JAMS COLEMAN – piano

Debussy, Beethoven, Schumann, Boulanger, Shostakovich

=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=

Sunday 10 May 2026, 4pm

JACKY ZHANG - piano (BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist)

Chopin, Ligeti, Brahms

=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=0=

Ticket price: £20 (concessions £18)

Season ticket: £54 (concessions £48)

Children under 16: free

All seats unreserved

Complimentary refreshments during interval
and after concert

VENUE: WETHERSFIELD CHURCH

Further information:

www.wethersfieldchamberconcerts.org.uk






Join us at Wethersfield Pavilion for the Great Summer Solstice Celebration on Saturday 20 June. We have food, music, a bar, games, dog show, stalls and a bouncy castle amongst other things on offer, so we hope you will come and enjoy the fun.

We are also including a classic car/bike display, so if you have a car or bike that you would like to show during the afternoon, then please do let me know. Contact is broad.julia@yahoo.co.uk.

CLUB EVENTS

PERFORMING AT WETHERSFIELD CLUB
SATURDAY 2 MAY 2026, 8.00PM

**THE FOGGY DAIS' UPBEAT
ORCHESTRA**



A NIGHT OF REGGAE
AND SKA MUSIC
COME AND JOIN THE PARTY!

WETHERSFIELD CLUB PRESENTS



KARAOKE
Night

Special Guest KJ
HOSTED BY MAIR & BOB
SATURDAY 9TH
MAY
DON'T MISS OUT ON THE
EXCITEMENT!
TIME: CLUB OPENS 4PM
SINGING FROM 7.30PM

WETHERSFIELD CLUB

**OPEN MIC
NIGHT**



**THURSDAY
21 MARCH 2026**

FROM 7.30 PM

**PLAY, SING OR JUST LISTEN
TO THOSE WHO DO!!**

WETHERSFIELD CLUB

SATURDAY 23 MAY 2026

AN EVENING WITH OUR
GOOD FRIENDS

**BEER VALLEY
DRIFTERS**

PLAYING LIVE FOR US AGAIN FROM 8.00 PM
JOIN US FOR A GREAT MUSIC NIGHT!

WETHERSFIELD CLUB

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE ABOVE MEETING SHALL BE CONVENED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULES OF THE CLUB

SATURDAY 16 MAY 2026

8.00 PM

CURRENT MEMBERS ONLY

CLUB OPEN AT 4.00 PM FOR FA CUP FINAL

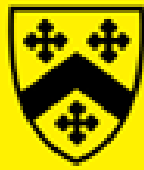
PLEASE NOTE THE CLUB DOORS WILL BE CLOSED ONCE THE MEETING HAS STARTED

The next meeting of the **Wethersfield History Group** will take place
on **Thursday May 14th** in Wethersfield Pavilion at 8pm.

This month we are delighted to have **Tim Turner** return once again.

Always a popular speaker, Tim will talk to us this time about
the **History of Audley End House over** four centuries
and why it is still so relevant today.

All welcome as usual - £3 on the door with refreshments



Felsted Choral Society

Diva's, Dreamers & Daring Deeds!



Opera & Operetta Favourites
including... Puccini, Verdi, Bernstein,
Gilbert & Sullivan and many more

Saturday, 20 June, 3pm

Music Director: Thomas Duchan Conducting
Felsted Choral Society

Accompanist: Bohdana Ravliuk

**Tickets £20 – includes programme, complimentary drink
and feasting on our Luscious Strawberry Tower
Under 18s Free**

ticketsource.co.uk/felstedchoralsociety (No Booking Fee)

**Venue: Holy Cross Church, Station Road, Felsted
CM6 3DG**

[What3Words///northward.legend.best](https://www.what3words.com/northward.legend.best)

[Facebook.com/felstedchoralsociety](https://www.facebook.com/felstedchoralsociety)
felstedchoralsociety@gmail.com

Publicity: Tony Baker 07799 413191

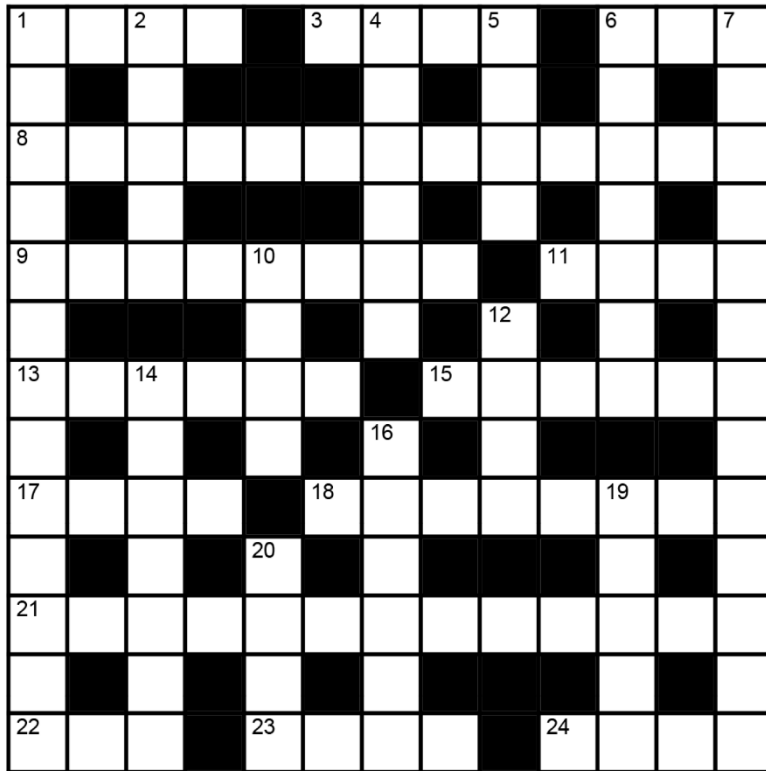


Registered Charity No. 297351

OFFER

Two Free Tickets to the First person from quoting this magazine who contacts me by telephone on the number on the poster above.

Crossword 96 by Robert Burrows



Across

- 1 Rub gently (4)
- 3 Ship's breadth (4)
- 6 Conveyance (3)
- 8 Essex hamlet (9-4)
- 9 Emotional eruption (8)
- 11 After others (4)
- 13 Spiritual respect (6)
- 15 Spanish dance (6)
- 17 Amorous glance (4)
- 18 Send (8)
- 21 Essex hamlet (8-5)
- 22 Groove (3)
- 23 Between black and white (4)
- 24 Piece of work (4)

Down

- 1 High Street browser (6-7)
- 2 Turn (5)
- 4 Selfish act (6)

Across

- 5 Create (4)
- 6 Army group (7)
- 7 Sentimental endearments (5,8)
- 10 Not new (4)
- 12 Circular band (4)
- 14 Short prayer (7)
- 16 Remove from office (6)
- 19 A social relationship (3-2)
- 20 Excited (4)

Cryptic Across

- 1. Dirty pew I rub over (4)
- 3. Big smile across the ship (4)
- 6. It goes backwards under water (3)
- 8. Dave's sick note lost in this hamlet (13)
- 9. Rub stout to heal eruption (8)
- 11. The first shall be ... (4)
- 13. Scared about what's holy (6)
- 15. Dance, Rob, Ole! (6)

17. Stare rudely at broken Lego (4)

18. Chaps Ted arranged to send off (8)

21. Maybe a pond legend, Reg, here? (8,5)

22. Not good to be stuck in one (3)

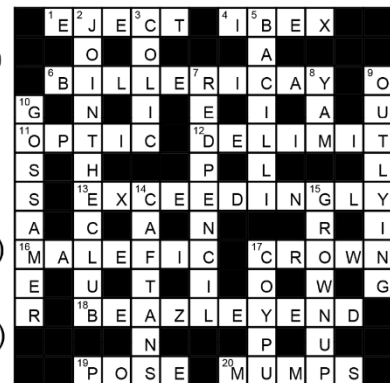
23. Ill-defined legal area (4)

24. Boiling soup - a major work (4)

Cryptic Down

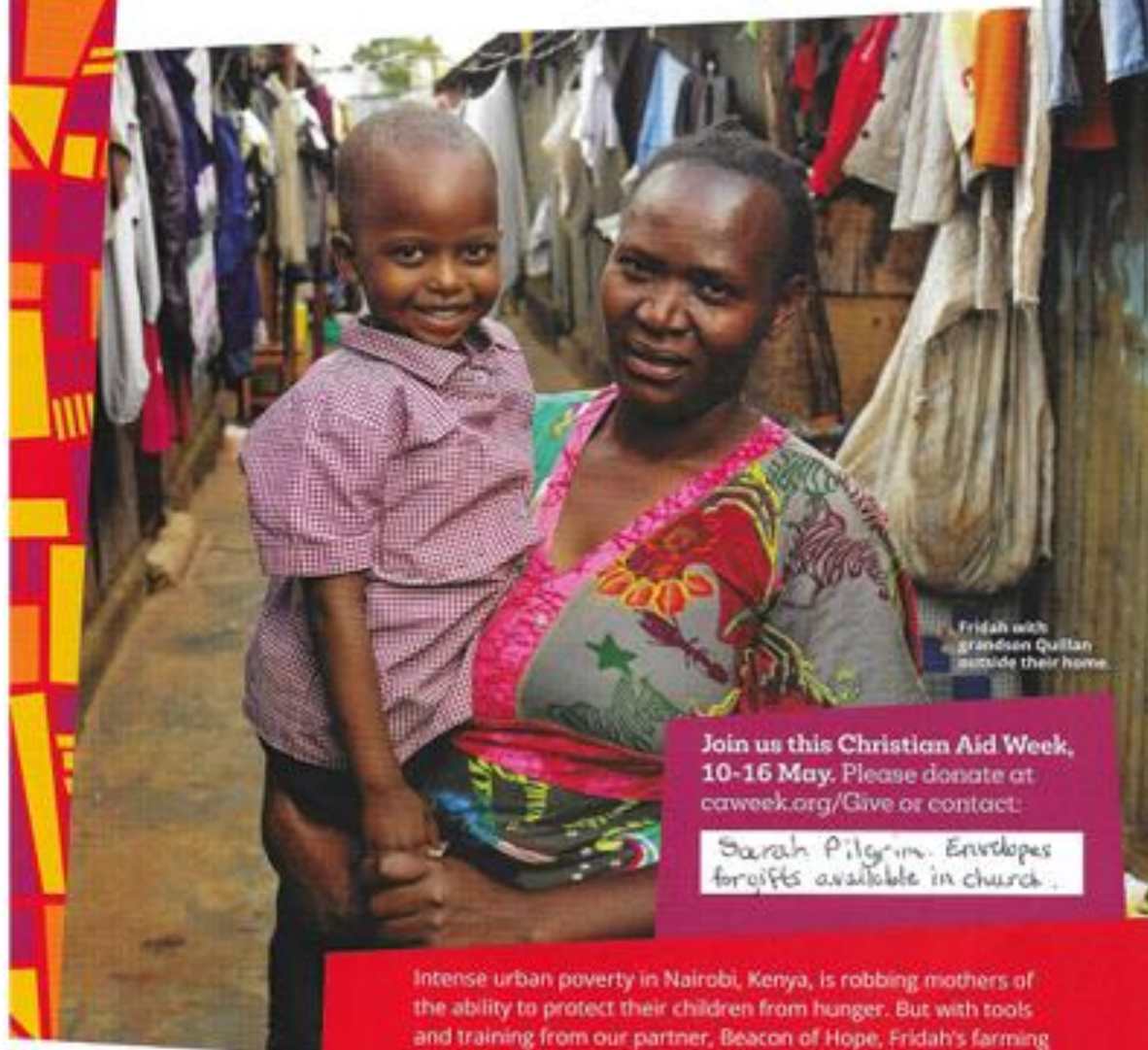
- 1. Lookers never buyers (6,7)
- 2. VIP to turn on a point (5)
- 4. Sadly Meg, so I show selfishness (6)
- 5. Some create Ma Kettle picture (4)
- 6. A broken bridge for army unit (7)
- 7. Sugary but empty endearments (5,8)
- 10. Some bus Edward caught, not new (4)
- 12. Ring for some echo optics (4)
- 14. Pick up poor colt cel (7)
- 16. So deep, unfortunately, but unseat (6)
- 19. Fix loose ends (3-2)
- 20. Very keen to cook some sago grounds (4)

Solution Crossword 95



Where **hardship** means **hunger**

...urban farmers can grow hope.



Fridah with
grandson Quilan
outside their home.

Join us this Christian Aid Week,
10-16 May. Please donate at
caweek.org/Give or contact:

Sarah Pilgrim. Envelopes
for gifts available in church.

Intense urban poverty in Nairobi, Kenya, is robbing mothers of the ability to protect their children from hunger. But with tools and training from our partner, Beacon of Hope, Fridah's farming vegetables in a small city plot to feed her family and earn an income.

Join us this Christian Aid Week and support someone like Fridah to fight hunger and grow hope.

Join us today: caweek.org/CAW

christian
aid

Christian Aid is a registered charity in the UK (No. 263014) and in other countries. It is a member of the Christian Aid International network. The Christian Aid logo and the text 'Christian Aid' are registered trademarks of Christian Aid International. The text 'Join us today: caweek.org/CAW' is a trademark of Christian Aid International. The text 'Join us today: caweek.org/CAW' is a trademark of Christian Aid International.

FR Registered with
FINANCIAL
REGULATOR

Wethersfield Puzzle Page 33

Wordsearch British Castles 5

E	C	O	C	K	E	R	M	O	U	T	H	C
I	D	O	T	E	L	B	Y	Y	V	O	A	M
L	E	J	P	M	C	X	E	E	K	W	W	A
E	A	H	E	A	H	M	O	Y	E	E	E	I
A	L	M	M	Y	O	L	M	D	L	R	N	D
N	I	U	B	K	W	E	A	H	D	H	U	E
D	C	A	R	E	W	O	O	A	Y	A	F	N
O	R	O	O	I	R	D	L	Y	M	R	R	S
N	Y	B	K	S	C	L	A	S	O	O	R	T
N	W	R	E	S	S	L	E	C	L	R	I	A
A	N	O	N	R	O	W	A	Y	R	A	N	R
N	D	U	N	D	E	E	M	R	R	E	G	O
O	D	V	B	L	A	I	R	C	E	R	E	D

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Acre | Dundee | Leod | Oer |
| Amberley | Duns | Lewes | Pembroke |
| Bere | Eilean | Maiden | Raby |
| Blair | Donnan | Maol | Rait |
| Carew | Elcho | Maud | Red |
| Clare | Ewloe | May | Ring |
| Cockermouth | Hawen | Mey | Star |
| Corfe | Hay | Moy | Tower |
| Deal | Keiss | Mylor | Wressle |
| Dote | Keldy | Odo | York |

Solution Bible 5

F	T	P	K	I	N	G	S	L	U	K	E	W
S	A	R	M	H	E	R	O	D	M	S	L	O
I	A	T	A	M	E	S	S	I	A	H	S	R
M	B	E	T	P	S	A	L	M	G	O	T	S
O	A	S	T	H	P	M	V	J	J	L	A	H
N	L	T	H	E	L	L	E	E	A	Y	B	I
R	T	A	E	F	E	U	R	S	N	M	L	P
G	A	L	W	A	G	S	A	J	O	E	N	
U	R	M	M	S	N	S	E	T	U	O	I	S
I	N	A	E	L	G	G	T	A	A	S	H	L
L	S	V	C	D	E	M	O	N	S	R	I	N
T	E	B	G	E	L	N	Z	D	A	V	I	D
T	O	R	A	H	S	H	T	P	E	T	E	R

Wordsquare 6-9

1	2	3	4	5	6
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					

The answers across and down match

Clues across

- Formal gesture of respect
- Handsome man
- Descriptive of house built on a concrete slab
- Not painful
- Old measure of capacity
- Respect

Clues down

- Formal gesture of respect
- Handsome man
- Descriptive of a house built on a concrete slab
- Not painful
- Old measure of capacity
- Respect

Solution Wordsquare 5-9

1	2	3	4	5	
T	H	R	E	W	
6	H	Y	E	N	A
7	R	E	B	A	R
8	E	N	A	C	T
9	W	A	R	T	S

WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE HALL FRIDAY NIGHT CINEMA 2026

17th April



15th May



19th June



17th July



18th September



16th October



Doors open 6:30pm Film Starts 7pm
Tickets £5 cash or card Raffle £1
Bar & snacks available before & during interval
Ticket Enquiries 07304 360410

Wethersfield Village Community Shop New Opening Hours

MONDAY 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM

TUESDAY 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM 6.00 – 8.00 PM

WEDNESDAY CLOSED

THURSDAY 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM (POST OFFICE 2.00 – 4.00PM)

FRIDAY 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM

SATURDAY 10.00 AM – 1.00 PM

SUNDAY 10.00 AM – 11.00 AM

Every Thursday we take fresh deliveries of fresh bread, rolls and pies from **Mersea Bakery**.

Fresh meat, bacon and ham every week from **Priors Hall**.

Sliced Hovis is continually stocked and fresh Milk is delivered 3 times a week.

Fresh fruit and vegetables available and full range of frozen foods, including meals.

Volunteers are needed, if you can, please pop your contact details into the shop to join the team.

MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

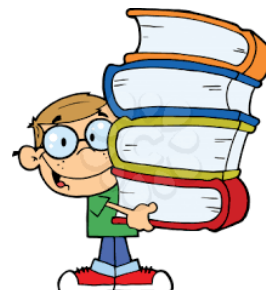
Mobile Library 2 visits Wethersfield **every 3 weeks** (Excluding Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day or Bank Holidays.)

NOW on **MONDAY mornings - 10.40am to 11.10am**

and can be found parked in the High Street or at the Village Hall

Next visit dates: - MONDAY 18th May 2026

MONDAY 8th June 2026



ALL WELCOME and FREE to ALL!


Community Market
Wethersfield Village Hall,
CM7 4BS

Saturday 23rd May
10.30 - 1.30

Craft and Food Stalls
Charity Tombola
Tea, Coffee and Refreshments
FREE ENTRY
 Enquiries 07876553332



STAMPS

for

Farleigh Hospice



Thank you to all those who have been saving their used postage stamps and popping them in the tub on the table in Wethersfield church.

Old and new styles welcome as are those from all countries.

PLEASE KEEP COLLECTING!

Thank you

Operation Epic Fury// Revelation 4–5, Easter 2026

It was Easter Sunday.

Dawn had only just begun to lift itself over the city.

Somewhere lilies were being carried into church.

Somewhere a priest was lifting bread with tired hands.

Somewhere, someone who had slept rough was waking cold under a thin blanket in a church porch.

And on the screens the old empire was speaking again.

“Open the f***** strait”, he says, “you crazy b*****s.”

On Easter morning.

The day we dare to say that death does not get the final word.

The day the women come running from the tomb, breathless, half afraid to trust their own joy.

And there it is—the old beast still roaring.

Not with horns and heads, not rising from the sea, but from the glow of phones, from podiums and flags, from the mouth of a man who has learned that fury sounds like strength

to frightened people.

I looked, and there before me was a throne.

Not in heaven at first. Here. In the theatre of power.

Pax Americana.

The old Roman peace with newer weapons.

A peace held together by aircraft carriers, oil routes, and the threat of ash.

Babylon never really left. It just changed its branding.

And around the throne the voices gathered hawks, markets, men in suits speaking of necessity and collateral damage as though children were abstractions.

And day and night they did not cease saying,

holy is strength,

holy is retaliation,

holy is the one

who promises to make them fear us.

But then the vision shifts.

Beyond the noise.

Beyond the headlines.

Beyond the old men playing God with the world.

A throne.

The real one.

And in the right hand

of the One who sits there

a scroll.
History sealed.
The grief of nations sealed.
The tears of Gaza.
The fear of Tehran.
The dead of Kyiv.
The lads in Leeds
lost to addiction and despair.
All of it held.
And no emperor
can open it.
No president.
No general.
No man with gold towers
and a mouth full of threats.
And I wept.
Because this is the sorrow
of our age:
so much noise,
so little wisdom.
So much power,
so little mercy.
Then the voice:
Do not weep.
Look.
I turned
expecting a lion.
Something triumphant.
Something that looked
like the world's idea of power.
But at the centre
of the throne
stood a Lamb,
as though slain.
And that is the judgement.
Not only on Trump.
On every empire.
On every throne
that feeds on fear.
On every peace
that is only another name
for domination.
At the centre of things
is not the beast.
Not the swear word.
Not the missile.
Not the strongman.
But wounded love.
Scarred mercy.

The Lamb.
Still standing.
Still walking
the streets of this wounded world.
Still found
among the battered and bruised,
in hospital corridors,
hostels,
alleyways,
bomb-sites,
and church porches.
Still opening the future
with pierced hands.
And all the thrones of men
begin to look what they are:
dust
pretending to be eternal.

- Rev'd Jon Swales

