

Wheatland News March 2026

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The inauguration of a benefice's minister is always a significant event in the life of the diocese. It is both a solemn and a joyous occasion. In a service presided over by the Rt Revd Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford, Sally Wallace-Jones was installed as the new Rector of the Stottesdon Benefice.

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



Editorial

At the end of March the clocks go forward for British Summertime, everyone's hoping the rain will finally stop and allow us to use the extra daylight to get outside more and enjoy the garden and countryside.

The Wheatland News committee would like to thank Denise Knightley for editing last month's edition, unfortunately due to work commitments she is unable to be permanent editor of this newsletter. Roger Cook has agreed to be the new content editor, please give him your support going forward.

In this edition there are features on the licensing of Revd Dr. Sally Wallace-Jones in the Stottesdon group of Parishes (see front page photo); there is a fascinating piece on the evolution of bat wings; and why we should try to make room for a natural dead hedge somewhere in the garden or other outside space; as well as many other interesting and informative articles.

Many rural village halls are struggling with finances barely breaking even, please promote village hall and local events through this newsletter and if you can please do support those events.

If you usually read this newsletter from an online version, please consider purchasing hard copy, although subscription is from January for the year, reduced rates apply, see page 33 for details.

If you currently receive a printed copy of the Wheatland News and haven't paid your subscription, please see the announcement on page 4.

Wheatland News Local Coordinators

Please send reports to your contact for your parishes listed below.

The deadline for getting your contributions for the **April 2026** edition of WN to the **Local Coordinators or the EDITOR** will be **noon on MONDAY 16th March 2026**. Due to editing and printing deadlines, late submissions **CANNOT** be included and will be sent back to the submitter for inclusion in the following month's edition.

Newsletter Editor	Roger Cook - wheatlandnews@outlook.com
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Billingsley	Revd David Poyner - D.R.Poyner@aston.ac.uk
Farlow, Sidbury, Middleton Scriven, Cleeton St Mary, and Silvington	Julia Evans - juliaevans278@googlemail.com



THANK YOU CAROLINE

The Wheatland News Committee would like to thank Caroline John for all the hard work she, and the late Bobbie Jarvis, put in for many years to make this newsletter what it is today. We hope we can continue to produce the same high quality; these are big shoes to fill.

The fact that there are now 5 people doing the same job that Caroline and Bobbie did speaks volumes about the commitment and effort they put in.

We had a wonderful lunch at the Pheasant at Neenton with Caroline to thank her for time editing the Wheatland News. Caroline is one of those people who take a deep interest in their local community both by participating in activities today but also taking a deep interest in local history. She is writing a detailed history of Neenton (her home for many years) amongst many other things. She now lives in the very heart of Shrewsbury and continues to engage with local groups and play a lively part in the community. Thankyou Caroline!



...and as Caroline wanted to sign off her time as editor "that's all folks"

✚ Parish Services and Benefice News for March

Brown Clee group of Parishes

		<h3>Brown Clee Benefice</h3> <p>Rector – Revd Joe Simons</p> <p>The Vicarage, Ditton Priors, Shropshire, WV16 6SQ 01746-599217 07872-464276</p>	
		<p>St John the Baptist, Ditton Priors, and Holy Trinity, Wheathill and Loughton</p> <p>CHURCHWARDENS: Carole Smith Mark Smith: 01746-712394</p>	<p>St Michael & All Angels, Aston Botterell</p> <p>CHURCHWARDENS: Anne Preece: 01746-787237 Ben Upton: 07870-160039</p>
<p>St Giles', Chetton</p> <p>CHURCHWARDEN: Sheila Millington: 01746-789443</p>	<p>SS Peter & Paul, Cleobury North</p> <p>CHURCHWARDENS: Mike Bradbury: 01746-787676 Jane Bufton: 07716-877421</p>	<p>All Saints', Neenton</p> <p>CHURCHWARDENS: Dot Cartwright: 07854-559474</p>	

Brown Clee Services:

Sunday 1st March. The Second Sunday in Lent.

9.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Val Smith	Ditton Priors
11.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Val Smith	Aston Botterell

Wednesday 4th March

10.00am	Morning Prayer	LMDG/CS	Cleobury North
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Sunday 8th March. The Third Sunday in Lent.

9.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
11.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Chetton

Wednesday 11th March

10.00am	Morning Prayer	LMDG/RW	Ditton Priors
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Sunday 15th March. The Fourth Sunday in Lent. Mothering Sunday.

9.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
11.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons/DC	Neenton

Wednesday 18th March.

10.00am	Morning Prayer	Rev Joe Simons	Chetton
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Sunday 22nd March. The Fifth Sunday in Lent. Passiontide.

9.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
11.30am	Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Cleobury North
2.30pm	Evening Prayer	LMDG/MJ DC	Loughton

Wednesday 25th March.

10.00am	Morning Prayer	LMDG/MJ	Ditton Priors
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Sunday 29th March. Palm Sunday

10.00am	Group Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Chetton
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Monday 30th March

6.00pm	Evensong	LMDG/DC	Neenton
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Tuesday 31st March

6.00pm	Evensong	LMDG/RW	Aston Botterell
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Wednesday 1st April

6.00pm	Stations of the Cross	Rev Joe Simons	Chetton
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Thursday 2nd April

6.00pm	Passover Meal	Rev Val Smith	Cleobury North Village Hall
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Friday 3rd April. Good Friday

6.00pm	Reflection	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
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Saturday 4th April.

6.00pm	Reflective Compline & Vigil	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
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Sunday 5th April. Easter Sunday

10.00am	Group Holy Communion	Rev Joe Simons	Ditton Priors
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Lent



The Ditton Priors Lent Courses continues to run through March. Courses this year are held weekly on a Thursday evening at The Pavilion, Ditton Priors. These will start on Thursday 19th February and run until Thursday 26th March and the Easter Week. The topic for discussion is the theme of generosity, in the context of how we live our lives with others, the environment, our neighbours, the economic landscape, the implications for justice and peace and finally in relation to our own offerings. If you are interested in joining us then do please let us know at Church Services or at The Vicarage – 01746

599217 browncleebenefice@outlook.com

Thank you.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2026:

If you currently receive a printed copy of the Wheatland News and have not renewed and paid the annual subscription, please note that the April edition will be the last distributed to you.

Thank You



Brown Clee Benefice Easter Services

Wed 18th February	10 am	Communion & Ashing	Ditton Priors
Wed 25th February	10 am	Morning Prayer	Ditton Priors
Wed 4th March	10 am	Morning Prayer	Cleobury North
Wed 11th March	10 am	Morning Prayer	Ditton Priors
Wed 18th March	10 am	Morning Prayer	Chetton
Wed 25th March	10 am	Morning Prayer	Ditton Priors
Sun 29th March PALM SUNDAY	10 am	Group Holy Communion	Chetton
Mon 30th March	6 pm	Evening Prayer	Neenton
Tue 31st March	6 pm	Evening Prayer	Aston Botterell
Wed 1st April	6 pm	Stations of the Cross	Chetton
Thursday 2nd April MAUNDY THURSDAY	6 pm	Passover Meal	Cleobury North Village Hall
Friday 3rd April GOOD FRIDAY	6 pm	Reflection	Ditton Priors
Saturday 4th April	6 pm	Compline Vigil	Ditton Priors
Sunday 5th April EASTER SUNDAY	10 am	Group Holy Communion	Ditton Priors

Brown Clee Readings for March 2026

Sunday 1st March The Second Sunday in Lent	Purple or Lent Array	Psalm 121, Genesis 12. 1-4a; Romans 4. 1-5; 13-17; John 3. 1-17
Sunday 8th March The Third Sunday in Lent	Purple or Lent Array	Psalm 95, Exodus 17. 1-7; Romans 5. 1-11; John 4. 5-42
Sunday, 15 March 2026 The Fourth Sunday in Lent, Mothering Sunday	Purple or Lent Array	Psalm 23, 1 Samuel 16. 1-13; Ephesians 5. 8-14; John 9
Sunday, 22nd March The Fifth Sunday in Lent, Passiontide begins	Purple or Lent Array	Psalm 130, Ezekiel 37. 1-14; Romans 8. 6-11; John 11. 1-45
Sunday 29th March Palm Sunday. Liturgy of the Palms	Red	Psalms 118. 1-2, 19-end (or 118. 19-24), Mathew 21. 1-11
Liturgy of the Passion	Red	Psalms 31. 9-16 (or 31. 9-18), Isaiah 50. 4-9a; Philippians 2. 5-11; Matthew 26. 14-end of 27 or Matthew 27. 11-54



Reflection for the month by Revd Joe Simons

How fed up are you with the rain?

It seems that we have suffered under cloudy skies for most of January and now on into February. Lent is the season for giving up something and you could argue that we have already done that; we have given up on the sun coming out!

Lent is a time for us to do a bit of a reset, to look deep within ourselves to maybe reflect on who we are and how we are living out our lives. For

Christians we might use this time to walk closer with Christ in his journey of temptation, to spend time in prayer and to read our bibles. Part of that journey that we make is through self-denial, both literally and figuratively.

To look at what we crave for and ask ourselves if by giving it up we can re-evaluate who we are.

Whether or not you wish to give up something in your lives is down to you, but I would urge you that if you lay it down, you also pick something else up instead. I would urge you to pick up the gift of time and make space for reflection and to do those things which give you and those around you the gift of yourself.

For Christians we give up ourselves and our time to draw closer to Jesus, in him we receive perfect peace to the extent in which we trust him. Lent allows us to realize that no amount of money, possessions, insurance and alarm systems will ever be enough. The peace and contentment that comes with faith in God is a gift that is independent of circumstances.

Jesus said:

'For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Matthew 16.25

It is this paradox that drives us to go deeper in relationship with God through Jesus, this is the invitation that we turn to for real peace once again in Lent.

Joe

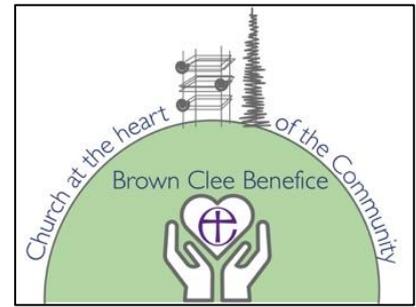


Brown Clee Benefice News

Since our last edition we have had the pleasure of conducting a lovely Baptism for Marlie May Allen. We welcomed Marlie into our Christian Family on Saturday 17th January at St John's. She



was surrounded with love, and so many of her family and friends to support her. God Bless you Marlie May.



From our Prayer Board (by Marlie's older sister) –
Please pray for Mommy, Daddy, Lennie, Marlie, Jet, Nell and the rest of my family.

Happy, Safe, Healthy By Evie Allen

February has been a busy month for us in Brown Clee Benefice.

As we approach Lent, we remember that Lent is a time for us to reflect on where we are but also about where we are heading, so on Saturday 21st February we held a Vision Workshop at The Pavilion in Ditton Priors.

This was a time for us to think about how we continue to connect and serve our communities, to share new ideas we could try and pray for places where we see Jesus is at work across our parishes. The Anglican Church is woven into the fabric of our villages and for many is not only an anchor from the past but also a light for the future. The church is seeking to connect with all across our communities and bring that light of hope, friendship and support wherever it is needed.

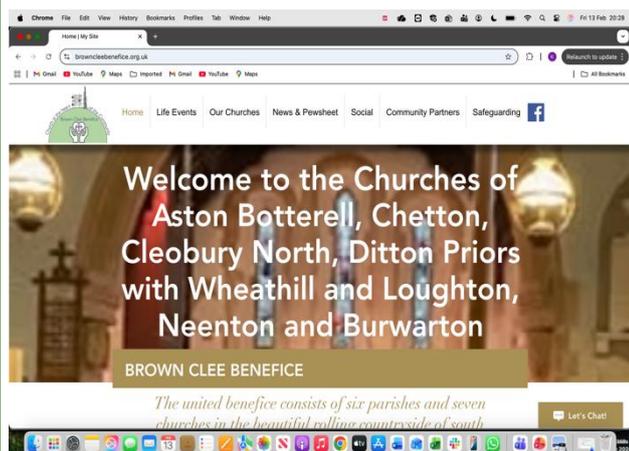
We are pleased to advise that our planning application for a new disabled toilet, water and drainage for St John the Baptist in Ditton Priors was approved in February. Many thanks to all that have supported the application, and we now continue in the process of fundraising. This will make such a difference to the church and village, acting as a springboard for further options for worship, prayer groups and small meetings in church. If any of our readers would like to make a contribution towards the construction costs do please make contact with Revd Joe.



Elsewhere across the benefice we have embarked on plans to refurbish the bells at St Giles Chetton, all part of the 200 years celebration for the existing peel of bells in that beautiful church.

Finally, we are running a lent course at the Pavilion in February and March looking at the topic of generosity in all its forms, not just financial. It runs for 6 weeks starting on 19th February every Thursday at 6pm until 26th March and the Easter week. Everyone is most welcome to any of these evening events – Do dip in and out of them!

It is such a joy to be part of this community, and we look forward to sharing with you in our next issue an update following our Vision Workshop; how you can help or where we can help and support you.



BROWN CLEE BENEFICE WEBSITE

We are thrilled to launch our new website for our seven churches, with all the news of our missional work, our life events and those we work closely with.

Please do visit us on www.browncleebenefice.org.uk we would love to have your comments.

Ditton Priors News *Marjorie Jones writes:*

We are moving so fast through February that we hardly have time to 'stop and stare'. But even though the rain clouds won't leave us, the days are getting a little longer and we look forward to the clocks moving forward later this month. We so need the light and the sunshine !

We are now well into the season of Lent and a busy time Church-wise leading up to Easter. It is good to set aside a time for examination, assessment and reflection, a time of self-judgement, if you like. Are we serving God as we should, are we striving to be the best we can be?

- ✝ Sunday 1st March. 9.30am Holy Communion
- ✝ Sunday 8th March. 9.30am Holy Communion
- ✝ Wednesday 11th March. 10.00am Morning Prayer
- ✝ Sunday 15th March - Mothering Sunday. 9.30am Holy Communion
- ✝ Sunday 22nd March. 9.30am Holy Communion
- ✝ Wednesday 25th March. 10.00am Morning Prayer
- ✝ Friday 3rd April. 6.00pm Reflection
- ✝ Saturday 4th April. 6.00pm Reflective Compline & Vigil
- ✝ Sunday 5th April. 10.00 Group Holy Communion

FIRST SATURDAY COFFEE MORNINGS

Continue 10.30am -12.30pm (please note time) and in Church on 7th March, 11th April (avoiding Easter), 2nd May, 6th June and 4th July.

There is no charge for this popular community event and everyone is very welcome.

LENT LUNCH

Thursday 5th March , 12.30pm at Ditton Priors Village Hall.

Homemade Soups will be served with Bread Rolls, followed by Cheese and Crackers.

There is no charge for this meal, but donations for Charity will be welcomed.

Please let me know if you are coming, for catering purposes. (01746 712 423)

EASTER COFFEE MORNING

Saturday 28th March 10.30am at the Pavilion.

There will be an Easter Egg Hunt in Church and also an Easter Bonnet Competition for all ages. Stalls, Raffle and the usual excellent Coffee and Cakes.

CHURCH FETE

Saturday 16th May 1 - 4pm in and around Church.

There will be a Barbecue, entertainment by the Saxophone Ensemble 'Black Eyed Susan's', a variety of stalls, games and the usual Raffle. Do come and join us.

FOOD BANK

We are still collecting for the Food Bank in Bridgnorth and there is still a great demand for foodstuffs and toiletry items. There is a large box at the back of church and Marcus takes these items into the centre weekly. Thank you for your generosity.

CHURCHYARDS

We have two Churchyards to maintain in Ditton Priors and costs are very high. We are grateful for any donations towards these costs, either to Revd. Joe, the Churchwardens, myself or any Church member. The Churchyards are a community asset and are widely used. We do try to keep them in good order. Please give generously in memory of loved ones passed. Thank you.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Pam's Plants Sat. 23rd May Opposite Church 10.30am - Coffee etc. in Church.
Pimms & Puds. Sat. 4th July 5 - 8pm at the Pavilion Ditton Priors.
Burwarton Show. Thurs. 6th Aug. Refreshment Tent
Teas in Ch/yard. Thurs. 20th Aug. Stalls, refreshments, etc.
Harvest Supper. Sat. 10th Oct. 7pm in the Village Hall.
Christmas Fair. Sat. 21st Nov. 10.30am at the Pavilion Ditton Priors.

CLEANING ROTA FOR MARCH

- Sunday 1st March. Mr and Mrs Graham Russell
- Sunday 8th March. Mrs Shirley Wall and Mrs Anita Casswell
- Sunday 15th March. Mrs Debbie Jones and Mrs Anne-Marie Shilling
- Sunday 29th March. Mr and Mrs John Ballard
- Sunday 5th April. Mr and Mrs Tony Brown

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST 100 CLUB RESULTS FOR FEBRUARY 2026

- £20 Margaret Russell
- £10 Pete Mathews
- £5 each to Lara May, Richard Fox, Marj Lautman

EASTER LILIES.



As in other years we hope to have a display of Lilies in church for Easter. If anyone would like to contribute towards them, donations can be given to a church warden or myself; Shirley Wall. 07530 089808. *Thank you.*

Wheathill and Loughton News *Marjorie Jones writes:*

Our first service for 2026 was to be held at Wheathill on 15th February, however this was cancelled due to flooding.

Next Service



Sunday 22nd March. 2.30pm Evening Prayer - at **LOUGHTON**

Aston Botterell News *Anne Preece writes:*

We are looking for anyone to help with cleaning the church in anyway please. Whether cleaning the brasses or more and with flowers for each service – which is once a month, so only comes round once a year. There are occasional special services, and we are always grateful for those who help with these. Any help will be most welcome to do a turn in our beautiful church. Also, if you are planning a wedding, you will be most welcome to come and have a look round – It is a very photogenic venue.

We held a lovely gathering at home in the warm instead of a cooler church for our January and February services ...



Sunday 1st March. 11.30am Holy Communion



Tuesday 31st March. 6.00pm Evening Prayer

Sat 27th June Fete and music in the church, anyone who would like to sing or play music, please let me know.

Aston Botterell results for February are:

£20 - Ben Jones - No. 13

£10 - Pat Warren - No. 165

£5 - Richard Jones (Farlow) - No. 158

£5 - Shirley Baugh - No. 222

Neenton News *Dot Cartwright writes:*

When you read this, it will be March, hopefully the weather will be better and a bit warmer. The flowers will be starting to poke through, and hopefully some of the potholes that have been causing grief to so many people will have been filled in.



We are having a Mother's Day service on 15th March at 11.30am and all are welcome.



Monday 30th March. 6.00pm Evening Prayer

We've had a survey of the wiring done in the church and unfortunately, it's not good news. The whole church needs to be rewired, which is going to take a while, and be very expensive. If anyone would like to donate towards this work, please contact Dot Cartwright on 07854 559474, or if you would like to join our Fun and Fundraising group, please contact Jo Willetts on 07885 671335.

God bless you all

Chetton News *Shelia Millington writes:*

Services

-  Sunday March 8th 11.30 am - Holy Communion.
-  Wednesday March 18th 10am - Morning Prayer.
-  Sunday March 29th 10am - Palm Sunday. Group Service.
-  Wednesday 1st April 6pm - Stations of the Cross.

Flowers and cleaning

Sheila.

Hundred club

£15.00 Flossie & Hugo no 27.

£10.00 Max Gill no 6.

If you would like to renew or join, £10.00 per ticket, prizes drawn each month.

A few dates for your diaries:

On Saturday March 28th we will be holding a breakfast at the Down. Let Sheila or Marion know if you'd like to join us. All very welcome.

We are holding a coffee morning on Wednesday 1st April at Church House, Chetton courtesy of Charles and Lisa - 10am to 1pm. Do come along and join us for chat, coffee and cakes. There will be a bric a brac stall, if anyone has anything they would like to donate, let Lisa know and she will collect.

On Saturday May 2nd, Revd Joe will be holding a small service to commemorate the five airmen who lost their lives at Eudon George in the Second World War. Two of them were never recovered. A new memorial has been erected by the pilot's nephew Keith and Julian Millington.

We hope to have representatives from the military and the British Legion.

Afterwards we will have light refreshments at Chetton Village Hall, all are welcome. Please let Sheila know if you would like to attend as we need to know numbers.

Looking ahead, Chetton Heritage Museum in conjunction with the Midland Oil Engine club are having a show on Sunday 17th May, 9.30am to 4.30pm at Lower Cockshutt Farm WV16 6RF. There will be a tractor run leaving at 10am returning in the afternoon. Aircraft, vintage and military vehicles, vintage cars, lorries, bikes, trade stands, hot food etc. Please see local social media etc for details or visit Chetton Heritage Museum website.

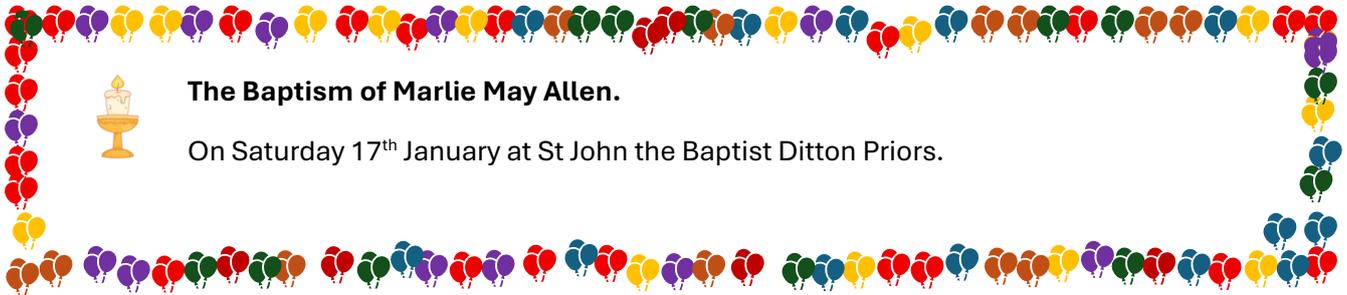
Cleobury North and Burwarton News *Jane Bufton writes:*

-  Wednesday 4th March. 10.00am Morning Prayer
-  Sunday 22nd March. 11.30am Holy Communion
-  Thursday 2nd April. 6.00pm Passover Meal and service in Cleobury North Village Hall Booking essential for this to enable catering. Please contact the Church Office 01746 599217

If anyone could offer any help with the flowers and cleaning during March and April it would be most welcome.

Julia's last Friday of the month Coffee Morning will be held on Friday 27th March at Cleobury North Village Hall 10.30am – 12noon, come along for delicious refreshments and a chat.

A big thank you for the once-a-month lunch club held on the second Friday of the month, and to all the ladies that supply the food and service.



The Baptism of Marlie May Allen.

On Saturday 17th January at St John the Baptist Ditton Priors.



Funerals

The Funeral of Edwyna Bennett 'Bunny'

On Thursday 5th February at Telford Crematorium

DADDY'S HAT 2026

opens with Jonny and Friends playing at St Mary's Church, Billingsley, on Saturday 21st March at 3:00 pm.

Do come, enjoy the company and the music – and even the light refreshments afterwards! No charge, no tickets, just a small donation to the Hat for expenses if you wish.





Beautiful Burial Grounds

Caring for God's Acre (CFGa)

Fair Maids or Candlemas Bells, not quite the first sign of Spring!

Snowdrops appearing in our gardens or churchyards and along the verges are not the first sign of Spring, but they are a sign that the year has turned. Many snowdrops found in

churchyards and monastic sites have been planted as a symbol of purity and hope.

The first known cultivation of snowdrops in the UK was recorded in 1597 and, while it is thought that it was pilgrims who brought this beautiful flower to our shores, it was the Victorians who enthusiastically planted them in churchyards and cemeteries.

Snowdrops go by over 30 different local names including dew drops, eve's tear and Fair Maids. They are also known as Candlemas bells.

In the Middle Ages Candlemas (held on the 2nd of February) was the day when everyone in the parish brought their candles to church to be blessed by the priest to ward off evil spirits. After a procession, and the blessing, the candles were all lit and set before the statue of the Virgin Mary. The snowdrop was the flower gathered to decorate the church at that time, so took on the name of that ancient tradition.



Churches Count on Nature dates announced

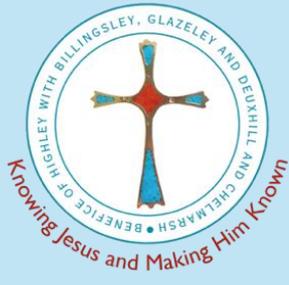
For over 16 years the CFGa have been encouraging all who help to look after churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries to celebrate these fantastic places in the lovely month of June.

Churches Count on Nature is part of Love Your Burial Ground Week, focusing on the brilliant wildlife to be found in churchyards and chapel yards. It is a joint initiative promoted by Caring for God's Acre, the Church of England, the Church in Wales and A Rocha UK. National Cemeteries Week is hosted by the National Federation of Cemetery Friends.

The "count on nature" this year will be on Saturday 6th to Sunday 14th June, when custodians are encouraged to observe and document nature in burial grounds across the country.

Registration will be live from 16th March and from that date a link can be found at:-

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/about-love-your-burial-ground-week-with-churches-count-on-nature/>



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 0780-100-9693 (mobile) or 01746-861121

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

St Mary, Highley <i>CHURCHWARDEN</i> Carl Hinkinson	St Mary, Billingsley <i>CHURCHWARDEN</i> Vacant	St Peter, Chelmarsh <i>CHURCHWARDEN</i> Vacant	St Bartholomew, Glazeley <i>CHURCHWARDEN</i> Vacant
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Severn Valley Benefice Services

1st March		
9.30	Morning Prayer	Chelmarsh
10.30	Holy Communion	Highley
8th March		
9.30	Holy Communion	Chelmarsh
10.30	Holy Communion	Highley
15th March		
9.30	Morning Prayer	Chelmarsh
10.00	Holy Communion	Glazeley
10.30	Holy Communion	Highley
22nd March		
8.00	Holy Communion	Billingsley
9.30	Holy Communion	Chelmarsh
10.30	Informal worship	Highley
29th March Palm Sunday, Benefice Service		
10.00	Holy Communion	CHELMARSH

Chelmarsh News:



January opened with snow and ice; some of our local churches cancelled their services due to the condition of the local roads (although the rammed snow and ice did at least fill the potholes). However, the congregation at Chelmarsh is nothing if not resourceful and a small group were able to dig the church from out of the snow and spread grit on the paths so we could hold our usual Sunday Service. I do however have to report the appearance of a graven idol in the churchyard. We stoutly resisted the temptation to offer sacrifices to it and instead admired the work that had gone into making it; it was quite magnificent! Other Sunday services have seen less excitement but attracted good congregations; we are grateful for all who support us.

Our March services are listed in the table above. I would particularly draw your attention to the benefice service on Palm Sunday at 10am at Chelmarsh. This is the first time for some years that the service has moved from Highley; please attend if you can.



As I reported last month, work has been completed (up to a point...) on the church tower. The church architect drew our attention to the state of the wooden louvers in the belfry; these are the “windows” with wooden slats at the top of the tower, in the room that has the bells. Some of the slats were in danger of falling out. Local builder Richard Poyner, assisted by Martin Preece, has now replaced these; Richard managed to do this without the need for scaffold. The new oak louvers were made by another local craftsman, Tim Bentley from Cleobury Mortimer. Richard also replaced the ladder in the tower, again as recommended by our architect. Unfortunately, we have now discovered that there is a leak in the tower roof, so we will need more work to mend this.

In February we held the funeral of Joan Owen, who was buried next to her late husband, Les. Joan was the daughter of Issac and Elsie Hatton; she was born in 1927 and was brought up in Chelmarsh where she went to school. Later the family moved to one of the remote cottages at Brooksmouth, where Joan walked to Deuxhill School and then they moved to Marlbook in Oldbury, where they kept pigs, goats and chickens. Joan would take the horse and cart to Bridgnorth to do the weekly shopping. Joan met Les when she went to work in the carpet factory in Bridgnorth and they were married at Highley in 1956, where they lived in Oak Street. Les died in 1996 but Joan remained active for almost all of the remainder of her long life. We send our condolences to daughter and son-in-law, Jan and Trev.

Billingsley News:

We held our first service of the new year in January, the 8am communion. This service attracts people from both Billingsley and neighbouring communities who appreciate the early start. For the first time, we were able to enjoy the warmth from our new under-pew heaters; these really do make a difference at 8am on a January morning! The PCC is looking to instal a timer switch, so we can put these on well before people arrive in the church.

We are continuing to plan our programme of events for the coming year. Part of the job of the church is to serve the community by bringing people together and so we place a high priority on this. Our “spring” event has now been pencilled in for June, when we envisage mounting a local history exhibition in the church combined with a bric-a-brac sale and offering refreshments. If anyone has old photos of Billingsley and would allow us to copy them, please contact me (David Poyner).



We are looking at ways of brightening the churchyard and the drive. This is a balancing act, as we have a rich display of orchids and other wild flowers in the summer (the picture shows “self-heal” in the churchyard, valued for medicinal purposes and as a charm against witches and, I believe, some vicars). Currently the snowdrops are in full bloom. Equally, we appreciate the need to keep the grass under control. To do this, we mow around the main paths, particularly at the front but use the Caring for God’s Acre team for the rest of the church yard. We are looking to plant spring bulbs in the mown areas.

On Saturday 21st March we host a Daddy’s Hat concert at Billingsley at 3pm; a free concert of classical and popular guitar music at Billingsley Church with Jonny and friends. Refreshments afterwards.



Glazeley News:

We held our monthly service in January, when we again had a good congregation; we are particularly grateful to our friends from Chetton who regularly support us, at Sunday services and who also share the organisation of the monthly breakfasts at the Down.

Our candles, along with one from Billingsley, were taken to Highley in February for Candlemas to be blessed. Candlemas marks the end of the Church's celebration of Christmas and Epiphany. It celebrates the presentation of the infant Jesus, the light of the world, in the temple at Jerusalem but is also when the candles that will light our own churches in the coming year are blessed.

Our picture this month shows Glazeley back in October, when rain was but a distant memory and we could rely on the sun lighting our days. Since I last wrote we have had another storm which snapped a fir tree next to the church, leaving the top of the trunk dangling perilously over the next-door paddock. Fortunately our tree surgeon came quickly to deadwood the damaged tree and make it safe.

Words from a member of the congregation I never thought I would hear at Glazeley; "the new heating was good at Christmas, but the church was a bit too warm".....

The March church breakfast at the Down is being organised by Chetton on Saturday 28th March at 9am. Please contact Sheila Millington at Chetton (01746-789443) if you would like to come. The cost is £8 per person.

We wish speedy recoveries to Marion Corfield recovering from heart valve surgery and also Sheila Fox from a recent illness.



Very sadly, former churchwarden Graham Tranter died in January; his funeral was led by the Rev Val Smith. Graham was a local lad, born and bred to the soil. He worked most of his life on farms, chiefly at Eudon Burnell with the Crawford-Clarke family. He was a skilled stockman. One of his great passions was gardening, which he inherited from his mother and grandfather. Competing in local and UK agricultural shows was his passion. For many years, his was the only name on the first prize certificates in the horticulture tent at Burwarton. He excelled with tomatoes (twice being in the Guinness Book of Records) and giant cabbages. His fertiliser recipe was a closely guarded secret, but even those who were privy to this could not match his skill. He was a keen shooter; he was the captain of Bridgnorth and District Rifle League and loved days out on local shoots. Let us draw a veil over the day he attempted to shoot a pigeon in his garden but instead hit one of his cabbages... He was also a very

successful cricketer playing as a clean hitting batsman for Middleton Scriven, Cleobury Mortimer and Burwarton. He was also a keen crown green bowler. Then of course there was his vintage David Brown tractor, complete with the trailer of his own design in which guests could ride.

Graham could be forthright but he was a good and loyal friend to many; 150 attended his funeral. He was sadly very familiar with loss; his wife, son and daughter all died before him. He responded with stoicism and dignity; his love and pride were his grand and great grandchildren and he took it upon himself to channel his love and life guidance to them. He also gave support to friends; he was a strong and generous person. May you rest in peace, Graham and rise in glory.



Molecule of the month; Prx1 and bat evolution by David Poyner

Bats are fascinating creatures. Churches are well known as bat dwellings. Some clergy get very upset about this, but I managed to persuade Glazeley's resident bat to find another abode simply by threatening to make it churchwarden if it interrupted another PCC meeting. Baptising bats is another sure-fire method of making sure you never see them again in church. I also encounter bats on a regular basis on my underground excursions in caves and mines, when we make sure we do not disturb them as they hibernate. The bats that live in Shropshire mines can fly up to 40 miles to find new territory.

That particular statistic introduces an interesting problem; how did bats evolve the means to fly? Some creationists have argued that bat evolution is impossible; a half-formed wing would simply make bats clumsy and vulnerable to predators. That can be dismissed simply enough; it is most likely the ancestors of bats were tree-living creatures, similar to squirrels who moved by jumping between branches. A more interesting problem is what caused the development of the wing? The bat wing has evolved by extension of bones in the equivalent of the arm. Bat fossils are very rare; the bones are delicate and unlikely to survive long after death. As a result, we have no real idea of what ancestral bats looked like. However, recent work has provided a plausible mechanism of the molecular path to the wing.

Bones grow by first producing cartilage; this then gets turned into bone. Cartilage is produced by special cells called chondrocytes. So it seems that in the ancestral bats; these cells became especially active. There is a molecule called BMP1 that causes production of chondrocyte cells. So, sometime in distant evolution, it looks like the primordial bat went into overdrive in making BMP1. There has recently been a breakthrough in understanding how this happened.

All proteins in living creatures ultimately exist as a "blueprint" on DNA; a gene is just the name for the bit of DNA that has the instructions for a particular protein. When a cell wants to make a specific protein, the gene that has the instructions for forming that protein is activated and after several steps, the protein is made by the cell. The cell activates the gene by a protein called a transcription factor. This binds to the DNA at a special site called a promotor and "tells" the gene to start the process of turning itself into the required protein.

Specifically for the key cartilage activator, BMP1, the transcription factor that controls its production is called Prx1. This is found in everything from mice to bats. In most species, it is unremarkable; it causes only a modest production of BMP1. Not so in bats; Prx1 appears to be super-active, causing a massive boost to BMP1 production and hence, eventually cartilage production and bone growth. What seems to have happened is that in bats, the promotor that binds Prx1 has undergone a small but very significant change; it has become very sensitive to Prx1. Thus only a small production of Prx1 will be detected and turned into BMP1 production in a way that is unique to bats.

Thus we now have a beautiful molecular explanation for the evolution of the bat wing. A simple change in one part of the protein production machinery, the promotor for Prx1 has resulted in very rapid growth of bones in the bat arm, allowing the rapid development of the wing. Perhaps God choses to work through evolution by natural selection for a reason.

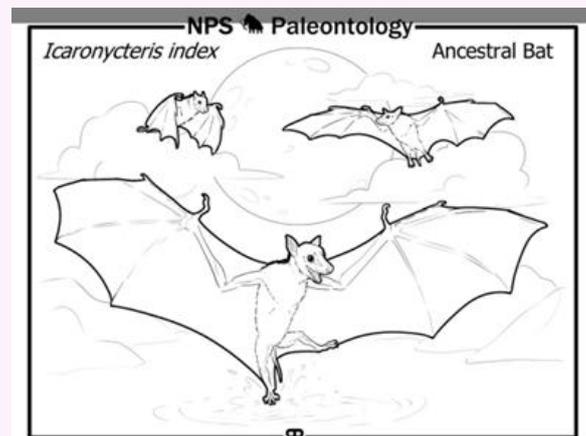


Figure 1 Bat evolution. One of the very few early bat species is *Icaronycteris index*, known from fossils in Bute National Park in the USA (<https://npgallery.nps.gov/>).



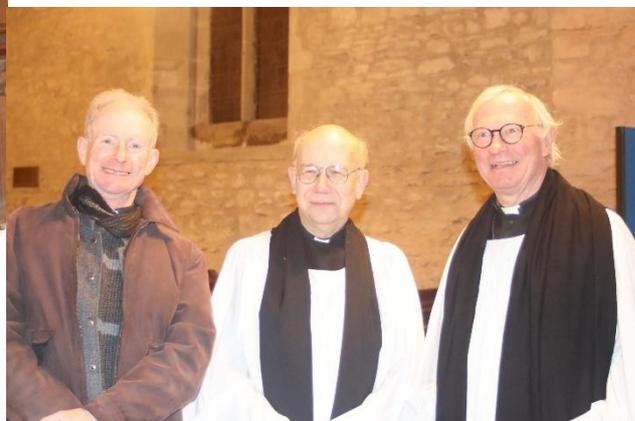
Sally and brother Peter, a Bishop, now retired who worked for many years in New Guinea



The most important person not taking a direct part in the service – Sally's husband John. We wish them every happiness in the village and community



Processional staff bearers with the Rural Dean. From left to right; Clare Tibbits; Revd Jeannetta Stokes; Sue Dolphin; and Ann Constable



Revd's John Daniels; David Poyner; and Justin Bailey. We are indebted to them, together with Revd Neil Dunlop, who sadly could not attend, for keeping the benefice running during the vacancy



On a cold February evening, the licensing was attended by a full congregation, all parishes were represented in the service.



Comparing notes? The service went perfectly start to finish, our thanks to Revd Jane Plackett-Ferguson, the Bishops chaplain, who led a rehearsal a few days beforehand.



A familiar face, Sally with Joe



Plenty to eat and drink after the service, more cake than you would find in a bakery!



Clare and Sally

Sally talking with the Rural Dean Revd Jeannetta Stokes, also with the Assistant Rural Dean, Revd Dawn Taffinder, and Stephen Griffiths, the Assistant Archdeacon of Ludlow



Stottesdon group of Parishes

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

Rector – Revd Dr. Sally Wallace-Jones. Email: revsamwj@gmail.com Phone: 01746 599057 / 07999 482107

Services in Stottesdon in March

Sunday, 01 March			
9.00am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Farlow
10.30am	Morning Prayer	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
11.30am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Middleton Scriven
Sunday, 08 March			
9.00am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Cleeton St Mary
10.30am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
Sunday, 15 March Mothering Sunday			
10.30am	Informal Worship	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
11.45am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Sidbury
Sunday, 22 March			
9.00am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Silvington
10.30am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
Sunday, 29 March Palm Sunday			
10.30am	Group Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
Sunday, 05 April Easter Sunday			
9.00am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Farlow
10.30am	Holy Communion	Revd Dr Sally Wallace-Jones	Stottesdon
10.30am	Easter Celebration	Ann Constable	Middleton Scriven

Stottesdon 100 Club

The 100 Club is under review following the hiatus in the usual draws attendant upon the sad loss of Chris Tibbits. With apologies to all for the delay; An announcement about future arrangements will be made as soon as possible



A service to remember the life of Murial Tisdale, who sadly passed away in January, took place in St. Mary's Church. Murial, better known as Mrs.T, lived her whole life in and around the Stottesdon, Chorley and Bridgnorth area. A very moving tribute was given by her eldest daughter, Karen Dayus, who not only spoke of her life and loving personality, but painted a vivid picture of a young person growing up in post-war rural Shropshire.

Murial turned her hand to many jobs but is best known for taking a variety of roles at the local primary school where she worked for over 27 years, including that of a very popular dinner lady.

She will be remembered for always being willing to help others with a smile and a seemingly endless supply of cake for anyone who visited. She will be greatly missed by the entire community, and we extend our deepest condolences to her many friends, as well as to her children, Karen, Nick, Cherry, and their families.



Stottesdon and District W.I.

On Wednesday 21st January we held our monthly WI meeting at Farlow village hall.



Due to the inclement weather in January, we did not book an outside speaker, so

Clare Tibbits prepared a quiz for us. We had a good mixture of general knowledge, food and drink and historical questions (*it was a real challenge! Ed*). We enjoyed the evening and a prize of chocolates was presented to the winner. The evening ended with superlatively good cake and of course a raffle!

So how did the W.I start?

History of the Women's Institute

The WI began in Canada in 1897. It was founded by Adelaide Hoodless, after the death of her young son from drinking contaminated milk. She realised that better education in health, hygiene and home economics could save lives.

The first WI was created to help rural women learn skills in: food safety, childcare, nutrition, household management and community improvement. It was about empowering women through knowledge at a time when women had very few public roles.

The movement spread to the United Kingdom during World War 1. The National Federation of Women's Institute (NFWI) was formed in 1915 in England and Wales. The British government supported it because women were needed to help with: food production, rationing, keeping rural communities functioning during wartime.

The WI quickly became a way for women, especially in the countryside to organise, support one another, and contribute to national life. Through the 1920's-1960's, the WI expanded rapidly across Britain and the

Commonwealth. The WI became known not only for traditional activities like cooking and crafts, but also for major social and political campaigns, including: Women's education, healthcare access, equal rights, environmental issues and domestic violence awareness.

Every year in June at the National WI annual meeting all members vote for the resolution which will be picked to campaign for. Last year it was Bystanders can be lifesavers, which encourages everyone to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). We await the national AGM to find out what has come top of our pole for 2026's cause.

Closer to home we raised over £2000.00 in aid of the Severn Hospice last year thanks to the efforts of our wonderful sponsored swimmers. All the efforts of Stottesdon and District W.I!

The WI is now the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK. We celebrated our centenary in 2015 and currently have around 180,000 members in approximately 5,500 WI's. And as you may recall even Prime Minister quake when they know we are in town!

We play a unique role in providing women with educational opportunities and the chance to build new skills, to take part in a wide variety of activities and to campaign on issues that matter to them and their communities. If you are interested in finding out more about Stottesdon WI then please contact me.

Debbie Haynes
07780113869
debbiehaynesflp@hotmail.co.uk
President of Stottesdon and District WI



Church Clock (non) striking:

In this cold and damp weather when most people have windows tightly closed you may not have noticed that the church clock at St Mary's is not striking the hours. Inside the clock is a mechanism which is made up of, amongst other things, a great big weight which gradually descends and so causing the bell clapper to strike the bell and so signalling the hours. The problem is that the weight used for striking is not winding up. The winding mechanism was converted to an electric auto-wind system some years

ago. During Storm Goretta where the area experienced freezing snow, it caused many power-cuts. These interruptions in supply caused some buildings to experience only a low voltage supply during which time some lights or appliances worked but were dimmer and some failed to work at all. When power was restored a number of people found some circuit boards had become damaged by this low-voltage. We believe one or more of the circuit boards in the auto-wind unit may have become damaged. So, we are asking our electrician to check the situation with the clock's power source to ensure that there is power going to the auto-wind unit.

If all is well with the auto-wind then we will need to get experts in so it's back to using the chimes of Big Ben to set your clocks and watches.

News from Sidbury

Guess What? It's rather muddy getting to the church!

Anyone for a "guess the feet" competition!

He's trying to hide them, but I believe Revd David Poyner might have the muddiest wellies.



Brown Clee C.E. Primary School

Danny Harley, Head Teacher Writes

Here is some information on our school council and photos of each year's council representatives:

At Brown Clee, pupil voice is a really important part of everything we do.

Our school council is entirely pupil-led, with a "Head of School Council" (Year 6 pupils) responsible for arranging the times, days, agenda and outcomes of their meetings/"working lunch". The topics of these meetings span from school dinners to utilising spaces within school-to-school trips and visits.

The Heads of School Council are chosen based on written applications by the Year 6s (as part of our Year 5/6 roles and responsibilities process). The rest of the council is chosen via a democratic nomination/voting process (led again entirely by the Heads of School Council) - with two representatives chosen from each year group (Year 5 to Reception).

We will carry more information in future editions about the roles and responsibilities Year 5 and 6 have.

Meanwhile the school website can be found at <https://browncleschool.org.uk/>



Brown Clee Surgery Patient Participation Group. *Tina Ranson Writes:*

Dr Bassett attended the January meeting of patients, and announced that he is very pleased to have found a young male Doctor with experience in General Practice, who will join the Brown Clee team, thus ensuring the future of Brown Clee for many years to come. Dr Matthews and Dr Bravey will continue to work alongside the new Doctor, whilst Dr Bassett takes a well-earned retirement.

Lisa Davies, the Advanced Nurse Practitioner had led a really interesting and well received discussion on issues around menopause last November. A second session is now planned for Wednesday 11th March at 7pm in the Pavillion in Ditton Priors. There are still a small number of places left and the talk is relevant to any woman approaching menopause or post menopausal. There is a lot more to it than just 'hot sweats'! To book a place: browncleppg@gmail.com

The audience also learned from Bob Williams about Parish Paths Partnership (P3 groups) and how they keep footpaths accessible. Jenny Joyner, who teaches TaiChi got everyone involved while she was telling us about the benefits of TaiChi.

If you want to know more your local P3 group, or about how you can join a TaiChi class, contact browncleppg@gmail.com

The next meeting for patients is Tuesday 21st April 2026 at 7.00 pm in Ditton Priors Village Hall. All patients are welcome to attend, and we believe that Dr Matthews will join us for that meeting.

Brown Clee Young Farmers Club.

Please do join us for a Young Farmers and Brown Clee Benefice joint event on Monday 23rd March – **A Quiz and Curry Night**

Starting at 7pm at Ditton Priors Village Hall it promises to be a fun filled time, so do join us if you can. Register your teams of six for £30 by 1st March.

Contact the Benefice Office on 01746 599217 browncleebenefice@outlook.com



Ditton Priors Ladies Friendship Group 2026. *Gill Severn writes:*



February's meeting of DP Ladies' Friendship Group proved to be a most interesting evening.

Rob McNeil (our very own local author!) entertained us with a fascinating talk about his background and his personal journey to becoming a published author. Rob gave us a great insight into his chosen way of writing books. This appears to involve a lot of planning whilst paying particular attention to detail. A truly unique talk. Thank you Rob.

Our March meeting is 'Your Favourite Recipe' evening which involves sampling the food! Please feel free to join us. Please contact Margaret Bill 01746 712030 or Gill Severn 07972 501738 for further information.

Burwarton and District Gardening Club. *Bev Harris writes:*

Earth is a ball of rock..

This was the starting statement from our speaker Nancy Lowe. Nancy's talk 'The Secret Life of the Soil' was fascinating and very informative. She began by explaining the Gaia Theory proposed by James Lovelock who suggests that all organisms on earth are closely integrated to form a single, self-regulating system, maintaining the conditions for life on the planet. Nancy described these earth's systems using analogies with the human body; Lungs of the Earth, the oceans produce most of the oxygen on earth, Earth's Kidneys, how wetlands cleans the system and a Vascular system, how migrating animals and birds carry nutrients around the system.

Nancy focused on the composition of soil and stated that in one teaspoon there are over one billion organisms with around twenty to thirty thousand different species. Each organism has a function, shredding material, breaking down leaves and helping to improve soil structure. Many organisms produce nutrients e.g protozoa eat bacteria and excrete nutrients. Fungi in the soil can break down tough pollutants. With this knowledge, gardeners can play an important role in maintaining healthy soil for increased drought tolerance and for plants that are self-sufficient.

Nancy gave us useful advice about no dig gardening, gentle weeding and using mulch wisely to maintain healthy soil. Nancy supported her ideas with scientific research and the whole talk was enhanced by some amazing graphics which demonstrated her concepts. The talk generated much discussion afterwards and many of us agreed that we have been 'doing it wrong'! I think we have all taken some ideas that we intend to implement in our own gardens this year and hope to see the benefits. This was the second visit by Nancy to the gardening club, and we are already looking at her list of talks to invite her back next year.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 12th March when Samantha Hopes will be talking about 'Plants with a Story'. If you would like to join us, please come along to Stoke St Milborough Village Hall where the door opens at 2.00pm and the talk begins at 2.30pm. You are guaranteed a warm welcome, a nice cuppa and some delicious home bakes. If you would like more information about the gardening club, then please get in touch with me.

Bev Harris
Secretary
Burwartonanddistrictgardening@gmail.com
07933724728



Cleobury North Village Hall. *Sharon Jenkins writes:*

I am sure we are all looking forward to spring and seeing the sun again!! It is so nice to see the snowdrops appearing, which gives hope of longer and brighter days to come.

February bookings include meetings, Burwarton Show Committee, Brown Clee Young Farmers, Shropshire Community Health Trust and the Brown Clee Football Club.

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. Also, we are looking at actioning an in-door car boot sale in the summer for local people.

Work has begun for a special evening in honor of our late friend Bobbie, who loved everything about France – watch this space for updates!!

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.

I look forward to seeing where 2026 will take us.

Remember if you wish to book the hall, please contact Sharon on sharonjenkins1605@yahoo.com or 07854538645.

Community Land Trust

The Willows - Good News!

After the unexpected news that Tom Hughes will be leaving The Willows at the end of February, the CLT Board is very pleased to announce that we have reached an agreement with Amanda Liddle and Karn Duvalier to be the new licensees. Amanda has been a familiar face at the Willows for the last 7 years and Karn has been a key player in the kitchen for Tom. There may be a short closure whilst improvements are made for the new occupants, but The Willows should be up and running again for Spring and Summer. We will be able to provide more detailed information very soon.

Oak Farm

The house, workshops, horticultural area, the Jam Hut, the greenhouses and closed barn are now occupied, along with several other storage places. The portacabin and paddocks are still available to lease.

Plans are being prepared to improve community access to areas such as the pond and walk-through to The Willows, but at the moment we are waiting for Shropshire Council to reimburse the amount agreed for necessary repairs to the buildings and site. Shropshire Council has financial difficulties and, unfortunately, this has had a knock-on effect on our own situation. Discussions are ongoing and we remain hopeful that we will have a significant boost to our finances in the coming months that will enable work to begin.

In other news ...

Work on the Environment Centre continues and funding is being sought for the provision of information boards.

Miriam Machancoses recently joined the board and adds a wealth of experience to the team. She is vigorously pursuing funding streams so that we can realise our ambitions to provide a social hub, combined business enterprise and nature sanctuary in the heart of the village.



Ditton Priors Halls Social Committee. *Louise Tyson writes:*

DITTON PRIORS HALLS WARM HUB

The Halls Committee identified a need for a warm hub during the very cold, snowy snap in January when most of the village lost electricity for over 12 hours. As soon as the power was back, the Hall was opened up as a place for villagers to gather in the warm, make hot drinks and even cook for their children. It is our intention to try to open either the Village Hall or Pavilion during periods of over 4hrs of extreme weather in the future. In any such circumstances, we will try and reach as many people as possible by Face Book or personal contact. Please keep an eye on local Face Book pages or contact Halls Booking Mobile 07570 712711
Garry Aulton (Chair) Mobile 07890 033435



Currently we have the following dates for events held in Ditton Priors either at the Village Hall or the Pavilion.
Fri 24th April 7pm at The Pavilion : Ditton Priors Challenge Quiz Night
Sat 23rd May 7pm at the Village Hall (Provisional date): A Night at the Races
Sat 19th Sep 7pm: at the Village Hall (Provisional date): Barn Dance



Ditton Priors Local History Group. *Robin Greenwell writes:*

Plans & Events for 2026!

Ideas have been popping around at the last few committee meetings as we start to plan our events for the year - and we have some exciting possibilities! Dates and details are still to be confirmed but we can share two definite dates already. We kick off, as always, with our AGM at Ditton Priors Village Hall. This will be on Tuesday 14th April at 7pm, and is a great opportunity to renew your membership or join for the first time if you've been thinking about it.

The next confirmed event features the welcome return of guest speaker Patricia de Haan. Anyone who has attended Patricia's two previous talks on Maps of Shropshire will know just how fascinating they are, and what an excellent speaker Pat is! Her latest talk is entitled "Britannia: The C17th Volumes with Maps of Shropshire". Pat will be bringing along a number of original maps and one very rare Britannia volume for everyone to see! This will be at Ditton Village Hall on Tuesday 7th July at the usual time of 7pm. Not to be missed!

Other talks and event possibilities during 2026 include: Ironbridge & the Industrial Revolution, Ditton History Walk & Talk with Di Bryan, The Roman Road & Wroxeter, Ditton Old Photos & Memorabilia Morning, Wenlock Abbey Private House Tour (Please note: these are not yet confirmed talks /events but we're working hard to make them happen!)

New History Centre Display Boards

Work continues on our new display panels, but it is taking considerably longer than we initially imagined! What we thought would be a one-year project, is looking more like two years, but with good reason - a lot of research goes into each and every panel, to ensure accuracy and historical relevance to the story of Ditton, before we even start the process of design and printing.

However, we are pleased to announce that 10 new panels are now complete (so we're approaching halfway!) and we will soon be carrying out some redecoration and refurbishment inside the History Centre so the

Before Revd Joe arrived, there had not been much of a push to improve the church facilities, however since joining the Benefice, he has brought a real sense of energy and determination to getting things moving to make the church a truly welcoming place for everyone — not just spiritually, but practically too.

And then there is Bob, who has quite literally been the engine behind this project. He put in an enormous amount of time reviewing options, preparing documents, navigating the planning system, and working through every heritage concern and technical detail imaginable. Their hard work means the whole village can now look forward to a church that's more comfortable and accessible for everyone. We are lucky to have them both.

It has been great working together with them to get this over the line, and if any of you ever need my assistance with anything in the community, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

George

Cllr. George Hollyhead

Brown Clee

george.hollyhead@shropshire.gov.uk

07484 541513

Chetton Village Hall. *Pam Downing writes:*

We have had the hall decorated now and are about to replace the crockery. Many thanks again to the funding received from the Edward Cadbury Foundation, Tesco and the National Lottery Awards for All.

If you would like to come along and support our committee we are having a meeting on Thursday 26th March at 7pm.

Enquiries Sue: 01746 789239.

NEW CLASS **SUPPORTED & SEATED PILATES**



TUESDAYS 12.15 -1.00 PM

CHETTON VILLAGE HALL

FOR OLDER ADULTS WHO WANT TO:
Improve mobility and flexibility
Increase balance and confidence
Improve getting up and down from the floor
Enjoy exercise in a friendly group

Join Pam's Class Today – Web site: pampilates.com
or Sue Bayliss 01746 789236

**Pam's
Pilates**

The Venerable Derek Chedzey - Archdeacon of Hereford

As I write this we are fast approaching the fourth anniversary of the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 22nd. I have learnt through listening to the Ukrainian community who came here following that invasion that for many this war actually began in 2014 when Russia invaded the Crimea. Our communities have offered hospitality, love and care to those displaced by this act of war.

Wherever we look our news is constantly full of conflict and around the world there are armed conflicts and tensions which cause us all to stop and ask is there not a better way to resolve our differences. Whatever the politics and reasons for the Russian invasion what is clear is that despite peace negotiations this war is continuing to see people killed and injured on both sides. It is important we do not lose sight of the fact that in war there are no winners only losers.

There are many theological arguments on whether warfare can ever be just and how we appropriately remember those lost in war. For us as Christians the Bible has a lot to teach us about the root causes of warfare and bloodshed. We are also reminded in those same pages that we are called to serve one another and to care for those who suffer. The ultimate sacrifice will always be to give our lives away for others.

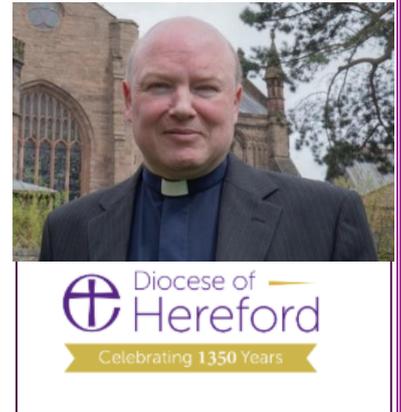
“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” - John 15:13

As Christians we are called to build relationships that create peace and harmony and offer the reconciling power of Jesus’ love. We are to offer a better more appropriate way to live and it is through the empowering of the Holy Spirit that we are changed. It is the Holy Spirit that builds the fruit of the Kingdom within each of us, and this enables us to bear one another’s burdens and create communities of peace.

As Jesus prepared for his own death, he warns the disciples not to lose heart when they see strife in the world. As they stand outside the temple in Jerusalem, he warns them what is to happen in their lifetime. His words are fulfilled in 72AD when the Romans destroy the temple in Jerusalem, but they are also just as true today for us as for his disciples.

“Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” - Matthew 24:4-8

Jesus does not mean that we have to accept war with its horror and bloodshed but that we should respond to it appropriately. The New Testament teaches us that human selfishness, greed and intolerance lead to conflict. The church has a message of hope and the solution to these driving passions deep within humanity. If we are in any doubt, it is Jesus and his sacrifice for us that reconciles us to God and helps us offer peace in the world. We are called to fight evil and stand up for the Kingdom and its values; in doing so we help to build a better world. Our job is not to judge but to offer love and support. As a clergy person I have had the privilege of hearing the stories and experiences of grief and pain that war brings from those most impacted by it. I have always tried to bring God’s love, forgiveness and compassion to those who are tormented by memories of war. As the church we are called to care for those who suffer and to build a more peaceful world. In this period of Lent perhaps we should all pray for peace and reconciliation wherever there is conflict.



The wonderful benefits of a DEAD hedge!! By Sue Crichton

A dead hedge is one of the most vibrant, sustainable features you can add to your garden. Far from being just a pile of sticks, it is a purposeful, eco-friendly barrier that transforms garden "waste" into a thriving wildlife sanctuary.

What is a Dead Hedge?

A dead hedge is an upright structure made from woody cuttings, such as branches, twigs, and prunings, stacked or woven between vertical wooden stakes. It functions as a natural fence or screen, but unlike a living hedge, it doesn't require watering or soil nutrients to thrive.

Why You Should Build One?

It's been such a gloomy start to the year, this is one garden job you can do in March. It's such an asset to your garden.

- **Wildlife Haven:** It provides essential shelter and nesting sites for birds like wrens, robins, and dunnocks. It also acts as a safe haven for hedgehogs, amphibians, and beneficial insects.
- **Waste Management:** Instead of burning pruning or hauling them to a landfill, you keep the biomass on-site, recycling nutrients back into your soil as the wood decomposes.
- **Climate & Soil Benefits:** They act as a carbon sink and a natural windbreak, creating sheltered microclimates for delicate plants while preventing soil erosion.
- **Low Cost & Effort:** Using materials already found in your garden makes it a free alternative to expensive wooden fencing.
- **Natural Barriers:** They act as effective windbreaks for vegetable patches and can screen unsightly areas like compost bins or utility zones.
- **Low Maintenance:** Unlike living hedges, they require no irrigation, chemical treatments, or annual trimming.

How to Build Your Own

1. **Mark the Line:** Decide on your hedge's path. They can be straight or curvilinear to fit your garden's aesthetic.
2. **Drive the Stakes:** Hammer two parallel rows of sturdy stakes (like hazel or chestnut) into the ground, roughly 30–50 cm apart.
3. **Layer the Material:** Start with heavier branches at the base for stability. Fill the gap with your collection of prunings, packing them tightly.
4. **Weave for Strength:** For a neater finish, weave longer, flexible branches horizontally between the stakes to bind the structure together.
5. **Maintain & Top Up:** As the material settles and rots over its lifespan, simply add more fresh cuttings to the top to maintain its height



Step-by-Step Construction

1. **Mark the Line:** Decide on a straight or curved path, typically 50–60cm wide.
2. **Drive the Stakes:** Hammer two parallel rows of sturdy stakes (like hazel, chestnut, or untreated timber) into the ground. Space stakes roughly 50–75cm apart along each row.
3. **Layer the Material:** Place heavier branches at the base for a strong foundation. Fill the gap with your pruning, packing them tightly and interlocking them for stability.
4. **Weave for Strength:** For a neater finish, weave long, flexible materials like willow or bramble horizontally through the stakes.
5. **Leave Access Gaps:** Ensure there are small openings at the base to allow hedgehogs and amphibians to pass through.



Maintenance and Lifespan.

A dead hedge typically lasts 3–5 years before the bottom layers decompose significantly.

Maintenance is simple:

- **Top it Up:** As the wood settles and rots, simply add new prunings to the top each year.
- **Replace Stakes:** Periodically check the stability of the uprights and knock in new ones if they begin to rot.
- **Avoid Disease:** Do not use material from plants affected by honey fungus or box blight, as this can spread to the rest of your garden.

Around Wheathill Wildlife Site, we have made seven, of various lengths, over the last couple of years.

They hide the composting area, thicken the base of hedges that have that ballerina appearance, they link gaps in hedges and create new boundaries.

What's been lovely this winter is they have made lots of dry, safe spaces for wildlife to rest.

Hope you make one too!

The Churchyard Task Team Volunteers

I have been looking forward to March all the way through last month. This has a lot to do with working in ancient churchyards. There is so much going on despite the weather. It is as if the plants know more than we do - is that possible? While admiring carpets of snowdrops it's easy to forget, that underneath that carpet, nature is working hard.

While cutting back ivy on yew trees, clearing growth on churchyard walls, under your feet as the snowdrops fade away you can spot other plants pushing up to the light. Bishop's Castle churchyard has an amazing display of wild daffodils in March and April and working there recently, there they were, leaves and buds were in sight. The Churchyard Task Team volunteers, part of Caring for God's Acre, will be back in the town later this month and I know we will be greeted by "A host, of golden daffodils".

It's the colours of March that make me happy. The snowdrops reflect January and by next month, the celandines are showing off their gold. The primrose doesn't attempt to compete, offering a pale yellow as if it's too shy to show off so ostentatiously. Even closer to the ground you can spot the hairy violets in shades of purple, violet and lilac. This is a flower that likes to play with hue and tone, so a very clever little plant I think.

Just as clever is the crocus. Familiar in our gardens as well as a stalwart in many a churchyard, the earliest ones are purple, although the bright yellow stamens take some of the glory. It can give the impression of delicacy, but it's strong enough to be an early spring performer.

It is not just about colour. Wood spurge is a leafy tall plant with tiny green umbels and lots of them. With height in March at about 40 centimetres, (16 inches for the decimally challenged!) it stands out without any gaudy colours. In contrast the wood anemone is a fragile looking plant with spindly stalk and three green leaves below its simple white star-like flower. You might wonder if you have the right flower as it can be tinged with a pink frosting.

March is also good for saints having 2 patron saints, St David of Wales on the 1st and St Patrick of Ireland on the 17th, while another famous Welsh one, St Teilo on the 9th. We get Mothering Sunday in this month too - so much going on! But the best bit of March is the light. By the 31st, the clocks will have sprung forward. Between sunrise and sunset there will be 13 hours, that's half the day in the light. Something nice to look forward to.

Anni Holden Calver, Secretary of Shropshire Churches Tourism Group (SCTG)

www.discovershropshirechurches.co.uk

Trustee of Caring for God's Acre and Churchyard Task Team cheerleader!

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

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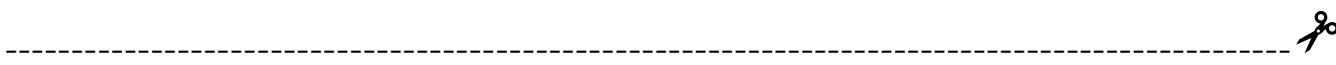
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The DEADLINE for contributions for the APRIL 2026 edition is NOON on 16th MARCH 2026. Any contributor who is not aligned with a specific Benefice – please send your items direct to the Editor at “wheatlandnews@outlook.com”

Puzzle Page

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Devilish: Target to finish



Don't know if you've been following the plight of the Severn Valley Rescue centre on the local TV news, papers and radio, or if you've seen their facebook posts. On the 9th February they announced the temporary closure of the sanctuary, cancelling February half-term open days due to severe weather damage. They reached out to the local community for help, with the amount of water damage sustained they feared they may even have to close permanently.

I thought I'd include an extract from a very recent post of

theirs showing what a great community we have.

"What a rollercoaster of a week.

So just this time last week, we announced that we couldn't open for half term, and we shared just how desperate our situation is following the very wet winter - and it still continues to get wetter every single day.

Well it all went a bit a bit "crazy crazy", and I should have known that you guys would go all "Mary Poppins" and start pulling things out the bag.

You're all amazing.

We were being tagged left and right, we were on the BBC, the local news, the radio and the paper, and we have had offers of help from people we have never even met.



The gofundme has raised over £6000 meaning we can start some work, and we have had donations come in through our bank and PayPal too.

We have had more stone delivered, wood chipping and donations of dog food and rabbit treats - and rubber stable mats arrived on a huge army vehicle. I mean, why not?

This week we have meetings planned with a construction company who may help, a digger driver and new volunteers.

And we still have people we need to reply to, so please know we are trying to get back to everyone and you are all appreciated.

We are by no means out of the woods. But you guys have turned despair into hope.

I can't thank you enough.

I have been telling "One Eyed Jack" all about it today. He was our first, and original rescue... And he's a wise old boy and a good listener. Maybe it's the big ears.

We will be sure to keep you all updated on what happens over the next few weeks, with the goal still to be open at Easter x"

Severn Valley Rescue is a registered charity, if you are able to support them in any way through this period,

💛 Donate: <https://gofund.me/874615dbd>

🛒 Buy items from their Amazon wishlist:
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/38ZT27397YPU>

If you can't donate money right now but have food, materials, or equipment to share, please reach out to the sanctuary directly — every bit helps! 07968 703 541 or Email: info@severnvalleyrescue.org

The Back Page

Daffodils in Folklore, legends, symbolism and art by Clive Jackson



The Tenby daffodil (*Narcissus obvallaris*) is most often cited as the Welsh daffodil. This is the variety that grows wild in South Wales and is described as having perfect proportions. It has an all-yellow flower and is extremely hardy. It is ideal for planting into rough grass or meadows where it will spread when left undisturbed.

It may be the flower was chosen to join leeks as an emblem of Wales because the Welsh word for leek (*cenhinen*) and for daffodil (*cenhinen pedr* – or ‘Peter’s leek’) are so similar.

It is relatively recently that the daffodil has become associated with Wales – only since the late 19th century, as opposed to the leek, which has been a national symbol since the

16th century. Daffodils may have been drafted in as a replacement for the leek, which is not as attractive or fragrant to wear on a lapel!

The most famous account of daffodils in Greek mythology is the tragic story of Echo and Narcissus as told in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The mountain nymph Echo prevents the goddess Hera from catching out her errant husband Zeus in one of his many affairs. As punishment, the chatty nymph is cursed to only be able to repeat what others have said, never able to speak her own words. Shunned by her friends, Echo wanders the forest where she meets and falls desperately in love with the beautiful youth *Narcissus*. Unable to converse with him, she is cruelly and shamefully rejected. He in turn is punished by the gods to also suffer the sorrow of unrequited love when he falls equally helplessly in love with his own reflection in a pool. Unable to either be with or be apart from the object of his desire, he wastes away by the pool edge, ultimately turning into the beautiful flower.



Narcissus by Caravaggio



The legend of the Chinese Lily tells of a man who leaves his two sons his land. The eldest son takes the tillable land leaving his brother just a watery, rocky area. A benevolent fairy gifts the younger son three daffodil bulbs. The flowers are greatly admired, and he makes his fortune selling bulbs. The elder brother buys up all the bulbs and plants hundreds in the hope of outcropping his sibling. But his daffodils all die because they do not get enough water. A lesson about the pernicious nature of greed, but also about the importance of right plant, right place.

Daffodils in art and literature

Daffodils are arguably more famous as a literary muse, not least to William Wordsworth whose poem ‘*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*’ is a shameless ode to the wildflowers he and his sister Dorothy saw during a walk in the Lake District. Written in 1804, BBC Radio 4 listeners voted it the nation’s fifth favourite poem. Wordsworth’s daffodils were probably *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, one of the most pervasive wild species.

Daffodils as symbols of hope

In the UK daffodils are the flower for the month of March, the astrological flower of Pisces and what you are supposed to give on your tenth wedding anniversary. Floriography, or the Language of Flowers has mixed interpretations of what daffodils mean. Yes, they can represent vanity, hubris and misfortune, as influenced by the tragic Narcissus, but as the first ray of spring they also symbolise anticipation and love. In many dream interpretations daffodils suggest a fresh start or renewal



*John Singer Sargent's
Daffodils still life*