

Teme TRIANGLE

Clifton-upon-Teme • The Shelsleys • Lower Sapey



Harpley Sustainable Church Flowers Movement

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The newly renamed Bloom Café at Pitlands opens on Thursday 5 March

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Front cover picture:

The Sustainable Church Flowers movement started at St Bartholomew's Church in Harpley. Pictured (left to right) are Candy Connolly, Kate Hurst, Fr. Benji Tyler, Jill Smith, Shane Connolly, Dot Millward and Dr Jill Timms (see report on page 3 opposite).

GENERAL SYNOD BACKS HARPLEY'S SUSTAINABLE FLOWERS

The General Synod of the Church of England last month backed a Diocesan Synod Motion from the Diocese of Worcester encouraging churches and cathedrals to explore ways of arranging flowers that are both beautiful and environmentally responsible.

The Sustainable Church Flowers movement began as a grassroots initiative in the small rural parish of Harpley, when volunteers led by Clifton's Shane Connolly started exploring how traditional flower arranging methods could reflect the Church's commitment to caring for creation. It has since grown into a national and ecumenical network offering practical support to parishes, arrangers and clergy.

Before the debate, a video was shown to shed light on the issue, featuring Shane Connolly, who provided and designed floral arrangements for the King's Coronation and the weddings of The King and Queen and The Prince and Princess of Wales.

The motion does not introduce any rules or bans. Instead, it encourages churches, wherever possible, to consider using seasonal, locally sourced flowers and foliage, and to phase out single use floral foam - a 1950s era plastic product which cannot be recycled or composted, sheds microparticles when handled, and contains the equivalent of up to ten carrier bags' worth of plastic per block. The Royal Horticultural Society has already prohibited floral foam at its shows, including Chelsea, since 2021.

The motion highlights long-established alternatives such as reusable vessels, twigs, moss, chicken wire, and metal 'frogs', which for centuries enabled churches to create arrangements without single-use plastics. It also celebrates the creativity of volunteers and the opportunity to support local growers and community gardens.

At the Synod's group of sessions in February, the Bishop of Dudley, Martin Gorick, who introduced the motion on behalf of the Diocese of Worcester, said: "This motion comes from a village PCC wondering how they could make a difference, however small, in caring for God's creation. The Sustainable Church Flowers movement began around a kitchen table in the wild west of Worcestershire but is now a fast growing national and ecumenical movement for positive change, with florists, growers and above all wonderful church flower arrangers spreading the word and giving practical help and advice. Be part of it! "This motion rejoices in flowers and foliage in church, and encourages us to source them locally and seasonally wherever possible: remember Jesus on that hillside, rejoice in what's around you. Think simple, natural, beautiful."

SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF CLIFTON-UPON-TEME NURSERY

For more than a quarter of a century, Clifton-upon-Teme Nursery has been a place where our youngest villagers take their very first steps into learning, friendship and independence. Established by the community for the community, the nursery has proudly operated from its site behind the Primary School for the past 26 years, supporting generations of local families.

Many parents and grandparents reading this will remember their own children's time there. However, our much-loved setting is currently housed in a Portakabin that has now outlived its expected lifespan. Designed to last around 20 years, the building is several years beyond that point and is beginning to require increasing repairs and maintenance. While it has served us well, it is no longer the long-term solution our children deserve.



The nursery committee has therefore set its sights on an exciting but ambitious goal: raising funds for a new-build nursery. A modern, purpose-built space would allow us to create a safer, warmer and more inspiring environment for the children, while ensuring the nursery remains sustainable for many years to come.

This isn't just about bricks and mortar — it's about protecting an essential village resource. The nursery enables parents to work, helps children build confidence and friendships, and keeps family life rooted in our community. Keeping it open and thriving benefits us all.

To help make this vision a reality, we are planning a major fundraising event in Clifton village recreation ground in **July 2026**. More details will follow, but we hope to begin spreading the word now and encouraging everyone to get involved — whether by attending, volunteering, donating, or simply helping us raise awareness.

With the same community spirit that founded the nursery 26 years ago, we're confident we can build something even better for the next generation.

If you'd like to support the project or find out more, please keep an eye out for updates in the coming months. Together, we can secure the nursery's future for Clifton families for decades to come.

Abi Pethybridge

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF ST BARTHOLOMEW'S, HARPLEY

In 2027, St Bartholomew's Church, Harpley, will celebrate a very special milestone: 150 years since the foundation stone was laid in 1876. To mark the occasion, we are planning a year of events that honour both the history and the living community of Harpley and Lower Sapey — and we would love your help.



As part of the celebrations, we hope to gather together old photographs of the area: recognisable houses, farms, landscapes, village life and the people who have shaped it. These will be collated into a commemorative 2027 calendar, marking 150 years since the church opened. Copies of any photographs will also be displayed at an anniversary celebration in May this year. If you have pictures tucked away in albums or drawers that you would be willing to share (copies are absolutely fine), we would be delighted to hear from you.

Our events begin on Friday 6 March with the welcome return — by popular demand — of our former curate, Rev Tobias Thorne, who will once again guide us through the wonders of the night sky. An astrophysicist as well as a gifted musician, Tobias promises to 'elucidate the actual harmony of the heavens' in what is sure to be an enlightening and entertaining evening.

Looking ahead to the new calendar, we're also inviting today's photographers to capture Harpley and Lower Sapey through the seasons. Throughout 2026–27 we will run a friendly, *Countryfile*-style photo competition to select images for each month, with prizes available. Entries can be sent to lowersapeychurchwarden@gmail.com.

With recent improvements at St Bartholomew's — including the new beverage station, ceiling works, replastering, and toilet plans progressing well — the church is looking better than ever and ready to welcome everyone. We hope you will join us in celebrating all that we share, past and present, in this wonderful community.

Keep an eye on *Teme Triangle* for updates and further details.

Liz Young

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Abbreviated draft minutes of Clifton Parish Council meeting, held on 5 February 2026 at Clifton Village Hall.

Present: Cllr, J. Bowden (Chair), Cllrs P. Brooks, R. Neave and A. Griffiths. District Councillor Paul Cumming.

Approval of Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on December 4, 2025 (The January meeting was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions). Approved.

Public Time:

Two members of the public addressed the meeting regarding a village fete in aid of a new Nursery building. The Parish Council is happy to support this venture. Action: Parish Clerk to facilitate the creation of a Parish Summer Fete Working Group to report to the Parish Council.

Planning Applications:

Application M/25/01856/FUL: Parish Council comment submitted. Noted by PC.

Application M/25/00790/PIP: Notification of Planning Appeal.

Cllr Bowden confirmed that there seems to be no Planning Appeal meeting regarding this. Written submissions only to the planning officer. Closing date 6th February. Cllr Neave invited members of the public to voice their opinions on this matter. A member of the public expressed concerns regarding the number of houses being built in the village already and the appropriateness of the lane for additional houses.

Cllr Neave suggested that the Parish Council should note that the PC agrees with the Planning Officer's original decision to reject the planning application and note that additional traffic would not just be going through the village but also using the lane to Whitbourne. Action: Cllr Neave to send a written response to PC Clerk for submission the following day.

A member of the public also expressed concern that the village is classified as a settlement that has facilities, such as doctors' surgery and good transport links, that are not currently present.

Application M/25/02037/HP: Variation of Condition.

Application M/25/01776/HP: Approved.

Application M/25/01775/LB: Approved.

Parish Clerk Correspondence: CCTV and woodland. Chairman has responded. No CCTV on the footpath. There may be CCTV cameras in the woodland off the public footpath. Matter closed.

District Cllr report: Elections may be suspended due to reorganisation of the council. The two options have been submitted. Planning continues to be problematic.

Community Infrastructure Levy: There is now parity between charges imposed on developments in the north and south of the county.

Cllr Brooks asked about the County Council's representation at the recent Hope Lane Appeal. Cllr Cummings has raised this with the relevant officers at the County Council. SWDP should be adopted by the end of March 2026. Cllr Cummings confirmed that the SWDP is a five year plan.

County Cllr Report: County Council £600 million in debt. Exceptional financial support from the government is required (£33million). County Council has applied to increase the council tax by 10%.

Blocked drains and gulleys. Please report any issues by accessing the website. <https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/report-road-or-path-issue/report-drainage-and-flooding-highway> Action: Parish Council or representative to report blocked gullies on Clifton Hill.

Financial and Governance Matters:

Confirmation of the budget for fiscal year 2026/27 is scheduled for January 2026. Agreed by all members.

Parish Matters and Updates:

Review of the Parish Council Calendar 2026, including notable dates and events.

Update on the noticeboard. Cllr Neave updated on progress. It would seem that the cost may exceed proposed amount. Action: Cllr Neave to provide quotes / proposals for noticeboard in the next meeting.

Update on the car park ramp. Completed. Final costs to be confirmed.

Playing Field (CFAF) project update provided by Cllr Bowden. Cllr Bowden states that the increased size of Pavilion has resulted in an estimated cost of £700. An alternative quote has been requested. The MHDC money needs to be spent by 2033. Planning Permission has been applied for. Any alterations to the planning application shouldn't be problematic.

Playground tunnel project update. Action: Cllr Bowden to provide details of the quote for repairing the tunnel at the March meeting.

Wildflower noticeboard update. Regarding the aluminium lectern next to Wildlife Garden. £995 is the latest quote. Decision: The Parish Council confirmed the design. Decision: Cost of approximately £995 agreed by Parish Council.

Tennis court gate update. Ongoing.

Pavilion Update. Cllr Bowden will provide an update on the Pavilion, including information on costings.

Highway Matters: Lengthsman tasks discussed. Action: Cllr Griffiths to request tree donations from Woodland Trust.

Speed sign is in the process of being sent back for further repairs.

Councillors' Reports and Items for Future Agendas:

Action: Cllr Bowden to contact local solicitors regarding registering land for bus shelter. Cllr Brooks asked for the alternative location to be investigated.

Action: Cllr Brooks to investigate with Platform Housing transferring over possession of the land.

Action: Bowls Club to be invoiced in April. Any issues regarding non-availability of the green can be negotiated separately.

Action: Cllr Bowen to investigate gate closure for Playing Ground gates.

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 5 March, at 7:40pm in the Village Hall.



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SHELSLEY VILLAGE HALL UPDATE

Recent events...What a fantastic evening we had at the Shelsley Village Hall on 31 January! Our first live music event since the committee took over last year — and if we're honest, we weren't quite sure what to expect as we'd never hosted anything like it before. But just like our Fireworks Night ... it was a HUGE success!

Matt Peplow absolutely rocked the Shelsleys — amazing live music, incredible vocals and an atmosphere that had everyone up on their feet dancing. The energy in the room was unreal!

And YES... for everyone who keeps asking... Matt is coming back! See the Dates for your Diary below.

Coffee, Cake & Community ... A big thank you to everyone who joined us in January for coffee and a catch-up. It was lovely to see so many friendly faces and due to its popularity, this will now become a FREE monthly Coffee & Cake morning (donations towards the hall are very welcome).

Grant & Funding Update.... We're delighted to share that just under £32,000 has been secured through various grants so far. This funding has been allocated towards essential repairs (including roof repairs), fire safety maintenance and improvements to create a safer, warmer and more welcoming space. Recent works completed include fire safety checks, PAT testing, and a fully functional alarm system now in place. Our latest grant from the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office has part-funded a brand new internal and external CCTV system (installed last month). Unfortunately, roof repairs have been delayed due to the weather, but we're hoping work will begin in March.

We are incredibly grateful to the Parish Council, parishioners, local businesses and our Friends Group for their generous support and donations towards this vital project, which enabled us to fully fund and complete the work.

Hire the Village Hall... To encourage new activities, we're offering four weeks FREE hall hire for community groups, exercise classes and new activities. The hall is also available for private hire at very reasonable rates and offers. Arrange a viewing and share your ideas by emailing shelsleysvhmc@gmail.com.

Dates for Your Diary:

Bar Open – Thursdays & Fridays, 7.00pm–10.30pm

(Pop in for a drink and a catch-up — lighter evening hours currently under review.) If you'd like to volunteer behind the bar or help organise events, please get in touch — we would be very grateful for your support.

Tuesday 3 March – 7.30pm, Shelsleys' Women's Group – An informal first get-together to establish a group for the women of the Shelsleys (Beauchamp, Walsh and Kings). All welcome — a great opportunity to meet new people! The bar will be open for refreshments.

For more information contact:

Karen Metcalfe – kmetcalf.shelsleyspc@gmail.com

Susan Taylor – susan.james21@btinternet.com

Friday 20 March – Bingo Night (time TBC) – Prizes & raffle.

Saturday 18 April – PCC Pie & Pint Night (ticket info and time TBC) – Bar will be open.

Saturday 16 May – Live Music Night – Matt Peplow 'Back to the 80s'. £5 on the door. 80s dress code strongly advised! Bar 6.30pm, Music 8.00pm.

Saturday 27 June – The Shelsleys VH BBQ & Summer Gala – Family Day. Stall holders welcome — please contact us!

What would you like to see at the hall? Drop us a message, post on our Facebook page, or email us at shelsleysvhmc@gmail.com. We'll do our very best to make it happen — but we'll need your continued support to help make these events a success - we look forward to welcoming you to the hall very soon!

HOLLOW MEADOW, STOKE BLISS

In 2023 a Community Interest Company was founded to enable Hollow Meadow, a three acre local wildlife site at Stoke Bliss, to continue into the future as a protected site. After a busy couple of years working with Natural Networks and Severn Rivers Trust it is now in a position to host courses relating to Nature, Crafts and Wellbeing. Bookings for the courses are direct with the course leader. However if you wish to visit the meadow you are welcome to contact them on hollowmeadow23@gmail.com to arrange a time.

Courses held at Hollow Meadow this year include:

11 April, Saturday, 10am-1pm Weaving a small rush table mat.

phi.forestry@btinternet.com

2 May, Saturday, 11am-4pm Beltaine Spring Celebration.

<https://www.gaiasweave.com>

20 June 20, Sunday, (time tba) TVWG Bioblitz.

Contact hollowmeadow23@gmail.com

A SMALL ACT FOR THE TEME VALLEY

Anyone who walks regularly around Clifton upon Teme or through the lanes and fields of Shelsley Beauchamp and Shelsley Walsh will know how lucky we are. A quick circuit to stretch the legs can take in the river meadows, wooded banks, quiet lanes, skylarks overhead, and views that seem to roll on for miles. It's the sort of landscape that quietly restores you without your noticing — one of the great privileges of living here.

Which is why a single drinks can, crisp packet or coffee cup can feel so jarring. No one sets out to litter our verges and footpaths, yet it accumulates all the same: wind-blown wrappers in hedges, bottles in gateways, the odd takeaway box at the edge of a lay-by. Over time, these small bits of rubbish add up and spoil what is otherwise a beautiful walk.

So here's a modest suggestion. If you're already out with the dog, or taking a Sunday stroll, or heading up Clifton hill or along the Teme, consider slipping a spare bag or two into your pocket and picking up a few pieces of litter as you go. Nothing heroic — just what you happen to pass. Five minutes worth makes a surprising difference.



There are a great deal of people who already litter pick and this is also a thank you and reminder that it is a good time to go out again with your bag and gloves. To grow this group if more of us did this regularly, our paths, verges and gateways would stay noticeably cleaner year round.

It also sets a quiet example. Children notice. Visitors notice. And, perhaps most importantly, we remind ourselves that these lanes and fields aren't just scenery — they're ours to look after. A small act, a short walk, a cleaner village.

Next time you're out enjoying the Teme Valley, why not take a bag with you? Follow this link for more litter-picking kit advice:
<https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/join-the-adopt-a-street-scheme>

TEME TRIANGLE EDITORIAL VACANCY

Teme Triangle magazine is looking for an additional editor to help the current two editors produce ten issues a year. A flair for writing and some experience with Adobe InDesign would be helpful, but full guidance and support will be given. Contact Jerry Johns or Louise Hutton for further details.



ST KENELM'S YEW TREE

The yew tree in front of St Kenelm's Church is registered on the Ancient Yew Tree database. Its actual age is unknown but an ancient yew tree is thought to be at least 800 to 900 years old. Who knows if this yew is that old! The Fortingall Yew in Scotland is estimated to be between 1,500 to 3,000 years old making the one in St Kenelm's quite a young tree. No-one is sure why yew trees are so common in churchyards. The Druids valued yew trees for their mythology and symbolism, often planting them on sacred sites which were then used by early Christians as places to build churches on. Yew is poisonous, so there may also have been practical reasons for planting them in churchyards, as the trees could be kept away from grazing animals while still being used for making bows – a popular use for yew trees historically.

SHELSLEY 'TITS TO THE WIND'

On a chilly Sunday last month, 35 ladies took the plunge at The Birche lake in Shelsley Beauchamp raising money for the Worcestershire Breast Unit Haven.

This is the fourth year that Carole Warren has hosted the 'Tits to the Wind' event and this year it raised an amazing £6,000. It was extremely impressive and heartwarming to see how many ladies braved a 'fresh' swim in the lake. Many thanks to Carole and her amazing team of organisers and helpers for keeping everyone safe and providing such a fabulous brunch after the swim - Emma Carpenter, Steph Harrison, Rebecca Perry and Charlotte Banks.



Event organisers Emma Carpenter, Steph Harrison and Carole Warren



Shelsley charity swim for Worcestershire Breast Unit Haven



Happy dippers

ST KENELM'S NEWS

Tower: Sadly we have had a challenging start to February with the collapse of part of the tower exterior wall on Saturday 7 February. The wall at the base of the tower is made of three layers, an internal wall and an exterior wall with rubble infill making it a very wide solid wall. Issues had been observed with the wall but not how loose it actually was, so probably a good thing that it has collapsed before anyone was working on the repairs. We already had good contacts with a stonemason, structural engineer and architect who all visited within the first few days to offer advice. Hopefully by the time this is read we will have the necessary plans and an idea of the costs to repair the damage which will be needed for grant applications and fund raising!



Warm Welcome: A huge thank you to everyone who supported the Warm Welcome morning, 'Wear it Red' in aid of the Midlands Air Ambulance charity last month. It was great to see the hall so busy as people stayed for a lunch of soup, roll and plenty of cake. I am amazed to say the morning raised £358.72.

Praise 4 All: On the third Sunday of the month there is a relaxed family-friendly service held in St Kenelm's. It is led by Rev Jen Jones and the 'Open the Book' team who also visit Clifton school every fortnight to present a short play based on the Bible. The service uses a shorter simplified liturgy and is followed by refreshments. There are toys for our younger members who find it difficult to sit still quietly and space to move around if necessary. Please come and try out the service, the next one will be on Mothering Sunday 15 March, a really special day.

FUN DOG SHOW

Join us for a fun-filled afternoon in Clifton on Saturday 26 September for a Fun Dog Show featuring a variety of classes, prizes for the waggiest tail, and refreshments for all the family. Everyone is welcome – bring your four-legged friends and enjoy the festivities from 2pm until 4pm. Proceeds in aid of St Kenelm's Church and Child of Hope.



TEME VALLEY WILDLIFE

The Teme Valley Wildlife Group's first talk in 2026 was on the subject of owls and, as luck would have it, one made a rare appearance in our garden around the same time. During 30 years residence in the Teme Valley, I have only ever seen four types of owl around here. The most common, which I'm hearing at dusk nearly every day at the moment, is the tawny owl. Tawnies are the large chestnut brown owls who sound the well-known tu-whit, tu-woo noise, which is answered kee-wick by the females. They are the commonest British owl, live in parks and woods, hunt by night and roost by day.

Beautiful, white-fronted barn owls I've only seen occasionally, and never in my garden. These birds have a reputation for being able to fly utterly silently, which, combined with their white colouration gives them a ghostly aspect. Driving along quiet country lanes at dawn and dusk may reveal their graceful hunting habits. Quite a few times, I've stopped my car to watch one quartering a field or dipping low either side of a lane hedge looking for small furry animals. Also beside a lane, sitting in the shadow of an enormous oak tree, I once saw a long-eared owl. This had beautiful amber eyes and was keeping dry atop a fence post during a night of torrential rain.

But the bird encountered in January was a little owl. And, surprisingly, it was being chased by two chattering mistle thrushes in broad daylight. Little owls are not native birds, but they are little, just eight and a half inches tall. They were introduced from the Continent at the end of the last century and are birds of the open countryside. They frequently fly by day as well as by night and feed on small birds and a large variety of insects. Mistle thrushes are bigger, at ten and a half inches tall, and highly territorial. They breed early in the season and are at their most aggressive in February when they have eggs in the nest. My pair was clearly having no truck with a passing little owl. They made a fearful racket seeing it off, but the little character didn't have time to make the call that gives it its common name of screech owl.

The next meeting of the Teme Valley Wildlife Group will be at 7:30pm on Thursday 12 March 2026 at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, WR15 8RR. We welcome Alicia Leow-Dyke whose talk will be an update on the Welsh Beaver Project and concerns the re-introduction of this once-native mammal. Members and friends are welcome. It is just £3 on the door.

For up-to-date information on what wildlife is being seen in the area, or to give us your sightings or comments, please visit our Facebook page. A programme of events, newsletter and bird survey are available on our website.

Stephanie Mocroft

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Church Matters

by Rev Jen Jones



Since the start of 2026 we seem to have had one storm after another. However, some of them may not have officially been named as storms, there certainly has been a lot of rain and ice and bitterly cold winds. Then there are the flooded roads and the potholes, and those really sneaky potholes that, like the shark in *Jaws*, lurk beneath the flood water to take out your tyres or suspension.

Recently I went to Glasshampton monastery for a 'retreat day' and on the morning of my visit the rain was bucketing down and there was one of those biting easterly winds. I was pleased to get settled into the warm room where I would spend the day. I made a hot drink, settled down in an armchair and started to read Psalm 1.

The words of the psalm conjure up images of trees planted by streams of water and winds that blow the chaff away. As I sat in this quite comfortable space within the monastery, the only sound was that of rain beating against the window and the view from that window of the winds blowing and bending the trees.

I thought about the trees by the stream in the psalm and the windblown chaff and about how we are deeply rooted in our rural communities, through our traditions and our history and how these are etched in the landscape and in our lives.

When the storms of life affect us, we bend and yet we hold fast. We rely on our roots to hold us firm until the storm passes. And when it has passed and we begin to recover, we might find that we have shed a few leaves in the process or even discover that some of the chaff, the unwanted stuff, has been blown away.

There is a hymn that you may be familiar with. It was written by Pricilla Jane Owens in 1882. It has a nautical theme rather than a rural one. As I sat in the safe, albeit sparse, comfort and security of that room at Glasshampton, I thought about those times when I too had been buffeted by storms in my life.

In the afternoon the skies cleared and the weak sunshine shone through. I decided to venture out. The wind was still cruel and biting but I went for a walk with my red and white collie who ended up with her white socks the same colour as the rest of her; a rich red-brown due to the mud beneath our feet, in her case paws. That rich earth that binds the roots of the trees, holds them firm and yet allows them to flex and bend in whatever the storm throws at them. The mud clinging to my wellies was a reminder of what was hidden beneath it and that new shoots would soon be appearing and signs of spring would be seen in the buds on the trees, the yellow heads of daffodils and lambs bouncing around in the fields. May we, like the trees, with their roots planted firmly in the rich earth, hold fast in the hope of new life and new beginnings as winter turns to Spring.

Sabbatical wanderings in Assisi, Italy

As promised last month, I am delighted to share with you a few thoughts and impressions from my trip to Assisi last November.

Very early one Monday, I left a rainy, dark Stansted Airport with my two travelling companions Sian and Lucy. We share a common interest in St Francis and St Clare of Assisi and, although they had both visited Assisi before, there was a definite sense of excitement and adventure as we travelled across Europe. We gazed down on the snow-sprinkled Alps below us and emerged from our plane, onto the tarmac at Perugia. The sky was a deep blue and the air was warm. A weather pattern we enjoyed for all of our visit.

Assisi is a UNSECO world heritage site and, walking through its narrow and steep medieval streets and piazzas, time just seemed to melt away. It is the place where in the 1200s St Francis lived, set up his community of brothers and now rests, surrounded by four of them in the crypt of the Basilica. It is also the place where St Clare established her community at San Damiano. Clare took inspiration from the life of Francis, as they both lived remarkable lives devoted to Christ. Francis and his brothers were known for preaching, living in extreme poverty, and serving those at the margins of society. They lived in the midst of God's creation and Francis particularly never ceased to marvel at its awe-inspiring wonder. Clare, being a medieval woman, was obliged to live an enclosed life but drew to her a group of women as they followed her friend Francis in his example.

Whilst in Assisi we stayed at St Anthony's Guest House, enjoying the central location and the hospitality of modern-day Franciscan sisters. We walked up to the place of a mountain retreat used by Francis and his brothers (Eremo delle Carceri), visited the church where both Francis and Clare were baptised, saw their childhood homes, walked down the hill to San Damiano and spent a day exploring the Basilica and its wonderful art works. We also found the tiny church Francis rebuilt and close to it the place where Francis died – both now surrounded by a larger church sited on the plain beneath the old part of Assisi. The stories I had read about Francis and Clare came to life as we stood and worshipped where they had, 800 years ago.

There is so much more I could say...but will end with the reflection that the Umbrian suppers, wine, coffee and gelato also helped to make those days of pilgrimage ones which I shall treasure for a long time. If you are interested in knowing more about following St Francis today do get in touch.

Rev Julia Curtis

LOWER SAPEY NEWS

So, the rain continues and one wonders if the land will ever be dry again. It has been so bad that apparently a huge sink-hole has opened on the main Clifton to Tenbury road. We continually splash through flooded roads and paths and mud is everywhere. Perhaps if we have another summer like last year, we may forget this time. The spring flowers seem overwhelmed but perhaps some may survive through Easter. However, the snowdrops in our churchyard are as lovely as ever, having been spaced out last year to fill vacant areas.

Work continues inside the church and this is surely the last lap. The vestry is awaiting a long-overdue spring clean and new plaster and this is being done. Thanks are due to David Richards for clearing out the vestry beforehand. We can't remember when this was last done. The church received welcome publicity recently in local and national papers due to the Sustainable Flowers campaign, launched by Shane Connolly. The team put their case before the Church Synod last month and we wish them luck and hope that they succeed (*see report on page 3*). Well done to all of them and we are proud of all their efforts.

This year will be the 150th year since St Bartholomew's was founded and we are planning some interesting events to commemorate this (*see page 5*). These will combine history, community celebrations and fundraising across the forthcoming year and will include a celebration of the Harpley health care workers, Quiet Garden days and family histories. There will be a calendar photo competition with entries to be collected and judged in July. I am sure we have many talented photographers in the area. Events begin on 6 March with a return, by popular demand, of our curate, Rev. Tobias Thorne, who will talk again about the night sky. Please come along at 6.30pm to St Bartholomew's, but wrap up warm.



As I looked out into the gloom and usual rain recently, I saw my neighbour Harriet Richards splashing round and round in the fields training for her National Schools Finals on 14 March. I really admire the ambition and enthusiasm of someone who could work so hard for their future.

NOTICES

Church Services at St Bartholomew's. Please check the services at the end of this magazine, but there will be a Circle Service on Sunday 22 March at 10.30am.

Housekeeping for March will be in the hands of Pat Savage.

The Ladies Bible Group will not meet in March, but Lent classes will be held for the Easter period, starting on Tuesday 24 February, also at Pat Savage's at 2pm in the afternoon. Everyone welcome, but please could you confirm if you are coming beforehand.

The Mobile Library will call on Friday 20 March at 10.20am and 10.40am.

Margaret Griffiths

MARTLEY YOUNG FARMERS

We'd like to say a big 'thank you' to Claire from the Animal and Plant Health Agency for joining us recently, along with vet Paul, to give a fascinating talk about the important work they do. It was a really interesting and informative evening, and we're very grateful to them both for taking the time to come along and share their knowledge with us.

Looking ahead, our Big Breakfast is taking place on Sunday 8 March at Martley Memorial Hall. There will be two sittings available, with the first at 9.00am and the second at 11.00am. Breakfast will include a delicious Full English, along with cereals, fruit juice, and plenty of tea and coffee. Tickets are £10 per adult and £6 for children (up to 12 years old). To order tickets, please contact Zoe on 07772 202840 or Amy on 07975 636122. Thank you to everyone who has already purchased tickets — we're really looking forward to seeing you and hope you're all ready for a great morning!

We also have our Easter Bingo coming up on Friday 27 April at Martley Village Hall. Doors will open at 7.00pm, with eyes down at 7.30pm. There will be a tuck shop selling cans of pop, chocolate and crisps, and tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. You're also welcome to bring along your own drinks and snacks. It's always a fun, family-friendly evening, so come along and support us — everyone is welcome.

As always, if you're interested in joining Martley Young Farmers or would like to find out more about what we do, please get in touch with Zoe on 07772 202840. New members are always very welcome, and we'd love to hear from you.

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**CHURCH SERVICES IN CLIFTON, THE SHELSLEYS
AND LOWER SAPEY (HARPLEY)**

March 2026

Sunday 1 March

10.30am: Holy Communion, St Kenelm's Clifton

10.30am: Morning Praise, St Bartholomew, Harpley

Friday 6 March

6.30pm: Skies at Night St Bartholomew, Harpley

Sunday 8 March

10.30am: Family Holy Communion, All Saints,
Shelsley Beauchamp

3pm: Lambing Café Church, Parsonage Farm, Rochford

Sunday 15 March: Mothering Sunday

10.00am: Praise 4 All, Mothering Sunday, St Kenelm's Clifton

6.30pm: Evensong, St Kenelm's, Clifton

Wednesday 18 March

10.30am: Holy Communion. St Andrews, Shelsley Walsh

Sunday 22 March

10am: All Age & Holy Communion, Rochford Church

Sunday 29 March: Palm Sunday

10am: Hanley Rectory to Village Hall Walk for
Palm Sunday Celebration

WELLY CHURCH AT ST KENELM'S CHURCH, CLIFTON

Come and explore where God is at work in the natural world in and around us. We meet in the grounds of St Kenelm's Church, Clifton upon Teme, on the following Saturdays at 4pm:

18 April - Experience Easter outdoors.

23 May - Come Holy Spirit

27 June - Hidden Treasures

25 July - Fishing

22 August - Picnic on the shore

19 September - Harvest



ANCIENT STORIES FOR CONTEMPORARY WISDOM (2)

Hello again to this series of short articles which look at ancient stories and wisdom for today. So far, I've offered some thoughts on the opening story of Genesis and what we can helpfully learn from its description of God making everything in six days.

What we often overlook – and it has some real insights for contemporary life – is what happened on the seventh day. What happened that is so important is (paradoxically) that not a lot happened. Day six has come to a great crescendo. Everything has been made. Everything is very good. Humans (animals a bit like God) have been created and put in charge of the wonderful world. On the seventh day, God rests. God declares the seventh day special and a day of rest - a sabbath.

The pinnacle of creation is not day six, humans in charge. The pinnacle of creation is day seven, humans at rest. The highpoint of the story is relaxation and leisure.

The wisdom for us today is that we too need rest and relaxation. In one church I was part of we had someone whose job was to design very large electric motors. He told me his rule of thumb was to design motors which under normal load ran at about 70% of capacity. Less than that and the motor was bigger and more expensive than necessary; larger than that and there was nothing in reserve for those busy times, and there was an increased likelihood of breakdown and burn out. That, I told him, was pretty much how God had designed creation – and us in it.

Our society is increasingly 24/7. It is enormously difficult to live lives with “sabbath” built in. Ancient wisdom teaches us that “doing nothing” isn't actually doing 'nothing' or wrong. Finding time for rest is helping us to live in a way that reflects the nature of the God who made us.

Robert Barlow

SHELSLEYS' SPRING WALK

We are hopeful that the rain will stop for our spring walk on Sunday 29 March. Come and join us! All welcome including children and dogs on leads. Meet at Shelsleys' Village Hall at 2pm. Tea and cake has been offered.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH

- 3 Shelsley Women's Group meeting, Shelsley VH 7.30pm
- 4 Friendship Club Bingo, Clifton VH 2.30pm
- 5 Clifton Parish Council meeting, VH 7.40pm
- 5 Sky At Night, Rev. Tobias Jones. Harpley church 6.30pm
- 8 Martley Young Farmers Big Breakfast, Martley VH 9am & 11am
- 10 Clifton WI meeting, - 'Child of Hope-Uganda' with Rachel Austin. VH 7.30pm
- 12 Teme Valley Wildlife Group meeting, Stoke Bliss VH 7.30pm
- 20 Mobile Library: Clifton VH 9.45am, Harpley 10.20am, Lower Sapey 10.40am
- 20 Bingo Night, Shelsley VH
- 29 Shelsley Spring Walk, VH 2pm

APRIL

- 14 Clifton WI meeting, VH 7.30pm
- 17 Mobile Library: Clifton VH 9.45am, Harpley 10.20am, Lower Sapey 10.40am

MAY

- 2 The Big Breakfast, Clifton VH 9am-12noon
- 9/10 Pre-Raphaelite Flower Festival, Shelsley Beauchamp
- 16 Live Music 'Back to the 80s', Shelsleys VH 6.30pm
- 23 Coffee Morning, The Old Vicarage, Clifton 10am-12 noon

JUNE

- 27 Shelsley VH BBQ and Summer Gala

SEPTEMBER

- 5 Evening Supper and Talk: The Oldest Hillclimb in the World. Clifton VH
- 26 St Kenelm's Fun Dog show, 2pm-4pm

CHURCH CONTACTS

Oversight Minister: Rev Julia Curtis 01886 853286 revjuliacurtis@gmail.com

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Jackie Gilbert

St Bartholomew's, Lower Sapey (Harpley) Church Wardens:

David Richards / Liz Younge

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CANDLEMAS AT SHELSLEY WALSH

Despite the terrible weather conditions, a full congregation was present at the Candlemas Service held at St Andrew's, Shelsley Walsh on Sunday 1 February.

Candlemas celebrates the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and the purification of Mary, where Simeon and Anna recognise the infant Jesus as the Messiah. This biblical narrative was acted out by our kind volunteers in an atmospheric candlelit setting.

As is the tradition, the congregation lit candles from a single flame, to represent Christ as the Light of the World. Candlemas acts as a bridge between Christmas (incarnation) and Easter (the cross/resurrection), looking back at the birth and forward to the passion, thus marking the formal end of the Christmas-Epiphany season.

After the service the congregation enjoyed medieval refreshments of warm mead, medlar tarts and Candlemas stout-hearted cake.

Louise Hutton

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