

# Teme TRIANGLE

Clifton-upon-Teme • The Shelsleys • Lower Sapey



*Winter walkers in the Shelsleys*

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## In this edition

- Swift boxes installed in St Kenelm's Church
- Pitlands Farm Café opening details
- Appeal to dog owners during lambing season
- Sustainable church flowers campaign latest

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*Visit the website*

[www.temetriangle.net](http://www.temetriangle.net)

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*Clifton's Shane Connolly, pictured with his wife Candy at Windsor Castle last month, when he received his MBE from HRH Princess Anne for services to sustainable floristry (see page 17).*

### YOUR TEME TRIANGLE TEAM

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### Front cover picture:

*Local residents and friends met at Shelsley Village Hall on a cloudy and cold Sunday afternoon for our winter walk. An enthusiastic and chatty bunch, they walked for an hour and finished with mulled wine and mince pies back at the village hall. Watch out for the next outing and come and join in!*

## **JAN 'THE MILK' YOUNG**

Janet Young, better known to her many customers in the Teme Valley as 'Jan The Milk', who recently suffered a broken wrist after slipping on the ice in the cold weather, thanks everyone who sent well-wishing messages following her accident. Jan has been delivering milk, newspapers and other vital supplies to hundreds of households in the Teme Valley seven days a week in all weathers for more than 35 years. Most of her regular customers have been amazed and delighted to get their regular deliveries every day in the severest winter weather.



## **PITLANDS FARM CAFE**

A new café is set to open at Pitlands Farm in March this year. Aptly named, 'The Old Orchards Café', nestling at the heart of Pitlands Farm and surrounded by old orchards, it will be offering everything you can expect from a farm café; breakfasts, brunches, light lunches, home-made cakes and hot drinks, as well as being fully licensed.



Ian and Alice Mann of Pitlands Farm are looking forward to welcoming everyone to The Old Orchards Café when it opens next month. Ian says, "We always look forward to spring as our gardens burst into colour, and this year we're full of excitement as we introduce you all to The Old Orchards Café. Creating a relaxed, friendly place to eat and drink is what it's all about."

Alice adds, "Our vision is simple, quality food using seasonal ingredients direct from our orchards and gardens wherever possible, to be enjoyed in our cosy buildings, beautiful grounds and quiet spaces of Pitlands Farm, of which so many of you are already familiar with. Pitlands Farm holds a special place for many people, and The Old Orchards Café will only add to its charm."

Social media pages for The Old Orchard Café are yet to come, but for all news and updates please follow the socials for Pitlands Farm Holidays:

@pitlandsfarmholidays / pitlands\_farm\_holidays or visit the website [www.pitlandsfarm.co.uk](http://www.pitlandsfarm.co.uk).

## PROTECTING FARM ANIMALS FROM DOG ATTACKS

A law has been amended and will come into effect in March, to further protect farm animals from dog attacks. Four out of five sheep farmers reported dog attacks last year, and some £452,000 was the estimated cost to sheep farmers here in the Midlands.

What has changed? The livestock worrying fine is now unlimited, previously being £1,000. The police have greater powers to investigate. The law extends to cover paths and roads. The law distinguishes more clearly between attacking livestock and worrying livestock.



What is 'worrying livestock'? This includes chasing, running at, causing fear and panic, being loose and not under proper control. Stress alone is legally recognised as harm, as it can cause broken limbs from fleeing, exhaustion and mis-carriages. This is particularly important at present with many sheep in lamb.

What can we do? We are all part of our farming community and, as dog owners, we have responsibility to reduce harm as much as possible. In law, dogs can be offlead if they are under proper control, but the definition for this is very high. Even the presence of a dog in a field can cause worry. A dog may have excellent recall when they wander, but livestock will already have been affected in the event that the dog needs to be called back. Farmers seeing dogs off lead have no idea how 'under control' they are and they will be very concerned.

The safest option is to have your dogs on a short lead and also be aware of animals in neighbouring fields. Please think carefully about planning your walking route, avoid sheep fields if you can, and always take your lead!

*Val Jones on behalf of the Shelsleys Parish Council*

## CLIFTON FRIENDSHIP CLUB

In December we had our annual Christmas lunch, we were fortunate to have been given a donation from the RVS. This enabled us to invite members of the village who live alone to join our members. We had a fabulous time and were joined at this event by representatives from the RVS. Later in December we had a return visit from Stourport Choral, we all sang along to favourite carols and had a joyous time.

Visitors and new members always welcome. For more information, contact [dotmillward@btinternet.com](mailto:dotmillward@btinternet.com).

## PLAN TO BUILD 55 MORE HOUSES IN CLIFTON GETS APPROVAL

Outline planning approval to build another 55 houses on land off Hope Lane, Clifton, has been given the go-ahead following an appeal in October by the developer, TerraStrategic, being allowed by the Planning Inspector.



Nick Rowe, a member of the Clifton Sustainable Heritage Steering Group that opposed the planning application, commented: "While the group is clearly deeply disappointed by the Inspector's decision to allow a further 55 houses at Clifton, increasing the size of the village by around 50% over the last decade, the outcome was not that unexpected. Throughout the appeal process it became apparent that the absence of an up-to-date five-year housing land supply placed Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) in a weakened position, leaving applications subject to the 'tilted balance' set out in national planning policy. Until this matter is resolved, villages such as Clifton remain vulnerable to speculative development. The group hopes that MHDC will address this as a priority to provide greater certainty and protection for rural communities going forward. So, sadly, despite sterling work from the group, the decision has gone against us. We fought a valiant fight and could have done no more."



### CLIFTON CENTENARIAN'S DEATH

Joan Warren, who celebrated her 100th birthday in April last year, died in December. Her family moved to Clifton in 1939.



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## **Unapproved Abbreviated Minutes of the Shelsleys' Parish Council meeting held on January 13 2026**

**Present:** Chairwoman, Val Jones, Louise Hutton, Laura Taylor, John Stinton, Dave Bates, Carole Warren, Jean Hammond and Sean Hinton.

**Apologies:** Karen Metcalfe. County Councillor Justin Bowen.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the November 11 2025 were approved and signed as a true record.

**Parish Council use of the Village Hall:** The clerk explained that the whole of the village hall is now licensed premises and therefore the use of either room is appropriate.

**Lengthsman, Highways & Footpaths:** Lengthsman's worksheets were accepted. Water flowing near New Mill Bridge due to an insufficient culvert is again causing problems. The clerk will contact the land agent and the Highways department. The lengthsman will be asked to clear ditches by and above The Birche in order to stop water flowing along Fetterlocks Lane. The poor state of the road surface by the The Birche Hill bungalows has again been reported to Highways. Kingswood Lane will be closed for 1 day at the junction with Stanford Road on February 12th.

**Footpaths:** In response to an item raised at the last meeting the Chairwoman has spoken with walkers, farmers and landowners about better footpath signage. There was some positive outcome from this. The Footpath Warden has signs but no posts if landowners wish to signpost footpaths. New laws for the Protection of Livestock are soon to be introduced, an article will be placed in *Tem Triangle*.

**Correspondence:** All correspondence for information delivered via email has been circulated including: Clerks and Councils Direct. Details for Supercar Fest 13 June 2026. Police Priorities for Q1 2026. The three priorities agreed are speeding, theft and hare coursing. Details of a MHDC Community Story Telling workshop will be forwarded to those who might wish to attend.

**Village Hall:** Sharon Sarker, member of the Shelsleys Village Hall Management Committee updated the councillors on grants which have been applied for and received. The most important being for work to the roof which starts in February. It is also hoped that a grant to update the lavatories will be successful. The Management Committee has received a grant to update the security of the village hall but this only covers half of the cost. The Parish Council was asked to consider a grant for the other half at £1,216.50. The councillors after discussion

agreed to this payment which will be recorded as an urgent decision at the next meeting.

**Progress Reports:** Defibrillator maintenance. Councillors Hutton and Hinton will check.

Coronation Photograph. The photograph is not yet printed but once done a bespoke frame to match the existing ones will be sought. Broadband. Regular contact with Rob Stepniewski is maintained.

**Budget and Precept:**

After a split decision and a casting vote, it was agreed to request £7,000.00 for the 2026-27 precept, a reduction of £1,000.00.

The new councillor was advised of the training available. Clerk to forward details. The December Parish Walk was well attended and a further walk will take place on 29 March; details to be sent to *Teme Triangle*. The Chairwoman has a rota for litter picking.

Malvern Hills Area Meeting on the 15 January will be attended by the Chairwoman.

**The date of the next meeting:** 10 March 2026

Full minutes will be available on the WCC website:

<http://eservices.worcestershire.gov.uk/myparish/>

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## **SHELSLEY WOMEN'S GROUP**

An introductory get-together with the aim of establishing interest in starting a group for the women of Shelsley (Beauchamp, Walsh and Kings), is planned for Tuesday 3 March at 7.30pm in Shelsley Village Hall.

This will be an informal gathering with the opportunity to meet each other and give your views on what local women might like to gain from the group. The bar at the village hall will be open for refreshments.

Please join us for a friendly and informal discussion to develop ideas on what the group might look like. If you are unable to attend but are interested in receiving more information please contact: Karen Metcalfe: [kmetcalfe.shelseyspc@gmail.com](mailto:kmetcalfe.shelseyspc@gmail.com) or Susan Taylor: [susan.james21@btinternet.com](mailto:susan.james21@btinternet.com).

## **COFFEE AND CAKE AT SHELSLEY VILLAGE HALL**

Coffee and cake at Shelsley Village Hall, Saturday 21 February, 10.30am –12.30pm. All welcome. Come along and have a chat. No cost – donations welcome.



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## **REGAL FOLK FESTIVAL RETURNS TO TENBURY IN MARCH**

The Regal Folk Festival will return to Tenbury Wells from Friday 6 March to Thursday 19 March. Across four headline evenings, the festival will showcase some of the most compelling voices in contemporary and traditional folk, in the intimate surroundings of Tenbury's much-loved community theatre.

The programme features:

- Friday 6 March: James Yorkston
- Thursday 12 March: Maddie Morris
- Friday 13 March: George Boomsma
- Thursday 19 March: Daoirí Farrell

Scottish singer-songwriter and author James Yorkston opens the festival on Friday 6 March. A cornerstone of the Domino Records roster for over two decades, his work is known for its lyrical depth, warmth and quietly powerful storytelling.

On Thursday 12 March, Maddie Morris, winner of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award, brings a set of socially conscious, story-driven songs that explore themes including identity, equality and lived experience, marking them out as one of the leading new voices in British folk.

Rising North Yorkshire songwriter George Boomsma takes to the Regal stage on Friday 13 March. With a pure, resonant vocal style and intricate guitar work, he has appeared at major festivals including Cambridge Folk Festival and Port Fairy Folk Festival, earning a reputation for intimate, arresting live performances.

The festival closes on Thursday 19 March with Dublin-born traditional singer and bouzouki player Daoirí Farrell. Twice recognised at the BBC Folk Awards and widely praised as one of the most important Irish folk singers of recent years, his performances combine remarkable vocal power with deep roots in the Irish singing tradition.

"We are thrilled to bring the Regal Folk Festival back for 2026 with such an outstanding line-up," said Kim Grenfell, Theatre Director at the Regal. "James Yorkston, Maddie Morris, George Boomsma and Daoirí Farrell each bring something very special, and we cannot wait to welcome audiences for four unforgettable nights of folk music in Tenbury this coming spring."

Tickets for all Regal Folk Festival 2026 dates are on sale now:

- Website: [www.regaltenbury.co.uk](http://www.regaltenbury.co.uk) Box Office: 01584 811442

## VALENTINE'S DAY FLOWERS

You don't need to send red roses to show love for Valentine's Day, says local florist Kathryn Hurst who was recently presented with an Award of Excellence by E2 Media. Red tulips also mean love and are grown in the UK in February. Roses at this time of year are grown in countries like Columbia, Egypt and Kenya and flown vast distances to get here.

According to Kathryn of Camomile & Cornflowers Ltd, "If you want to reduce your carbon footprint, buy British flowers. At the moment the following home-grown flowers are available: alstromeria, tulips, hellebores, narcissi and daffodils. They won't be sprayed in nasty chemicals and flown halfway across the world and certainly show you care."



## HOLLOW MEADOW, STOKE BLISS

Hollow Meadow is a three acre local wildlife site in Stoke Bliss. It has a stream running through it, part is managed as a flood plain with the four resident sheep, two Cotswold X and two Soays, (excluded between March and August to allow the wild flowers including orchids and grasses to flower and set seed then gathered for hay). A path is cut through so that visitors can walk through the meadow with minimal disturbance to the biodiversity. The remaining two acres is a steep south-facing bank, part lime and part heavy clay. This again has a different flower-rich mix.

In 2023 a Community Interest Company was founded to enable the meadow to continue into the future as a protected site. After a busy couple of years working with Natural Networks and Severn Rivers Trust we are 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 us on [hollowmeadow23@gmail.com](mailto:hollowmeadow23@gmail.com) to arrange a time.

Courses held at the Meadow this year include:

April (date tba) Weaving a small rush mat. [phi.forestry@btinternet.com](mailto:phi.forestry@btinternet.com)  
May 2 Saturday 11am-4pm. Beltaine Spring Celebration. <https://www.gaiasweave.com>  
June 20 Sunday (time tba) TVWG Bioblitz. Contact [hollowmeadow23@gmail.com](mailto:hollowmeadow23@gmail.com)

## OPEN THE DOOR TO A WORLD OF WONDER WITH GIRLGUIDING

If you know a girl who loves to explore, make friends, try new things and have fun, then Girlguiding might be just what she's looking for. Girlguiding is all about non-stop fun, friendship and unforgettable experiences. It's a place where girls can be themselves, build confidence, learn new skills and enjoy being part of a team. Whether they're outdoors, getting creative, playing games or working together on challenges, every meeting is a chance to laugh, learn and grow.

There are different sections for different ages, so girls can join at the stage that suits them best:

- Rainbows – for girls aged 4 to 7. Full of games, crafts, stories and adventure, Rainbows is all about discovering the world in a fun and friendly way.
- Brownies – for girls aged 7 to 10. Brownies enjoy trying new activities, earning badges, going on trips and learning about teamwork and independence.
- Guides – for girls aged 10 to 15. Guides take on bigger challenges, learn practical life skills, go on camps and adventures, and have more say in what they do.

Girlguiding isn't just about activities – it's about friendship, belonging and confidence. Girls meet others from their area, make lasting friendships and learn how to speak up, support each other and be proud of who they are.

Girls are very welcome to come along for a night to see what it's like, meet others and join in. There's no pressure – just a chance to try something new in a safe and supportive environment.

Joining Girlguiding opens the door to a world of wonder – a place where girls can embrace curiosity, teamwork and the joy of being themselves. From first friendships in Rainbows to confident young women in Guides, Girlguiding helps girls grow, dream and discover what they're capable of.



If you have a girl aged 4 to 15 who's ready for fun, friendship and adventure, now is the perfect time to get involved. For more information, contact Angie Griffiths: [angiegriffiths@aol.com](mailto:angiegriffiths@aol.com) 07957 462519.

## SUSTAINABLE CHURCH FLOWERS GOES TO GENERAL SYNOD

The Sustainable Church Flowers Movement, led by Shane and Candy Connolly, is bringing a motion to the Church of England General Synod this month, asking them to commit to the principles of the movement. Founded in Harpley's St Bartholomew's Church in 2019 it has the support of their Ecclesiastical Patron, Bishop Martin Gorick.

The motion is twofold:

- a. That this Synod embraces the principles of the Sustainable Church Flowers movement - affirming the Church of England's Fifth Mark of Mission by encouraging the use of local, seasonal, and fully biodegradable or compostable flowers and foliage, arranged with natural and reusable techniques.
- b. Encourages the adoption of sustainable practices in church flower arrangements throughout the country; and strongly discourages the use of all floral foams in churches and churchyards within the Church of England.

If 2,000 churches decorated their altar three times a year with twelve Kenyan roses and one block of floral foam, each time the environmental damage could be estimated as follows: the Kenyan roses alone would equate with enough CO<sub>2</sub> to drive 17 times around the world - 430,000 miles.

The Water Footprint (Resource Depletion) for growing the roses would amount to 720,000 litres. Most Kenyan roses are grown around Lake Naivasha, where intensive floriculture has historically been linked to declining water levels and chemical runoff. Water needed per rose is approximately 10 litres. So the total water for this church decoration would amount to 720,000 litres or 158,377 gallons of water extracted from the Kenyan ecosystem – this is a day's use for 96,000 people. And, finally, the plastic waste caused by the foam would amount to 60,000 plastic bags which will take 400 years to compost. This is before we add the CO<sub>2</sub> involved in its manufacture, transport and packaging.

Many UK churches are now moving toward 'foam free' arrangements using water, chicken wire, twigs or 'frogs' (reusable metal pin holders) to arrange into. And sourcing locally grown, seasonal British flowers, which can reduce the carbon footprint by over 90%.

"Sustainable church flowers don't require perfection or large budgets, just a willingness to do things a little differently," says Shane Connolly. "By choosing seasonal stems and reusable mechanics, and working with local growers, churches can reduce waste while still creating welcoming, thoughtful displays. These small, practical steps add up, helping churches and communities care for their sacred places in a way that is both beautiful and responsible, week after week."

## TEME VALLEY WILDLIFE

Numerous small woods bear the name copse or coppice, reflecting their former role in the manufacture of traditional products such as fence posts, hedge stakes, hop poles, sheep hurdles and gates from a renewable wood resource. The practice of coppicing, cutting down a tree and then harvesting its straight regrowth, began in the Neolithic period but came to a halt after the Second World War. The oldest evidence for the use of coppice products in England comes from the 4,000 BC site of the “Sweet Track”, a causeway in the Somerset Levels whose watery domain has preserved its lining of coppiced brushwood to the delight of archaeologists many millennia later.



There are lots of coppices along the Temе Valley, many of them of ash, not a surprise given the thousands of hop poles which were once required. A quick look at the map brings up Mill Coppice, Bine Coppice, Brickbarns Coppice, Rock Coppice and Slashes Coppice to the south of the river and Rough Coppice, Hackenchop Coppice, Howney Coppice, Ash Coppice and Pudford Coppice to the north. Their names represent their owners, the type of tree they contained or, in the wonderfully named Hackenchop Coppice, the sort of work that went on in them.

Woods were typically divided into different areas or “coupes” which were cut in rotation so that usable wood was available every year. For different woods and different uses the trees were cut down in cycles varying from 5 to 20



years. There was always wood to cut and always some just beginning to grow. The great secret of broad-leaved woodland is that it is endlessly renewable. Coppicing extends the lives of these trees, unlike conifers which cannot recover after felling.

Woodland managed by traditional coppicing is alive with wildlife. The cutting of a coupe lets light onto the woodland floor which is followed by a profusion of primroses, violets, foxgloves, wood anemones and bluebells. Fast-growing tree shoots rapidly turn into leafy bushes and bramble makes thickets which provide cover and nest sites for birds and small mammals. Butterflies thrive. Of birds, warblers in particular are attracted to this habitat and make the most of new food and nesting opportunities. As the trees get bigger and light begins to diminish, bees and insects feed on tree nectar and shadier conditions hide larger mammals and provide roosts for larger birds. Rarer plants such as herb Paris and broad-leaved helleborine prefer a denser tree canopy so they wait until conditions are just right before putting up their shoots.

Woods which offer subtle gradations in light and in tree maturity host the greatest variety of plants and animals. Coppicing creates these conditions whilst also producing usable wood, a fact known to our ancestors, but sadly we no longer rely on wood for brushes, brooms, pea sticks, spade handles, basketry, clogs, wattle and daub, firewood, kindling or charcoal. If woodland is managed in the traditional way, wildlife gets a huge boost so bean sticks, anyone?

The next meeting of the Teme Valley Wildlife Group will be at 7:30pm on Thursday 13 February 2026 at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, WR15 8RR. We welcome Andrew Fusek Peters whose talk is called Garden Safari. He is a very popular return speaker and we can expect some stunning photography. 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. Our programme of events, newsletter and bird survey are available on our website at [www.teme-valley-wildlife.org](http://www.teme-valley-wildlife.org). We hold meetings on the second Thursday of the month, January to November. All are welcome.

*Stephanie Mcroft*

### **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.

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## **LOWER SAPEY NEWS**

We had a wonderful carol service at St Bartholomew's in December, organised by Dot Millward and friends, with new readings and some humour. The church looked as lovely as usual and the mince pies and punch warmed us all at the end of the service. The singing was excellent. I was unable to attend the Christmas Day service, but it was very well-attended as usual and there were many children there enjoying the service. Since then, some remaining improvements to the church's structure have gone ahead and this is now pretty well completed. Thanks go to our churchwardens, PCC and the builders who have had to struggle under poor working conditions recently.

Now we can look forward to spring and a slightly earlier Easter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which is 18 February. I am sure there will be Lent classes in our area, but I have no details of these as yet, so please look out for details. Time passes so quickly, especially when one gets old and an early Easter will break up a long winter. It won't be too long before the first snowdrops arrive. I already have some shocked-looking primroses and winter jasmine.

## **NOTICES**

For details of the February services for St Bartholomew's, see details at the back of this edition.

Housekeeping for February will be in the hands of the Richards family. The mobile library will call on Friday 20 February at 10.20am and 10.40am. The Ladies Bible Group will be at 2pm on 10 February at the home of Pat Savage.

Several of our friends and neighbours have been suffering poor health recently and we have them in our thoughts all the time. We have lost some good friends this past year and one was buried in January. I hope that spring will come soon. It is an awful time in our world at present and so many people are suffering and fearful for the future. Things must surely get better this coming year.

## **RIP Jane Edwards of Burton Court.**

Jane passed away at her home, Burton Court, at the end of 2025 after a long illness. She was 89 years old. Jane was married to Gwyn for 63 years and lived with him at Burton Court Farm for many years. She had lived in this area for the whole of her life, having been born at Purshall Green Farm, Elmbridge. She was always involved in some way with St Bartholomew's Church, even having embroidered some of the first kneelers there. She leaves three children, Margaret, John and Alan, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and will be greatly missed by all. Our sympathy goes to all Jane's family and friends

*Margaret Griffiths*

## ST KENELM'S CHURCH SWIFT PROJECT

I'm pretty sure a church renovation is a first for our local RSPB group. Last summer's project to put swift boxes up in Clifton-upon-Teme led us to notice that the village church hosts a good number of nesting swifts — at least 12 pairs. A good way to encourage swifts to use new nestboxes is to place them near an existing colony, so we made plans to install boxes on, or rather in, the church.

Old churches tend to be listed buildings, so attaching anything to the outside is unlikely to be allowed. However, several groups have successfully placed nestboxes behind the louvres in belfry windows, so that was our aim.

Together with Roger Mason, Mike Hails, Stuart Brown, and Nick Skilbeck, we offered to replace the dilapidated louvres in the west window and fit nestboxes behind them. Hopefully, young swifts will follow their instincts, explore the gaps, and see the boxes behind as new nest sites.

Doing a job like this required an excellent carpenter, and we had one in Roger. Mike and Stuart also have good practical skills. Nick and I concentrated on coordinating things, communicating with the church officials, and helping with lifting and carrying. Roger procured some oak for the louvres. The final product fitted perfectly, looked solid, but also heavy!



When we came to fit the louvres, we enlisted Nick's friend Vid, an ex-fireman and constructor of aerial walkways, and one of our members, Al, another ex-fireman and now a paramedic. We had all eventualities covered! They were there to help us safely lift the louvres up two almost-vertical ladders, and that happened without a hitch.

The next stage, of course, is to put the nestboxes in, but the higher church authorities are still thinking about that at the moment. Hopefully, we will have it done before the swifts return in late April or May.

*Simon Evans      sjandjw@googlemail.com*



# Church Matters

by Revd Julia Curtis

February can feel like a quiet month. The excitement of Christmas has faded, the days are still short, and although clumps of snowdrops bring the promise of things to come, spring seems a long way off. Yet it is often in these quieter times that we notice gifts most clearly — not the sort wrapped in paper, but the gifts that arrive through one another.



In our rural communities, generosity rarely makes headlines. It shows itself in smaller, steadier ways: a neighbour keeping an eye on an empty house, someone giving a lift to the shops, a warm word exchanged at the gate on a cold morning. These acts may seem ordinary, but they are gifts all the same, and they sustain us more than we realise. The Christian faith speaks often of gift. Life itself is understood as something received rather than earned. None of us chooses the land we are born into, the people who shape us, or the many kindnesses that quietly support us along the way. When we recognise this, generosity stops being a duty and becomes a response — a way of passing on what we ourselves have been given.

In February, the church marks Candlemas, a festival about light given and received. It is a reminder that even a small flame can make a difference when the days are dark. The same is true of generosity. It does not need to be dramatic or costly. A little time, a listening ear, a shared skill — these are often the most valuable gifts of all.

Rural life teaches us this well. We know how much we depend on one another, especially when weather turns harsh or times are difficult. Generosity here is practical, grounded, and often unspoken. It is woven into the rhythm of village life, from shared harvests to shared worries.

As we move through this month, perhaps we might pause to notice both the gifts we receive and the gifts we are able to offer. Both giving and receiving can evoke the emotion of gratitude, which has a way of opening our eyes to abundance, even when resources feel stretched. Generosity is an outworking of this and generosity, once started, has a habit of spreading.

My prayer for February is that we continue to look out for one another, valuing the small acts of kindness that make our communities strong. In doing so, we reflect something deeply human — and deeply hopeful — about the way we are meant to live together.

## **Sabbatical Update**

In the 'Church Matters' section I reflected on gift and generosity, and I am deeply grateful for the gift of three months sabbatical in the autumn last year. It was lovely to come back and see how well things have worked during this season.

Many of you have asked me 'how was my sabbatical?', and I can truthfully say it was all I hoped for, and more. Through the weeks I enjoyed being back in Norfolk seeing friends and family, and it was especially good to spend a bit more time with my Mum who is now in a nursing home. John and I enjoyed a trip on retreat to Devon and spent a number of happy hours rediscovering our garden, with some serious pruning and de-cluttering happening.

During sabbatical I was able to complete some useful fieldwork for my doctoral studies, and to present a work in progress session at the University of Birmingham. My studies continue part-time for the next 18 months as I begin to crystallise my ideas and write my thesis.

One of the highlights was a trip with two of my friends to Assisi in Italy, but more about that in another magazine issue!

Stepping away for a while often helps in gaining perspective and balance. So I returned in December with fresh energy and a better understanding of rhythms of rest and healthy patterns of ministry.

Safe to say I missed familiar faces, but not my emails, and am pleased to be back, with no major revelations about God calling me over the border to Wales or the Highlands of Scotland. I'm looking forward to 2026 and working together with gratitude and joy at all we are blessed with here in our part of Worcestershire.

*Revd Julia*

## **BLESS THIS HOUSE**

Have you seen the chalk lettering at St Kenelm's doorway? There is a tradition of blessing chalk at Epiphany to mark the doorway of homes and churches. It is a reminder of Mary and Joseph welcoming visitors to their home to see Jesus and also a reminder of the importance of hospitality and an opportunity to pray for God's blessing at the start of the year.

The letters and numbers are as follows: 20+C+M+B+26. The numbers give the year and the letters represent the three wise men, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. They also represent the initials of the Latin phrase, 'Christus mansionem benedicat' which means 'Christ bless the house'. Together they represent the prayer at the start of the year that the church and homes will be blessed by the love and peace of Christ.

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## ST KENELM'S NEWS

**Christmas:** Christmas was a busy month from the start of Advent to Christmas Day. The church looked great with all the small Christmas trees. Thank you to all those who decorated a tree to display in church. It was a real pleasure to see so many people taking part in the different services over the period. As usual the church was packed for the Christingle service on Christmas Eve, the memory of everyone stamping on the floor during the song will stay with me for a long time. A generous £123 was raised at the service for The Children's Society, thank you. Fabulous! A joyous service as Christmas should be.

**Warm Welcome:** St Kenelm's Warm Welcome celebrated Christmas with a lunch and carols on 18 December when approximately 40 people joined in. After a two-week break Warm Welcome is now weekly for the next few months, please do come and meet neighbours and a chance to chat with others. Warm Welcome meets in the village hall, doors open from 8.30am for parents to pop in for coffee and pastries after dropping off children. Parents babies, toddlers and anyone else is welcome all morning with free coffee and cake on offer. Lunch is served at 12.00.

**Church Building:** The Advent season started with electrical issues in church so that several services were either in partial darkness and/or no heating. Never easy to locate an electrical fault. Many thanks to Sean of Rewired who, after several attempts, located the fault in the boiler room. Luckily this was mended and the services had both heating, lights and the organ. Sean was also able to change several light bulbs (*right*) although he had to use a tower to do this safely.



**Tower Repairs:** On the 16 December you may have heard the bells being rung in St Kenelm's. This was part of a project by the University of Birmingham to assess the impact of bells on the structure of church towers, carried out by Dr Mohammad Reza Salami and his two students, Lucy Phung, and Camryn Palmer (*pictured, opposite right*) Thanks to Martley Bell Ringers who, through personal contacts, helped arrange for this to take place. Accelerometers were attached over the cracks to record any movements as



different bells were rung; the results are due soon when we will have more details about whether it is safe to resume bell ringing.

**Volunteers:** If you have an hour or two to spare a month to help with the church building there are plenty of jobs such as brass cleaning, church cleaning, gardening and other jobs; please contact Ruth Wilson. [ruth.wilson38@btinternet.com](mailto:ruth.wilson38@btinternet.com). Volunteers are always very welcome!



*Ruth Wilson, Churchwarden*

### **ANCIENT STORIES FOR CONTEMPORARY WISDOM**

Welcome to a series of short articles which look at ancient stories and how we can draw from them wisdom for living today. This first article looks at the Genesis story right at the very beginning of the Bible which tells of the start of everything. It's not a story of history or science but one told to bring hope and reassurance.

Like stories of King Arthur or Robin Hood, it's a story that uses an old tale to inspire later generations. The stories of Arthur inspire courage and chivalry. The stories of Robin Hood inspire standing up against oppressive power. The Genesis story inspires hope in a time of chaos. Contemporary scholarship suggests that the story as we have it now was told at a time when life for the people of God, the Israelites, had fallen apart. They had been ethnically cleansed to Babylon. The temple where they met with God had been razed to the ground. The royal household, descended from King David had been ended. The land God had promised them had been lost. The God they used to meet in Temple worship had seemingly deserted them. Instead, in Babylon, they were surrounded by people who worshipped the sun, moon and stars as gods. The God of the Israelites had apparently abandoned them and everything was chaos.

This story starts with chaos. It tells of the raw material that God uses for creation. It's chaos - waters, dark, swirling, turbulent, unpredictable. God breathes across the chaos and starts to bring order. The story reminds the Israelites that the Babylonian "gods" – the sun, moon and stars - are only there because their God calls them into being.

The world today can feel dark, swirling, turbulent unpredictable chaos. Our personal lives may sometimes feel the same. But God is big enough to deal with any amount of chaos. That brings hope and reassurance.

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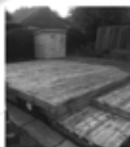
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## WHAT'S LENT ABOUT?

Lent may originally have followed Epiphany, just as Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness followed immediately on from his baptism, but it soon became firmly attached to Easter. It became the principal occasion for baptism and for the reconciliation of those who had been excluded from the Church's fellowship for whatever reason. This history explains the characteristic notes of Lent – self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter.

### Muddy Boots Mission Area Lent Reflections

As usual there will be Lent Reflections across the Muddy Boots Mission Area (Wyre Forest West, Four Rivers and Teme Valley). We'll be following part of the Pilgrim Course of the Church of England and we will be looking at the Lord's Prayer. The sessions are as follows:

- Week 1 - Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name
- Week 2 - Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven
- Week 3 - Give us today our daily bread
- Week 4 - Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us
- Week 5 - Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

### Locations and times

Great Witley - there will be face-to-face sessions in the Four Rivers Group from 1430-1600 on Wednesdays these being held at the Rectory (that's David's house) which is 1 Chiltern Close, Great Witley, WR6 6HL. The sessions are: 25 February, 4 March, 11 March, 18 March, 25 March.

**Online** – these will be via Zoom on the Wednesdays in Lent at 1900-2030. Contact Sallie for more details.

**Around the Teme Valley** – these will be held on Fridays in Lent from 1030-1200 in various people's homes. Contact Julia or Jen for details

Feel free to mix and match as best suits your commitments.

**Contact details** are given below:

Rev Sallie Butcher on 01299 896837 or email [revsallie@wyreforestwest.org.uk](mailto:revsallie@wyreforestwest.org.uk)

Rev Julia Quinn email at [revjulia@wyreforestwest.org.uk](mailto:revjulia@wyreforestwest.org.uk)

Rev Julia Curtis on 01886 853286 or email at [revjuliacurtis@gmail.com](mailto:revjuliacurtis@gmail.com)

Rev Jen Jones email at [tvscurate@gmail.com](mailto:tvscurate@gmail.com)

Rev David Morris on 01299 896783 or email at [revdm777@gmail.com](mailto:revdm777@gmail.com)

Rev Dr Tobias Thornes on 07487 885234 or email at [revtobiast@outlook.com](mailto:revtobiast@outlook.com)

I hope that Spring will come soon. It is an awful time in our world at present and so many people are suffering and fearful for the future. Things must surely get better this coming year



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

## **February 2026**

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February**

- 10.30am:** Morning Prayer, St Kenelm's Clifton  
**10.30am:** Morning Praise, St Bartholomew, Harpley  
**4.00pm:** Candlemass, St Andrew's, Shelsley Walsh

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February**

- 9.30am:** Holy Communion, Stoke Bliss Church  
**3.00pm:** Snowdrop Songs of Praise, Rochford Church

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February**

- 10.00am:** Praise 4 All, St Kenelm's Clifton  
**6.30pm:** Evensong, St Kenelm's, Clifton

### **Start of Lent**

### **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February**

- 10.30am:** Holy Communion with Ashing,  
St Andrews, Shelsley Walsh

### **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February**

- 10.30am:** Circle Service, St Bartholomew, Harpley

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March**

- 10.30am:** Holy Communion, St Kenelm's Clifton  
**10.30am:** Morning Praise, St Bartholomew, Harpley



*Carols on the Green in Clifton before Christmas*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

- 3 Stanford History Group Spring lectures begin, Upper Sapey VH 7.30pm
- 4 Friendship Club talk: *50 Years A Nurse in the NHS*. Clifton VH 1.30pm
- 5 Clifton Parish Council meeting, VH 7.40pm
- 8 Teme Valley Market, Talbot Hotel, Knightwick. 10.30am-1.30pm
- 10 Clifton WI Meeting, VH 7.30pm
- 13 Teme Valley Wildlife Group meeting, Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall 7.30pm
- 14 Shelsleys Parish Council meeting, VH 7pm
- 18 Friendship Club – Physio in the Sticks, Clifton VH 1.30pm
- 20 Mobile Library: Clifton VH 9.45am, Harpley 10.20am, Lower Sapey 10.40am
- 21 Coffee & Cake, Shelsley VH. 10.30am –12.30pm

### MARCH

- 3 Shelsley Women's Group meeting, Shelsleys VH 7.30pm
- 4 Friendship Club Bingo, Clifton VH 2.30pm
- 5 Clifton Parish Council meeting, VH 7.40pm
- 5 Sky At Knight, Rev Tobias Jones. Harpley Church 6.30pm
- 8 Curry & Karaoke Night, Shelsleys VH
- 10 Clifton WI Meeting, VH 7.30pm
- 20 Mobile Library: Clifton VH 9.45am, Harpley 10.20am, Lower Sapey 10.40am

## CHURCH CONTACTS

**Oversight Minister:** Rev Julia Curtis 01886 853286 [revjuliacurtis@gmail.com](mailto:revjuliacurtis@gmail.com)

Christenings, Weddings, Funerals:

Rev Jen Denniston 07783 432017

[jendenniston@gmail.com](mailto:jendenniston@gmail.com)

Jill Smith 01886 853311

Pat Snelling (Clifton) 01886 812443

**All Saints, Shelsley Beauchamp / St Andrew's, Shelsley Walsh Church Wardens:**

Kate Hurst 01886 812184

[kathrynhurst@btopenworld.com](mailto:kathrynhurst@btopenworld.com)

Holly Perks 01886 812369

[hollyperks@me.com](mailto:hollyperks@me.com)

**St Kenelm's, Clifton:**

Ruth Wilson (Church Warden, incl. Warm Space) [ruth.wilson38@btinternet.com](mailto:ruth.wilson38@btinternet.com)

Jackie Gilbert

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

David Richards / Liz Younge [lowersapeychurchwarden@gmail.com](mailto:lowersapeychurchwarden@gmail.com)





*Repairing the louvers in the tower of St Kenelm's church in Clifton in order to instal swift boxes (see report on page 23)*

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Contributions for the March 2026 edition by Friday 13 February please, to:  
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