



The Swaffham Crier

Volume XLVIII Number 12

December 2024



Editorial

Well! It looks like A&E waiting times are going to vanish in a flash! Similarly at the GP's surgery. This is because no-one will be allowed in. Not without having first gained permission from yet another NHS 'digital portal' first - yes, as your loved one lies bleeding on the carpet, you, having finally found which pigging portal it is, will doubtless be screaming 'what do you mean, you can't remember your passport?' Read Bottisham Patients (p22) and get complaining!

And many congratulations to Andrew Camps (see our centre pages) who received a much deserved Ethelreda Medal from the bishop last month at Ely Cathedral for his services to this parish.

St Cyriac's Owl Event was an enormous success — everybody loved it and you can see our account on page 14. Congratulations to Alister Leese on his magnificent birds and to Sharyn Robinson for organising the event in such a lovely location — come back very soon, Owls!

Meanwhile, Mark Lewinski has written a long letter to the Crier detailing potential problems and uncertainties with the new Heating Scheme systems. He is calling for a User Group, and indeed there has been some attempt in this direction in the past. But this really should be resumed — if no-one-else will host, then I will, and at least we can get some sort of consensus on what is going on.

Well done, David, Sue, Allan and Jackie for getting us on the Map (see Letters) and January's Crier will come out as soon after New Year as we can make it.

Happy Christmas Everyone
from
All at the Crier Team!

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Cover Picture: *Winter Walk*, oil painting by **Karen Fisher**



Letters to the Editors



Dear Editors,

Christmas Coffee Morning

Another festive and fun Christmas Coffee Morning in the Village Hall on a bright frosty November morning brought in people of all ages from around the village, and further afield, to buy delicacies from the Pop-Up Teashop and goodies from local traders. Artwork, jewellery, handicrafts, eco-products and seasonal items were on sale, alongside Kate's legendary bric-a-brac, and newcomers Hidden Treasurers from Burwell. The café delighted with its range of cakes, cookies and festive bakes.

The event was in aid of St Mary's church, with stall fees and raffle supporting the wonderful Burwell Print Centre. Thanks to the wonderful support we were able to send £144 to our chosen charity, and bank £210 for church.

A huge thanks to stallholders, bakers, customers, and all who assisted with the event in any way.

Look out for an enhanced event next year!

Dee Noyes



Swaffham Prior Village Hall
Christmas Carol Singing
With Village Band
11th December 6:30 – 8:30
Mulled Wine & Mince Pies
All Are Welcome



**Owls in St Cyriac's —
see p. 14 for the review
of this amazing event**



Dear Editors,

5070 Miles to Swaffham Prior!

Me and Sue and Alan and Jackie Gould have just returned from the Seychelles. At a beach bar we had a signpost made pointing to Swaffham Prior. The artist didn't really get the Prior bit so it's squeezed on the bottom but she made a good job of the churches. We were proud to put SP on the world stage!

David Jackson.

Dear Editors,

Pegged or Strung Out?

I don't like writing a pre-emptive or predictive letter, but I feel I should do this one.

By the time the December Crier will be out, the 2025 tariff for heating units for the village heating scheme should be published also. The Heating Team tell me this should happen on 30th November. The unit price is pegged to the price of oil, we are told.

I have emails from the last oil supplier I used in 2023, from this time last year. They were offering 1000 litres at 69p per litre ex VAT.

This November the same company have been pricing at around 53-55p per litre. That's a 20% drop.

Assuming that pricing is typical, as the heating oil market is very competitive,

can we expect a 20% drop in the heat unit rate? By my calculator, the current 9.68 per unit would drop to 7.75. But I have a feeling it won't go that low. I wonder even whether it will go down at all. By the time you read this, we might know, either way.

The problem so often here is knowing, or not knowing, how things are. The heating scheme suffers from the lack of a user group. What gets published in the Crier by the heating team is promotional, ie how many more connections are being made, and how to join. And a couple of months ago, some quotes on how wonderful the scheme is, from happy residents. November Crier? Nothing. Does that mean nothing to report, or nothing good to report? I don't know.

A month or two ago I was talking to someone who complained that the bill function on their new monitor the 'pipit', didn't work. I didn't think it was supposed to, but I had to get it confirmed from someone else, ie what I thought was the case, ie that billing wasn't a useable feature on the pipit anyway.

The day before writing this, I saw people were posting on the SP facebook noticeboard that they couldn't get the heat up to a reasonable level. The phrase 'it's our turn to have problems' struck me; there seems to be a feeling that problems with the running of the system are a regular occurrence. Are they? Or is that just griping? I honestly don't know.

In summer our system stopped working one day. The only reason I knew was because I'd noticed the heat use numbers hadn't gone up on the monitor. (we have a hot water tank, not on demand, because we have solar water also, so it wasn't a matter of no hot water coming out of the tap). There is no alert on the monitor to say the system is not working, (our oil boiler did have a light to say it wasn't working) let alone that it had depressurised. But apparently that was what had happened, the engineer said, when he fixed it a few hours later. Why? he was asked. 'It just does that sometimes', was the not very reassuring reply. I have heard since from someone else, that you can re-pressurise it yourself if you know what to do. But I don't know how. If I had been there when the engineers re-pressurised it, I would have asked what he had done and whether I could do it myself. Even if you know what to do, is it safe for a non-plumber to do? I have no idea.

Yesterday also, someone not on the heating scheme said to me: are they still using the gas backup, like they were earlier in the year, when her boiler service man had told her it was happening? I didn't know. I hope not and I assume not. But I don't actually know.

It all seems to be hearing by the by, hearsay and passing conversations. And people posting on the Swaffham Prior facebook page when they aren't happy.

I am left wondering then: are there really a lot of problems with the heating scheme such that people feel 'it's our turn to have problems', or not? Just not knowing the answer to that points up a problem. I know there are people who love it and are very happy, and extol the virtues of it. Fine; I don't know what proportion they are of the whole, and happy people often don't feel the need to be very involved, I get that; but there are clearly also people who aren't feeling totally ok with the heating scheme in their homes. Those people matter a lot, whatever proportion they are. They need to feel they are well informed about what's going on.

At the very least, and this would be so easy, it needs someone on the heating scheme to post a weekly email - not a newsletter, just an email - to all users, saying how things are going this week, where there have been issues, latest updates on the system, any generally useful information. Like whether we could expect the unit price is likely to reduce, or not, rather than just publishing the 2025 tariff at the end of November. I hope we should see a significant reduction if we are pegged to oil. But as so often with the heating scheme, I don't know.

Mark Lewinski

This Month's Cover Picture

Winter Walk was painted in January this year, inspired by walks up the Lower End road towards Reach with their black lab Izzie. It was part of a Spring exhibition at Parndon Mill, Harlow "Out of the Grey".

Karen regularly exhibits in the village with Prior Arts Group and takes part in Cambridge Open Studios each July. You can see more of her paintings this month (6th-22nd December) at the Babylon Arts Winter Open exhibition "Small, but Perfect" in Ely.

Instagram [Karen \(@paintingsbykarenfisher\)](#)





Rainbow Christmas Fair Tombola

In support of the upcoming Christmas Fair, FOSPS are kindly asking for brightly coloured donations for the Christmas Fair Tombola. Please see some examples below

Maltesers, digestives, ready salted crisps, Kit Kats, skittles, munchies, red candle

Chocolate orange, Haribo, fudge, revels, toffee crisp, mini cheddars, orange Fanta, orange stationery, orange juice/squash

Marshmallows , raspberry laces, pink wafers, fruitellas, bath bomb, nail varnish, pink toiletries

Dairy milk, quality streets, hot chocolate, Ribena, Parma violet sweets, hero's, chocolate fingers

Oreo's, cheese and onion crisps, air freshener, blue football, teabags, hobnobs, milky bar, roses chocolates

Mint chocolates, after eights, apple juice, green toy, Pringles, matchmakers,

December 2024

SATURDAY

FRIDAY

THURSDAY

WEDNESDAY

TUESDAY

MONDAY

SUNDAY

1 9 Cage Hill	2 39 High Street	3 12 Lower End	4 Red Lion Pub	5 7 Rogers Road	6 5 Tothill Road	7 Well House 50 High St
8 15 High Street	9 *Village Hall	10 22 Rogers Road	11 30 Mill Hill	12 25 High Street	13 22 Green- head Road	14 37 High Street
15 Granta House 10 High Street	16 32 High Street	17 19 Tothill Road	18 14 Mill Hill	19 19 Lower End	20 1 Mill Hill	21 Anglesey House 59 High St
22 47 High Street	23 Scout Hut High Street	24 St. Mary's Church	25 Merry Christmas	26	27	28
29	30	31				

* Created by the
pupils at
Swaffham Prior
School



CHRISTMAS FAIR

AT SWAFFHAM PRIOR VILLAGE HALL

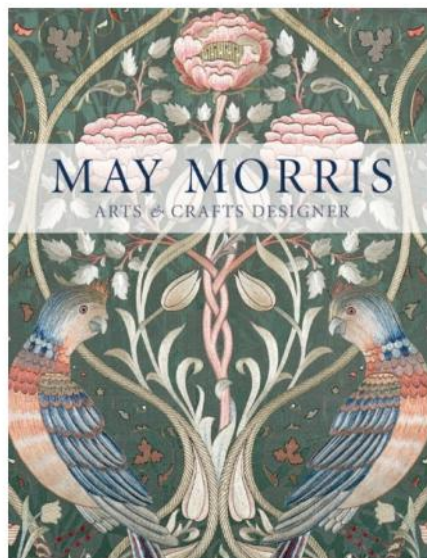
JOIN US FOR CRAFTS,
STALLS, GAMES, TREATS
AND BEVERAGES!

COME AND MEET THE GRINCH!

18TH DECEMBER AT 3.30-5.30PM

FREE ENTRANCE

**You are very welcome to join
our open meeting**



theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



**Come along on Monday, 20th
January where
Fiona Rose will be talking on May
Morris, daughter of designer
William Morris
£5**

**Swaffham Prior
Village Hall at
7:30pm**

Boxing Day Hockey Match

SWAFFHAM PRIOR VS SWAFFHAM BULBECK

The Denny, Swaffham Bulbeck

Thursday 10.45 am (10.30 am players)

COME AND SUPPORT SWAFFHAM PRIOR!!

All proceeds to MAGPAS



**Contact Mandy Kingsmill if you would like to play in the winning team!
New players especially welcome**

07796 091855 (mandy@kingsmills.uk)

POEM OF THE MONTH

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

W B Yeats

The Advent poem to end them all, this was written in 1919. It was Yeats's response to the conflagration that had come close to destroying a European civilisation rooted in the historical legacy of the Holy Roman Empire and the notion of "Christendom". It prophesies, not inaccurately, the rise of fanatical demagogues who will finish the job. Yeats theorised that history moved in concentric spirals (gyres) of two thousand years, one waxing as the other waned, with radical violence attending the tipping point. Thus, Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents marked the death throes of the pre-Christian era symbolised in the poem by the Sphinx, whilst "a rocking cradle" in a Bethlehem stable ushered in the new dispensation. Now, the Christian era in its turn is drawing to a chaotic close, and the Sphinx - the Antichrist - is stirring again.

Haven't been able to get this poem out of my head this past few weeks. Can't think why.

Andrew Grant

The Reading Group reads... Mandelbaum Gate

By Muriel Spark

We read *Mandelbaum Gate*, written in 1965, by Muriel Spark.

Set in Jerusalem in 1961, against the back drop of the Adolf Eichmann trial, half Jewish, catholic convert (as was the author), Barbara Vaughan, has come here in the hopes of meeting her fiancée, Harry Clegg, a divorced archeologist, working at the site of the Red Sea scrolls. (He has actually gone to Rome, hoping to get an annulment of his previous marriage.) To do this, she must pass through the Mandelbaum Gate, which stands in the middle of Jerusalem, on the barbed wire frontier between Israel (occupied Palestine) and the Jordanian Arab sectors. For a Jew, this is very dangerous, as the Palestinian Arabs have an “hysterical” hatred of the Israeli Jews. Barbara has met a middle aged, very benign diplomat, Freddy Hamilton, who works in the British Embassy and understanding the political situation, insists that she needs help. (There is an interesting side plot here, concerning Freddy’s frightful controlling mother who lives in the north of England with Freddy’s old Nanny, who’s sadly becoming pretty unhinged: It has a gruesome end).

He too needs assistance, so involves the highly intriguing Ramdez family. Jo, the father, who over the years has made a comfortable living out of the British military and now, by running a tourist agency, for Christian pilgrims, who want to visit holy sites.

Abdul, one of his sons, actually 34, but tells the world he’s 25. Highly intelligent, educated at Cairo University, a fluent English speaker and has good friends of all nationalities. Then Suzi, a younger sister, as equally intelligent and resourceful in challenging situations as her brother. All three, smart Arab operators, doing a bit of spying and smuggling on the side.

Once Barbara is safely across the frontier, the real fun and games really start. Real fear, confusion, abduction, farce, espionage, kidnap and smuggling. Barbara, as she had always wanted, gets to see all the holy sites, but heavily disguised as an Arab servant, is ill with scarlet fever and eventually gets back to Israel, hidden under a cart load of smuggled sandals, finally dressed as a nun, wearing a stolen habit.

She is reunited with Harry and of course they get married. Abdul and Suzi, have to disappear - Abdul to Tunisia - with his Jewish friend Mendel, to open a cafe and Suzi to Athens where she marries a lawyer.

A story, both deadly serious and very funny. Mixed religions and cultures, living in an impossibly divided society.

Margaret Joyce.



Next month we’ll be reading: *Bournville*, by Jonathon Coe.

Julie's Christmas Vegan recipes

Parsnip, chestnut and sage vegan nut roast

400g parsnips	180g cooked chestnuts, chopped
2 tbsp chia seeds	125g ground almonds
6 tbsp water	Small handful flat leaf parsley,
1 tbsp olive oil	chopped
1 onion, chopped	Salt and pepper to taste
2 cloves of garlic, crushed	<u>To Top</u>
6 sage leaves, finely chopped	½ tsp olive oil
¼ tsp nutmeg	8 sage leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 180c. Grease a 900g loaf tin and line the bottom with baking powder.

2. Peel and chop 400g of parsnips, removing the core, steam or boil until soft, then mash.

3. While the parsnips are cooking, grind the chia seeds to a powder. Add 6 tbsp of water and stir until you have a thick paste.

4. Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a pan and fry the chopped onion until soft, add 2 cloves of garlic, 6 chopped sage leaves, ¼ tsp nutmeg and continue cooking for a few minutes.

5. Stir through the chestnuts, ground almonds, a small handful of chopped parsley and your chia paste and mashed parsnips.

6. Stir well and season to taste, transfer to prepared tin and press down well. Bake for 25-30 minutes until golden brown on top.

7. Allow to cool in tin for 5 minutes, then run a knife around the sides and turn out onto a serving platter.

8. To serve, crisp up the remaining sage leaves, frying for a few minutes in olive oil and sprinkle over the top.

Serves 6

Vegan sausage rolls

375g pack of vegan puff pastry	2 tsp smoked paprika
1 tsp olive oil	100g fresh breadcrumbs
200g leeks, trimmed weight, finely	250g apple sauce, jar
chopped	¼ tsp sea salt
1 tsp wholegrain mustard	Freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp fresh chopped sage	1 tsp tamari, (soy sauce) for brushing

1. Preheat the oven to 220c. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the leeks for 5 minutes until softened. Add the mustard, sage, smoked paprika and breadcrumbs and heat

through for 1 minute. Add the apple sauce, season well and fry for 2 minutes. Set aside to cool.

3. Roll the pastry into rectangles, Spoon the mixture into the middle of each sheet, fold over the pastry, then press edges together, using a fork to crimp and seal them. Slice and cut into sausage rolls.

4. Brush with tamari, put on a greased baking tray and bake for 15-18 minutes until puffed and golden.

Classic Vegan Mince pies

200g plain flour

90g dairy-free butter, cubed

75g icing sugar

300g vegan mincemeat

2 tbsp soya milk

1. Preheat oven to 180c, Make the pastry, add the flour, butter and icing sugar to a food processor and pulse until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs, remove to bowl and bring together with your hands to form into a ball, if a bit dry add a little water.

2. Refrigerate for 20 minutes, then roll out to 4-5mm thick, grease a bun tin and use a pastry cutter to fill each hole, fill with the mincemeat and top with star shaped pastry shapes, brush with milk and cook in the oven for 20-30 minutes until the pastry is cooked through and crisp.



Newmarket Cinema, The Stable, High Street, Newmarket.

December 16th - A Good Woman (2004) (PG)

Doors open at 6.45pm with the film starting at 7.30pm. Admission is £6 which includes free refreshments. If you would like to reserve seats either send an email to richardjbowler@outlook.com or call 01638 666810

Richard Penney

St Cyriac and St Julitta

Owl Experience

26 October 2024

The Church of St Cyriac and St Julitta, which, at various stages of its 800-year existence has from time to time endured a state of almost total ruin, has probably hosted many an owl over the centuries, but never before, I suspect, deliberately, or in the variety that descended on the last Saturday in October.

Under the eagle eye (sorry about that) and leather-clad wrist of Alister Leese, five exotic residents of Hawkeye Falconry UK were put through their paces in the nave of the church.

Leather gauntlets had been left lying handily around the seats and the birds entertained and intimidated two full houses of enraptured (enraptured?) guests, landing on the wrists of adults and children alike, some of the latter smaller than the owls.

We were introduced to father-daughter pairing Domino and Coco, spectacled owls which are unusual in their approach to catching prey - in this case monkeys. Rather than flying stealthily and pouncing, spectacled owls have evolved to resemble their prey facially, and simply sit waiting for an incautiously curious monkey to get too close.

More conventional – at least by owl standards – was Squeak, a melanistic barn owl, unusual only for being black rather than normal barn-owl-coloured, who lived up to his name and flew at high speed and in utter silence, which is what makes them such effective hunters of small mammals. Did you know a barn owl has such acute hearing, aided by the dish-shaped receptor of its face, that it can hear a mouse stirring at 30 metres?

Mylo, an extremely exotic Peruvian Striped owl, was even worse news for mice with a greater auditory range still.



The largest of our visitors was Clover, a Ural owl with a rather sad history. Ethnically Russian, and with a father named Putin, she was due to return to Russia in early egg-hood, but the invasion of Ukraine put paid to that and Clover now has a UK passport.

It was a fascinating afternoon and a highly entertaining way of raising much-needed funds for the Churches Conservation Trust, which maintains St Cyriac's and churches like it, that, without their support, would fall into decay and ruin as St Cyriac's once did.

Well done and many thanks to Sharyn Robinson for organising the event.

Andrew Grant





Here are our daughters , Lois and Ellen, aged 10 and 7, meeting Dominic the owl at St Cyriacs yesterday. It was a wonderful event.

Lucinda Brown



And the grown-ups loved it too! Caroline Matheson and Hilary Grant — absolutely enchanted...



Andrew Camps
Etheldreda Medal Presentation, Ely Cathedral,
Saturday 26 October, and celebration in St
Mary's Swaffham Prior, Sunday 27 October 2024

Andrew Camps is a long-term Trustee, Secretary and Treasurer of the Swaffham Prior P, member of the village Parish Council, and on the Church Council of St Mary's, he has been years as verger and absolute general factotum at St Mary's is greatly appreciated. He is "diligent"

From the Ely diocese website: The Etheldreda Medal Award is for persons whose service (as a national or international concern) is both 'generous' and 'outstanding'. It is also essential people; those who might (in partnership with others) come close to being nominated for church communities, but also serve their wider community in exemplary fashion. For many relate to a short but extraordinary act of kindness or course of conduct.

The medals were presented by Bishop Graham Kings, Honorary Assistant Bishop in the E



archial Charities dispensing grants and educational resources to meet local need. A former in a steadfast supporter and fundraiser for the church link in Tanzania. His more than thirty cent, hardworking, caring, stoical and committed”.

to community (which might be as ‘local’ as their extended family but could be as extensive special that the person’s good works have hitherto been unrecognised. I am looking for excep- or a King’s Award for Voluntary Service. This award is for those who not only service their people this will be about the duration and persistence of their good works, for others it may

ly diocese.

Dee Noyes

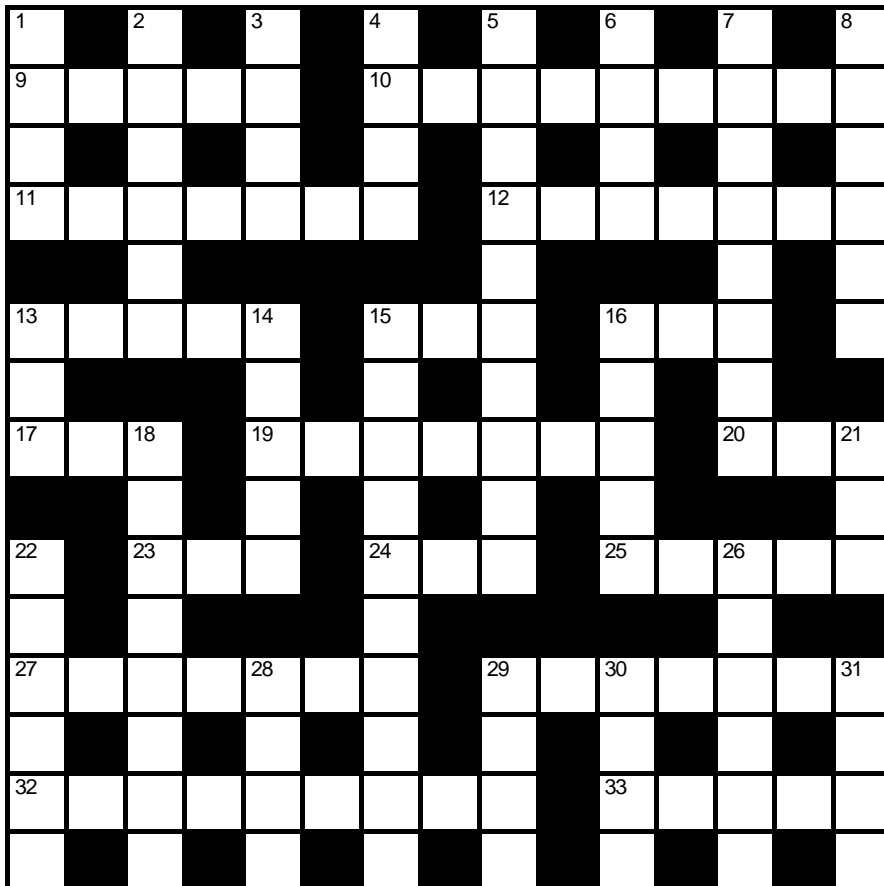
Crossword Number 222

Compiled by

Sponsored by **The Red Lion**

BYWELL

* clues contain no definition, but solutions are of a kind; they are nine in number, which is not quite enough to link them. Send your answers to the editors by 31st December 2024. The sender of the first correct solution out of the hat will win a free Sunday Lunch at *The Red Lion* - See the pub manager for full details. Emailed solutions are acceptable but please include "CROSSWORD" and the crossword number. in the header.



Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Tel:.....

Across

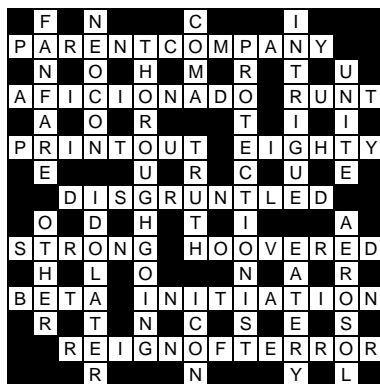
- 9 Am I following the motorway to where? (5)
- 10 * Starting to get ready in town in France (9)
- 11 * It's quite near coming back after midnight (7)
- 12 Brutish heirs go insane (7)
- 13 Brush off the broom, perhaps (5)
- 15 Plutonium's found in a pimple (3)
- 16 Grazing land in Bleak House (3)
- 17 Alternative up-tempo energy (3)
- 19 Staying and suffering (7)
- 20 In the middle of a date range is another one (3)
- 23 Long thin instrument central to Borodin composition (3)
- 24 It's cold back in the city (3)
- 25 * Denying the ending of mis-birth (5)
- 27 * Rules about another long thin instrument (7)
- 29 Harass monk with missile followed by novice (7)
- 32 Bewildered senile lot are most seeking company (9)
- 33 Worker right away is more alert to social injustices (5)

Down

- 1 Not even Samsung has a complacent look (4)
- 2 Where selling Arab revolution involves extreme characters (6)
- 3 * Foreign character drinks no more (4)
- 4 Opposed to beheading a Dickensian Londoner (4)
- 5 * He drives on recklessly (10)
- 6 Concluded endings in Chekhov and Chandler (4)

- 7 Mutilate! Mutilate! And you will get the best (8)
- 8 * Rewrite beginning with mu and aleph (6)
- 13 Climbing through the tree in sports apparel (3)
- 14 Black country is lacking taste (5)
- 15 Freely deliver pig, not subject to the normal rules (10)
- 16 Slog one's guts out to gain access (3,2)
- 18 * Slept around foolishly after Sue left (8)
- 21 Tree has collapsed (3)
- 22 Brought about in Pakistani law: ideas observed in India (6)
- 26 Play in a suit that is not appropriate (6)
- 28 Stare at non-golfer when there's nothing odd about him (4)
- 29 * Good looker on the radio (4)
- 30 Drink quickly, but not while in Oxbridge (4)
- 31 Can be played back in Chancery Lane (4)

Solution to crossword no. 221



We congratulate Colin Dailly, the winner of last month's competition, who will receive a prize certificate from the editors. Honourable mentions go to Mike & Christine Carrington, Mary Joyner, Robert Nunn and Dainin O'Dowd.

The Swaffhams' WI

Our November meeting of The Swaffhams WI reflected our love of nature and the wish to bring the natural world into our homes at Christmas time.

We were once again delighted to invite Clare Kenward of clare kenward flowers, Cambridge, to demonstrate how to create the most beautiful Christmas table decorations. Clare's style is based around making the most of the natural elements around us and she focuses on the natural shapes of the elements used, making sure to bring out the true colours of the flowers or dried foliage. As it is nearly Christmas, the displays can of course be enhanced with candles, baubles, birch stars and gorgeous rich velvet ribbons (apparently bows are on trend this year!). We all sat entranced watching Clare as she demonstrated 4 different approaches to bringing the natural world inside at Christmas time. A huge thank you to Clare for her time and generosity – she was as ever such an inspiration and I know that many of us will be foraging in our gardens to recreate her designs.

Our next meeting is our Christmas party and then we are into 2025, where we will start another fabulous series of talks and events. January begins our programme with Fiona Rose giving a talk on May Morris, the daughter of designer William Morris. The meeting takes place on Monday 20th January at 7:30pm in Swaffham Prior Village Hall. This is an open meeting, so do please come along and bring partners and friends too. There will be a charge of £5 for non-members of the Swaffhams WI and all visitors are very welcome. We hope to see you there.



Kate Muscroft





VILLAGE GARDENERS

At the November meeting of the Village Gardeners, Chris Field, the managing director of Field Compost, gave a talk on 'Why Peat Free'. Peat, formed in wetlands from the accumulation over thousands of years of partially decomposed plant material, is an ingredient formerly added to composts. However, in a move to preserve the remaining peatlands to protect the habitats of unique plants and birds, and preserve this valuable carbon store, the sale of peat-based products to gardeners has been banned in the UK. This has created a challenge for the horticultural industry, which needed to find a viable peat free alternative which could sustain plant growth.

Field Compost has been producing peat free products since 2010, with a drive towards sustainability under-pinning their business. Through research and development they aim to provide high quality compost products, adding ingredients such as Coir (a waste product sourced from coconut husks), bark fines and wood fibre to emulate peat properties such as moisture retention, pH and drainage. Based at Weston Colville, they sell composts, soil improvers, mulches and more; their full range can be found on their website www.fieldcompost.co.uk. They are supported locally by Darwin Nurseries and Farm Shop on Newmarket Road, Cambridge, who sell some of their products and have conducted successful field trials with their compost.

The Village Gardeners will now take a Christmas break and our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21st January at 8pm (doors 7.45pm) in Swaffham Prior Village Hall, when Liz Taylor, CEO of Red2Green, will be coming to speak to us about how the Community Garden at Bottisham College supports people with learning disabilities. Everyone is welcome at our talks; attendance is free for members (£20 for the year) or £4 for visitors. We wish you a Merry Christmas!

Fiona Geraghty



Mothers' Union

We met for our Autumn Social and Bring and Buy sale on a sunny afternoon. After our usual short service, we had great fun playing Bingo with kit-kats for prizes and enjoyed choosing bargains from our sale table. £41.50 was raised towards our branch funds which enables us to pay for the hire of the Fassage Hall each month for our meetings. The afternoon finished with refreshments and lots of chatter!

Our meeting on Thursday 12th December will have a festive theme and we will be making table flower decorations – bring a small container and join us, holly, flowers and candles provided. We will again be supporting the Christmas Appeal for Women's Aid, with donations of supermarket vouchers. Donations can also be made online at www.womensaid.org.uk. Women's Aid supports survivors of domestic abuse, and those seeking refuge accommodation and support.

We hope to see some of you on 12th December.

Alison Martin

A message from Bottisham Medical Practice regarding Healthwatch Survey

Do you live in Cambridgeshire? Yes. Will you ever require NHS services now or in the future? Eg GP or A&E? Yes.

Then read on as this is VERY IMPORTANT.

The local NHS team (the “ICS” - those who fund our local NHS services) are spending £10 Million on a “digital front door”.

What does this mean? Rather than go straight to A&E or call your local GP patients will need to login to a “digital portal” and you’ll be told where to go.

You won’t be able to just book a GP appointment or just attend A&E like you can now. Instead, you might be sent to a pharmacy or to an NHS website without speaking to or seeing a doctor or nurse.

Your personal health record will need to be shared more widely than your GP practice. It will become more likely you’ll get access to NHS clinicians who aren’t doctors, or NHS staff using artificial intelligence to advise you about your health.

How will elderly patients or those with learning disabilities access this? How will patients who don’t have WiFi, smartphones, computer skills or good vision access this?

We don’t know. And as your local GP surgery - we are very worried.

This feels like the end of a family doctor service on the NHS. It feels like your right to attend hospital in an emergency is under threat.

This Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS survey is about your views on these plans for digital access - and even this survey can only be accessed by those who already have digital access!

Please share with your elderly relatives and neighbours, help them complete it and help them have their say. Ask them their thoughts on the “digital front door”.

This will affect each and everybody from cradle to grave.

Please feedback how the loss of access to your GP or walk-in access to A&E as you currently know it, would affect you and your family.

<https://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/form/improving-digital-access-to-heal>

The Patients’ Group is looking for more patients to join us at our meetings. We meet every three months and would love to have your thoughts and feedback to help improve the facilities the practice may provide in the future. Why not come along to our next meeting or if you want to know more about what we do please contact our Chairman, Steve Gilson via email s.j.gilson@btinternet.com or leave your details with reception and he will contact you for a chat.

Next Meeting: Will be at 6.30pm Thursday January 23 2025 in the Surgery waiting room. If you wish to join our meetings, please email our chairman s.j.gilson@btinternet.com. Or speak to reception.

We wish you all a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year.

Bottisham Medical Practice Patients Participation Group



From our District Councillors Charlotte Cane & John Trapp

Full Council 17 October 2024

Two motions were passed at this meeting:

- one was to increase the Council's local awareness campaign which has been underway for several weeks now, to alert those eligible for Pension Credit to apply by the deadline of 21st December 2024, see below for more information.
- the other one was on the banning of sea toilets on the waterways in the District; the discharge of sea toilets is permitted by regulation on all inland waterways unless specifically banned; the Council is to request the Environment Agency to take the necessary steps to achieve a ban on the Great Ouse and its tributaries.



Council unanimously agreed to create a working group in order to prepare a Local Plan (the document that defines where new housing, industrial and recreational buildings can be built within the District). Our current Local Plan is almost ten years old, and it must be replaced by an up-to-date version within two years to stop speculative building.

Hundreds of pensioners in East Cambs could be missing out on Pension Credit. An estimated 600 pensioners in East Cambridgeshire could be missing out on Pension Credit. Pensioners on a low income are being advised to apply for Pension Credit now to be in with a chance of qualifying for this year's Winter Fuel Payment.

East Cambridgeshire District Council has launched a promotional campaign encouraging as many people as possible to [apply for Pension Credit](#) before 21 December. Applications received after that date will not automatically receive the £300 Winter Fuel Payment.

Pension Credit is available to people of a pensionable age on an income below the £218 a week threshold (£333 for couples). Those above the threshold may still qualify if they are carers, have a disability, or have savings under £10,000.

Anyone who needs help with applying for Pension Credit can contact the community advice team at East Cambridgeshire District Council, or attend one of the Council's drop-in sessions. These take place at The Grange in Ely Monday to Friday, from 10am until 4pm.

At the last Full Council meeting (17 October) the council unanimously passed a motion to request changes to the government's decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment, which in previous years had been paid to all pensioners.

The Council will be carrying out a number of actions including:

- writing to people who are registered for its assisted bin collections to see if they are eligible to apply for Pension Credit before 21 December
- contacting Parish Councils, community groups and charities operating in East Cambridgeshire to ask for their help to ensure all eligible pensioners are supported in claiming their entitlement
- encouraging as many people as possible to sign up to Age UK's petition to [Save the Winter Fuel Payment](#)

With all best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Cllrs Charlotte Cane MP and John Trapp

Treasure time together this winter at Anglesey Abbey

Come and experience an enchanting new Christmas at Anglesey Abbey. The House will be richly decorated for all to enjoy and the wider estate offers walks around the sensory Winter Garden, festive shopping, tasty treats and wintry adventures in the woodland play area.

We're Going on a Bear Hunt!

We're delighted to have 10 beautifully painted, life-sized bear sculptures currently exhibited around the gardens. In collaboration with Wild in Art and Walker Books, the trail is one big, enchanting journey through art and adventure. Have you visited yet? Pick up a trail map and enjoy some gr-eat games and activities along the way. The trail is free and runs from 19 November 2024 to 5 January 2025; normal admission to Anglesey Abbey applies.

Christmas in the House

The Jacobean-style country house at Anglesey Abbey is beautifully decorated for the Christmas season, with festive displays highlighting Lord Fairhaven's vast and significant collection. From 23 November 2024 until 5 January 2025, step inside to discover a treasure-trove of history and admire the treasure-themed Christmas decorations in each room.

You can also meet Father Christmas in the house – there are just a few spaces left on Fridays. For more information and to book, please visit the Anglesey Abbey website.

Live music

Save the dates! It wouldn't be Christmas at Anglesey Abbey without some live music, mulled wine and festive tunes, so we'll be joined by Cambridge Harmony Chorus on Sunday 1 December and City of Cambridge Brass Band on Sundays 8, 15 and 22 December. Please head to our website for performance times.

We will be closed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day but open again on Boxing Day. From all of us at Anglesey Abbey, we wish you a very merry Christmas!

nationaltrust.org.uk/angleseyabbey



Wicken Fen News

Winter is the perfect time for a wildlife walk at Wicken Fen. Whether it's misty, frosty or beneath a fiery sky, the calls of ducks, geese and wild swans carry on the breeze. So why not wrap up warm and head out along one of the trails across the wider nature reserve.

The Docky Hut Café has a selection of warming comfort food, festive hot drinks and tasty treats. In the visitor centre, dogs receive a warm welcome and a stamp in their National Trust Pooch Passport. While you can browse our selection of festive goodies in the gift shop, perfect for a bit of yuletide shopping. And don't miss the secondhand book stall, which also stocks a collection of jigsaw puzzles. Both the café and visitor centre/gift shop are open 10am – 4.30pm daily (except for Christmas Day).

A new winter trail, around the boardwalk, will be open throughout December and early January, where families can help lost Highland calf Parsnip find her way back to the herd, meeting resident and visiting animals along the way.

For nature lovers, it's well worth standing by the visitor centre at dusk to look out for roosting hen harriers, Wicken's Sedge Fen is a renowned wintering ground for this rare bird of prey.

Peat project

Our exciting Peatland Restoration Project is well underway, with works taking place on Burwell Fen, Verrall's Fen and Tubney Fen. Contractors have been constructing clay banks (known as buds) around areas of deep peat on Burwell and Tubney Fens to wet them up. This locks in carbon, therefore helping mitigate climate change, and creates important habitat for both wintering and breeding birds. The footpath through the middle of Burwell Fen will be closed until March 2025, but there is access via the National Cycleway Route 11 and along the Burwell and Reach Lode-banks.

Excavation works along Spinney Bank, on the far west side of the Fen, uncovered the foundations of an historic old drainage windpump and also a glass bottle (possibly an old lemonade bottle) made in Burwell at the old Guyatt and Droford Mineral Works, which closed in the 20th century.

The £2 million project is predominately funded through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 'Nature for Climate' Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) managed by Fens East Peatland Partnership (FEPP), with funding from corporate partners including Starling Bank and Anglian Water.

Details of our events and trails can be found on our website at

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/whats-on

For the latest reserve information, please visit our website www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen

Follow the progress of our Peatland Restoration Project on our website

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cambridgeshire/wicken-fen-national-nature-reserve/peatland-restoration.



Lapwings over the Fen

Notes from the Parish Council November Meeting

Cllr John Covill chaired the monthly meeting of the Parish Council on Thursday 14th November, attended by 8 Parish Councillors and 2 members of the public.

Reports

East Cambs District Council- report circulated prior to the meeting, Cllr John Trapp attended. Cllr Trapp noted that parishes should be consulted regarding the new Local Plan. Cllr Greenfield suggested that changes could be imposed on parishes. Cllr Trapp stated he would represent parish opinions.

Planning applications.

24/01140/FUL Single storey side extension. Sheldricks Cottage, 42 Lower End, Swaffham Prior, CB25 0HT

The PC agreed to endorse the application.

Permanent sign on Betty's Bank for Betty Prime

Approved unanimously.

Making safe of the tall Benstead gravestone.

The PC agreed a quote from Ivett and Reed to undertake the work required.

The playground

The results of the October quarterly inspection were noted. The PC agreed not to renew the contract for quarterly inspections, going ahead with just the annual inspection instead. The Clerk noted that quarterly inspections were recommended, but not statutory.

Kingsway solar farm consultation

After discussion the PC concluded that:

The PC opposed the creation of the connection corridor between the proposed solar farm and the Burwell substation.

If the connection corridor is to go ahead the PC preferred the lines to be underground due to the curtain effect of wires from what must be very large pylons.

And agreed to respond to the consultation with these views.

Government consultation on remote meetings and proxy voting

The PC agreed to support the use of hybrid and/or remote meetings in exceptional circumstances, and to oppose the introduction of proxy voting, which it was felt would take away the ability of people to hear all the arguments and change their minds.

A-B1102 Group feedback regarding bus routes.

Cllr Greenfield reported.

The travel survey carried out by A-B1102 had received 900 responses which had been statistically analysed. A 2 service system (the T4 and T5) buses was developed from this, consisting of a fast and a slow service connecting at key points or hubs, covering more villages and reaching more destinations within Cambridge. Quy has been identified as an interchange between the services and there are several potential hubs in the villages, including one at Swaffham Prior, which may require a second bus shelter being built, either on the top road or opposite the current bus shelter, near the playground, but this is still in early stages and looking at options, so nothing definite yet. CPCA are developing packages to provide, put up and maintain (for a few years) bus shelters and Real Time Information equipment, and also looking into what funding would be available for these if required.

Cllr Greenfield agreed to act as key contact point for the PC with A-B1102.

The Parochial Charities sheds

Cllr Kent-Phillips reported that the 'Paper Sheds' by the playground are probably the last

two original buildings belonging to the Parochial Church Charities and may be 16th/17th century. They may have been built to store coal bought for the school and the poor of the village - a stipend from the original charity bequest or coal/wash house for the charities' houses that stood on Town Close. As such, they are of historical significance to the village.

The PC agreed that the Clerk would contact the Historical Buildings List and apply to add the Paper Sheds.

Allotments.

Cllr Latchford to inspect the Lower Allotments at the weekend and email options for maintaining the paths and unrented allotments for consideration at the December meeting.

Clerk's Report

A number of grants were now open for application from ECDC

The Law Commission are running a consultation regarding burial law updates, responses needed by 9th January - Clerk to respond on behalf of the PC.

The defibrillator padlock has been replaced with one that should be easier to read and the Clerk is looking into replacing the light bulbs in the telephone box so that it will be lit up at night.

The playground inspection to do list is complete apart from treating of the moss and filling in cracks between the play surface and the edging.

Parish Councillors' Reports

Cllr Kent-Phillips

Voneus broadband has been down for a fortnight and they are aware of this

The phone box will be hosting an advent calendar window

The Pound gate needs revarnishing and the white post of the village sign needs repainting.

Cllr Greenfield

Fibre. Of the two potential suppliers, County Broadband will almost certainly not come to Swaffham Prior. GigaClear has completed their surveys and may start work early next year; they are still considering if they will cover the High Street.

Grass-cutting. Nurture Landscaping had wanted to invoice the PC monthly, dividing the total cost across 12 months. Cllr Greenfield had declined as the seasonal nature of the contract would not suit this system.

Produced from unapproved minutes and may contain errors; approved minutes can be found at <http://www.swaffham-prior.co.uk/pc/minutes.html> If anyone would like any further information on any of the above items, please contact the Clerk.

The next monthly Parish Council meeting will be on Thursday, 12th December 2024 starting at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. All are welcome to attend.

BON MOT NUMBER 155

Santa Claus has the right idea: visit people once a year.

Victor Borge (1909 –2000)

FROM CHARLOTTE CANE, MP

It's hard to believe, but we're already four months into my time as your MP for Ely and East Cambridgeshire. It's been full of new experiences both in Parliament and here at home, and I wanted to take a moment to share some highlights and updates with you.

Earlier this month, I made my maiden speech in the Commons, and it was a memorable experience. I spoke about our area's incredible mix of industries, from agriculture and the horseracing community to cutting-edge tech businesses we can be proud of. I also highlighted our beautiful natural landscapes, including the chalk grasslands, Wicken Fen, the Devil's Dyke, and the iconic "ship of the fens"—Ely Cathedral.

The Chancellor's recent decision to increase National Insurance employer contributions is a worrying one for many of our local healthcare providers and public bodies. I've called on the Chancellor to reconsider this rise, which risks putting even more pressure on already overstretched services. Our local NHS teams, care homes, and charities need support, not additional burdens.

In rural areas like ours, reliable broadband is still a luxury rather than a given. I recently joined a debate on broadband provision and am now seeking a meeting with the Minister to push for better connectivity in our villages and towns. It's not just about convenience; poor internet access affects businesses, schools, and families across Ely and East Cambs. I'm determined to make sure our voices are heard on this issue.

This month I've also had the privilege of voting to remove hereditary peers from the House of Lords. This vote marks an important step towards modernising our political system. I've long believed that the Lords should be a place of expertise and experience, not inherited privilege, so it was an honour to play a part in making this change at last.

I've been out and about in the constituency recently, meeting residents at my surgery, visiting farmers across the region, celebrating the opening of the new Community Diagnostics Centre at the Princess of Wales Hospital, visiting the Social Club in Haddenham, Cottenham Village College, Wicken Fen, Cambridge Regional College and Queens Court Care Home—just a few of the many engagements I've had the pleasure of attending as your MP.

It was an honour to lay a wreath at the Remembrance Service in Ely, while my representatives did the same at local ceremonies in Littleport, Soham and Reach. I was moved to pay my respects alongside so many of you, honouring those who have served and sacrificed for our country.

It's been a busy few months of recruitment, too, but I'm pleased to say that we now have my MP office team in place. I know that some of you have been waiting for a reply, and I appreciate your patience while we prioritise emergency cases. We are working hard to respond to your emails and calls as quickly as possible and will be in touch with everyone still waiting soon.

I will end my report as I ended my maiden speech—by reiterating my pledge to

be a strong voice for our community and to work tirelessly as your local MP. If you want to get in touch, please email me at charlotte.cane.mp@parliament.uk.

*Charlotte Cane MP
November 2024*

FREECYCLE



Everything is free and nothing is expected in return.

If you have any offers or wants, please contact me by the 14th of each month by phone (01223 813362/07980 423210), e-mail (junthompson44@gmail.com) or drop a note through the letter box (23 Longmeadow).

Please let me know if you would like anything repeating in subsequent issues.

Offers

Two small refrigerators, both Proline box model PBR65W-U, size about H 20" x W 18" x D 19" (H 51cm x W 45cm x D 48cm). Robert 07785 110434

Large (two door and one drawer) pine wardrobe. Sue (sue@wicken4x4.co.uk, mob: 07944 831042)

Air Fryer (see photo) – used only 3 times. Roz 07802 440010



**That was the
Halloween
that was....**

Swaffham Prior Village Hall

December 2024

'Tis the season to celebrate - there are many events; parties and other festivities happening in the village hall over the next month.

In particular don't forget the Christmas Carols and songs evening on Wednesday 11th at 6:30pm, last year was great fun and enjoyed by everyone so please join us again for mince pies and mulled wine with gifts for the children and a good sing!

The following is a list of the regular events happening in the hall but please check with the organiser as it may change over the Christmas period

WI Meeting	3rd Monday of each month 19:30 – 21:30	Contact Kate at kate-muscroft@gmail.com
Village Gardeners	3rd Tuesday of each month 19:45 – 21:30	Contact Fiona on 01638741712
SF-Fit Pilates	Each Tuesday 17:30 – 19:00	Contact Sarah on 075999072008
SF-Fit Pilates	Each Wednesday 10:30 – 11:30 & 19:00 – 20:00	Contact Sarah on 075999072008
PhysiOptima Pilates	Each Wednesday 09:00 – 09:50	Contact Kristin on 07799323867
Quilters sewing group	Each Thursday 10:00 – 12:30	Contact Ruth on 01638743720
Slimming World	Each Thursday 17:30 – 19:00 & 19:00 – 20:00	Contact Sharon on 077601925638
Tai Chi Life Academy	Each Friday 10:00 – 12:00	Contact Sharyn on 0774017917
Lok Hup	Each Friday 12:00- 13:00	Contact Sharyn on 0774017917
SF-Fit Yoga	Each Friday 17:00 – 18:00	Contact Sarah on 075999072008

If you're looking to hire the village hall, for a wedding, party or other family gathering go to our website for availability, bookings & prices at;-

www.swaffhampriorvillagehall.co.uk

For anything else contact Philip Blackburn on 0750123

Services in December 2024

Sunday 1 December – Advent Sunday

9am Online service on Zoom
10.30am Holy Communion, Bottisham
4pm Getting Ready for Christmas Service, Quay Village Hall
4pm Advent by Candlelight Concert, two churches of Swaffham Prior

Wednesday 4 December

8pm CbyC, a contemplative service, online on Zoom

Sunday 8 December – Second Sunday in Advent

9am Online service on Zoom
Holy Communion, Quay
10.30am Christingle Family Worship & baptism, Swaffham Prior

Sunday 15 December – Third Sunday in Advent

9am Online service on Zoom
10.30am Holy Communion, Swaffham Bulbeck
Morning Prayer, Bottisham
3pm Carol Service, Quay
4.30pm Carol Service, Swaffham Prior

Thursday 19 December

3pm Carol Service, Lode

Friday 20 December

10am Nativity and Crib Service, Lode

Sunday 22 December – Fourth Sunday in Advent

9am Online service on Zoom
10.30am Holy Communion, Swaffham Prior
6.30pm Carol Service, Bottisham
Carol Service, Swaffham Bulbeck

Tuesday 24 December - Christmas Eve

6.30pm Holy Communion, Bottisham
11.30pm Holy Communion, Swaffham Bulbeck

Wednesday 25 December - Christmas Day

8am Holy Communion, Quay
10am Holy Communion, Swaffham Prior

Sunday 29 December - First Sunday after Christmas

9am Online service on Zoom
10.30am Holy Communion, Lode

Each Thursday

10.30am Holy Communion, Lode

Revd Canon Max Osborne
max9@btinternet.com; 01223 481187
(Rest day: Tuesday)
Churchwardens: Bottisham: bot-tisham@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
01223 604019
Lode: lode@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
01223 811222
Quay: quay@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
01223 812652
Swaffham Bulbeck:
bulbeck@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
01223 812525; 01223 811501
Swaffham Prior:
prior@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
01638 743937
For general enquiries:
admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;
churchwar-
dens@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/
angleseychurches;
A Church Near You: https://
www.achurchnearyou.com/church/7380/
benefice

Dates for Your Diary December 2024

Sun	1	Live Music at Anglesey Abbey [24]
Wed	4	The Reading Group, 6pm [11]
Sun	8	Christingle Service, 10.30am, St Mary's [31] Live Music at Anglesey Abbey [24]
Wed	11	Village Carol Singing, 6:30pm - 8:30pm, VH [2]
Thu	12	Prayerful & Peaceful Artgroup, 10.30—1pm, Bottisham Church [13] (and every Thursday) Mothers' Union, Lode, 2pm [21] PC Meeting, 7.30pm, VH [27]
Sun	15	Carol Service, 4.30pm, St Mary's [31] Live Music at Anglesey Abbey [24]
Mon	16	A Good Woman, 7.30pm Newmarket Cinema [13]
Wed	18	School Christmas Fair, 3.30-5.30pm, Village Hall [6, 8]
Fri	20	WI, May Morris Open Meeting, 7.30pm, VH [9]
Sun	22	Live Music at Anglesey Abbey [24]
Tue	24	CHRISTMAS EVE
Wed	25	CHRISTMAS DAY Holy Communion, 10.30, St Mary's [31]
Thu	26	BOXING DAY Hockey Match, 10:45am, The Denny, Swaffham Bulbeck [9]
Sun	29	Crier Copy Deadline
January 2025		
Tues	21	Coffee Morning, 10.30am—12 noon, 23 Tothill Road [5]

Numbers in square brackets indicate page number of an accompanying article

Club	Contact	Tel.	Date	Time	Place
FOSPS	Becky Wilkes	07827 318351	2 nd Mon of Term	8pm	Village School
Beavers, Cubs and Scouts	Tim Doe	gsl@1st Swaffhamprior scouts.org.uk	Wed (Term) Mon	5:15-6:30pm 6:30-8.00pm 7.00-8.30pm	Scout Hut
Reading Group	Brenda Wilson	743937	1 st Weds of month	6:00pm	Variable
Village Gardeners	Fiona Geraghty		3 rd Tues of month	8:00pm	Village Hall
WI	Kate Muscroft Kaye Lewsinski	07752011308 Kayejanelew@ gmail.com	3 rd Mon of month	7.30 pm	Village Hall