



Parish news

December 2025

For the Parishes of ASHBRIITTLE with GREENHAM, BATHEALTON, STAWLEY and KITTISFORD

Church Services

Sun 7th Dec	2nd Sunday of Advent	
9.30am	Holy Communion Service	St. Michael's, Stawley
11.15am	Sung Eucharist	All Saints', Rockwell Green
11.15am	BCP Communion Service	St. John the Baptist, Ashbrittle
3.30pm	Family Choral Evensong	St. Nicholas', Kittisford
Sat 13th to Sun 14th Dec	Christmas Tree Festival	All Saints', Rockwell Green
2.00pm - 5.00pm	Enjoy refreshments and tour all the colourful Christmas trees on display	
Sun 14th Dec	3rd Sunday of Advent	
9.30am	Holy Communion	Holy Cross, Sampford Arundel
3.00pm	Carols amongst the Christmas Trees	All Saints', Rockwell Green
Tue 16th Dec		
7.00pm	A Celebration of Christmas	St. Michael's, Stawley
Fri 19th Dec		
7.00pm	Carols by Candlelight	Bathealton Village Hall
Sun 21st Dec	4th Sunday of Advent	
11.15am	Sung Eucharist Service	All Saints', Rockwell Green
6.30pm	Christmas Carol Service	Holy Cross, Sampford Arundel
Mon 22nd Dec		
7.00pm	Christmas Carol Service	St. Margaret's, Thorne St. Margaret
Wed 24th Dec	Christmas Eve	
4.00pm	Family Crib & Christingle Service	All Saints', Rockwell Green
4.00pm	Family Crib Service	St. Nicholas', Kittisford
10.00pm	Midnight Mass	Holy Cross, Sampford Arundel
10.00pm	Midnight Mass	St. John the Baptist, Ashbrittle
Thu 25th Dec	Christmas Day	
10.00am	Christmas Day Family Service	St. Michael's, Stawley
10.15am	Christmas Day Communion	St. Margaret's, Thorne St. Margaret
Sun 28th December		
9.30am	Holy Communion Service	St. Bartholomew's, Bathealton
11.15am	Sung Eucharist Service	All Saints', Rockwell Green

For services in **January 2026** please visit our website at westtong.org.uk/services or contact Revd Andy Barton at welcme@westtone.org.uk or 07795 699737

Churchwardens and Clergy Ashbrittle with Greenham

Ashbrittle	Charles Doble, The Old Rectory, Ashbrittle, TA21 0LQ	01823 672365
	David Hanks, Manley House, Ashbrittle, TA21 0LE	01823 672436
Bathealton	Sarah Eustice, Oakwood, Spring Grove, TA4 1NL	01823 401248
Kittisford	Annie Musgrove, Meadow Farm, Greenham, TA21 0JW	01823 672627
Stawley	Penny Hare, Stawley Mill, Wellington, TA21 0HT	01823 672183
	Colin Haddrell, Tucks Farm, Stawley, TA21 0HS	07974 804990

Priest-in-Charge

Reverend Andrew Barton, 2 White Oaks, Langford Budville, TA21 0RB

Contacts: Home/Office - Phone 01823 924007 or 07795 699737

Email revdbarton@gmail.com

Thought for the Month

Advent is upon us, and I wonder what you are looking forward to. A Christmas full of family, food, and fun, or perhaps a quieter celebration alone or with just a few. Over the coming weeks no doubt many lists will be written, shopping lists, gift lists and “who do I need to write to and thank” lists. Some of you may simply be looking forward to it all being over for another year.

Whatever it is that December means to you, I hope there is something within it that you can look forward to. Advent after all is a season of anticipation, hope and excitement. A quick scan of the wonderful number of events taking place across the villages over the coming weeks suggest that we are up for a rollercoaster ride.

Having something to look forward to or holding out in hope for something we yearn for, both contribute to positive wellbeing. As does feeling connected to others or belonging to a community. The recent Vision Day and Community Lunch held at Appley Pavilion in October showed just how much belonging and caring for others matters to people here.

Planning for the future

One of the ways your local churches are looking to respond to this is by broadening the range of events and services that are on offer. We are making space for children, young people and families within our rota of services. Alongside this there will be something for those who are not interested in attending a service but who would welcome a space to chat about life, the world and all things challenging.

Plans are at an early stage so watch this space (*and our website westtone.org.uk*) as we start to unwrap the gifts that await you in 2026. Now that’s something to look forward to.

As is the hanging of stockings. The church in Kittisford is dedicated to Saint Nicholas, a 4th century bishop from what is now Turkey, whose life reflected the Santa Claus we look forward to arriving overnight on Christmas Eve. St. Nick gave away his wealth to help those in need, especially children.

According to a much-loved story, he helped three poor sisters by secretly dropping a bag of gold down their chimney. The legend says that the gold ended up in a stocking that had been hung to dry by the hearth, a tale that many see as the origin of our Christmas-socking tradition. In some countries children still leave out their shoes on St Nicholas’ Day hoping to find sweets and small gifts inside.

Come and celebrate the story with local children who will be singing a specially written song at St. Nicholas’ Church Kittisford on

Sunday 7th December. More details about this festival weekend can be found within this edition of The Parish News.

I hope as Christmas draws near and 2025 draws to a close that you have much to look forward to.

Let me be one of the first to wish you a very merry Christmas and a wonderfully happy New Year!

Revd Andy Barton

A Celebration of Christmas at Stawley Church

Tuesday 16th December
7.00pm



All are welcome to join the Village Festival Choir, led by John Young, in singing some favourite Christmas carols and sharing readings to celebrate Christmas and the arrival of winter.

Followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Artists always Wanted! Do you have a painting or photograph which could be used as a cover design for the Parish News? Seasonal and local images are particularly welcome. Please send hi-res images (300dpi) to Avril at AvrilSilk@aol.com Portrait format is ideal if possible.

Front cover - A double rainbow over Appley - photograph by Rachel Oliver.

Come and Sing at Kittisford on Sunday 7th December

If you have seen “The Choral” at the cinema recently you might recall how the choir master despaired at his newly formed choir singing so hesitantly. He then heard them belting out the National Anthem and urged them to sing out loud in the same way. The result was a jubilant performance that left both the choir and audience on a resounding and unforgettable high.

During our St Nicholas Patronal Festival at Kittisford, we are excited to welcome Alexander Douglas to run a singing workshop in Kittisford House Barn starting at 12 noon (exactly) on Sunday 7th December. He is a very talented and experienced choral director who has frequently directed choirs on Songs of Praise on TV. So, if you can sing “Auld Lang Syne” at New Year or “Land of Hope and Glory” at a rugby match, you can sing.

Sing, sing, sing!

We would love as many people as possible to join us for this workshop as it will be fun and an opportunity to learn some music, specially written by Alexander for Choral Evensong. The music has been written with community singing in mind so that it is simple to learn and sing. Bute Voices, who are singing the Anthem in the service later in the day, will also be singing in the workshop to support the community singing. So, no need to be afraid of singing out of tune or turn.

The workshop will end at 2.00 pm and participants can then enjoy their own packed lunch in the barn before walking down to the church to sing in our Festival Choral Evensong at 3.30 pm. It promises to be an exceptional service as we will also enjoy a specially written psalm sung by the choir from Rockwell Green Primary School and an anthem sung by Bute Voices from Cardiff.

After the service, everyone is invited back to Kittisford House Barn for jacket potatoes and apple crumble. As parking in Kittisford is limited, we are encouraging parking at Kittisford House Barn. Please bring suitable footwear for the walk along the footpath to the Church.

We very much hope to see you at 12 noon on 7th December for a **Big Sing** at Kittisford House Barn, followed by Choral Evensong in Kittisford church at 3.30 pm.

Don't forget to join us at St Nicholas Kittisford at 6.00 pm on Saturday 6th December for a short concert given by Bute Voices in aid of “Music in Schools”.

Annie Musgrove, Churchwarden

Ashbrittle Harvest Supper

As we live in a rural farming community I always think it is most appropriate to celebrate ‘harvest’ at this time of year.

Last month over forty of us gathered at Ashbrittle village hall where we enjoyed a lovely supper of mainly local and homemade produce. A big thank you to all those involved with preparation and serving.

A long standing custom of singing after supper was duly continued, lead this year by Lucy Williams. A number of traditional and contemporary songs were sung; all good fun.

The evening finished with a raffle and from the proceeds £100 was donated to the Macmillan Cancer charity.

Many thanks to all who attended and helped make it such an enjoyable evening.

Jon Dawes, Chair, Village Hall Committee



Bathealton Village Hall

POP UP CAFÉ

A friendly warm space: time to catch up with old friends or meet new ones.

The next ‘Pop - Ups’ will be on:

Monday 1st December

Main course : Homemade: Moroccan Lamb Tagine or vegetarian Tagine with Moroccan Rice

Sweet: Homemade: Mince Pies with Cinnamon Cream

and Monday 5th January 2026

Main course : Homemade: Game Pie or Cheese and onion pie with mash potatoes.

Sweet: Homemade: Trio of Cakes

Unlimited Cafetiere of Coffee or a selection of teas - all for £9.00 each day.

You can reserve a place by calling Del on 07980 994082 or just pop in.

St Nicholas Patronal Festival

Kittisford, TA21 0SA

Saturday 6th December, 6-7pm

Choral Concert by **Bute Voices**

Sunday 7th December, 12-2pm

Singing Workshop for Evensong

Beginners welcome (book your place)

Sunday 7th December, 3.30-4.30pm

Evensong (followed by hot food & drinks)

Children, bring a spare shoe for a St Nicholas treat!



Wear your wellies



More info: musy@cantab.net

Donations to
MUSIC FOR SCHOOLS
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CHORAL
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Deer... at Christmas

It's that time of year again – Christmas and so on and actually as I write this it does indeed feel very 'Christmassy' - here in Tracebridge we have a thick frost still on the ground. To be honest, I refer to this as the Tracebridge Permafrost as the sun, at this time of year, disappears behind the hill not to be seen until about February! The article isn't about the Tracebridge Icesheet but actually about deer and Christmas obviously.

Naturally we think about Reindeer at this time of year as they are the sleigh pulling outfit employed by Father Christmas to circumnavigate the globe in a different time dimension depositing presents and gifts on all those who deserve them (and probably some who don't). The first mention of reindeer employed in this fashion was an 1823 poem – Night Before Christmas.

Anyhow, someone asked me if the reindeer were male or female? If the Reindeer team were real non-magical reindeer then probably they'd be females – the male reindeer shedding antlers in Autumn after mating. Females also shed their antlers but only after they've given birth in the spring. Logic would dictate therefore that the team are ladies. However, to avoid any protest marches through the local lanes, I suspect the sleigh pulling lot are a mix with Rudolph at the front!

What marvellous animals

Reindeer are pretty marvellous animals generally though. They are excellent swimmers, can deal with ridiculously cold temperatures and have been munching their way around Northern climes for 2 - 3.5 million years. Their eyes change colour from gold in the summer to blue in the winter to enable them to see better in the colder months.

Rangifer tarandus (to use their Latin name) live in Eurasia and Northern America (where they are known as Caribou). Reindeer form a central part of the culture of the Saami people of Northern Europe. The Saami are one of the oldest cultures in Europe and much of European folklore regarding deer generally is said to originate from the far North.

Reindeer haven't been in the UK for about 8500 years but there is a small herd in Scotland should you wish to go and see a decent bunch of them. They feature extensively in cave paintings through the UK and Europe however. Fossils have been found as far south as Spain and date back to the last ice age. Here in Tracebridge it is easy to imagine it being cold enough for them to be grazing outside!

There are some amazing folk traditions with regard to reindeer. The Saami believe a white

reindeer created the world for example. White stags of various species have been highly valued by many cultures – the White Hart is a feature of Arthurian legend and regularly pops up in Celtic mythology.

One of my favourite legends is the Saami myth that has the Deer Mother 'Beaivi' flying in the night sky during the Winter Solstice to search for and carry back the sun to end the dark months of winter. (Personally I'd rather Beaivi got a move on and arrived in the next few weeks)

Another relatively unknown legend is that of a Celtic goddess of Winter – the Cailleach. She was renowned for herding deer during the winter months and protecting them from hunters (which could be a bit of a challenge for me if she was armed!).

The legend has it that she is the bringer of frosts and snows. Once upon a time a crazed bunch of warriors in the far north of Scotland decided to confront Cailleach and drive her away hopefully then letting the sun and warmth back into the land. Sadly for them, Cailleach recruited some stags, cast a magic spell on them and together they disappeared into the snowy forests carrying with them the seeds of life. In due course the warriors gave up the search. Cailleach eventually became tired and settled on the top of a mountain. Once the land was rested she encouraged streams to flow and her stags pawed the earth to let the seeds of life grow and bring new life to the world. All the warriors had to do, clearly, was show a bit of patience and take it easy during the winter. Hey ho.

Anyway, as you can probably tell, deer have been involved in our prehistory mythology for eons and even today in our uber modern world, we still have and embrace plenty of reindeer themed images at this time of year. Let's hope this tradition continues. Perhaps Rudolph needs to get him and his team a TikTok or Snapchat account and bring their antics up to date.

Have a lovely and peaceful Christmas and if you're out early one morning in the frost keep an eye out for Cailleach and her white stags.

Cheers to you all.

Antony Weeks

News from the Parish News

Donations this month received from:

David Pearce

Many thanks for your kind donations. Donations may be left at Stawley Shop or sent directly to the Treasurer. Details inside back cover.

Andrew Millard, Treasurer

— THE —
GLOBE INN
APPLEY

A warm welcome awaits you at
The Globe Inn this Winter

Sit back, relax and let us take care of the cooking this festive season and enjoy our special set Christmas menu, available from 3rd - 24th December (pre-booking essential).
2 courses for £29.95 or 3 courses for £34.95

Cosy up in front of our roaring fires and enjoy our weekly-changing selection of seasonal guest ales, along with delicious home-reared Appley pork and beef and locally sourced meats from Tim Potter.

CHRISTMAS ARTISAN MARKET

Wednesday 17th December 12-5pm

GRAB A LAST MINUTE GIFT OR BARGAIN STOCKING FILLER AT THE GLOBE INN'S POP-UP FESTIVE CRAFT FAIR.

Lots of
**GIFTS
UNDER
£10!**

Now taking
bookings for
festive
celebrations!

Amanda, Stuart & Luna wish all their customers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Open
Wednesday to Saturday 12 noon - 11pm
Sunday 12 noon - 4pm
Food
Served from 12 noon - 2pm & 6pm - 9pm
CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS
Tuesday 23rd December & Christmas Eve 12 noon - 11pm
Christmas Day 12 noon - 2pm (drinks only)
Boxing Day CLOSED
Saturday 27th December 12 noon - 11pm
Sunday 28th December 12 noon - 4pm
Monday 29th December CLOSED
Tuesday 30th December 12 noon - 11pm
New Year's Eve 12pm til late
Thursday 1st - Saturday 3rd January 12 noon - 11pm
Sunday 4th January 12 noon - 4pm
Monday 5th - Thursday 8th January CLOSED
Open as usual from Friday 9th January 12 noon - 11pm

📍 Appley, Stawley, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 0HJ
☎ 01823 673147
✉ stuardurston@hotmail.co.uk
📍 The Globe INN Appley

Visit our Facebook page to see our full Christmas menu.

Mistletoe: a festive icon and botanical enigma



When mentioned, the first thing brought to mind is the sight of the apple-green sprig of European Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) adorned with its 'snow-blob' berries, traditionally sus-

suspended over doorways and entrances at Christmas, inviting a 'lucky' seasonal kiss from guests who arrive for the festivities. It's certainly associated with mid-winter celebrations and festivities, little bunches bought from traders vending from great swags in the market or harvested yourself, if you're lucky enough to have some growing in an apple tree, Hawthorn or Poplar.

This strange, hemi-parasitic plant which adorns certain trees in our landscape has long puzzled and perplexed people. It has an oddly ghoulish way of growing, seemingly within a tree, then bursting out through the bark with odd fleshy stems and waxy pairs of narrow spatulate leaves. Unlike many parasites, it produces chlorophyll and can photosynthesize but still extracts fluid and minerals from the host plant. It can produce a certain level of stunting in some hosts and the extra mass and wind resistance produced can cause breakages and lifespan limitation.

Mythic reputation

It is quite possible that this strangeness and otherworldliness has given the plant its mythic reputation and the countless legends and mystical associations that have attached to it over the millennia across numerous traditions. There are in fact around one thousand, three hundred different species of Mistletoe worldwide, each one showing special and unique adaptations for climatic conditions, host and habitat, whether it is Australia, Asia, or North America, with native cultures developing their own specific legends, medicine and magic around it.

Much importance is attached to Mistletoe in the Druidic tradition and the cutting of it from Oaks with golden sickles - the Oak is, in fact, very rarely a host and only a dozen or so confirmed trees are known in the UK with *Malus* (Apple or Crab Apple), *Crataegus* (Hawthorn), *Populus* (Poplar) and *Tilia* (Lime) being the preferred hosts. Maybe it was the rarity within Oaks (also sacred within Druidic traditions) that gave its appearance there the ritual significance accredited to it. Within the European pre-Christian cultures, mistletoe berries were symbolic of male fertility

and abundance. From Norse mythology came the ideas of its connections with death and re-birth, also the idea of kissing under a sprig as an act of goodwill and reconciliation. A similar idea came from the Romans who hung it over their doorways for protection and as an offering of love and peace. The Victorian era brought about the revival of many things (including the reinvention of the druidic 'tradition') and this included their near obsession with mistletoe and Christmas, making it an essential part of the seasonal decoration, thus further merging pre-Christian winter solstice festivities with those of the celebrations for the birth of the Christ-child.

The life-cycle of Mistletoe is closely wrapped up with the feeding habits of certain birds such as the 'Mistle Thrush' (*Turdus viscivorus*) also known as 'Stormcock' and other members of the thrush family, particularly winter visitors such as Redwings and Fieldfares which voraciously seek fruit from Rowans, Hawthorns, Holly and Mistletoe. The sticky, mucous jelly within the berry protects the seed as it passes through their digestive tract but also often the berry-material just sticks to the beak with the seed attached and in attempts to wipe it off on rough bark, the seed adheres. So whether the seed was wiped or pooped on to the tree, the seed hopefully germinates and forms a specialized form of root called a *haustorium* which can penetrate the bark and start extraction of nutrition from the host and penetrate and spread throughout. The flowers are small and inconspicuous, of a pinkish white colour, pollinated by insects and bees which result in numerous berries, technically '*drupes*' often in pairs. The berries are toxic, containing a complex mix of chemicals and substances though there is a lot of interest and research into these compounds in medical science with many potential uses in treatment of epilepsy, hypertension and cancer.

So as you pause below the mistletoe this Christmas to pucker-up, cast a thought for the history and diverse cultural significance of this strange and iconic plant and the good luck, good wishes and protection it has symbolized for those that have paused beneath the magic sprig before you and with a kiss, pass it on.

John and Julie Ridgley

Village Oil Group

The next oil delivery is due on
**Wednesday 10th December
and 11th February 2026**

To place an order, please email:-
judy.milne@btinternet.com or contact
Judy or Michael Milne on 01823 672205 by the
Monday before the Wednesday delivery
New members always welcome

CHRISTMAS TREE ✦ LIGHT SWITCH-ON ✦

Join us for a magical evening to start the Christmas season!

📅 Friday 5th December 2025

🕒 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

📍 Ashbrittle Village Green

Enjoy:

🎵 Traditional Christmas Carols

🍷 Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

🧥 Christmas Jumpers
welcome!

LIGHTS SWITCH-ON

✦ AT 7:00 PM! ✦

Bring your family, friends, and festive spirit —
let's make this Christmas bright together!

Curry by candlelight



A fabulous evening
of delicious curries
(meat and vegetarian options)



£12 – Bring your own drinks

Please book on 07980 994082

Saturday 6 December 2025 at 7pm

Bathealton Village Hall TA4 2AN



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3RD & 17TH DECEMBER

7TH & 21ST JANUARY

10AM–12.30PM

IN AID OF CHURCH RESTORATION FUND



THE WINTER EXHIBITION



GREENWAYS STUDIOS
ASHBRITTLE . TA21 0LE

DECEMBER 2025

FRIDAY 5TH

5PM - 8PM

SATURDAY 6TH

10AM - 4PM

SUNDAY 7TH

10AM - 4PM



LOUISE BAKER . TIM HAYWARD
PAUL LEYLAND . BARBARA ROLL

www.greenwaysstudios.com

Quaker Meeting for Worship

Spiceland Quaker Meeting Uffculme
EX15 3AZ

We Meet for Worship at Spiceland
every Sunday at 10.30am till 11.30am
also available on Zoom -

Meeting ID:865 5570 2735 Passcode:
498173

All are very welcome.



Квакери: Друзі України
Релігійний Вебсайт
Quakers: Friends of Ukraine
Religious Website

Ukrainian Quaker Shchedryk Christmas Carol

Shchedryk, shchedryk, shchedrivochka,

Swallow flies from Kyiv skies.

Heavenly bird

Chirps to the world:
Mark birth of Christ.

Walk in the light
With lambs and birds,
Flock of George Fox.

Silence embrace,
Worship and praise.

Quakerly spirit
Inwardly peer it.

Vocally witness
Truth, love and peace.

My land in flame,
Pray for Ukraine.
Christ, save the Earth,

Stop all the wars.

Bring in New Year

Hope and not fear.

Thank you! Yours simple
Lambs, birds, and peoples.

Welcome Packs

Since the demise of the Rural Community Initiative I have not been made aware of all newcomers to the area, so many may not have received a Welcome pack.

If you have moved here in the last year or two and would like a Welcome pack they are now available from the Stawley Village shop free of charge.

Mike Parkinson

From the Parish News

Many thanks to all our contributors and advertisers who have helped create another year of the 'Parish News', and of course, those of you who have so generously donated to the fund.

We have been delighted to carry advertisements and reports for the many events held in our parishes during the year. Another very busy year with lots going on.

Local talent

We have also been able to feature some superb paintings and photographs on the front cover of the magazine - a real demonstration of local talent. Keep them coming please! We hope that you have enjoyed the enhanced colour reproduction, afforded by some very generous donations.

Also, many thanks to our willing band of helpers, led by Pat Sweet, who have distributed the magazine directly and promptly to each and every household each month.

The distribution team:

Ashbrittle and Tracebridge Andrew and Liz Burt, Gail Britton, Pip Wilson and Michael Fairfax

Bathealton Nerys Gibb, Fiona McVicar, Jessica Bunn, Sara Bloxham, Fiona Holmes, Jo Forrester, Michael Tarr and Janet Sharland.

Greenham Lin Colebrooke.

Kittisford Penny Stanbury; John and Christine Brinkman.

Stawley Pat Sweet, Mike Parkinson and the Village Shop.

Wiveliscombe and Wellington Sue Webber; Martin and Sally Perry

We also send the magazine by email, in a PDF format, to a number of people outside of our immediate area. If you know of anyone else who would like to receive a regular copy in that way, please contact us at ashparishnews@gmail.com

The magazine is also available on the Stawley website www.stash.org.uk

Finally, we would like to say a special thank you to Matt Venn of Sharper Print who has always been most helpful and has provided us with a first class service.

Wishing you a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Avril Silk, Maurice Stanbury
and Andrew Millard*

Includes games and activities, food, gift and a visit from Father Christmas!

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY
 £5 PER CHILD, UNDER 1S FREE

12th December | Appley Pavilion TA21 0HH | 4.00 – 6.00pm

Children must be accompanied by an adult.
 All proceeds to Swallows and Stawley Preschool Fundraiser.

ALL PROCEEDS TO STAWLEY PRESCHOOL FUNDRAISERS

LAMBING BINGO!

BINGO WITH A TWIST!

BUY YOUR BINGO CARDS FROM PRESCHOOL OR FROM STAWLEY SHOP FROM DECEMBER 12TH, JOIN THE WHATSAPP GROUP AND MARK OFF THE NUMBER OF EACH EWE THAT LAMBS!

FULL INSTRUCTIONS WITH PURCHASE OF BINGO CARD.

CASH PRIZES

£5 TO PLAY

LAMBING STARTS JAN '26

The Greenham Dairy Maids

Twice a month, ever since the on-line writing workshops I ran during the Covid lockdowns, a small group has continued to meet in Greenham. I choose varied writing prompts to stretch and delight my amazing, creative students. One particular prompt has had unexpected and far-reaching effects.

It began decades ago. I was half the age I am now. In Paris. From the relative calm of my seventies, I still remember the wild emotions of my thirties. That might explain my passionate response to the unknown (to me) French/American artist whose retrospective was on at the Pompidou Centre – then a new, exciting creative complex famous for its distinctive Brutalist/inside-out architecture. The building was amazing – then I went inside, and the amazement just grew and grew. I saw art which is as fresh in my memory now as it seemed then. I wept, laughed out loud and wept again at Niki de Saint Phalle's bold, brave, feminist and feminine art.

Her letters, strewn with tiny pictures and wordplay, were beguiling. Collages of children's plastic toys disturbed me, as did her angry assemblages, *Tirs*, where bags of paint were shot with rifles. By contrast, large, voluptuous Nanas danced around the galleries, uncompromisingly colourful and full of the joy that was hard fought for – Niki de Saint Phalle's childhood was abusive and violent.

One of the Nanas, *Hon, the Cathedral*, was the size of a building – once inside you visited a milk bar, cinema and planetarium. I remember there were queues of visitors.

I particularly enjoyed the Skinnies, which cast wonderful shadows.

A year passed, and the brightness had gone out of my life. I heard that the London gallery, Gimpel Fils, was exhibiting Niki's work. It was time for an infusion of joy.

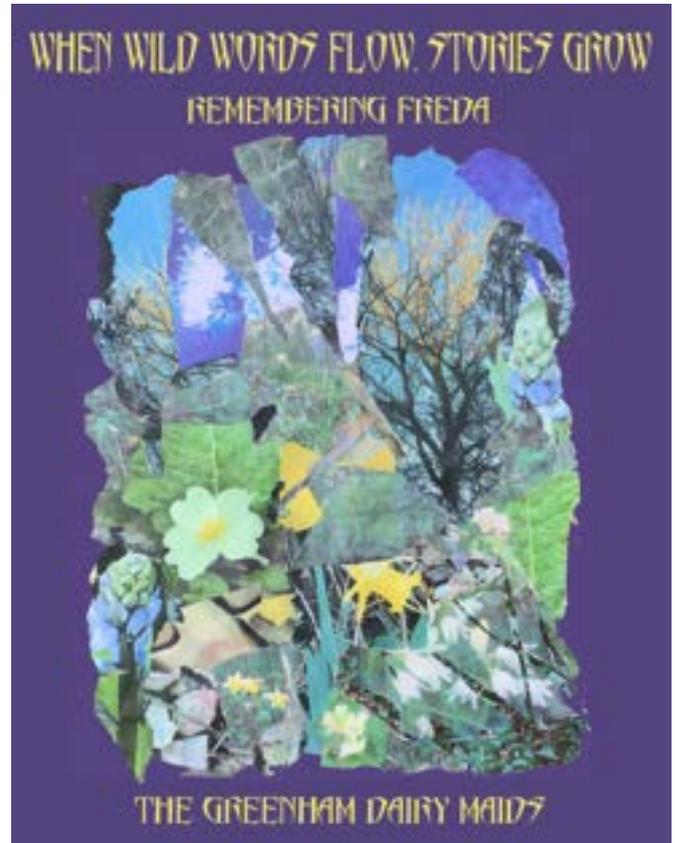
I am so glad I went. That's when I heard about the Tarot Garden in Tuscany, mainly the work of Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely. I was learning about the Tarot cards, and the sheer audacity of the concept caught me, and has never let me go. The buildings I saw in Niki's hand-drawn book, bedecked with mirror, vibrant and eccentric, dazzled me. I longed to go, and regret that it has never happened.

I marvelled that two such different artists could work together and still remain true to themselves. As lovers and artists, they fascinated me.

Forty years passed. I was looking for prompts for our creative writing group, and found my precious book about the Tarot Garden. It affected one student, Freda, profoundly, as it had me. She started to write a semi-autobiographical

novel. Her main character, Sig, discovers Niki de Saint Phalle's work, and plans her own Tarot garden.

Not all the group liked the art – one described it as 'a nightmare in a kindergarten.' But Freda was truly captivated, and did masses of research and planning. One Christmas she surprised me with a wonderful present – Niki's fragrance, the 'ultimate dark-green witchy chypre' in a distinctive blue glass bottle. I treasure it.



I wish I could say Freda finished her clever, funny, wise novel, but I can't. She died just over a year ago, and is much missed. As her friends continued producing their own inspired writing, the idea came to us of creating a book in her memory, including extracts from her unfinished novel. Last week I sent the text and artwork to the printer, in good time for Christmas. In December we will have a party, to celebrate Freda's life and our book, packed with stories, poems and illustrations. The cover image is by Janet Morris.

Now something amazing. There is an exhibition of work by Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely here in Somerset at the Hauser and Wirth gallery in Bruton until February 2026. I was there a few weeks ago, with Freda's friends and her daughter, Tanya. It felt like a pilgrimage to me. My memories resonated so deeply, connecting the past with the present. I wish Freda could have been there to dance with the Nanas.

Avril Silk

Carols by Candlelight



**Friday 19 December 2025
7 pm**



**Raising money for a new Union Flag
for Bathealton Church
Mulled Wine and Mince Pies**

Bathealton Village Hall

TA4 2AN

Adults £5 Children £2

Come and Sing Carols and listen to the
Christmas Story
Join us at St Nicholas Kittisford
for a children's Christmas
Celebration at
4 pm on Christmas Eve
before Father Christmas has
the busiest night of his year
Everyone welcome
Refreshments after this short,
jolly, candlelit service
Contact Annie Musgrove 01823672627



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Contact The Presenter Live :

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Message the Presenter via 10radio.org
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Emergency WhatsApp Group

This time last year Stawley Parish Council tried to set up a WhatsApp group that would only be active to disseminate information of use to the community in times of crisis. The response was, to say the least, disappointing with only three people wishing to join. Today (the 6th November) the road in Greenham is blocked. After speaking directly with the “man in the hole” we have determined that the road might be open in time for the school run this afternoon but may be closed again tomorrow. We have disseminated this information to a few by other WhatsApp groups in Greenham and Stawley but how much better it would be to have a larger group.

So, we will try again!

It is intended to have a WhatsApp Group:

- To allow Stawley Parish Council to rapidly disseminate information on matters such as road diversions, power or water outages.
- To allow all members to share information about an event which has just occurred and that could affect parishioners such as a road blockage.

The Group is **not** intended to become a chat line or a forum for advertising things such as fetes, events in the Pavilion or churches.

Details of the members of the Group will be kept on a list held by the Clerk to the Council. If

you would like to join this group, please e-mail the following to the Clerk so that the Group can be set up:

- Name
- Mobile phone number
- First line of address
- Postcode

Paul Musgrove, Clerk

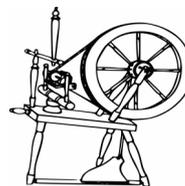
Rainfall Statistics (inches) for October 2025

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
6.06	4.88	5.79	5.79	3.86

It may not have felt like it but October 2025 has been the driest for some years. In October 2018, 2.89 inches of rain fell. As for annual figures, at the end of October 2025 we have received just 50% of the 2024 rainfall. We are still on track to break the 2010 total of 30 inches of rain which would make this year the driest in more than a decade.

When you read this it will be already time to wish everyone a Merry Christmas! Have a lovely time!

Val Coots



Spinning and Woolcraft Group

A twice-monthly get-together at a member's house for textile crafting, chat and a cuppa

Perhaps you would like to learn to spin with us?
Or bring along your knitting, crochet or other needlework project

All welcome

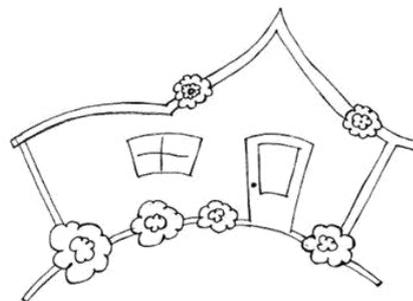
If you would like to join us, please contact me and I will add you to the mailing list.

Next Sessions

Tuesdays: 2nd and 16th December
6th and 20th January 2026
at 2.30pm

Contact Pauline on 01823 672222 or
email pjw200355@gmail.com

Stawley Community Village Shop & Tea Room



Opening hours

Week day opening 8.00am to 5.00pm
except:

Wednesday 8.00am to 1.00pm

Saturday 8.00am to 12.00pm

Sunday 9.00am to 11.00am

Christmas Opening Hours

Wednesday 24th Dec 8.00-12.00

Christmas Day CLOSED

Boxing Day CLOSED

Saturday 27th Dec until Wednesday 31st

Dec 9.00am-11.00am

New Years Day CLOSED

The Tea Room will close 30 minutes before shop closure

The Post Office is here every Thursday 11.30am to 1.30pm
Contact us on 01823 674361 or shop@stawleyshop.com



Season's Greetings to All from everyone at Stawley Village Community Shop



We have a new line of **soups** selling from our chiller. These are made by our wonderful baker and are delicious, they are made with organic veg and help us to continue to provide the fruit and veg in the shop, as they use up any surplus.

We stock envelopes, padded and standard design, Sellotape and parcel tape for all that last minute packaging, 1st and 2nd class stamps and of course the Post Office will be with us on Thursday 18th December.

We will have new gift items for sale as well as Christmas chocs, Mince pies, Baileys Brownies and Cranberry and Orange Loaf Cake! AND keep your eyes peeled for the Four Parishes Christmas Hamper, from five local food producers.

Look forward to seeing you soon at Stawley Community Shop and Tea Room

Return to normal hours from Friday 2nd January

Country Matters

Bring joy to the world

Christmas, it's the most wonderful time of the year for many of us. It is a season with its own songs, traditions and folklore; full of family, friends, festive foods, presents and decorations. It can also be a season of excess. The type of excess that changes pleasure to regret: overindulging in treats, buying more than we want or need, packing our schedules until we are overwhelmed with the festivities. Such excess is often accompanied by the waste of the season: wrapping paper, cards, packaging, electricity, uneaten food, damaged decorations.

Sometimes this excess occurs because we are too tired or overexcited to check in with ourselves in the moment; it can be a hectic season after all. Sometimes it's because we feel obligated to fulfil seasonal traditions or we follow them unthinkingly.

This year we invite you to maximise joy by eliminating something you would usually buy or do because "it's what we do at Christmas" rather than because it brings you fulfilment. A "less is more" philosophy. Seeking joy in this way is a great approach to saving yourself money, time and energy with the added benefit of reducing the impact of our Christmas celebrations on society and the natural environment. Depending on your choice you could reduce things like energy use, food waste, rubbish and pollution.

Impact on the environment

There are myriad ways to add joy by removing excess. Maybe your family adopts the tradition of exchanging presents in gift bags that you plan to re-use every year, thus eliminating the purchasing and discarding of gift paper. Maybe you skip the difficult task of hanging outdoor Christmas lights, reducing energy use and light pollution. You could send e-cards instead of paper cards or buy some things used instead of new. Your friend group could agree to share a meal instead of getting each other presents. Perhaps you don't buy Christmas pudding or mince pies if your family doesn't enjoy them. However, if you do enjoy hanging Christmas lights or unwrapping presents, prefer paper cards or new items, love Christmas pudding or want to exchange presents with friends then you would choose something else.

Here are the rules if you want to join us. Don't overthink it, it's not something you have to stick with forever. Do consider and consult friends and family. Don't fall into the guilt/shame trap of eliminating something because you think it's good for humanity or "the right thing to do". This is not meant to be a sacrifice for the "greater good". When you choose let the benefits to society and

the environment be a happy by-product. Despite what we are often told sacrifice is not always required to make the world a better place. The "right" choice will be something that at most brings you extra happiness and at the least eliminates something you never miss.

Every person is different so this is quite a personal decision. Have a think. What will you choose?

Alësha Naranjit and Frazer Higgins

Lunch Club

In October we tackled a fiendish science quiz compiled by Pauline Wood. Much discussion, some scratching of heads and a fair share of laughter ensued as we organised ourselves into teams and turned our minds to the questions. After thirty minutes or so we were called to order and one team was victorious with bags of jelly babies to prove it, all generously shared. Thank you Pauline.

We then settled down to yet another generous Jackie White meal.

Our Christmas lunch will be on Thursday 18th December, starting at 12.00 noon (sharp)! Not only will there be a traditional meal with all the trimmings, but also members of the Village Festival Choir will be present with John Young and local talented friends. I have been assured that this will be 'a Christmas Cracker mix of pan-to, poetry and popular songs and will be 'a crack-ing good starter to our Christmas dinner'. Clearly not to be missed.

If you would like to be included, please let me know by Monday 15th December, as numbers may be limited. My contact details are: telephone 01823 672203 or email harlingdelia@gmail.com.

Advance Notice for 2026

Our January lunch club will be on Thursday 29th January. Details of the speaker will be circulated later

Delia Harling.



Coffee, Cake and Chat

Ashbrittle Village Hall

Saturday 20th December
10.00 - 12.00 noon

**Unlimited Coffee and Delicious Home Baked
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Ashbrittle Art and Craft Group

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Painting and Drawing - Mosaics - Textiles Crafts - etc.

Come and meet some local art and craft enthusiasts, see what's going on and tell us about your favourite craft

We meet at a member's house. Arrangements will be confirmed in advance, via a monthly reminder email

**Meetings will now be on the 2nd Thursday
afternoon each month**

**11th December and 8th January 2026
2.00 - 4.0 pm**

If you are interested in joining us, contact me by email below to be added to the mailing list:

Pauline pjw200355@gmail.com



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ASHBRITTLE VILLAGE HALL
Thursday 18th December
Noon start

Traditional Christmas lunch cooked by Jackie White

A WONDERFUL START TO OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

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harlingdelia@gmail.com

Sale of Garden Sundries and Equipment

Very unfortunately, the afternoon of the Sale of Garden Sundries, in the Grounds of Stawley Church, coincided with the most abysmal weather imaginable - continuous torrential rain and strong winds! This seriously impacted on the number of punters attending, though the few who did venture forth were very happy with their gardening bargains! Thanks to those who did come and to Sue Jacoby, Colin and Annette Haddrell, Kate Holloway and Richard Woods who helped transport vast amounts of stuff, setting up the stalls or manning them.

The Sale of Equipment was more successful and a number of the items listed in the Parish News were sold to local people. Many thanks to those involved.

As a result of the initiative, we are very happy to be able to give cheques for £600 each to Stawley Church Tower Fund and to the SCA.

Clive and Val Wall

A Night of Magic and – Torture

I am writing this the day after Wivey Cares' Race Night fundraiser, so forgive me if I still sound a bit OTT! The presenter duo kept us on our toes all night but if you'd thought it was just watching horse racing videos, well, you would be wrong, very wrong. Some willing, and I presume, a few press-ganged, 'volunteers' participated in games in between the races - from cross-dressing to being 'fed' marshmallows, and everything in between.

I have been under immense pressure not to divulge details (let alone publish photos and videos) in the Parish Magazine of those residents who found themselves lined up in front of the audience. A veil of silence has been placed over events and what happened at Wivey Rugby Club must stay there. Suffice to say, the lucky observers had great fun watching the less fortunate volunteers – to whom we owe great thanks for contributing with grace to a memorable evening!! If you follow Wivey Cares on Facebook you may see some photos and videos.

With 2025 drawing to a close Wivey Cares would like to thank everyone who made this our best year ever by helping us with our activities, or by donating. We could not continue without your generous support. In October we started our second weekly social group and warm winter space, the Hub & Grub, which provides great company, good food and fun. The Wivey Health Walks also got off the ground and run on the same day as Hub & Grub (Wednesdays, 10.30, Rugby Club),

so people can do a short walk, nothing too strenuous, along the Wivey Recreation ground. Afterwards they can join the 'cake' experience and even stay on for the full Hub & Grub programme. None of these groups would have come to life without your generous help!

Whilst I don't have the final figure yet it looks as if we have made around £600 from the Race Night, the cost of six Memory Activity Group sessions!

I shall bore you next year with the annual performance figures - I am sure you are already looking forward to it! Meanwhile, something more pressing – from all of us at Wivey Cares.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Val Coots, Trustee

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and 27th January
9.50 - 10.10 a.m.



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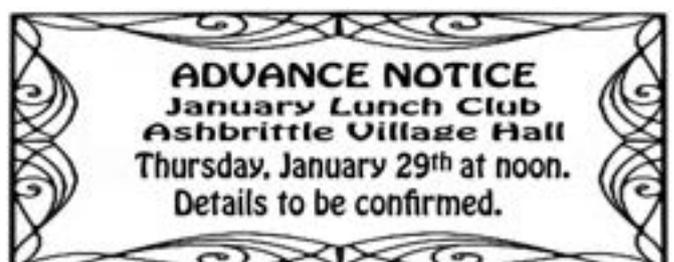
CHAT Have an open conversation about it. Share your thoughts and hear from others

The Marlton Inn, Longford Budville
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St. Andrew's Church, Wivelscombe
Weekly, beginning Thursday 22nd January, 12.15pm

For more info and to register visit
alpha.org/try-alpha
or email sarah@trinityandants.co.uk

For the curious



ADVANCE NOTICE
January Lunch Club
Ashbrittle Village Hall
Thursday, January 29th at noon.
Details to be confirmed.

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7pm

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TA4 2AN

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Diary Dates 2026 - Waterrow Village Hall

Friday February 6th 6.30 Quiz night

Teams of up to 6 with meal & desserts served, book tables early to guarantee your place.

Saturday March 28th 7.30 Film night

An enjoyable film with meal & desserts served - always a popular event.

Saturday July 18th 12.30 BBQ

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Sat Nov 14th 6.30 Film night

An enjoyable film with meal & desserts served - always a popular event.

You can get details of all events from Liz Kilbride: Tel - 01984 623431
email = liz@kilbride.org or visit St Andrews all ages café on a Thursday morning.
Full details of all events can be found in local magazines and local Facebook



Waterrow Village Hall



Quiz Night

Friday February the 6th 2026 6.30 pm

Waterrow Village Hall, Waterrow - TA4 2AX

Quiz Teams - maximum of 6

The meal is Chilli, jacket potato and salad with vegetarian option available. Followed as always by the excellent homemade dessert selections. Meal will be served at 6.30 pm. Please bring your own drinks.



To reserve your table please either email Liz using liz@kilbride.org.uk with your name and team size or you can phone her on 01984 623431

Priced at only £12.00 for adults £6.00 under 12s

We look forward to seeing you there!

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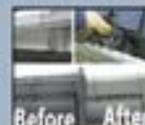


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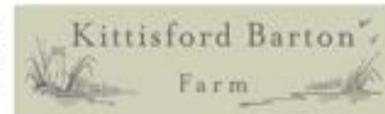
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Defibrillators in our Community

Would you know what to do if someone in your household had a Heart Attack/Cardiac Arrest?

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of premature death. In cardiac arrest the heart's steady rhythm is often replaced by disorganised electrical activity called ventricular fibrillation (VF). The sooner VF is treated by an electrical shock (defibrillation), the greater the chance of the person's life being saved. Immediate action by members of the public can save many lives.

DIAL 999 FIRST

But, there are four defibrillators within our community which are easy to use with verbal and visual instructions and available to anyone. They are permanently located at these places and can be found using the // *What3words* codes below.

Ashbrittle Village Hall, on the outside wall.
blurts/flats/crouching

Bathealton Village Hall, on the outside wall.
relatives.widgets.rolled

Kittisford, New House Farm, on the wall opposite the church.
bonkers.regime.lyricist

Stawley Village Shop, on the outside wall
messaging.servers.quaking

Each one can be removed and taken to where it is needed. **These are all accessible 24 hours a day and no access codes are required.**

Editorial Policy

Please note that the views expressed in this magazine are the responsibility of the individual author(s) and are not necessarily the views held by the editors of the Parish News.

Local information

Police Beat Team PCSO Brianna Whelan
Tel: 07761 405460 or email:
brianna.whelan@avonandsomerset.police.uk

Parish Councils

Ashbrittle - Chairman Charles Doble 01823 672365 or 672618
email: *charles@greenandcarter.com*

Bathealton - Chairman Philip Broad 07584 657106
email: *philip.broad1@outlook.com*

Stawley - Chairman Paul Musgrove 01823 672627
email: *stawleypc@stash.org.uk*

Somerset Councillors

Cllr Dave Mansell – 01984 623823 or email:
dave.mansell@somerset.gov.uk

Cllr Gwil Wren – 01823 400657 or email:
gwil.wren@somerset.gov.uk

Community Halls

Appley Pavilion and Recreation Field

– to book, call 01823 672266 or email:-
Lucy Williams *info@appleypavilion.co.uk* or book
online at <https://appleypavilion.co.uk>

Ashbrittle Village Hall

– to book, ring Pat Gainey on 01823 672760
or 07713 276656

Bathealton Village Hall

– to book, ring Tilly Willis on 07961 970743

Local Groups

Stawley under Fives at the Appley Pavilion.

Becky Alder Pre-schools Manager - Swallows,
Sampford Arundel 01823 672342 Mon/Tuesday.
Stawley Under Fives 07707 416871 Weds/Thurs/Fri

Parish News information

The Editors and the next issue deadline date are on the back cover. Please send items for publication to the Editors in good time to ensure publication. There is only a short time between the deadline and the printing of the Parish News and late items may not be included. Please send items for publication by email *ashparishnews@gmail.com* preferably as attachments in Microsoft 'Word' format.

Advertising Our rates are £2.00 per month for a small box, £4.00 for a quarter page, £8.00 for a half page and £16.00 for a whole page. Advertising for community events, charity and church fundraising events in our area are normally carried free of charge. Occasional one-off adverts from residents in our area seeking to sell or buy an article or seeking to acquire or offer a service are also carried free of charge. In all cases the style, layout and size allocated to an advert is at the discretion of the Editors.

Editors: Maurice Stanbury 01823 672216 and Avril Silk 01823 672131; e-mail address:
ashparishnews@gmail.com

Treasurer: Andrew Millard, Barton Barn, Kittisford, Wellington TA21 0RZ

Bank details: Account Name: The Parish News, Sort Code: 30-98-45. Acc. no. 01828373

Distribution: Pat Sweet 01823 672380

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

December

1st	12 noon - 2.00 pm	Pop-Up Café in Bathealton Village Hall
3rd and 17th	10.00 - 12.30 pm	Books, Biscuits, Coffee and Cakes at Stawley Mill
5th - 7th	See ad on p 11	The Winter Exhibition at Greenways Studio, Ashbrittle
5th	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Christmas Tree light switch on - Ashbrittle Village Green
6th	6.00 - 7.00 pm	Choral Concert by the Bute Voices at Kittisford Church
6th	7.00 pm	'A fabulous evening of Delicious Curries' in Bathealton Village Hall
7th	12 noon	Singing Workshop at Kittisford House Barn
7th	3.30 pm	Choral Evensong at Kittisford Church
11th	7.00 pm	Kittisford Christmas Dinner at Kittisford House
18th	12 noon	Christmas Lunch Club in Ashbrittle Village Hall
19th	7.00 pm	'Carols by Candlelight' in Bathealton Village Hall
20th	10.00 - 12 noon	Coffee, Cake and Chat in Ashbrittle Village Hall
24th	4.00 pm	'Carols and the Christmas Story, especially for children' - at the Church of St Nicholas, Kittisford

February 2026

6th	Quiz night in Bathealton Village Hall
20th	Quiz night in Appley Pavilion



Saturday November 8th was a very special day at Stawley Church when Alex, one of our regular bell-ringers, became Mrs McKenna, and then joined in the celebrations, following the marriage ceremony.

Photo - Maurice Stanbuy

Next Deadline Date: Friday 23rd January 2026

Editors: Maurice and Avril