

The Four Parishes News Magazine

BECKLEY
FOREST HILL with SHOTOVER
HORTON-cum-STUDLEY
STANTON ST JOHN



Green Belt parishes stand against Greater Oxford Unitary Authority

December 2025/January 2026

The editor writes



As another year draws to a close, I want to thank all the people who contribute to this magazine in so many ways. The whole process starts with the 'content creators' (yes, we have these in print media too!) - people who live in our villages and are willing to write something for the magazine, either regularly or because they have something specific to say. Most of the regular content is assembled by the village representatives (listed at the foot of page 3), who send it to the magazine in time for the monthly deadline. One off contributions are generally emailed directly to me, ideally by pre-arrangement! People also send photographs, which I am always very pleased to receive even if we can't use them all immediately.

All this material has to be organised into a consistent format over a limited number of pages, which can be quite laborious and time-consuming, especially if there are last minute changes or additions. The editorial team (listed at the foot of page 7) assist with layout and editing of content, proof read the draft magazine, and provide valuable editorial advice.

Once the magazine is printed, the volunteer distributors spring into action to ensure that your magazine is delivered as quickly as possible. Altogether, I estimate that at least 40 people in our community are regularly involved in producing this little publication!

I also want to thank the advertisers, without whom the magazine could not continue as a printed publication.

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year! *Julia*

All contributions to and advertisements in this magazine are the sole responsibility of the author and do not imply or represent any official editorial view or endorsement.

Our cover photo

was taken at a meeting in Wheatley on 27 October 2025 to discuss proposals for Local Government Reorganisation.

See page 14 for further details.

If you have taken a photo which you think might be suitable for the cover of the next magazine, please email it to

4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

The Four Parishes News Magazine

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We welcome contributions for future issues, but please get in touch with the editorial team beforehand at 4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com to discuss any piece you'd like to write. Contributors typically live in the Four Parishes, or have a strong personal connection to the area. The editors reserve the right to reject any submitted content at any stage of the editorial process.

Recent issues of the magazine are available to view online at
www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine.

The closing date for the February 2026 issue is 15 January 2026

To advertise in the magazine please email JULIA
adverts.4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

News or notices for the individual 'Village pages' should be sent to:

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Horton-cum-Studley	Carol Welch Tel: 01865 358122 Email: carol_welch20@hotmail.com
Stanton St John	Sue Baker Tel: 01865 351449 Email: susanjbaker24@gmail.com



Celebrating Christmas in our Four Parish Churches **A summary of Advent and Christmas Services**



Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Beckley



21 Dec 6pm - Carols and Claret
24 Dec 4pm - Crib Service
25 Dec 10am - Holy Communion

St Nicolas Forest Hill with Shotover



7 Dec 4pm - Children's Christingle
14 Dec 6pm - Advent Carol Service
23 Dec 7pm - Nine Lessons and Carols
24 Dec 4pm - Crib Service
24 Dec 11pm - Holy Communion

St Barnabas Horton-cum-Studley



21 Dec 6pm - Carol Service
24 Dec 4pm - Crib Service
24 Dec 11pm - Holy Communion

St John the Baptist Stanton St John



17 Dec 7pm - Looking for the Light
21 Dec 6pm - Carol Service
24 Dec 4pm - Crib Service
25 Dec 10am - Holy Communion

For information about any of the above services, please contact Anthea Beresford:

Tel: 01865 351839 Mob: 07876 527514 Email: anthea@fourparishes.org.uk

**WE WISH YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A SAFE AND PEACEFUL
NEW YEAR!**



Four Churches at the Heart of our Community



Church Services in the Four Parishes, December 2025

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
7 December <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
	4pm Four Parishes Children’s Christingle and St Nicolas Day Celebration at St Nicolas, Forest Hill			
	6pm Church Without Walls at Stanton St John Village Hall			
14 December <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i>		9.30am Morning Prayer	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion
	6pm Advent Carol Service at St Nicolas, Forest Hill			
17 December <i>(Wednesday)</i>	7pm Looking for the Light at St John the Baptist, Stanton St John			
21 December <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	11am Holy Communion	6pm Carol Service	6pm Carols and Claret	6pm Carol Service
23 December <i>(Tuesday)</i>	7pm Traditional Nine Lessons and Carols			
24 December <i>Christmas Eve</i>	4pm Crib Service	4pm Crib Service	4pm Crib Service	4pm Crib Service
	11pm Holy Communion at Forest Hill		11pm Holy Communion at Horton-cum-Studley	
25 December <i>Christmas Day</i>	10am Holy Communion at Stanton St John		10am Holy Communion at Beckley	
28 December <i>1st Sunday of Christmas</i>	10am Four Parishes Service of Holy Communion at St Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley			

Church Services in the Four Parishes, January 2026

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
4 January <i>The Epiphany</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
	4pm Four Parishes Children's Church at St Nicolas, Forest Hill			
	6pm Church Without Walls at Stanton St John Village Hall			
11 January <i>The Baptism of Christ</i> <i>1st Sunday after Epiphany</i>		9.30am Morning Prayer	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion
	6pm Epiphany Carol Service at St Nicolas, Forest Hill			
18 January <i>2nd Sunday after Epiphany</i>	11am BCP Morning Prayer	9.30am Holy Communion		11am Morning Prayer
	6pm Iona Service at Beckley Church			
25 January <i>The Conversion of Paul</i>	10am Four Parishes Service of Holy Communion at Beckley			
	3pm Four Parishes Family Church does Forest Church at Bernwood Forest, Horton-cum-Studley			
	6pm Taizé Service via Zoom			

Please check the website www.fourparishes.org.uk for any updates. If you are not on the church mailing list and would like an invitation to a Zoom service or a regular reminder of weekly services, please email Anthea: anthea@fourparishes.org.uk.

Benefice of Beckley, Forest Hill with Shotover, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John

The Reverend Anthea Beresford is Vicar of the Church of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Beckley, St Nicolas Church in Forest Hill, St Barnabas Church in Horton-cum-Studley, and St John the Baptist Church in Stanton St John. Anthea is supported by a team of voluntary clergy, lay ministers and churchwardens, whose details are listed below.

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Vacant at present

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The Four Parishes News Magazine has 10 issues per year and is distributed free of charge to approximately 850 addresses in Beckley, Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John. It is funded by advertising revenue, which is used to cover the printing costs. We are dependent on volunteers to assemble the content, book and invoice the advertisers, compile and edit the magazine, collect it from the printers and distribute it throughout the four parishes.

Editor: Julia Stutfield

Layout Designer: Catherine Matthews

Assistant Editors: Jonathan Barker, Anthea Beresford

A letter from Anthea

Hi everyone,



When is 'too early' to start thinking about Christmas?

With differing personalities, time pressures, responsibilities, and logistics to manage, the answer to this question will be different for each of us. I seem to remember seeing Christmas decorations in the shops in October, but I have tried hard to put that out of my mind. I confess I am not one for mooching around shops, so I miss most of the early appearances

of Christmas wares, but I was quite shocked at the beginning of November to be seeing Christmas adverts appearing on television. Interestingly this is the only time of year that I pay any attention to adverts – seeing which I think is the best, and whether I agree with the critics on this, and whether there are any decent Christmas sermon ideas tucked away in them! Not quite what they are meant for of course! Sadly, for the marketing people, they do not tend to make me charge off to the shops.

I am fortunate not to have to think about Christmas meals. One of my sisters has that unenviable task – and she does it SO well. But I do need to think ahead and try to remember everything we want to do in the Four Parishes over this period – fortunately with the assistance of others, helping us not to miss anything, and trying to avoid clashes.

Over the years I have sensed that we can become so overwhelmed with



all the planning and busyness, that the real meaning and sense of seasons of Advent and Christmas can be overlooked, as we juggle our time and resources from one thing to another. Each individual activity might be wonderful and joyful, but there is little time to savour them and think about the true

meaning of the seasons.

I have always found the season of Advent a difficult one to fully appreciate. It is hard to hold on to the 'watching and waiting' of the season, because of the looking ahead and planning for Christmas itself.

Reading this month's magazine, it has been wonderful getting a sense of everything that is going on in our church communities and in our wider village communities. I look forward to seeing many of you at these. This period can be a wonderful time of gathering, of being together with family and friends. My prayer for us all is that we have a wonderful time together, savouring the 'watching and the awaiting' of advent perhaps through reading an advent book, singing advent carols, or simply taking some time out to prepare ourselves for the coming Messiah, before the celebrations of Christmas.

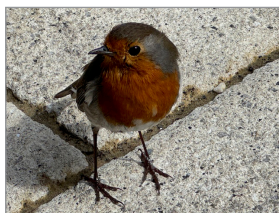


There are many things I am looking forward to: the Christmas celebrations in our churches, remembering once more the first coming of our Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us; singing carols around our villages and in our churches; spending time in our communities, enjoying each other's company; celebrating Christmas with the children and staff of Beckley School; spending time with family and friends. We have a lot going on around the Four Parishes throughout December, so please do have a careful read of the magazine to make sure you do not miss out.

Amongst the joy and happiness of many, I know for some Christmas can be a tough time. Please remember that if you need someone to talk to, I am always around.

I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas, and very best wishes for the New Year ahead, remembering that whatever we are each facing in our lives, we are never alone.

Anthea



The Reverend Anthea Beresford is Vicar of the Church of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Beckley, St Nicolas Church in Forest Hill, St Barnabas Church in Horton-cum-Studley, and St John the Baptist Church in Stanton St John.

CHURCH MATTERS

Church opening and services

All the churches in the Four Parishes are open daily. Beckley 10am-6pm; Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John: 10am-4pm.

Finishing the ‘beyond’ challenge from Advent 2024

I hope you are still journeying with me as we start our final leg of reading the New Testament in a year. For December we need to finish John 1, and read the whole of John 2, John 3, Jude and Revelation.

As I have said before, whilst I appreciate this probably sounds rather daunting, it is no harder than any other month we have already conquered. We can do this! I hope you manage it and feel a sense of achievement at the end. Please do let me know how you get on. If you have got to the end, you have done amazingly well, and I hope it has been a fruitful challenge for you.

Advent challenge 2025

30 November marks the beginning of Advent this year. As mentioned in the November magazine, I thought for the Advent Challenge I would suggest we read the Gospel of Matthew: it is the Gospel for the coming year, so having it fresh in our minds, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the light of the world, the Word made flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, on Christmas Day, would be an especially good thing. There are 28 chapters in Matthew, so perhaps we could read a chapter a day, and an extra chapter on each of the four Sundays in Advent. I look forward to hearing how you get on!

Private devotion during Advent

Advent began on 30 November, so it is not too late if you want to do something special to mark this special season of preparation.

There are many different books that are designed for use during Advent. I have two suggestions, but you may have a favourite you go to, or one that has been sitting on your bookshelf begging to be read for some time. My suggestions this year are: *Listening to the music of the Soul* by Guli Francis-Dehqani. The other is *A Prayer Book of Days: with saints through the ages* by Gregory K Cameron. If you read either of these, or something else you have found yourself, I would love to hear from you as to how you get on.

The 'beyond' challenge for Advent 2025

As our 'beyond' part of the challenge this year I thought we could read the whole Bible again in the coming year. I appreciate this is more challenging than last year when we were reading only the New Testament, but many of us have done it before, and I think it would be great to do it again. As I have said before, there are many different reasons for reading the Bible – sometimes to simply familiarise ourselves with the various books, sometimes more devotional, etc. In this challenge we can remind ourselves of the whole story of God and His people, as recorded in our Scriptures.

I hope some of you will join me in this. As ever, the important thing remains not to get dispirited if we get a little behind, but to get going again. I hope we can encourage each other.

So, in January, for the Old Testament, we need to aim to read the whole of Genesis, the Book of Job up to chapter 21, Psalms up to chapter 18:6 and Proverbs up to chapter 3:20. For the New Testament, we need to aim to read the Gospel of Matthew up to chapter 21:22. I look forward to hearing how you get on. Please do let me know.

Looking for the Light: Wednesday 17 December at 7pm St John the Baptist, Stanton St John

This service is an opportunity for quiet reflection in the lead up to Christmas. There are four short Bible readings and reflections, a short time of silence between each for us to gather our thoughts, two carols and some short prayers. It is aimed at everyone, but especially those for whom Christmas might be a difficult time, or those seeking some moments of peaceful reflection in the heart of the busyness of the season.

Carol Services, Christmas Services and other Christmas activities

Please do look carefully at the rota pages, individual village pages and the back cover for details and timings of the various activities going on in our four churches and villages. It would be lovely to see you at any you can get to. Please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Book Group

We are continuing reading *The Wrong Messiah* by Nick Page. We are a friendly group who meet virtually by Zoom on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm for an hour. Please do get in touch with me if you would like to come and join us. New members are always welcome.

Ongoing midweek activities on Zoom

Midweek activities continue on Zoom as detailed below. Please get in touch with Anthea for invitations if you wish to be included, and look out for email updates of any changes over the holiday period.

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Morning Prayer at 9am		Y		Y
Evening Prayer at 6pm	Y		Y	
Four Parishes Book Group at 7.30pm			Y	

Home Study Group

The study group is having a break throughout December until early in the New Year. If you are interested in being involved once it starts up again, please contact Annie Payne by email at anniefpayne@gmail.com. Please look out for email updates in the New Year as to the start up date, and the book they will be reading.

Prayers for Peace

As the ceasefire in the Holy Land continues to look fragile, hope for peace in Ukraine continues to look unlikely, and news of atrocities in Sudan, Myanmar and Mozambique continue to come through, it is clear that God's peace is not present throughout the world, so we continue to pray for peace. We will meet for 15 minutes at 12pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays in December and January across the Four Parishes as follows:

	December	January
Beckley	6 and 24	3, 21 and 31
Forest Hill	17 and 27	14 and 24
Horton-cum-Studley	3, 13 and 31	10 and 28
Stanton St John	10 and 20	7 and 17

For more information about any of the items on pages 10-12 of the magazine, please contact me, Anthea Beresford.

Email: anthea@fourparishes.org.uk

Telephone: 01865 351839 Mobile: 07876 527514

GENERAL

Islip Big Bike Ride - Sunday 3 May 2026 - entries now open!

The 2026 Big Bike Ride (70 miles) will start from Westminster Abbey at 9am on Sunday 3 May 2026 with alternative routes from Great Missenden (35 miles), Thame (15 miles) or Islip (for little ones!) - full details can be found at the website: www.islipbigbikeride.com.

From Westminster Abbey to Islip through royal parks, and country lanes, this is a unique and beautiful 70-mile route from central London to the ancient village of Islip in Oxfordshire, the birthplace of Edward the Confessor. Starting outside Westminster Abbey, the route goes through Hyde Park and the Georgian splendour of Holland Park. Emerging near Wembley you tackle Harrow on the Hill and emerge from London directly into the beautiful, rolling Chiltern Hills.

With the woods and winding lanes behind, the route takes the Phoenix Trail, an old railway line converted to a cycle path, across the Oxfordshire plain to Thame (with an optional bypass of the Phoenix Trail for serious cyclists). Then it's just a short hop around the Otmoor Nature Reserve to the finish at Islip Village Hall.

The Big Bike Ride welcomes those who cycle regularly as well as those looking simply for a fun family day out. There will be refreshment stops and support en route, a party atmosphere at the finish, and a commemorative gift. For those looking for a shorter ride there are starting points at Great Missenden and Thame, with a children's ride starting in Islip.

The registration fee covers administration, refreshments both en route and at the finish, a finish line gift, and free physiotherapy for riders. Costs are subsidised by our sponsors, and the profits will benefit the two organising charities (The Friends of Dr South's School, and St Nicholas' Church, Islip). This is a fundraising event, and we strongly encourage all riders to seek sponsorship to further benefit the charities supported by the ride.



When you book your place on the ride you can arrange for you and/or your bike to be transported to London. See the transport page at www.islipbigbikeride.com or contact info@islipbigbikeride.com with any questions.

Andrew Service, Stanton St John

Update on Local Government Reorganisation

None of the Green Belt Parish Councils attending a recent meeting in Wheatley on Local Government Reorganisation [LGR] supported the 3-Council/Greater Oxford unitary authority proposal. This included all the Four Parishes, Elsfield and Sandhills. In total more than half of the 48 rural Green Belt parishes under threat of annexation into Greater Oxford attended this meeting on 27 October. Also present were the two local MPs Freddie van Mierlo (Henley and Thame) and Callum Miller (Bicester and Woodstock) and Cllr Tim Bearder. The majority of the Parish Councils backed a single county-wide unitary authority as the least expensive and disruptive option. Ginette Camps-Walsh told the meeting that the Greater Oxford proposal would be the most expensive for council taxpayers, as the approximately 80% of services currently provided by the County Council would have to be delivered in triplicate, with three lots of overheads. Their plans for housing development would be very damaging to our parishes, destroying 2,250 acres of our Green Belt countryside and creating urban sprawl to expand Oxford, without improving access for commuters.

The POETS (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainability) report launched at the end of October also said a single unitary authority was the best option for Oxfordshire and that the 3-Council/Greater Oxford option was "the most disruptive.... likely to be the most expensive. It is also based on some very aggressive growth targets with little evidence of how supporting infrastructure could be developed to keep pace." The current population of Oxford City is 165,200. Greater Oxford would grow to 345,000 in 2040.

The decision about LGR in Surrey has been made by the Secretary of State Steve Reed for two unitary council authorities "as it is more likely to be financially sustainable". This was despite the fact that 51% of local consultees voted for the 3-council, and only 19% for the 2-council option.

The three proposals for Oxfordshire for 1, 2 or 3 unitary councils will be submitted at the end of November. Local consultations will be in the New Year, with elections to the new unitary authorities on 6 May 2027. The new unitary authorities (apart from Surrey) are 'to go live' on 1 April 2028.

Please sign our petition to Reject the Greater Oxford proposal - <https://chng.it/bDwg74DJmp>.

Ginette Camps-Walsh, Beckley

Update on the Red Rose 108 Bus Service

The 108 Bus Users Support Group has recently received an update on passenger use of the Red Rose 108 Bus Service. We are pleased to report that the service is being well patronised by commuters. Passenger numbers have risen from 947 in April 2024 to 1544 in August 2025. A new contract was negotiated with Red Rose in April 2024 to provide a bigger bus and a scheduled service, six days a week, from Bicester into Oxford via Headington and back again. The original timetable was adjusted in July 2025 so that particularly for people who travel into Headington and Oxford for school and work, there is public transport available.

There has recently been an issue for passengers waiting to catch the 13.10 bus at the 108 Stop on the High Street in Oxford. The stop is close to Turl Street where there is massive congestion throughout the day. **It is very important that a prospective passenger signals very clearly to the bus driver to stop.** Unfortunately, the congestion at the bus stop has resulted in some elderly passengers being left stranded on two occasions. **We therefore urge people waiting to catch the 108 on the High Street to keep a careful watch for the 108 so that the driver sees there are passengers waiting.** It is important to note that occasional delays are possible due to traffic congestion and a degree of tolerance is helpful - the bus drivers being under great pressure to keep to time.

This issue has been taken up by the 108 Bus Users Support Group and also by Rachel Khiara who is currently the transport rep on the Parish Council in Beckley with Tim Darch and Dave Harrison at OCC who are in the process of setting up a meeting with Red Rose to discuss these concerns. Watch this space for an update or, **if you have been affected by this or any other problems with the 108, please get in touch with one of our members – see our contact details below.**

Jill Meyjes and Kate MacFarlane - 108 Bus Users Support Group

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Horton-cum-Studley:	Jill Meyjes - jill.meyjes@gmail.com Kate MacFarlane - katemacson@hotmail.co.uk
Stanton St John:	David Polgreen - david@hillviewers.net Dee Hazell - d.hazell84@btinternet.com
Forest Hill:	Wendy Walker - wendybmi@hotmail.com

The Six Birds of Christmas

by Lyn Ebbs

How many birds feature in the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'? The correct answer, of course, starts 'It depends...'. Do you mean the total number of birds mentioned (23) or the cumulative total (184)? I'm going for a more sensible option and just discussing the different species.

The first day's partridge could be one of two species found locally: the native Grey Partridge or the introduced Red-legged Partridge. You will probably need to head south, to the Berkshire Downs, to have good chances of spotting Grey Partridges these days. Like pheasants, Red-legged Partridges, released into the wild for shooting, are more plentiful (they actually feature on our garden list). An alternative name for Red-legged is French Partridge, so it could also deputise as one of the three French hens.



The identity of the 'four calling birds' is debatable; so many birds call! But there are versions of the song where the birds are colly or collie birds (derived from the same root as colliery). In that case, the only choice is the Blackbird, which is as black as coal. Although possessing a beautiful song, the sound you usually hear from Blackbirds as winter dusk approaches is the repeated 'tuk-tuk' call as they head off to roost. If you notice them in greater numbers now it's because our native Blackbirds are often joined by visitors from Scandinavia and the Baltic. They are the same species but lack our Blackbirds' distinctive yellow bill, theirs being brownish black.



Typically, geese don't lay eggs in winter, so you might have a problem locating six of them on 30th December. Their egg-laying is influenced by daylight hours, and they won't start laying again until the days lengthen in late winter or early spring.

Swimming swans are easier to find especially as, in winter, our native Mute Swans are joined by two winter migrant species: Bewick's and Whooper. Occasionally small numbers drop in at Otmoor or Farmoor, but for a reliable

sighting of winter swans, and a pleasant day out, I recommend a visit to the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust centre at Slimbridge. The Bewick's Swans that spend the winter there have been studied so closely that the staff can identify individual birds by the different patterns of yellow and black on their beaks.



You will probably have noticed that I missed out the two Turtle Doves that should have been delivered on Boxing Day. There isn't a realistic chance of seeing even one here in December. While we're still enjoying the festivities or going for a healthy walk, Turtle Doves will be foraging for seeds in West Africa. It won't be until spring arrives, when they've completed their 3,000-mile journey across the Sahara Desert and south-west Europe that we will see them back in the UK. Once they reach our shores, Turtle Doves look for quiet, sheltered places to nest in thick scrub or the widest and tallest



hedgerows. For food, they rely on the seeds of low-growing wild plants, scattered across farmed land, fallow fields and grassland. It's not so long ago that their gentle purring song would have been the sound of summer for residents of our four villages. Even in the last ten years they could reliably be seen and heard on visits

to Otmoor, but this is the last one I saw there, five years ago.

That's where the issues lie; there just isn't enough food or shelter for them here or in other parts of the country. The RSPB has an appeal to provide specialist seed mixes to create habitats and food for Turtle Doves. If you would like them to feature in our summers, not just be a line in a traditional song, please consider donating via this link: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/donate/turtle-dove-appeal>.

As an advance notice, RSPB Oxford Local Group's popular Birdwatching for Beginners course is returning next spring (more details in the next edition of the Four Parishes Newsletter).

Lyn Ebbs has lived in Stanton St John for 37 years and has been volunteering at the RSPB Otmoor Reserve at Otmoor Lane, Beckley, since 2009.

The Story of the Wise Men



Wise men arriving in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus is one of the most captivating Christmas stories: but who were they, where were they from, is there evidence of a star, why those gifts and how did it gain such popularity? The only biblical source for the

wise men is the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 2:1-12) and probably refers to “magi” who were a highly educated priestly caste from the East (Persia/Babylon), a region famous for its long history of astronomical observation and astrology.

The Bible does not state how many wise men there were, but subsequent traditions have settled on three, based on their gifts: Gold (a gift for a king), Frankincense (an incense used in worship, suggesting divinity) and Myrrh (an embalming oil, foreshadowing his death). They are often seen as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies that speak of Gentiles (non-Jews) bringing gifts to worship the Messiah.

The idea that they were also kings developed in the 3rd century and was likely based on Old Testament prophecies (like Psalm 72:11) that speaks of kings paying tribute to the Messiah. Their names—Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar—first appeared in a chronicle around the 8th century. Melchior is often depicted as an older king of Persia. Caspar (or Gaspar) is often shown as a king of India. Balthasar is often represented as a king of Arabia or sometimes Ethiopia and frequently depicted with darker skin to symbolize the universality of the faith.

They followed “a star in the east” which they believed heralded the birth of the “King of the Jews”. There is no definitive historical or scientific evidence for a single stationary “star” but there were several highly significant and unusual astronomical events that occurred around the time Jesus’s birth, which scholars place around 7 BC to 4 BC.

The most convincing is a rare astronomical event that took place at the time and was first proposed by astronomer Johannes Kepler in the 17th century. This triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn (when planets appear extremely close to one another in the sky) in the constellation Pisces occurred in 7 BC (May, September, and December) and was a once-in-

800-years occurrence. To the Magi, Jupiter was the “king planet”, Saturn was associated with the Jewish people and Pisces was the end of a cycle or a major event. This rare triple merging would have been interpreted as an unmistakable sign of the birth of a new, great Jewish King.

A second explanation, though less convincing is a nova (a star that suddenly brightens) or supernova (an exploding star which could certainly be bright, noticeable, and fit the description of a “new star”. Chinese astronomical records show a “guest star” (likely a nova or comet) that appeared in the constellation of Capricornus in 5 BC and was visible for over 70 days. Contemporary astronomers have searched for remnants of a supernova from that era without success. Furthermore, while the Chinese recorded it, a nova would gradually fade, which may not fit Matthew’s description of a star that “went ahead of them till it came and stood over where the young child was.”

A third explanation is a unique or miraculous event, where theologians and biblical scholars believe the star was not a natural celestial object at all, but a supernatural sign created by God for the specific purpose of guiding the Magi. This would explain the star’s unusual characteristics -“it went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was” (guiding them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, a short distance south), which is impossible for a distant astronomical object. It might also explain how it only appeared to the Magi as Herod and his court knew nothing about it until the Magi arrived.

The carol, “We Three Kings of Orient”, was written by John Henry Hopkins for a New York City pageant celebrating epiphany in the late 1850s. It owes much of the popularity to its emotional swings between the rather melancholy minor-chord verses describing the Kings’ journey, history and gifts, and the hopeful major-chord blast of the chorus, in which they gaze up at the “star of wonder” guiding them to “perfect light”. Originally the Kings all sang the first and final verses in unison, with Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar taking a personal verse each in the middle.

The story of the three Kings was the culmination of St Matthew’s gospel, valid astronomical observation, Jewish prophecies about the coming Messiah and a good story sung to a heartening tune.

Jonathan Barker, Forest Hill

The St Nicolas Cope

For over 120 years, a priceless treasure has been hiding in plain sight on the wall of St Nicolas Church in Forest Hill. The 'St Nicolas Cope' is a piece of medieval English embroidery on dark crimson silk velvet, decorated with applied and embroidered motifs of angels standing on wheels, with scrolls decorated with black-letter text, flowers and tendrils.

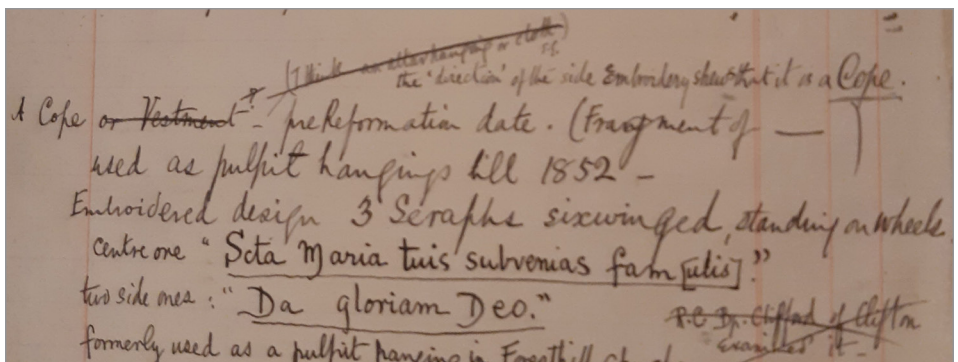
The textile was originally made in the late fifteenth century as a cope used in the Catholic liturgy. A cope (from the Latin *cappa* meaning cape) is a long mantle or cloak, made of a semicircular piece of silk or other material, open at the front and fastened at the breast with a band or clasp.

Copes are still worn by the clergy today (the photo shows the Bishop of Oxford wearing one in 2016) but there were periods during the 16th and 17th centuries when vestments and other ornaments were forbidden in churches and it is likely that the St Nicolas textile was hidden away for safety, although we don't know where or by whom. At some stage it was also cut down into a rectangle.



Our earliest documentation about the cope is an entry in a notebook started by Edmund Greaves, vicar of Forest Hill 1894 - 1904, which reads:

*"A cope - pre Reformation date (Fragment ...) used as pulpit hangings till 1852. Embroidered design 3 Seraphs sixwinged, standing on wheels.
centre one: "Scta Maria tuis subvenias fam[ulis]"
two side ones: "Da gloriam Deo"*



In 1903 the textile was repaired, mounted and framed at the joint expense of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society and of several private

subscribers. It was put on display on the wall of the nave in St Nicolas Church, where it has been ever since.

Over the years, in spite of the best efforts of various members of St Nicolas Church, the textile has inevitably suffered from exposure to light, damp and infestation, and it is now in urgent need of conservation. After much discussion, it was decided to approach the Ashmolean Museum for advice, and we were delighted to welcome Dr Eleanor Standley, Curator of Medieval Archaeology at the Ashmolean, who came to St Nicolas to inspect the cope in March 2024. To our astonishment and delight, Dr Standley suggested that if it was conserved and mounted, and a conservation grade display case could be made for it, she would have a suitable space to display it in the Ashmolean.



Following Dr Standley's visit, the next step was to get a quotation for the conservation work, which we did with the help of staff at the Ashmolean who put us in touch with a specialist conservator in Bristol. Having received her report, we then had to seek approval from the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches), a long and tortuous process which involved experts from Church House in London as well as members of the Oxford DAC. The conservation work was approved in April 2025, after which, with Dr Standley's help, we successfully applied for a grant from The Leche Trust to fund it.

On 7 November 2025, the textile was carefully lifted out of the frame and transported to the conservation studio in Bristol. When it returns to Oxford in the spring, it will be lent to the Ashmolean Museum for an initial period of 5 years, where it will be on display in the 400-1600 Gallery. The original frame remains on the wall in St Nicolas Church and will eventually contain a high quality photograph.



Julia Stutfield, Forest Hill

The Maple Tree Children's Centre, Wheatley Merry Christmas from The Maple Tree!



See our website and social media (below) for details about our programme and special events, including our **Silent Auction on 17 January** and **'Daffodil Day' on 22 March**.

Maple Tree Christmas Wish List:

- A bookkeeper who is familiar with SAGE.
- A volunteer on Monday and Thursday afternoons from 1-4pm.
- A fundraising-loving trustee!

In other news, we have been supporting some displaced families in the Ramada by the M40 and the Travel Lodge in Wheatley. Thank you for all the recent donations; food, equipment, clothing, nappies, toys and books! The families are putting everything to good use in the hotels and then in their new homes.

We are here to help if you need advice or support:

Telephone: 01865 236700 Email: info@mapletree.org.uk

Website: www.mapletree.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley



Laura Spencer, The Maple Tree Centre Manager



STANTON HOUSE

CHRISTMAS TEA

20th December	FREE ENTRY	4pm- 5:30pm
------------------	---------------	----------------

REFRESHMENTS | CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES | CHRISTMAS CAROLS | LIGHT TRAIL

Stanton House Retreat, Pound Lane, Stanton St John, OX33 1HF

Please RSVP to office@stantonhouse.org.uk (this will help us with catering)

BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 12. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Ride and Stride

Jan Weller was the only person in Beckley who took part in the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride on 13 September.

She visited 14 churches, and raised the magnificent sum of £870, which will be divided equally between OHCT and our church here.

Very many thanks to Jan for this amazing effort – we are hugely grateful!

Coffee and chat, Saturday 31 January, 10.30-12am

As the last Saturday in December is the 27th, only just after Christmas, there will be no Coffee and Chat that day. But we'll be back to normal in January. We are looking forward to seeing friends and neighbours again, and catching up with news. Please save the date!

Also don't forget that we have an extensive selection of books for all ages in the 'library' on the pew in front of the bookcase. Do take a look.

Carols and Claret, Sunday 21 December at 6pm

Carols and Claret, our wonderful celebration of Christmas, will be celebrated with carols and readings by candlelight, and time afterwards to enjoy mulled wine and mince pies with friends and neighbours old and new!

Please do wrap up well as the church can be chilly. It can be difficult in some parts of the building to read the carol sheets in the candlelight, so do bring a torch if you wish.

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve - Crib Service in Beckley Church at 4pm

Christmas Day - Holy Communion in Beckley Church at 10am.

The 'midnight service' at 11pm on Christmas Eve is at St Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley.

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

Beckley Fireworks and Bonfire

Huge thanks to the very many volunteers who again made the Beckley fireworks and bonfire on Saturday 8 November at Beckley playing fields such a success. These include those who manned and womanned the gates, organised the car parking, baked the scrumptious cakes and made the mulled wine and hot chocolate, the Abingdon Arms who sold out of their delicious hog roast rolls and sausage rolls , FOB for the marsh mallows and last but no means least for the Beckley dads making and lighting the bonfire.

Approximately 630 paying people attended, and their comments were very positive saying what an enjoyable evening they had had.

Notice of Landowner Deposits – Land at Wadley Hill Farm, Beckley, OX3 9SR - Access to Sydlings Copse – SSSI

The owners of Wadley Hill Farm, which includes the fields around BBOWT's Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI have made an application to deposit a map and statement which "*may prevent deemed dedication of public rights of way over such land*". The map does not include the path from the bridleway 123/7/10 (from B4027 at Royal Oak to Wick Farm) to the main entrance of Sydlings Copse or a walk around the perimeter of the field next to Sydlings Copse.

We need to inform the County Council that people have been using these paths for at least the last 20 years, As well as filling in a form to say this and sending it to the County Council we also need as many 'User Evidence Statements' as possible from those who are using or have used the path(s) over at least the past 20 years. Further information and maps are available on the Beckley website <https://www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk/>. If you are able to provide a 'User Evidence Statement' to keep these paths open for the public, please contact our Parish Clerk to let her know at clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk.

Christmas Fayre at the Abingdon Arms Sunday 14 December, 5-8pm

Christmas stalls, hot food and mulled wine.

Beckley and Area Community Benefit Society Ltd (BACBS)

Open share offer

The share offer to support the future of The Abingdon Arms is still open. Shareholders are entitled to 10% off food and drink at the pub: for further information email theabingdonarms@gmail.com.

More than a Pub programme

Pub quiz

1st Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm in The Abingdon Arms – with pizza! The last one of this year will be on **Wednesday 3 December**. Table bookings advisable - or you can just turn up and join an existing team. We suggest teams of no more than six people. No charge to enter, and thanks to The Abingdon Arms, there's a free round of drinks for the winning team.

Community walk

There will be no walks until Spring – watch this space!

Christmas Crafts, Friday 12 December, 3.30-5.30pm

Free Christmas decoration making for children and wreath making for adults. With mulled wine, mince pies, oven-baked pizzas and hot chocolate for sale at the bar. Collection for Waste2Taste. Booking advisable: email info@bacbs.org with numbers and names, plus children's ages.

Burns Night, Saturday 24 January

We'll be celebrating Burns Night in the pub with haggis, piper and the works. Only £29 per person for a three-course meal and a wee dram to toast the haggis. Book with £10 deposit per person by phone or in person at The Abingdon Arms – or email theabingdonarmsfunctions@gmail.com if you prefer a bank transfer.

Sunday evening talks in the pub at 6.30pm

There will be no talks in December. Our first 2026 talk will be on **Sunday 25 January**. **Stuart Ackland** from the Bodleian Library Maps Department will talk to us about the early maps of Oxford and the social history they provide – with special reference to the 19th Century Drink Map of Oxford.

Then, on **Sunday 22 February**, **Andrew Wheale**, also from the Bodleian Library, will tell us about Wilfred Owen's Last Battle.

More information about the BACBS More than a Pub activities can be found at <https://bacbs.org/events>.

FOREST HILL

St Nicolas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 12. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Children's Christingle, Sunday 7 December

The Four Parishes Children's Christingle will once again be held in St Nicolas Church, Forest Hill, together with our annual St Nicolas Day celebration. This year we will be **making Christingles in the church from 3pm onwards**, as well as rehearsing the songs for the Christingle Service and a short 'Acting the Bible' style drama about St Nicolas, who was the original Father Christmas! Children of all ages are welcome, as long as they are accompanied by an adult. **The Christingle Service starts at 4pm and lasts about 45 minutes.**

Christingle celebrations are a key source of funding for the Children's Society (Charity No. 221124) who provide specialist support for some of the most vulnerable young people in our society. For more information, including ways to donate, email julia.stutfield@gmail.com.

Music at St Nicolas

As usual, the St Nicolas Choir will be celebrating Christmas with a variety of festive music to suit all tastes. Key dates are:

Sunday 14 December, 6pm: Advent Carol Service

7 carols sung by the choir, 4 Advent hymns, and a selection of readings.

Friday 19 December, 6pm: Village Carol Singing

Meet at the Village Hall at 6pm with torch and warm clothing. This year we will be collecting door to door for the Children's Society (see above).

Tuesday 23 December 7pm Traditional Nine Lessons and Carols

Readings from the King James Bible, as used in the Christmas Eve Service from Kings College Cambridge, with a selection of favourite carols for all to sing.

Sunday 11 January, 6pm: Epiphany Carol Service

7 carols sung by the choir, 4 Epiphany hymns, and a selection of readings.

Choir members also support the Children's Christingle on 7 December and the Crib Service on 24 December at 4pm.



**Forest Hill Village Hall
Christmas Fair
13 December, 2-4pm**

Contributions of:

Tombola prizes

Raffle prizes

Gifts

Cakes

would be very welcome!

Contact James

(jde_skinner@hotmail.com)

Proceeds to be shared between
Forest Hill Village Hall and St
Nicolas Church, Forest Hill.

Jazz on the Hill at Forest Hill Village Hall

Tuesday 9 December and Tuesday 13 January, 7.30-9.30pm

Join Julie, Will and their musician friends to celebrate jazz with plenty of opportunity for instrumentalists and vocalists to make music with a house band, and to take the seat in the rhythm section as well if wished. Or just come to listen and soak up the atmosphere! No need to book, just turn up on the night. Soft drinks available, bring your own alcohol if desired. Suggested donation by card or cash £5.

Pop-Up Coffee Shop

Forest Hill Village Hall, Friday 30 January, 10.30am-12pm

Bring a friend, make some new ones! Donations of cakes are appreciated. Contact Julia Stutfield 07766 103427 or julia.stutfield@gmail.com.

Save the Date: Daffodil Day at Shotover House

Sunday 22 March 2026, 2-4.30pm

A 'once a year' opportunity to visit the private gardens of Shotover House. Booking opens on Friday 7 February: www.stnicolasforesthill.org/.

The Maple Tree at Forest Hill, Thursdays 10.30am-12pm



The Thursday morning 'stay and play' sessions for babies and toddlers run in Forest Hill Village Hall throughout the year. **We will, however, be closed on Christmas Day (25 December) and New Year's Day (1 January).**

For a full list of activities run by The Maple Tree Children's Centre in Wheatley, see www.mapletree.org.uk.

Forest Hill Parish Council

The next meetings of the Parish Council will be held on **Thursday 11 December 2025 and Thursday 8 January 2026 at 7pm in Forest Hill Village Hall.**

Dates of meetings, agendas and minutes can be found on the Forest Hill website: www.parish-council/foresthillwithshotover and on the Village Hall noticeboard. You can contact the Clerk by email at: theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk or telephone 0844 884 3328 (premium rate), between 9am and 5pm and leave a message.

A Reminder to Share Your Ideas by the end of January 2026

The changing facility (the green converted shipping container) situated on the recreation ground was funded by a Sport England grant in 2013 and installed in 2015 but it has now been out of use for over six years.

Back in 2022, the Parish Council began exploring how best to repurpose this facility. So far, the only suggestion put forward is to move the unit to Stanton St John Cricket Ground to replace their current pavilion.

If you have fresh ideas for how this facility could best serve our community, be it sports related or something entirely different, now is the time to share them.

We are especially interested in suggestions accompanied by details on how the proposal would be managed and sustained in the long run for the benefit of the parish.

Please submit proposals to theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk by the end of January 2026.

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

St Barnabas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 12. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Christmas Services

Carol service, Sunday 21 December at 6pm. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served after the service.

Crib Service, Wednesday 24 December at 4pm The Crib Service is a wonderful start to Christmas, a family-friendly short service where the children are involved in building the Crib, with prayers and short readings. I'm again asking children to either bring a crib figure up during the service, or assist in a reading or prayer, which you will receive prior to the event. If you wish to be involved, please contact me, and don't forget to bring your torches. Lynn Whitaker - 07795550851, email: lyndawhitaker@btinternet.com.

Christmas Eve - 'Midnight Mass', 11pm

Christmas Day - This year the service will be in Beckley not St Barnabas.



St Barnabas News

The Dog and Collar (St Barnabas) will open its doors on **Friday 5 December at 6-8.30pm**. This is a really nice opportunity to meet neighbours and fellow villagers for a drink and informal chat. We look forward to seeing you there. There will be NO

Dog and Collar in January. The next is **Friday 6 February 2026**.

Coffee and Chat

Saturday 13 December and Saturday 10 January, 10am-12pm

In St Barnabas. Everyone is welcome to drop in. No charge but donations welcome.

Michaelmas Fayre

Thank you to the Badger family for hosting in their farmyard and to all who helped make it such a happy occasion and helping to raise £1,145 towards the upkeep of our village church.

Memorial Concert at St Barnabas Church

A memorial concert was held at St Barnabas on 26 October in memory of Gordon Curtis (1936-2024), who lived in the village for 50 years with his wife Christine. The concert featured Richard Vendome (organist) and Daisy Livesey (soprano) performing a wide range of works, including some by Handel, Mozart and Stanley.

Richard described in Gordon's obituary how 'in 1977 Gordon assembled an enthusiastic team of parishioners who dismantled (an instrument from St Batholomew Church, Nettlebed) and transported (it) to Horton-cum-Studley,' replacing the original Bryceson organ.

On the morning of the concert a service was held at which Archdeacon David Tyler dedicated a new screen enclosing the organ pipes. The screen, designed by Nick Mynheer and crafted by Peter Street of Oxford with 'fleur de lys' images, complements the other carvings of the organ surround.

The event was well attended by members of the local community, who gathered to celebrate Gordon's life and contributions to the village. Many spoke fondly of his dedication, not only to the church but also to various musical groups over the years. The atmosphere was both reflective and uplifting, with music and tributes creating a fitting farewell.



Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

Gardeners have been making the most of the mild autumn - an ideal season for planting and for planning. I have indulged in some new clematis so I am looking forward to colourful climbers in the spring and summer. I also got rid of some of the thugs that were taking over. If a plant is not performing as expected you must be firm!

Winter will bring us colder days with perhaps the odd sprinkling of snow. I suspect it will be another early snowdrop season – I found many pushing up through the soil in early November. Frosted plant stems, seed heads and grasses look lovely in the winter sunshine, so do not cut everything

back. The old stems also provide shelter for the creepy crawlies that every garden needs. There are many scented winter plants that are worth considering for your garden: the flowers of Daphne bholua ‘Jacqueline Postill,’ Chimonanthus praecox (Winter Sweet) and Sarcococca hookeriana or S. confusa (Sweet Box) all bring fragrance to a winter garden.

The gardening club is flourishing. The 2026 programme includes talks on varied topics such as Harcourt Arboretum, The Wild Side of Beth Chatto’s Garden and Gardening in a Changing Climate. We are holding a workshop on hanging baskets in April and summer visits have been arranged to some wonderful gardens. Do come and join us - new members are very welcome. We usually meet in the Millenium (village) hall at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of the month (no meetings in the hall during the summer or in December). For more information contact me on 01865 351310.

Susan Burge, Chairman

Distribution of Funds from 2025 Otmoor Challenge

The Otmoor Challenge Association committee would like to announce the distribution of £3000 from the 2025 Otmoor Challenge Event to the following local charities and good causes, in accordance with the Rules of the Association.

Barton Community Association	£200
Millennium Hall, Horton-cum-Studley	£500
Oxfordshire Army Cadet Force	£500
Women’s Institute	£500
St Barnabas Church, Horton-cum-Studley	£500
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust	£300
Sobell House	£500

The event for next year has been officially scheduled for Saturday 30 May. Registration will open early in the New Year. We are continually on the lookout for more dedicated volunteers to help support the success of this event. At present, we are particularly looking for someone to take the lead in coordinating sponsorship opportunities. If you are able to contribute your time and expertise, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Nick Tribble, Chairman, Otmoor Challenge Association
ntribbs@hotmail.com

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

Recycling

From Thursday 1 January 2026, residents will be able to dispose of their glass in the blue recycling bin. Cherwell District Council approved the new scheme in early November. It ends over 30 years of residents taking glass to bottle banks and it brings the council service in line with the government's new Simpler Recycling legislation. Bottle banks will be removed gradually as kerbside glass collections are rolled out.

You can recycle: Glass bottles (all colours); Glass jars (e.g., jam jars, sauce jars). Please rinse items before placing them in the blue recycling bin to remove food or drink, but no need to remove labels or lids.

New Parish Councillor

We were pleased to welcome our new councillor Jonathan Lipman to our Parish Council meeting in November, following the vacancy created by the resignation of Sarah Foxcroft. We are grateful to Sarah for the many years service as Chair and latterly Vice-Chair of the Parish Council.

Proposals for unitary authorities

Proposals to simplify local government and increase value for money for council taxpayers will have been submitted to the government by county and district councils across Oxfordshire, by the end of November. Their websites should contain details of the submissions.

It is then for the government to consider the submissions and determine which of three options best fits their criteria. It is likely that a period of consultation will be held during 2026, with the intention of introducing a unitary authority structure (replacing the current mix of county and district councils) by 2028.

Parish Council Meetings

Meetings are open to all in the village, and are normally held each month at 7.30pm in the Millennium Village Hall. The next meeting is on **Wednesday 10 December** and typically thereafter on the second Wednesday of each month (except August when no meeting is held).

David Slingo

STANTON ST JOHN

St John the Baptist Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 12. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.



Christmas Lights



Bell Ringing * Lighting of the Tree * Carols
Hot Dogs * Mulled Cider * Hot Chocolate * Raffle

Friday 5 December at 6pm
Millennium Green, Stanton St John



Stanton St John Film Club

Saturday 13 December at 7.45pm, Stanton St John Village Hall

Doors open at 7pm for delicious cakes and hot drinks before the film; the bar will be serving wines. Only 60 seats available, please reserve yours beforehand with Sue Baker: susanjbaker24@gmail.com. Tickets at the door, £5 (cash only).

'Last Christmas' is a feel-good film inspired by the music of George Michael. Nothing seems to go right for young Kate, a frustrated Londoner who, humiliatingly, works as an elf in a year-round Christmas shop. But things seem to take a turn for the better when she meets Tom. Is this handsome charmer too good to be true?

Copy and paste this link into your browser to watch the trailer: [Last Christmas \(2019\) - IMDb](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9416636)



(see next page for details of the January film.)

Stanton St John Film Club (continued)

Saturday 10 January 2026 at 7.45pm, Stanton St John Village Hall

In 'The Ballad of Wallis Island' fictional folk duo, McGwyer Mortimer, were quite big back in the day; the day in question being around 2009. But to their biggest fan, Charles, they were huge. He's also a reclusive lottery winner, giving him the motive and the means to stage a private reunion gig for an audience of one on a remote island.



Copy and paste this link into your browser to watch the trailer: [The Ballad of Wallis Island \(2025\) - IMDb](#)

Stanton St John Parish Council

Notes from Parish Council meetings on 20 October and 17 November:

Shepherds Pit Lane

Two residents raised strong views about the future of Shepherds Pit Lane, expressing concerns about any potential closure and advocated for the introduction of "Quiet Lane" status instead of cycle lane. One resident also asked the Council to press Planning Enforcement on required conditions for the Breach Farm development, including roof colour and planting.

Village Updates

- Community Shop – A recent meeting was well attended, with a survey now circulating and a call for additional volunteers.
- Christmas Tree Collection – Will take place opposite the EV chargers in the Village Hall car park (date TBC).

Ongoing Village Hall Matters

- Anti-social behaviour has been reported to the police.
- Exterior lighting in the Village Hall has now been completed.
- The Village Hall loft is being cleared and may require boarding.

Budget and Finance

The Council reviewed spending to date and the draft 2026/27 budget, noting a modest surplus projected for this year. Councillors will propose any additional projects before the December meeting

A well-attended OCC session on the potential Shepherds Pit Lane closure allowed residents to speak directly with Highways representatives. Updated proposals and costings are expected by the end of the year, followed by further public consultation.

Next meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on **Monday 15 December**, with agenda items due by 8 December. Minutes of meetings are available on the Parish Council website <https://stantonstjohnparishcouncil.gov.uk/>.

Stanton St John Women's Institute

Our WI Craft and Coffee Morning on Saturday 1 November was very well-attended; thank you very much for your support. We held our regular meeting on 11 November to hear Melanie King's talk on whether, among other eighteenth-century remedies, onions can cure earache (the answer – possibly).



On **Friday 5 December** SSJ WI will be contributing to the festivities at the switching on of Stanton's Christmas tree lights by selling hotdogs. Last year, on a chilly evening, these were a sell-out, so make a note to arrive early.

Our December meeting is on **Tuesday 9 December at 7.30pm** in Stanton St John Village Hall. It will be a varied evening: toastmaster, Jim McLeod, will be describing what that role entails and hopefully will conduct us through the rest of the evening's attractions. These include a light-hearted quiz identifying our past selves, the presentation of the Sheila Pullen Bursary awards and, of course, some seasonal refreshments.



Then on **Tuesday 13 January 2026 at 7.30pm** at Stanton St John Village Hall Robin Stafford Allen will be addressing the question: 'Can we live on Renewable Energy?'. Robin retired from researching into fusion power and now lectures in engineering part-time at Oxford Brookes University. If you want to find out more about sustainable energy solutions the meeting is open to all, so please come along and enjoy the friendly atmosphere with the members of SSJ WI.

Monthly Coffee Mornings in Stanton Village Hall (10.30am–12pm)

Monday 8 December

Monday 12 January

Wednesday 28 January

Monday 9 February

Wednesday 25 February

Come for tea, coffee and cake! Everyone is welcome.

For further details, please contact Sue Baker: 01865 351449



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DECEMBER AT RECTORY FARM

 Tractor Shack Café open until Christmas from 9am-5pm except Monday (4pm on Sunday)	 Christmas Lunch at Rectory Farm. Full Turkey dinner, or vegetarian option available	 Reserve your Free Range Norfolk Bronze Turkey for Christmas from us	 Farm Shop - full of goodies and fresh vegetables to make your Christmas
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RECTORY FARM, STANTON ST JOHN, OXFORD. OX33 1HF
MORE DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE: www.rectoryfarmpyo.co.uk/christmas



Yoga with Rosa

Vinyasa flow yoga


Every Thursday at 18:30

Village Hall
 Stanton St John, OX33 1HD

07392 939103 bookwhen.com/rosangela

Please bring your own mat

Scan here





Shotover Kilns, Old Rd, Oxford OX3 8ST

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Sam Mitchell and the team at SJM Motor Repairs Oxford have been serving the local community for over 25 years.

Cars belonging to local villagers can be dropped off at Sam's house in Ventfield Close, Horton-cum-Studley. Sam will take the car into work, MOT and service it, and bring it back at the end of the day for collection.

Tel: 01865 308 007

Email: samfivewood@btinternet.com

Website: www.sjmmotors-oxford.co.uk

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Christmas Services and Events in the Four Parishes



Please refer to lists of church services and individual village pages for further details

Date	Location	Event
7 December, 3-5pm	Forest Hill Church	Children's Christingle making and St Nicolas Day Celebration
12 December, 3.30-5.30pm	Abingdon Arms, Beckley	Christmas Crafts
14 December, 5-8pm	Abingdon Arms, Beckley	Christmas Fayre
14 December, 6-7pm	Forest Hill Church	Advent Carol Service with St Nicolas Choir
17 December, 7pm	Stanton Church	'Looking for the Light' Service
19 December, 6-7pm	Forest Hill Village Hall	Village Carol Singing
20 December, 4-5.30pm	Stanton House	Christmas Tea
21 December, 6-7pm	Horton Church	Christmas Carol Service
21 December, 6-7pm	Beckley Church	'Carols & Claret'
21 December, 6-7pm	Stanton Church	Christmas Carol Service
23 December, 7-8pm	Forest Hill Church	'Traditional Nine Lessons and Carols'
24 December, 4pm Christmas Eve	All village churches	Christmas Crib Services in all churches
24 December, 11pm Christmas Eve	Forest Hill Church and Horton Church	'Midnight' Holy Communion Service
25 December, 10am Christmas Day	Beckley Church and Stanton Church	Holy Communion Service
11 January 2026, 6-7pm	Forest Hill Church	Epiphany Carol Service with St Nicolas Choir

