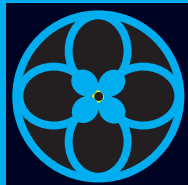


ELMBRIDGE



ELMLEY LOVETT

WINTER



HAMPTON LOVETT



RUSHOCK



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EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to our newly made over magazine!

Our printing expenses over the last few years have increased significantly. After getting several quotes it seemed that the only way to make savings was by sacrificing quality and appearance. That was until we met with Phil Maggs, a member of the Elmley congregation, who has helped us to manage the costs and deliver full colour throughout the magazine. This makes our future more sustainable and improves the quality and appearance. For those of you who only receive the printed version, we hope you like the new look and feel.

I would like to say a very big thank you to all involved in making this magazine possible; from the roving reporters to the distributors, many of whom have just taken on more deliveries. You are all very much appreciated. Without your help we wouldn't have our Four Square Magazine.

We would also like to thank you for all the donations during 2023 which together with our loyal advertisers keeps us functioning and able to produce a magazine the parishes can be proud of.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!

Marzena Cartwright

JOHN READER

Christine, Kate, Simon, Tom and families would like to thank everyone for their kind cards and messages following John's sudden and unexpected death.

We have such happy memories of our time in the Four Square parishes, and we made many lovely friends, and it was a great comfort to see so many of you at John's funeral.

As a family we much appreciate the support and prayers we have received since John died, thank you.

With love, Christine

Christine Reader

HALLOWEEN AT WHITLENGE 2023

We would like to thank all our visitors who came to our amazing Halloween trail at Whitlence Gardens. (pictures on page 16). It was a very successful event and so far we have raised £1,100 for air ambulance.

Christmas at Whitlence runs from **December 2nd to December 22nd**. Fun for all the family, do come and have a wander around our festive gardens.

*Lucy Southall Whitlence Gardens
Whitlence Lane, Hartlebury. DY10 4HD*



RETIREMENT OF OUR RECTOR, REV. STEPHEN WINTER

I will be 70 years old in February 2025 and I have noted in recent months that I don't have the energy that I once had, even when I took up this appointment in 2018. I have long held the view that I should leave while people still want me to stay and not stay until people start to think that it is time for me to go! There is a place for respected elder statesmen and women, but it should not be in the main job.

So I will be retiring at the end of August in 2024 and my last Sunday services will be on Sunday 25th August.

Laura and I live in our own home and not in a vicarage and so we look forward to remaining a part of your lives in the future but our formal connection to the Worcestershire Severn Parishes will end at that point.

Stephen Winter



RECTOR'S THOUGHTS

"So here it is, Merry Christmas!" and even as I write these words, that I am sure are familiar to you all, I do so in the knowledge that Noddy Holder, the man who made them famous, is currently being treated for cancer. As a near neighbour to us as a Black Country man, we think of him and his family in our prayers.

In these troubled times there are words that are read in our churches each year at Christmas, up and down the land, that mean an awful lot to me.

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never put it out."

If you have ever lit a single candle in a darkened room, you will notice that it changes the atmosphere of the room in a way that switching on a light cannot do. Recently we lit candles for those who have died in the last two years in church services in Ombersley and Elmley Lovett. I know, as I spoke with people who attended those services, that lighting the candles had a powerful effect on them and a number of them told me that they light candles when they visit churches. So do I. I light them for the people that I especially love and for the troubles of the world.

I have already spoken about one moment in the Christmas services that especially moves me. That moment comes in the Christmas Service of Holy Communion and we read those words on Christmas night. Another comes in a Christingle Service when everyone who attends is given an orange to symbolise the world with a candle that is placed in it. I have been involved in Christingle services in many different places, including cathedrals and small churches, for many years now, and when the moment comes when the candles are lit and the lights are turned down something magical happens. I feel it myself and I see it in the faces of children and their families who have come to the service.

And that leads me to my last point. One of the sadnesses of growing older is that so many of us lose our childhood sense of wonder and delight. Then Christmas comes along once again and for a moment we remember. I recall hearing the distinguished psychiatrist, Professor Anthony Clare, say that if he wanted a quick way to find out a person's current state of mind, he asked them about their memories of Christmas.

But what we tend to do is to ask our children and grandchildren to carry that sense of wonder and delight on our behalf. We say things like, "Christmas is for children", and we are partly right. I even find myself saying things like that, or at least I feel them. But I wonder if one of the big problems in the world right now is that we do not think that wonder and delight have anything to do with the adult world. They are just for children.

So I want to challenge you to try this spiritual practice this year, at the very darkest time of year. When you go to a Nativity Play or Carol Service, Christingle, Family Service or Holy Communion and a moment comes when you recall a childhood memory, or are touched by your children or grandchildren, or by the singing of a favourite carol, or a magical moment of any kind, don't just let it go by but stop a while. Lean into your feelings, whatever they are. Take notice of them so that you can come back to them later.

And make sure that you do come back to them from time to time. Let those feelings start to do their work in your hearts. And then, I promise you, the light that shines in the darkness, that the darkness that can never put out, will start to burn more brightly in your heart too.

A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Revd Stephen Winter

2023/4

THE WORCESTERSHIRE SEVERN PARISHES

Service schedule

Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Elmbridge, Rushock, Hartlebury, Ombersley, Doverdale

December 3rd 1st Sunday of Advent			December 10th 2nd Sunday of Advent			December 17th 3rd Sunday of Advent			December 24th Christmas Eve			December 25th Christmas Day		
9.00 am	Hampton Lovett	HC-CW	9.00 am	Rushock	HC-CW	9.00 am	Elmbridge	HC-CW	3.00 pm	Rushock	Crib Service	9.00 am	Elmley Lovett	HC-BCP
10.00 am	Hartlebury	Advent Hymns and Readings	10.00 am	Ombersley	Family Service	11.00 am	Doverdale	Carol Service	4.00 pm	Hartlebury	Christingle Service	10.30 am	Doverdale	HC-BCP
10.30 am	Elmbridge	Family Service	10.30 am	Elmley Lovett	MP-BCP	4.00 pm	Ombersley	Carol Service	6.00 pm	Hampton Lovett	HC-BCP	10.30 am	Elmbridge	Family Service
11.00 am	Doverdale	MP-BCP	11.00 am	Hartlebury	HC-CW	4.00 pm	Hartlebury	Carol Service	7.00 pm	Hartlebury	HC-CW	10.30 am	Ombersley	Family Service
11.00 am	Ombersley	HC-CW	6.00 pm	Hampton Lovett	Carol Service	6.30 pm	Elmley Lovett	9 Lessons and Carols	11.00 pm	Ombersley	Midnight HC-CW			
									11.00 pm	Rushock	Midnight HC-CW			

January 7th 1st Sunday of Epiphany			January 14th 2nd Sunday of Epiphany			January 21st 3rd Sunday of Epiphany			January 28th 4th Sunday of Epiphany			February 4th 5th Sunday of Epiphany		
9.00 am	Hampton Lovett	HC-CW	9.00 am	Rushock	HC-CW	9.00 am	Elmbridge	HC-CW	9.00 am	Elmley Lovett	HC-BCP	9.00 am	Hampton Lovett	HC-CW
10.00 am	Hartlebury	Sunday First	10.00 am	Ombersley	Family Service	10.00 am	Hartlebury	MP-CW	11.00 am	Doverdale	HC-BCP	10.00 am	Hartlebury	Sunday First
10.30 am	Elmbridge	Family Service	10.30 am	Elmley Lovett	MP-BCP	10.00 am	Ombersley	MP-CW				10.30 am	Elmbridge	HC-CW
11.00 am	Doverdale	MP-BCP	11.00 am	Hartlebury	HC-CW	11.00 am	Doverdale	HC-BCP				11.00 am	Doverdale	MP-BCP
11.00 am	Ombersley	HC-CW				6.00 pm	Hampton Lovett	ES-BCP				11.00 am	Ombersley	HC-CW

KEY

BCP - Book of Common Prayer

CW - Common Worship

HC - Holy Communion

MP - Morning Prayer

ES - Evensong

GREAT DIXTER

In October of this year, we spent a week on holiday in Kent. One of the places we had planned to visit was just over the border in East Sussex. When we went to see it, Great Dixter did not disappoint. It was amazing and inspiring and gave me something to reflect upon far beyond gardens and biodiversity.

We travelled down a small lane from the delightful village of Northiam and arrived at Great Dixter, which had that impression of not having changed in fifty years or much longer. People from all over the world come to visit the garden, developed by the remarkable gardener and writer Christopher Lloyd. As we found a place to park, the out-buildings and barns seemed very humble and timeless.

On entering the garden, we saw a large, ancient and beautiful house. The garden surrounding the house is a collection of different gardens. Some of them are very basic. In front of the house are two areas of rough grass, a meadow garden which contain a variety of plants that had flowered earlier in the year. There is some amazing topiary. I will not go into more detail about the gardens, for much of the colour had passed over by the time we went. What we did see was signs of the dense and amazing planting in the borders. Many of the plants were huge. We were enfolded in the garden. The plants seemed to look down on us.

The history of the property is fascinating. The manor of Dixter is first recorded in 1220, It was bought by Nathaniel Lloyd, Christopher's father in 1910 after it had been up for sale for ten years, described as an agricultural property with farmhouse attached. He was very wealthy and wanted to restore and extend the house. To do this he employed someone who was to become a famous architect, Edwin Lutyens, with the aim to reflect local traditions of building. Nathaniel and his wife Daisy had six children, so a new wing was designed and added by Lutyens to house the family. It was discovered that the old part of the house was mainly a wonderful mediaeval hall. Another wing was added to the house based upon the timbers of a dilapidated 16th-century house from nearby Benenden. The result was a beautiful house, looking very ancient. They changed the name to Great Dixter.



Nathaniel and Daisy transformed what was a farmyard into a wonderful garden, based on a layout drawn up by Lutyens. It was this garden and house that Christopher, who was born in 1921, returned to for good in 1954. It had been influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. He wanted to maintain and develop the house and garden but needed an income. He started writing articles and books, and also established a nursery. His writings contained views that were controversial for some, but very influential for others. Before he died in 2006, Fergus Garrett was appointed head gardener, and he continues this work. Christopher also founded the Great Dixter Charitable Trust, to oversee the house and garden as a place to welcome visitors from all over the world, a centre of education and a player in horticultural community projects locally and nationally.



As we wandered around the gardens and house, I was aware that this was a place of harmony and beauty with a sense of timelessness. The plants looked over us, enfolding us, and it was a reminder that we are part of this wonderful world and certainly not above it. I thought of the horrors of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, of the violence and hatred in those places.

But there in Great Dixter I reflected on all the people throughout the world who are good, caring and generous. Those who bring harmony, beauty, inspiration, healing, and light to our lives. May light and goodness always continue and triumph over darkness.

Stephen Owens

Stephen Owens is a retired priest living in Hartlebury and a member of St James' congregation

NATURE ROUND UP

Bumbarrels, Acorns, Nature-based insults and Festive feasting for all

I am watching the rain and winds of our latest exotically named storm having just managed to pop out for a quick walk with the Blue the Bedlington during in a brief dry spell. He steadfastly refuses to go outside when it is raining hard and there was a very real risk that he may have burst if he had stayed in much longer!

The temperature has certainly dropped with the Met Office showing a predicted temperature of 8°C which drops to 4°C when they adjust it for the Wind Chill factor. Our local birds seem hungrier as natural food resources decline and so are visiting the feeders more, showing a preference for higher calorie foods. In addition to our regulars, we have had a couple of visits from a twittering flock of Long-tailed Tits (right) which are known by a variety of names around the country including Bumbarrel, Mumruffin and Poke Pudding. Bumbarrel comes from the barrel or oval domed shape of their distinctive nests which are made from moss, lichen



and small feathers glued together with spiders' webs (left). The Worcestershire name for this species is Miller's Thumb but I haven't been able to find out the origin of this. Any suggestions welcomed!

Even despite the drop in temperature Collared Doves are still breeding as evidenced by a pair recently seen trying to make more doves whilst precariously balancing on a Broadband cable. Robins are staking their claim to a territory and can be heard singing loud and proud particularly at dawn and dusk.

Hedgehogs are still resident in Rushock village and will be looking to hibernate when triggered by low temperatures. There were some ill-informed scare stories about Hedgehogs not hibernating because of supplementary feeding by humans but there is no truth in this. Please remember to keep an eye out for small hedgehogs as, if they are not up to 500 grams by now they will not survive the winter.

Other wildlife encounters have been limited but I did help a Toad across the road in Lunnon Lane last week towards a garden where they are often found. Hopefully it will find somewhere safe to tuck itself away for winter. On the subject of amphibians, I was told by Paul Allen, WFDC Countryside Manager, that Rushock is a 'hot-spot' for Great Crested Newts. There have been several sightings of this highly protected animal in the parish and they also featured in a recent planning application. It has been a record year for Hawthorn berries with the largest crop for 20 years. This will provide a bonus for both our resident birds and the Redwings and Fieldfares that visit us for the winter. It's just a shame that so many have been destroyed when the hedges were flailed so early in the interests of 'tidying-up'.

From little Acorns...

Acorns have also been plentiful this year and both Grey Squirrels and Jays have been busy burying as many as they can to provide food for later in the year. They seem to be able to find most of them over the winter if needed and any they forget will hopefully germinate potentially providing a new Oak tree. One of the school assemblies that I deliver for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust is based around acorns and Oak trees and I always encourage the small people to pot up an acorn at home to help provide trees for the future. Oak trees provide a home for hundreds of species of insects, as well as birds, mammals and lichens, and so are a valuable, long-lived addition to the environment. If



you want to have a go all you need is a small plant pot and some peat-free compost. Drop the acorns into water and discard any that float as they are rotten and so will not germinate. Plant the acorn on its side just below the surface of the compost and, hopefully, it will show signs of life in the Spring. The pot must be kept outside as the acorn needs a cold spell before it will germinate. The average growth rate of an Oak sapling is about 1 foot per year (30 cm for European Oaks!). Repot it as it grows bigger and it will eventually be big enough to plant out in a suitable place.

Bird Brains and Dead Wood

To call somebody a bird brain is to imply that their mental abilities may be a bit challenged. In fact birds are



capable of working out solutions to all sorts of problems. I recently came across an article which described how Greater Spotted Woodpeckers manage to make a meal of Hazelnuts. It would not be possible for them to break them open on the ground as the nuts would keep rolling away. The Woodpecker has worked out that if it picks up a nut in its beak and then wedges it in a crevice in the bark of a tree the nut succumbs to the hammer action of their beaks and so provides a meal when the traditional diet of invertebrates may be harder to find. This technique can also be used on other food

items such as walnuts and pinecones. We can help our local woodpeckers out by providing peanuts and fat balls which contain essential fats and protein.

Dead wood is another derogatory term that suggests that something is of little value. However dead trees are very useful for many wildlife species including woodpeckers as they provide a good source of food and can also be hollowed out to provide nesting sites. Standing deadwood is particularly useful and more progressive woodland managers are leaving dead trees and branches where they lie to improve the biodiversity of their woods. Eventually the tree will be completely broken down and reabsorbed into the soil by the activities of many invertebrates, fungi and bacteria. A garden log pile will help wildlife.

Festive fun and frolics

With the joys of the festive season looming on the horizon it is worth remembering that, while we are cosily tucked up indoors with enough food to withstand a small siege, it can be a very difficult time for wildlife. Wild animals have to contend with the weather which day-to-day may be wet, cold, windy or any combination of these. Daylength is at its shortest so diurnal animals will need to take on as many calories as they can during the day to maintain their body temperature through the night. They also need to have access to water both for drinking and, in the case of birds, for bathing. It may seem a bit odd to splash about in low temperatures, but it is essential for the birds to maintain their plumage to ensure that they are well insulated. If you provide water it is easier to empty the container at night and then refill it in the morning rather than trying to break the ice.

We can do our bit to help the birds by providing supplementary food such as seed mixtures, peanuts, fat balls, sunflower hearts, dried mealworms and suet pellets for birds. The important thing is that they do not fill up on low energy bulky food such as bread as this will limit their potential calorie intake leaving them with insufficient fuel to survive the night. A Wren (right) weighs only about 10 grams which makes it very vulnerable to extremely cold weather and so over 25% may die over the course of the winter. They will often huddle together for warmth or use nestboxes for shelter and the record for the highest number seen in one nestbox is 69!



As I have mentioned in previous years, some of what we have for Christmas feasting can be used to top up the bird table, particularly crumbled mince pies, Christmas pudding and fruit cake. Just be careful about using anything with a high alcohol content as it can have unfortunate consequences! (right)

Keeping nest boxes available through the winter as well as leaving some wild areas in your garden such as hedge bottoms can be a real life saver for birds and invertebrates. Ladybirds, Butterflies such as Peacocks and Red Admirals and other insects will tuck themselves away in lofts, sheds, hollow plant stems or piles of leaves so please try and leave these alone.



The long Christmas break provides the ideal opportunity to appreciate nature either in your own garden or further afield. There are many local nature reserves available such as Chaddesley Woods where a bit of 'forest bathing' can help to relieve the pressures of overindulgence

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy Nature-filled New Year.

Terry Green

CHRISTMAS TREES 2023

Christmas Trees of various sizes this Christmas (of the traditional Norway Spruce variety) for a donation to the Yellow Submarine Charity which gives support to autistic children.

Please support this worthy cause and call 01562 777203 to arrange a time to view and reserve your tree any time after reading this notice.

You can come and dig up your own or have it ready to collect on Saturday the 9th December or on a day of your choice. Remember the fresher the tree the less the needle drop!

Tony Lloyd, Little Durrance, Berry Lane, Upton Warren



COUNTRY DIARY - November

Chill December brings the sleet, blazing fire and Christmas treat.

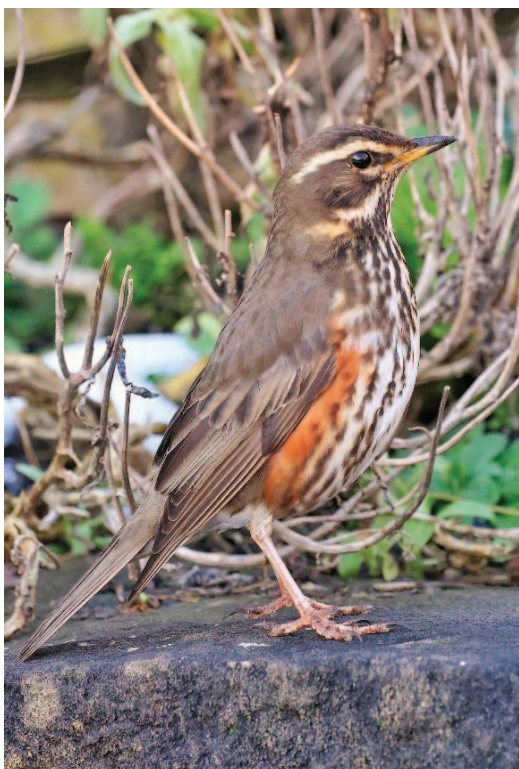
The end of another year – where does it go? Another year older, a new grandson (Mason, lovely, thank you Jack and Casey), and the festive season approaching. There is something ancient and ingrained in our DNA that makes us feel more tired and lethargic in mid-winter, and the collective festivities only heighten our senses as we light candles (even if we don't need to), celebrate old traditions, and eat and drink to keep the cold at bay.

In distant times past, a mid-winter feast was often the last big meal families would eat before facing up to three months of a meagre diet until plants started growing again in the spring. With little choice of wild foods in winter, previous generations would live on game and some dried foods, such as berries and nuts. Go back more than 500 years before guns were invented and the main method of securing food for the family was cunning. Traps, snares, pits and lures were all used as well as falcons to catch game, both fur and feather. Nothing was wasted, feathers for pillows and fur for clothing, horns for buttons and bones for tools.

There is so much tradition associated with Christmas from yule logs, to mistletoe, decorations and trees, singing and dancing, exchanging gifts and religious services. I wrote about some of the origins of the season in last December's diary, and its remarkable in this age of the internet that many of the traditions are still observed and passed down generation to generation.

So what is there to see in the countryside at this time of year? Quite a lot if you are patient and prepared to spend time outside in cold weather. The winter migrants are here in much bigger numbers than the summer migrants at their time of year; fewer species but a lot more birds. A visit to any coastal mudflats will see you rewarded with anything from a few hundred to tens of thousands of waders foraging at the tide's edge. Dunlin, knot, sanderlings, turnstones, oystercatchers, avocets, redshanks, sandpipers and many others busy themselves feeding in the rich mud along the tideline, hunting for the myriad of small invertebrates that live there.

They seem oblivious to the wind that can whip off of the sea and blow them sideways as they dance away from the incoming water. In coastal gullies there will be gulls, herons, curlews and numerous duck species. Birds of prey take advantage of this and it's a pleasing sight to see a marsh harrier skimming along the reeds looking for a potential feed. Above the tussock-grass a kestrel may be hovering, its sharp eyes finding unsuspecting mice and voles which he drops upon from a height.



Redwing

Stay inland and old pasture will be dotted with redwings and fieldfares; the former offering a flash of red where their name suggests, whilst the latter have a grey-blue neck and rump and a speckled breast. They work their way across the fields searching out earthworms and other insect life, usually in small groups. If you are really lucky you may see a flock of waxwings feeding on winter berries. They are stunning lookers and are more abundant here if there is a hard winter in their native Scandinavia; bad weather will force them to cross the North Sea. With a stand-out crest, a waxy colouring on their wing that gives them their name, and a black eye-mask, they are my favourite winter visitors. They are as likely to be seen in town feeding on municipal plantings of rowan and hawthorn as they are in the country, and the biggest migrations, called irruptions, force the birds away from the eastern side of the UK towards us.

Many of our native mammals are more elusive, preferring to spend time sleeping in burrows or nests and seeing out the winter in comparative warmth. Deer, however, are easier to spot with the trees now leafless and of the six main species of British deer, the roe is the one that you are most likely to encounter. They are not restricted to woodland and can often

be seen in daylight feeding on pasture close to the forest margins. The other five species are red, fallow, sika, muntjac and Chinese water deer.

The muntjac is about the size of a Labrador and is also known as the barking deer, due to its piercing bark, which is close to a scream and quite unique. I recall once standing still in a silent winter woodland at dusk and unbeknown to me a muntjac had approached, each of us unaware of the others presence. As I went to move off I startled it and it gave out the most frightening scream from about ten feet away. To say that I jumped out of my skin is an understatement. So if you go down in the woods today...

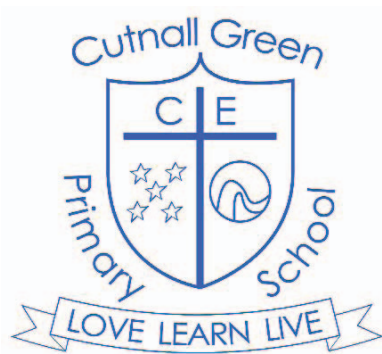
A.J.Selby -Kindly submitted by Barrie Audis



Fieldfare

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Please send all of your personal For Sale and Wanted adverts to the Editor for inclusion in the next issue.



CUTNALL GREEN C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Members of the Community,

I hope this message finds you well. It brings me immense joy to express my gratitude for the overwhelming response we received from our last article in the parish magazine. Your kind words and positive feedback have not only warmed our hearts but also reinforced the strong bond we share as a community.

Since our last communication, the school has been a hub of activity, with our pupils and staff fully immersed in various enriching endeavours. One highlight was our Scarecrow Competition and Family Scarecrow Trail on the last day of school before half-term. The whole event brought families together with creativity and fun. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated and attended this event, contributing to its tremendous success. Our winning scarecrow also went off to the Churchfields Scarecrow competition; a big well done to all our entries and to our winners Jacob and Jessica.

In addition, our Parents and Carers Coffee Morning and Pumpkin Hunt were equally delightful occasions. These events not only provided an opportunity for parents and carers to connect but also allowed our students to enjoy the festive spirit in a safe and engaging environment with their family members.

On the 10th of November, we were honoured to have Reverend Stephen join us for a whole school Remembrance Service. It was a poignant occasion where our children, with utmost respect, observed a two-minute silence at 11:00 am. This service not only allowed us to pay our respects but also prompted our students to delve into the history of Remembrance Day, fostering a sense of awareness and connection to our past as they were able to look and research some of our former pupils who were involved in World War I and II.

I would also like to share an upcoming event that promises to be a highlight of the festive season. On the 1st of December, starting from 3:00 pm onwards, we will be hosting our Christmas Fayre in school. The event will feature external stalls, crafts, face painting, delectable food, mulled wine, raffles and a tombola as well as many more. Most importantly, families will have the opportunity to visit Santa's Grotto nestled in our enchanting forest area. We extend a warm invitation to each and every one of you to join us on this joyous occasion.

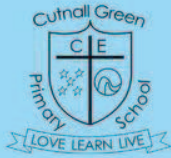
As we eagerly anticipate the Christmas Fayre, let us continue to strengthen the bonds that make our community so special. Your ongoing support is a beacon of inspiration for our students and staff alike. We look forward to seeing you at the school and sharing in the festive cheer.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season ahead.

Warm regards,

*Mr King
Head of School
Cutnall Green C of E Primary School*

Upcoming Open Day on Wednesday 29th November 2023 – if you would like to book an appointment, please contact our office.



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Mon 18th Sept '23 - 10:00am - 6:00pm
Fri 20th Oct '23 - 10:00am - 1:00pm
Wed 29th Nov '23 - 10:00am - 6:00pm
Sat 2nd March '24 - 10:00am - 1:00pm
Mon 3rd June '24 - 10:00am - 1:00pm

Book a visit

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LEST WE FORGET

Today we had 2 minutes silence for the children as we are not here for the 11th November. We are extremely proud of your children - they sat for the whole 2 minutes 🙏🙏



Watch the clock







A big well done to Grace and Jack who took part in the Remembrance Day Parade in Droitwich.

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF DUDLEY



Finding hope this Christmas-time

I don't know about you, but I rather dread turning on the news these days. It seems to have been particularly awful recently. The horrendous attack by Hamas and the taking of hundreds of hostages. The consequent attacks on Hamas in Gaza with such devastating consequences for innocent civilians living in that crowded land and unable to escape. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has not gone away of course, and there have been tragic attacks on Christians in Armenia, Pakistan and India that have gone largely unreported. If we add to these the cost-of-living crisis in this country, and the accelerating climate crisis affecting every country, it is easy to feel deep despair and a sense of hopelessness in the face of it all. As the psalmist said, 'I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where is my help to come?'

Christmas gives a message of hope, but not false hope. It speaks of the Logos or Word, the divine energy at the heart of all things, the dynamic force behind all creation, all that is. The source of inspiration for all human beings. This Logos is forever sustaining the universe and breaking into our consciousness, but in the birth of Jesus that Word was made flesh, once and for all. Jesus was born in Israel/Palestine in another dark time in that region's history. But God is as he is in Jesus, therefore we have hope. As St John says in the first few verses of his amazing gospel: 'In him was life and that life was the light of all people.'

Terrible things do happen in our world. Innocent men, women and children were killed in Jesus' lifetime too and yet he still preached and lived a gospel of peace and hope – right to the end and his death on the cross. But evil and hatred will never have the last word: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'

At Christmas we rejoice in God with us, Emmanuel. We rejoice in a hope for justice in this world, and for hope of a justice beyond this life too, when every wrong is put right and God is all in all.

May God be a blessing to you this Christmas time, and may you be filled with hope and love for God's world.

Loving God, we thank you for the message of peace that Christmas brings to our distracted world. We pray for peace in our world, peace in our streets, peace in our homes and peace in our hearts, as we celebrate the birth at Bethlehem of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Rt Revd Martin Gorick Bishop of Dudley

MORNING PRAYER

The dates for Morning Prayer are as follows: (All are Wednesday morning at 09.15 am);

December

06:12:23	Rushock
13:12:23	Hampton Lovett
20:12:23	Ombersley
27:12:23	No service

January

03:01:24	Doverdale
10:01:24	Elmley Lovett
17:01:24	Elmbridge
24:01:24	Hartlebury

Diana Glendenning

LICENSING OF OUR NEW ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER



Mark Badger will be licensed as our new Archdeacon of Worcester by Bishop John during Evensong in Worcester Cathedral at 5.30pm on Saturday 2 December.

Mark has most recently been the Rector of Kempsey & Severn Stoke w Croome d'Abitot & Norton on the edge of Worcester, as well as Area Dean of Malvern and Upton. He succeeds Robert Jones who retired at the end of November.

As Archdeacon, Mark will have oversight of parishes and clergy in the four deaneries of Worcester, Malvern and Upton, Kidderminster and Stourport, and Pershore and Evesham. He will also have responsibility for our diocesan priority to double the number of children and young people in our churches by 2030 and support parishes in their ministry to new housing developments.

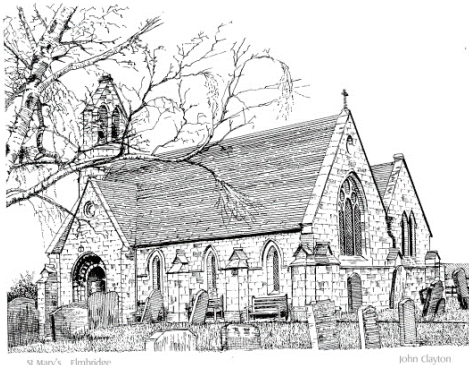
Mark said: "I was humbled and honoured to be asked to become the next Archdeacon of Worcester. I hope that I can continue Archdeacon Robert's work in being a pastor to the people in the Archdeaconry, helping them to feel loved and listened to and enabling them to continue to grow in their relationship with God and each other. I am looking forward to taking on a range of different responsibilities as Archdeacon."

All are welcome to the service in the Cathedral on 2 December.

Sam Setchell

WHITLENGE GARDENS at HALLOWEEN





ELMBRIDGE NEWS



ELMBRIDGE CHRISTMAS POST

The post box for the Elmbridge Christmas Post will be placed in the St Mary's Church on Friday 8th December. Please only use it for cards for **local delivery** and the **last collection** will be at **6 pm on Sunday 17th December**. Deliveries will be before Christmas!

Donations for the service will be for Acorns Children's Hospice **and can be gift aided if wished. Details will be in the church.**

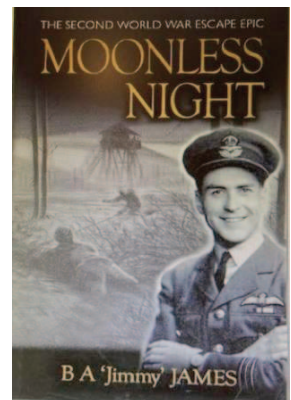
HELP! HAS ANYONE SEEN MY BOOK?

A few years ago, I was lucky enough to purchase this fascinating book, Moonless Night, signed by the author himself, Jimmy James, when I met him in Droitwich. A remarkably brave man.

Unfortunately, I no longer seem to have the book and I think perhaps I must have lent it to someone, but I have no idea who.

Was it you?

If you happen to have it still (easily done!), I really would appreciate getting it back again – and if you could phone me, Craig Nicholl (01527861264) I'd be delighted to come and collect it. Many thanks.



SPOTTED!

At the entrance to Church Farm Elmbridge. Amante Muscari or commonly called Fly Agaric - Poisonous



Barrie Audis

The Friends of Elmbridge
HARVINGTON HALL
THE HOUSE OF SECRETS

Dressed in his appropriate Elizabethan outfit, Phillip Downing, Manager of Harvington Hall kept us spellbound as he gave us a fascinating talk on this iconic Tudor mansion. He certainly knows his subject.

With his talk fully illustrated with slides, we learnt about this unique property with its seven priest's holes built by Master Craftsman Nicholas Owen. More holes than any other house in the UK.

Through Phil's vivid description, we learnt how dark these hiding places were, how damp, how cold, how cramped and how smelly. And he should know – he once spent thirty six hours in one!

Altogether a most interesting and enjoyable evening– helped of course by delicious food. As a result, many of us who have been to the Hall will probably go again to look at it in a different light and those who have never been will certainly want to see for themselves this unique piece of our history.





A reminder of what's happening during the festive season..



Tuesday 19th Dec. Carol Singing

Meet in the village hall at **6.00pm** for a glass of mulled wine before setting out.

Nick wright is going to get us off on the right note and the handbell ringers are adding to the festive music.



Saturday 23th Dec. We will be decorating the church ready for the big day and also tidying up the churchyard. If you can join us around **9.30am** that would be great. Please bring any tools – wheelbarrow, brooms, shovels, shears etc.

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK



Our **Christmas Day** worship will be a Family Service at **10.30am** and we are delighted that the **Rev Julie Humphries** has agreed to lead us on this most important day. It is sure to be an interesting occasion with appeal to all ages.

The handbell ringers will be adding spice to the service and we hope to see a full church.



BURNS NIGHT



AN IMPORTANT DATE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Yes, we're having another of our popular Burns Nights
on
Friday 26th January 2024
in Elmbridge Village Hall
7.00pm for 7.30pm

Just like last time, it's sure to be a popular event so put the date in your
diary and get your tickets (£20) by contacting

Ann Carter on 01299851640

PS Don't forget to bring you own drink and glasses

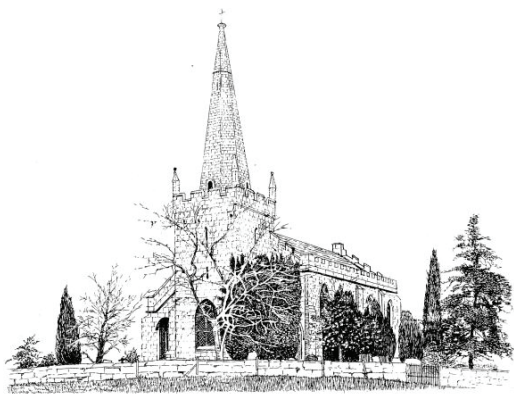


Some useful information about fly tipping, litter etc.

The problem	What to do/who to contact
Fly tipping on public roads	If the waste blocks the road or presents an immediate hazard to traffic/life ring 999 If not report it to County Council Highways Dept: 01905 765765 Or Client Services: 01386 565018 Alternatively both Wychavon & Wyre Forest District Councils have 'report it' forms online which can be completed.
Fly tipping on private land	It is the responsibility of the landowner to clear this.
Roads blocked by fallen trees or flash flooding	If there is a risk to life ring 999 Otherwise report it on www.worcestershire.gov.uk/reportit

If you would like to help keep our local lanes free from the ever increasing amount of litter then please consider signing up to become a volunteer litter picker on Wychavon's or Wyre Forest's 'Adopt a Street' scheme; full details can be found on their websites – they will provide you with the necessary equipment.

Barrie Audis



ELMLEY LOVETT NEWS

ALL SOULS SERVICE

This was a well attended service and one which is not just for those who have lost loved ones recently but for anyone wishing to take time out to remember a loved one.

We read the names out of those who have passed away over the last two years and for each a candle is lit. At the end of this we always play a recording of 'The Lord Bless you and keep you' sung by Nathan Williams when he was Head Chorister at The King's School and we are very grateful for his support. Nathan is currently studying medicine at Liverpool University.

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

Despite the poor weather, all the parishes were represented at our service of Remembrance, where we remember each soldier who lost his life in the World Wars.



The collection was made on behalf of the Four Square to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. This year we raised £175.

For each soldier's name that is read out, the half-muffled tenor bell is tolled. Neil Cutler again reprised his role as the toller of the bell and despite having a poorly back, made a fine job.

Standing (or stopping) the bell immediately after the last name is read makes a significant contribution to the respect with which we honour these names and is not easy. It was much appreciated.

Neil during practice



We are also most grateful to Arlo for bringing his Grandpa.



This plaque greets everyone who enters into the church at Elmley and many family names have sons who were lost. Whilst we do not immediately know what these men and women did during the Great War, Evelyn Cartridge is the great great Grandmother of Arlo.

If any families have information on any of these names and how they served, please let me know.

Richard Cartwright

St MICHAEL'S CHURCH
ELMLEY LOVETT

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

SUNDAY 17th DECEMBER 2023
6.30 pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies



Let us hear again from Holy Scripture the tale of the
loving purposes of God from the first days of our
disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought
us by this Holy Child;
and let us make this Church glad with our carols of praise!





HAMPTON LOVETT NEWS

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!!!

As I write this issue, I realise that Christmas is only 6 weeks away and the year 2023 is slipping away fast. Where have all those months gone?

Already the shops are full of Christmas cards, gifts and wonderful festive food. I haven't spotted a Christmas tree in anyone's window yet but I am sure it won't be long.

In our Christian churches Advent is a very special time and we look forward to all the special services, especially the carol services and here at Hampton is no different.

St Mary & All Saints

Hampton Lovett



Advent Carol Service

on

10th December 2023 at 6.00pm

Join us for a glass of wine and a mince pie after the service.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Our special Christmas service will take place at 6.00pm as usual on Sunday 24th December.

Hampton Lovett and Westwood Taster Days 2nd & 4th November

Two very successful days of activities were organised for local residents in the Parish rooms to see if the activities were of interest for future courses.

These activities were lead by qualified instructors and volunteers, including Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, seated exercises, crochet and bingo! Also support from Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire's 'Our Community Can' project and Droitwich CVS ensured we learnt about other projects and what we could do in the future.

A good positive turn out with most people enjoying all of the activities making it hard to choose which ones going forward in the new year we'd like to continue with.

All welcome. We will publish the dates and put into our notice boards....



SW Healthcare's 'Your Health project', also provided the health bus on the Thursday, where individuals could get vaccines or just a straightforward health check-up, this proved a valuable and very well received addition to the day.



At the end of day two we all agreed we needed another catch up before Christmas, date to be confirmed but a very positive outcome on a couple of dreary November days!

For any future activities please keep an eye out in our notice boards, or contact Councillor Janice Brookes on Janice@westwood-house.co.uk

PEOPLE IN OUR THOUGHTS

Bob O'Sullivan

We were all saddened to hear of the death of Bob O'Sullivan in October. Bob, Ruth and the family lived for many years at "Turret House" here in Hampton Lovett and moved into Forest End more recently. He was a local councillor for Hampton Lovett & Westwood Parish Council which he served on for many years.

Bob was a devout Catholic and attended the Sacred Heart church regularly.

His funeral took place there on 13th November but his body was laid to rest in our churchyard near his in-laws and where Ruth will eventually join him. Over 60 people came to a short but moving service led by Father George. We all send our deepest sympathy to Ruth and all the family.

Annette Sabey

We were sorry to hear that Annette suffered a stroke while on holiday on the Isle of Wight.

Before her marriage, Annette (nee Brimble) also lived at Forest End and has returned for services and church functions over the years since she went to live in Kidderminster. Tony is looking after her well and she is making a good recovery. We send her our very best wishes for a speedy and full recovery.

The Story of the Woodcutter

An older man applies for a job as a woodcutter but his boss doesn't think he's fit enough. He tells his boss that he can fell down a tree with a single swing. To prove this he goes outside, hits a five foot tree with his axe and it falls over.

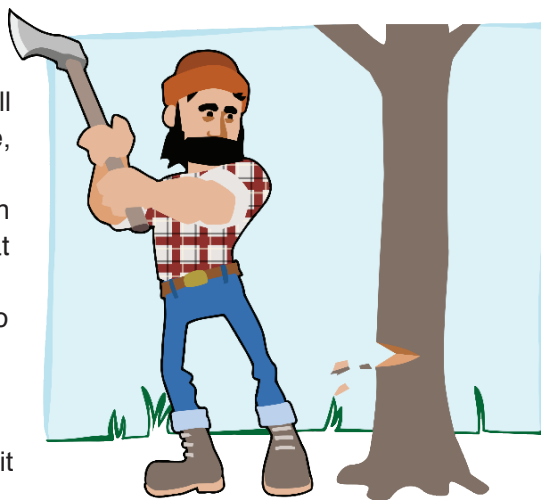
The boss is impressed. The man then repeats this with a ten foot tree, then a thirty foot tree and finally he swings his axe at an 80ft redwood and this giant tree comes tumbling down.

The boss is amazed and asks the man how he learned to do that.

The man said "I practised in the Sahara Forest."

"Don't you mean the Sahara Desert?" The boss asks.

"Well yes." The old man replied, "That's what they call it now.....!"



The Blonde who went Ice Fishing

A blonde wanted to try out ice fishing so she went out and bought all the gear she would need and headed for a local spot to catch some fish.

She went out onto the ice and after getting comfy on her stool she started to cut a circular hole in the ice. As she did so she heard a voice from the heavens cry out "There are no fish under the ice"

The startled woman stood up and looked around but saw no one.

She cautiously moved a little further out on the ice and set up a different spot and started cutting another hole.

Again the voice called out, seemingly from all around her,

"There are no fish under the ice"

Now feeling quite scared and getting a bit frustrated she moved all the way to the far end of the ice and started cutting again.

Straight away, this time louder than ever, the heavenly voice boomed out "There are no fish under the ice"

She jumped off her stool and shouted up to the heavens "Is that you Lord?"

The voice replied.

"NO, this is the manager of the ice rink. There are no fish under the ice!"

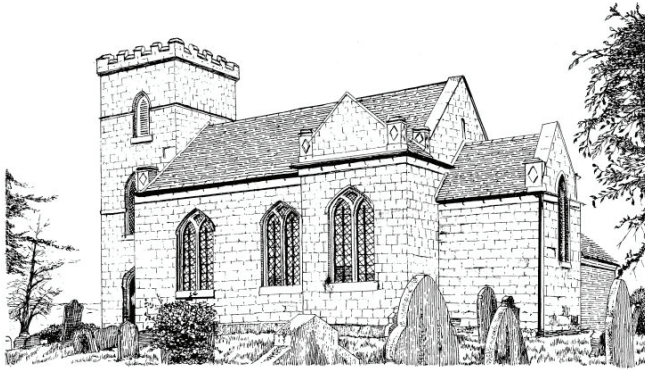
And finally a few jokes.....

1. There's a fine line between a numerator and a denominator. (only a fraction of you will get this joke)
2. What do dentists call X-Rays? Tooth pics
3. Did you hear about the first restaurant to open on the moon? It had great food but no atmosphere.
4. What did the ocean say to the other ocean? Nothing. It just waved.
5. Do you want to hear a construction joke? Sorry I am still working on it.
6. Did you hear about the fire at the camping site? It was in tents.
7. What's the difference between a hippo and a zippo? One is really heavy and the other is a little lighter.
8. When does a joke become a Dad joke? When it becomes apparent.
9. Why is Peter Pan always flying? Because he never lands.
10. How does NASA organise a party? They planet
11. I took the shell off my racing snail thinking it would make him go faster but if anything it made him more sluggish.
12. Did you hear about the cheese factory that exploded? There was nothing left but de Brie.



We wish you all a very Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year

Margaret Vertigen



RUSHOCK NEWS

HARVEST 2023

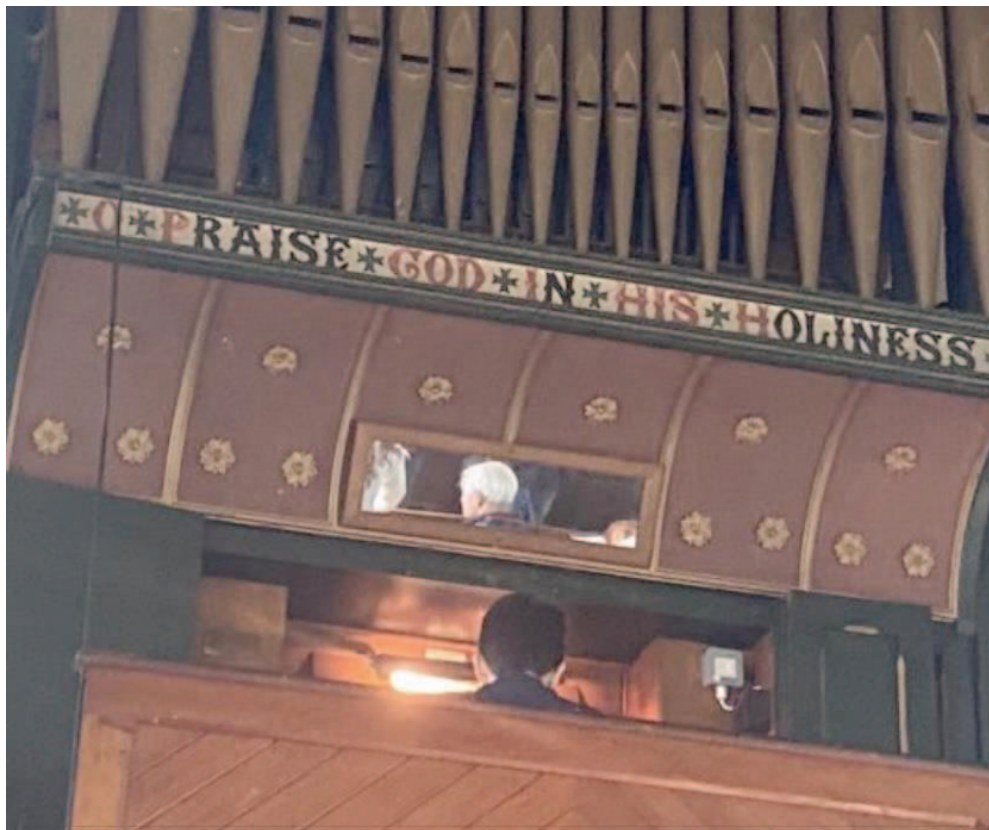
We were blessed with a glorious morning for the Harvest festival at St Michael's and All Angels Church, Rushock. The bright Autumn sunshine giving an extra warmth and vibrancy to our beloved church and the countryside it overlooks. As our Churchwarden, Kevin Jones, opened the service with his reading of 'To Autumn' by Keats, I think we were all able to let those words wash over us with a sense of gratitude, that we were there together, in a place of beauty and tranquillity, celebrating the gift of Harvest.

Reverend Stephen Winter led a joyous but also reflective service where we were invited to consider how agricultural practice has changed in recent years. We sang the hymn 'We the Plough the Fields and Scatter' which is most certainly an ode to farming methods gone by, but the sentiment is still vitally important, and I think we all recognise the great job our farmers do and that it is important they keep doing it! Several Farmers attended the service, but it was the younger members of the congregation that were kept busiest, and we enjoyed hearing the children deliver their readings. A highlight was when the children were invited to bring up their produce to show us and they all very eloquently answered questions regarding how various items were produced. Harvest always provides the opportunity for marvellous hymns to be sung and 'All things bright and beautiful' and 'Lord of the Dance' lifted us all in praise. Nick Wright as always played the organ expertly and was ably assisted by Archie Morris whose playing belies his tender years! Thanks must go to the small army of volunteers who decorated the church so beautifully with seasonal floral arrangements and an abundant array of harvest produce.

A sumptuous lunch followed in the Village Hall, indeed we had a full house and everyone tucked into a feast of cold meats, hot potatoes, salads and pickles. A number of people made puddings and a number of people enjoyed them hugely! Overall, we had a splendid Harvest Festival which was a real community effort. Thank you to everyone who contributed and especially to Mr and Mrs Nicholls who put in such a huge amount of time and effort to make the day a success.

Becky Vale







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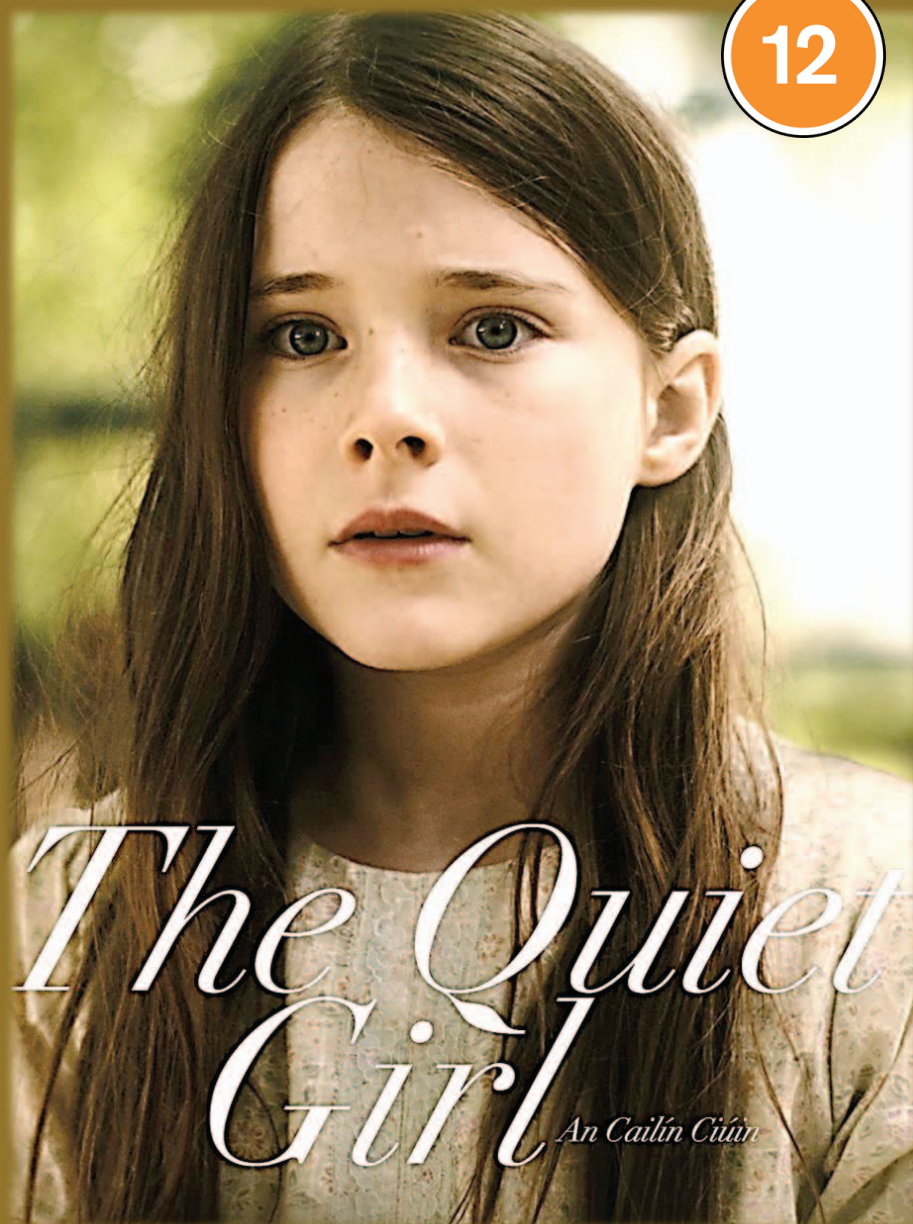
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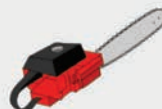
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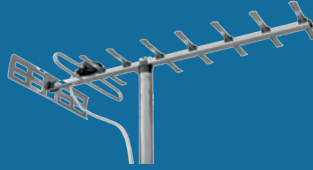
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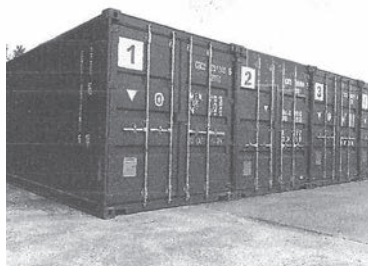
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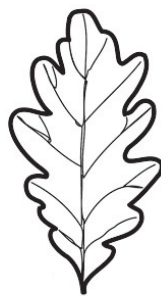


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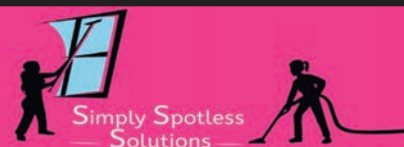
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DECEMBER 2023

THE FOUR SQUARE PARISHES

Service schedule

Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett
Elmbridge, Rushock

DATE	LITURGICAL COLOURS	TIME	CHURCH	FESTIVAL/ SUNDAY	SERVICE/ LEADER	SIDESMAN	READER	FLOWERS	LESSONS
Dec 3rd	PURPLE	9.00am	Hampton Lovett	1st Sunday of Advent	HC-CW	Dee & Neil Cutler		No Flowers	Isaiah 64:1-9; 1 Cor 1:3-9 Mark 13:24-end
		10.30am	Elmbridge		Family Service	Janet Miller & Lee Morton		Sylvia Clift	
Dec 10th	PURPLE	9.00am	Rushock	2nd Sunday of Advent	HC-CW	Kevin Jones	Kevin Jones & Jennie Walker	Marg Nicholls & Jackie Chapman	Isaiah 40:1-11 2 Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8
		10.30am	Elmley Lovett		MP-BCP	Tim Goss	Dee Cutler		
		6.00pm	Hampton Lovett		Carol Service	Various		Flower Committee	
Dec 17th	PURPLE	9.00am	Elmbridge	3rd Sunday of Advent	HC-CW	Sue Horton & Jan Taylor		Betty Shuck	Isaiah 61:1-4,8-end 1 Thess 5:16-24 John 1:6-8,19-28
		6.30pm	Elmley Lovett		Nine Lessons and Carols	Various			
Dec 24th	PURPLE	3.00pm	Rushock	Christmas Eve	Crib Service	Kevin Jones			2 Samuel 7:1-11,16 Rom 16:25-end Luke 1:26-38
		6.00pm	Hampton Lovett		HC-CW	Rachel Wyatt & Judy Bromage		Flower Committee	
		11.00pm	Rushock		HC-CW	Kevin Jones			
Dec 25th	WHITE	9.00am	Elmley Lovett	Christmas Day	HC-BCP <i>Stephen Winter</i>	Guy Cartridge	Tim Goss		Isaiah 52:7-10 Heb 1:1-4(5-12) John 1:1-14
		10.30am	Elmbridge		Family Service	Churchwardens			
Dec 31st		11.00am	ZOOM						

KEY : BCP - Book of Common Prayer, CW - Common Worship, HC - Holy Communion, MP - Morning Prayer, ES - Morning Prayer

JANUARY 2024

THE FOUR SQUARE PARISHES

Service schedule

Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett
Elmbridge, Rushock

DATE	LITURGICAL COLOURS	TIME	CHURCH	FESTIVAL/ SUNDAY	SERVICE/ LEADER	SIDESMAN	READER	FLOWERS	LESSONS
Jan 7th	GOLD or WHITE	9.00am	Hampton Lovett	1st Sunday of Epiphany	HC-CW	Ruth Yardley & Margaret Vertigen		Rachel Wyatt	Gen 1:1-5 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11
		10.30am	Elmbridge		Family Service	Sue & John Allen			
Jan 14th	WHITE	9.00am	Rushock	2nd Sunday of Epiphany	HC-CW				1 Sam 3:1-10(11-20) Rev 5:1-10 John 1:43-end
		10.30am	Elmley Lovett		MP-BCP	Marzena Cartwright	Judy Bromage		
Jan 21st	WHITE	9.00am	Elmbridge	3rd Sunday of Epiphany	HC-CW	Lib & Craig Nicholl			Gen 14:17-20 Rev 19:6-10 John 2:1-11
		6.00pm	Hampton Lovett		ES-BCP	Michele Powell & Ruth Yardley		Margaret Vertigen	
Jan 28th	WHITE	9.00am	Elmley Lovett	4th Sunday of Epiphany	HC-BCP <i>Stephen Winter</i>	Tim Goss	Richard Cartwright		Deut 18:15-20 Rev 12:1-5a Mark 1:21-28
Feb 4th	GREEN	9.00am	Hampton Lovett	5th Sunday of Epiphany	HC-CW	Rachel Wyatt		Rachel Wyatt	Prov 8:1,22-31 Col 1:15-20 John 1:1-14
		10.30am	Elmbridge		Family Service				

KEY : **BCP** - Book of Common Prayer, **CW** - Common Worship, **HC** - Holy Communion, **MP** - Morning Prayer, **ES** - Morning Prayer



