

ST. PHILIP & ST. JAMES PARISH CHURCH WHITTINGTON PARISH NEWS



DECEMBER 25 & JANUARY 26

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50p

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In the Worcester South East Team

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Safeguarding Officer: David Chestney 01905 359708

Elizabethan Room bookings coordinator:

Mrs Caroline Mayfield 01905 764822

Email: caroline.mayfield40@gmail.com

Magazine Editor: David Chestney 01905 359708

Email: david.battenhall@outlook.com

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Assistant Curate: Rev'd Richard Wood

Assistant Curate: Rev'd Mike Bunclark

Holy Trinity & St Matthew Ronkswood

Curate in Charge: Rev'd Richard Wood

Team Administrator:

Rebecca Caskie: Team Office, St Martins Church,
London Road, Worcester WR5 2ED

Tel: 01905 358083

email: worcestersoutheastteam@gmail.com

*For enquiries about Baptisms, Thanksgivings, Marriages and Blessings,
please contact the Team Administrator as above.*

***The Team Office at St Martin's is open on Mon, Tues, Thurs & Friday,
10am - 1 pm; visits ideally should continue to be by appointment.
Rebecca can always be reached by phone and email.***

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The invasion of Ukraine

The tenth instalment of Denys Bielov's account of his escape from Mariupol will be found on pages 14/15, again this month. Denys continues his journey across Europe, and finally reaches Berlin. See page 26 for ways that we can help Ukrainians fighting on the front line.



December 2025
& January 2026

Letter from the Vicarage

*December 25
& January 26*



Hi Everyone,
How are we all doing?

An e-mail dropped into my inbox recently describing a family's different approaches to walking a Labyrinth.

A Labyrinth, as you may well know, is similar to a maze, although there is no danger of getting lost and stuck, as there is only one pathway through the labyrinth. It goes from the outside to the centre, usually by quite a circuitous route, and those walking the labyrinth are invited to do so, mindfully and slowly, I guess, making their way to the centre; spending some time in reflection at the centre before retracing their steps making the journey back out to the edge.

The family concerned consisted of a Father, and his two children: his six year old son and eight year old daughter.

When the son originally spotted the labyrinth and asked to walk it, the Dad, had a vision of a contemplative moment with his children, walking it slowly and mindfully, but as he relates, "Real life, as it tends to do, had other plans!"

The son, though being told over and over again, that it wasn't a race, still felt the need to treat it exactly as if it was, and so practically jogged his way to the centre in order to be the first one there.

The daughter being older, knew better. She knew it wasn't a race, and so took it steadily and slowly, trying to be mindful; but all the time was distracted by her brother, who was doing it all wrong!

The Dad, tried to embody a spirit of equanimity and focus on his own footsteps and tried to ignore, as much as he was able, the approaches his children were taking.

Continued....

In the end he summarises, that they did eventually make it through the labyrinth: the son rushing, the daughter worrying and himself trying to stay present, but getting distracted at times.

As I read this account, I was struck by its similarities to our approaches to Christmas and the Advent Season.

I wonder will you want to rush headlong through December to get to Christmas Day, barely pausing during this season of preparation, to prepare yourself?

Or will you be distracted by what others are doing, or even what you have left to do, what presents remain to be bought, what preparations for Christmas meals remain to be done, what visits to friends and family need to be made?

I wonder, as we journey towards Christmas, can we set aside some time to remember that we journey with God, to God; and then as we journey into the New Year and away from the season towards the celebrations of Epiphany and Candlemas, remember that God is with us, Emmanuel.

Wishing you all happy Advent, Christmas, New Year and Epiphany seasons,

Andy.

This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's
hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall.
From John Betjeman 'Christmas'



LIVE ON-LINE VIDEO SERVICES

For all churches in the South East Team

Churches in the Team are open for public worship but we are continuing to meet for worship during the week using the zoom app downloadable from the zoom.us website. To join one of the services please email the host who will send you a link:

Morning Prayer: Monday to Friday at 8.30 a.m. *hosted by Mike Bunclark (mbunclark@tiscali.co.uk)*

Compline: Monday to Friday at 8.30 p.m. *hosted by Mike Bunclark*

Monday Prayer Meeting: 4.00 p.m. *hosted by Joan Hazzard (joanhazz@gmail.com)*

Virtual 'Yew Brew' Coffee Morning: Saturday at 11.00 a.m. *hosted by Andy Stand (andy.stand@sky.com)*

Prayers for Peace and Justice: Saturday at 12 noon *hosted by Joan Hazzard*

For enquiries about Whittington please email the Vicar

andy.stand@sky.com

**Sunday Services at 11.00 am will be streamed from
Whittington on Zoom.**



The Elizabethan Room for Meetings

The Elizabethan Room is now fully operational and is available for meetings of up to 12/15 people. Details and conditions of use are given on the church website, or at the Church, along with an application form. This can be sent to the bookings coordinator, Mrs Caroline Mayfield, email below:

caroline.mayfield40@gmail.com
or telephone 01905 764822

Sponsored by the National Lottery Community Fund

**There is a defibrillator on the wall of the Elizabethan Room
(shown above) and another on the front face of
the Community Hall, by the main door**

Unexpected Treasures

From the Diocesan Secretary, Andy Todd,



What things do you most treasure? I wouldn't be at all surprised if they have little value in financial terms – things like a first painting or drawing brought home from school by a child, a letter from a loved one, or an irreplaceable photograph. Treasure is where your heart is.

The story is told of a prosperous businessman seen hurrying to a butcher's shop on Christmas Eve during the Depression of the 1930s. 'Buying your Christmas turkey?' a friend asked. 'No, hot dogs,' answered the businessman. He explained how a bank failure had suddenly wiped out his fortune. He faced Christmas with no money for gifts and less than a pound for food. Next day, he and his wife and small child said grace before dinner and then ate hot dogs – a whole kennel of them, in fact: his wife had given each frankfurter toothpicks for legs and dental floss for tails, ears and hair. Their child was enchanted, and her infectious delight spread merriment among them all. After dinner they gave thanks again for the most loving and festive time they'd ever had. 'Now it's tradition,' the man said. 'Hot dogs for Christmas – to remind us of that happy day when we realised that we still had one another and our God-given sense of humour.'

Christmas can be many things, but it is certainly an invitation to rediscover the treasure of being really human. What gives life meaning is not the accumulation of ever more material comforts, but a willingness to be open to those around: and that includes - unexpectedly perhaps - the vulnerable and marginalised in our society, not just family and friends. That kind of openness is risky, but our model and inspiration is the God who comes in the form of a defenceless baby. No centre stage, crowds or applause for him. Just a scruffy outhouse and a few oddball visitors. This king, it seems, needs to be looked for in unexpected places; but when anyone welcomes him, and in him all the world's vulnerable and defenceless, they find the greatest treasure of all.

So, look for treasure in unexpected places, and may you find unexpected joys this Advent and Christmas season.

Andy Todd



What's on at Whittington December 2025 & January 2026

Saturday 6th December

10.30am-12noon Christmas Yew Brew in Elizabethan Room*

Sunday 7th December

Advent 2

11.00am

Parish Communion

3.30pm

Forest Church

Sunday 14th December

Advent 3

11.00am

Christingle Family Service

Sunday 21st December

Advent 4

11.00am

Carol Service

Wed. 24th December

Christmas Eve

5.00pm

Crib Service

Thurs. 25th December

Christmas Day

10.00am

Christmas Family Communion



Sunday 28th December

Christmas 1

10.00am

Communion Service at **St Martins**

Sunday 4th January

Epiphany

11.00am

Parish Communion

Sunday 11th January

Baptism of Christ

11.00am

Family Service

Sunday 18th January

Epiphany 2

11.00am

Parish Communion

Sunday 25th January

Conversion of Paul

11.00am

Family Communion

Sunday 1st February

Candlemas

11.00am

Parish Communion

3.30pm

Forest Church

*Please note Yew Brew in the Elizabethan Room finishes on Saturday 6th December for the winter months and reopens on Saturday 7th March.
Online Yew Brews will continue.

Support for Maggs Day Centre

This Christmas marks a very special milestone for Maggs Day Centre, Worcestershire's homelessness charity, as it celebrates **40 years since first opening its doors** in December 1985.



Maggs began when local people came together after the tragic death of a man named John Maggs, who was rough sleeping in Worcester.

That act of compassion created a safe place where those experiencing homelessness could find warmth, support, dignity, and hope - a mission which continues to this day.

This year, Maggs invites our parish community to join them in their **“Help Rewrite the Story - Give the Gift of Hope”** Christmas campaign.

There are simple ways you can support:

Gift of Hope Baubles - symbolic baubles that fund meals, warm clothing, sleeping bags, and essentials

Storybook Wishlists - collect warm clothing, toiletries, food items, or supermarket gift cards

Community “Chapters of Hope” - schools, churches, and groups creating displays or prayers of hope

Every gesture - whether a donation, a prayer, a shared story, or a warm meal - helps someone move forward with dignity and feel cared for this winter.

“The need has grown, but so has the kindness of our community,” says Melissa from Maggs. “Your support helps us continue offering warmth, safety, and hope to those who need it most.”

For more information on how you can support or make a Christmas donation, please visit:

www.maggsdaycentre.co.uk/christmas-2025/

Or donate directly: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/28786>

Together, we can help ensure that no one in Worcestershire feels forgotten this Christmas.



**St Philip & St James, Church Lane,
Whittington WR5 2RQ**



A warm invitation to come and celebrate
the Festival of Christmas

Sunday 14th December at 11.00am

Christingle Family Service

Sunday 21st December at 11.00am

Carol Service

Traditional readings and familiar carols

Christmas Eve at 5.00pm

Crib Service

Blessing the crib, listen and watch as the Christmas story unfolds
and sing familiar carols

Christmas Day at 10.00am

Christmas Morning Communion Service

with carols



All are welcome

For further information please contact the
Team Office 01905 358083

worcestersoutheastteam@gmail.com

www.whittingtonchurch.co.uk



Church of St Philip & St James, Whittington

**After 6 December the Yew Brew will be on
Zoom from 11am to 12 noon**

**Please contact Revd Andy Stand
andy.stand@sky.com
for an invitation**

**The Yew Brew Coffee Mornings reopens
in the Elizabethan Room
on Saturday 7 March 2026
10.30am – 12 noon, and thereafter
on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month
with meetings on Zoom on the other Saturdays
www.whittingtonchurch.co.uk**



**From the Parish Register
at Whittington
Baptism
2nd November 2025
Primrose Louise Tanner
Daughter of Ben and Georgia Tanner
~~~~~**

**Interment of Ashes  
22nd November 2025  
Charles Compton Anthony Glossop**

## **Well known pilot....**

At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures to illustrate a biblical story. The teacher was startled to see one little boy was drawing an aeroplane. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy explained. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the figure in the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."

# FOREST CHURCH

## SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER

3.30pm - 4.30pm  
Whittington Churchyard

At this month's Forest Church, come and help construct a Grotto under the Yew Tree, lit by paper lanterns. We'll retell Advent stories (The Angel, Mary and Joseph) and sing some carols by lantern light. Join us for outdoor worship, activities and refreshments.

Contact: [revrichwood@gmail.com](mailto:revrichwood@gmail.com)



*St Philip & St James,  
Whittington*



*Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026*  
*Parish Communion at 11.00am*

*The Wise Men follow the Star  
and arrive at Bethlehem*



### Know what?

As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. "You can't do that," argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know.

He shot me a dubious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good all year, but he doesn't know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?"

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**10th January**  
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**Bartók** - Romanian Folk Dances

**Saint-Saëns** - Bacchanale

**Borodin** - Polovtsian Dances



Photo © Michael Whitefoot



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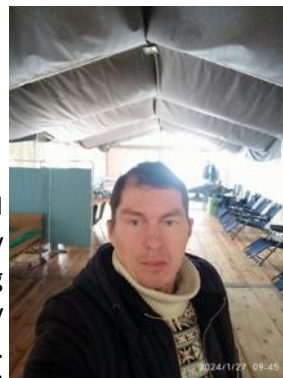


# Escape from Mariupol

## by Denys Bielov - 10

### Second attempt!

After I was deported from Germany back to Poland, I reached a tent for refugees around 1am, barely alive. There were two heating fans and folding couches with blankets, so I could sleep. It was very windy outside, and the tent's canvas flapped noisily. But I was so tired that nothing bothered me, and I fell asleep in my clothes. In the morning, they gave me a room in a hostel. I tidied myself up a bit, had a decent meal, and went into town, following all the Rubikus' team instructions. It was to be a very busy day. Yesterday, it seemed to me that my plans had fallen through and I would have to start all over again. But Rubikus guys are fantastic! They gave me hope and understood how important it was for me to get to Berlin to see my friends Olia and Ruslan. They said we should prepare some documents and in a couple of days I would be with my friends.



Ordering an international passport and ID-card in Poland could mean waiting up to three months, which would have ruined all my plans. Rubikus suggested another way. I had to get a PECEL, the Polish equivalent of the British National Insurance Number. I spent the whole day running around Warsaw to various 'Ujondas' (administrative service centres) and by the end of the day everything was ready for my next attempt to get to Berlin.

While I was waiting, I decided to contact an old acquaintance and client, for whom Tanya and I had designed an apartment in Mariupol in 2010. He really liked our design. A few years later, he moved to Berlin and settled in very well. I contacted him several times from occupied Mariupol. He truly couldn't understand why I wasn't leaving Mariupol. So, when I suddenly got in touch from Warsaw, he was very surprised. He admitted that he thought that I had been brainwashed and had gone over to the Evil side. But he was glad to learn that was not true. I also told him about my adventure with the Bundespolizei. To which he replied, *"You are certainly a hero for overcoming such a long and difficult journey through 'Mordor' (This is what Ukrainians began to call Russia and Belarus after the full-scale invasion) and preserving yourself and your good intentions for two years in this hell. But you'd better forget about Berlin. You'll most likely be anchored in Poland."* This was discouraging but I thought, *"No, I have to drag my anchor to the shores of Britain. So many people believe in me, I cannot let them down".*



When the PECEL and official papers were ready, Rubikus gave me a cover letter that was also supposed to help me cross the border into Germany, and bought me a train ticket for 31 January (2024). Of course, I was still very nervous when the train approached the border. After all, my previous humiliation that I had experienced still lingered like phantom pains. Still, I believed that everything we had done would work. Surprisingly, there was no inspection. The train stopped briefly at the border and then we continued to Berlin. Inside, I was almost as happy as I had been after crossing the Belarusian border. Soon I got off at Hauptbahnhof station, where Ruslan was waiting for me.

I couldn't believe that Ruslan and I had finally met! Two years ago (2022), we stood together on the roof of my house, trying to get a signal on our mobile phones while watching Russian bombers pounding the centre of Mariupol. When he, his wife and daughter managed to leave during the last large-scale evacuation, I couldn't have imagined that two years later we would meet in Berlin. To be honest, I wasn't even sure we would ever see each other again. Back then, under those hellish shells, it seemed to me that our death was more likely than our survival. And now here we were, riding the tram together to meet his family. We sat in a restaurant for a while to celebrate our reunion. I gave them a package from Mariupol, we joked, told stories, and ate sushi. Then we went to their flat. For the first time since Mariupol, I was able to wash all my clothes in a washing machine, wash myself thoroughly and eat a good home-cooked meal. Ruslan took me to the Ukrainian migration service in Berlin and finally I applied for a passport and ID card.



*A friends flat in Dnipro in ruins after bombing - and location in flats.*

*Photos by Alena Sheglova*







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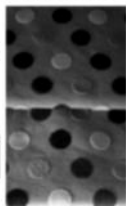
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# Community Hall Update

## WHAT'S ON - REGULAR CLASSES YOU CAN JOIN

Please contact the class organiser for more information, costs and to pre-book

### MONDAY.

10.30am - 11.30am. Zumba with Aimee Ford.

Contact: [aimeeford@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aimeeford@yahoo.co.uk)

5.30pm. The Star Project Children's Theatre (Term time only) with Jo Payne.

Contact: [director@thestarproject.info](mailto:director@thestarproject.info)

### TUESDAY.

4.00pm to 6.30pm. Dance (for 3 year olds and above) with Elizabeth Gibbs

Contact: [lizdance@icloud.com](mailto:lizdance@icloud.com)

6.30pm - 9.30pm Gong Bath + Sound Meditation with Angela Latham.

Contact: [evenstartbabe@msm.com](mailto:evenstartbabe@msm.com)

(varying monthly dates available)

### WEDNESDAY.

4.30pm to 5.30pm Yoga with Natalie Houlding.

Contact: [natalie@zafyoga.com](mailto:natalie@zafyoga.com)

6.30pm to 7.30pm. Pilates with Rebecca Hadlington.

Contact: [fitness-worcester.com](http://fitness-worcester.com)

### THURSDAY.

10.00am (for 10.15am start) to 11.00am Zumba with Denise Wrafter

11.00am to 12.00noon Yoga with Denise Wrafter.

Contact: [sdwrafter@btinternet.com](mailto:sdwrafter@btinternet.com)

7.15pm - 9.15pm T'ai Chi with Dr Marc.

Contact: [marc@obelison.com](mailto:marc@obelison.com)

### FRIDAY.

9.45am to 10.45am Zumba with Aimee Ford.

Contact: [aimeeford@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aimeeford@yahoo.co.uk)

6.00pm to 7.00pm. Duke Yoga with Fiona

Contact: [fib42@hotmail.com](mailto:fib42@hotmail.com)



**Community Hall Management Committee**

**[info@whittingtoncommunityhall.co.uk](mailto:info@whittingtoncommunityhall.co.uk)**

*Responsible for managing, maintaining, developing and running the  
Community hall.*

# **Whittington Parish Council**

*From the Chairman: Adam Hooper*

The crisp mornings and dark nights we are experiencing can only mean that we are now well into winter. The views across the fields in the mornings are beautiful - it does remind me that we are lucky to live here.

As the year draws to a close, it's a great opportunity to look back on what has been achieved in the last 12 months. Firstly, the Parish Council has started developing a one, three, and five-year plan for the parish. To facilitate this, we ran a residents' survey and were delighted with the number of responses.

Then, Whittington Parish Council has adopted a new logo to better reflect our growing community; the new logo features the distinctive roof of the community hall and our well-known landmark of the Whittington Tump. Parish councillors worked with residents from the Wildmore Estate to plant a community orchard. It was a wonderful day and a great opportunity for parish, county and district councillors to get involved in a community activity and meet with residents.

Also, the Parish Council were delighted to be able to provide grant funding to the community hall for their VE Day celebrations.

My thanks to all of our parish councillors, current and past, who have given up their time during 2025. We have all joined the parish council because we are passionate about making Whittington a great place to live.

Our thanks also to our County and District Councillors - Linda Robinson, Rob Adams and Liz Turrier. They work tirelessly to represent the residents of Whittington; we are grateful for their passion and the relationship the parish council has with them.

A final thank you to our Parish Clerk, David Hunter Miller. He keeps everything running in the background with great professionalism and patience! We couldn't do it without him.

A significant achievement for the Parish Council this year has been finding a solution to the poor drainage on the allotments. Our thanks to Richard Boase for his work on tackling this and working to find a contractor to resolve the lack of drainage. The recent deluge of rain from storm Claudia put the newly improved drainage to the test - we were delighted to see the work was successful and the allotments were not waterlogged - a great success.

*Continued.....*

A final reminder that Santa will be back again to visit Whittington this year. Now running for it's third year, the sleigh has become a highlight of the festive period. Whittington Community Events Group, who run the sleigh, have raised more than £4000 for local charities and good causes in our local area, and the funds raised through the sleigh are a key part of this. Santa is always looking for more elves to help him on his visits. If you're interested in becoming an elf, send an email to [whittingtonceg@gmail.com](mailto:whittingtonceg@gmail.com)

Dates for Whittington will be:

Friday 5th December - Whittington Village and The Swan Pub

Sunday 7th December - Wildmore Estate

Saturday 13th December - Whittington Walk

More details about Santa's routes can be found online at [www.whittington-events.com/santa25](http://www.whittington-events.com/santa25)

We were delighted to hear that Whittington Community Events Group has recently been awarded just over £19,500 from the National Lottery Community Fund. They plan to use the funding to improve the summer fayre and build a new Santa Sleigh for 2026.

There's no parish council meeting in December. We will publish the dates for 2026 in January.

The meetings are held at the Community Hall in Whittington Village.

Please do pop along to the meeting to see what we do and how you could make a difference to where you live by joining us.

Wishing you all a wonderful and peaceful Christmas

Adam

### The Wrong Gift??

A young couple began to assemble a special Christmas gift they had bought for their children. They had bought a kit for a tree house, but it didn't make sense. Then they realised that the materials were for a sailboat, so they wrote to the company to complain. The company's reply was brief: "While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, we are more concerned about the man who is out on a lake somewhere, trying to sail your tree house."



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

# Helping the people of Ukraine on the front line



UKRAINE APPEAL

UKRAINE APPEAL

UKRAINE FREEDOM COMPANY (WEST MIDLANDS)

[Ukrainefreedomcompany.org](http://Ukrainefreedomcompany.org)

Patron: Maj Gen Arthur Denaro CBE, DL

## COMFORT BOXES

Contributions are required to provide individual 'comfort' boxes for the men and women fighting at the front. These may contain some or all of the following items:

First Aid kit items: Bandages: Antiseptic cream: Lip sol: Wet wipes: Soap: Tissues

Female sanitary products: Toilet rolls: Toothpaste/brush: Small towels

Candles (including tea lights)

Sewing kits

Tea: Coffee: Sweets/chocolate

Thermal underwear: socks:

Tinned food (ideally with ring-pull top) - e.g. sardines: baked beans: soups: fruit:  
or packets of dried foods - e.g. pasta: noodles: soups: 'instant' oats

Cooking utensils - army mess tins: enamel plates/mugs: cutlery: small pots/pans:

DO NOT INCLUDE ALCOHOL, DRUGS OR CIGARETTES AS THESE ARE LIKELY TO BE CONFISCATED BY CUSTOMS.

## MEDICAL SUPPLIES

\*\*\*\*\* There is a desperate ongoing need for medical supplies and first aid kits – priority items required being tourniquets, wound dressings, bandages of all types, etc.

While many medical items in the UK are required to have a 'use-by' date, and often consequently get destroyed, UFC can often divert these for use in the Ukraine – please consider approaching contacts at local hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, doctors' surgeries, paramedics, etc. requesting that they give consideration to donating such supplies. In addition, there are many mobility aids retained by ex-patients who find it difficult to return them - we are happy to accept such items including wheelchairs, walking frames, crutches, walking sticks, limb splints etc.

\*\*\*\*\*We are now able to accept financial donations via our dedicated bank account – please consider a 'one off' donation, or a monthly standing order, details as follows:

Metro Bank Account: Ukraine Freedom Co (West Midlands)

Account No: 56781099 – Sort Code: 23 - 05 - 80

If able to assist, please contact your local UFC representative, who can also arrange collection throughout the area: Brian Watkins email: [lovelacewatkins@uwclub.net](mailto:lovelacewatkins@uwclub.net) mobile: 07771694000



# Raising funds for St Richard's



Our fantastic volunteers will be out collecting and recycling trees throughout Worcestershire on Friday, 9 and Saturday, 10 January 2026.



Every year, St Richard's cares for more than 3,000 patients, loved ones and bereaved people.

You will have the opportunity to make a donation when registering for collection.

**Register online before  
10am on Monday, 5 January**



[www.strichards.org.uk/christmas-tree-collection](http://www.strichards.org.uk/christmas-tree-collection)

01905 763963  
St Richard's Hospice  
Wildwood Drive  
Worcester WR5 2QT



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
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Charity Number: 515668

# Geriatric Truths by those that know!

\*\*\*\*

"Old age comes at a bad time." (Ed Sullivan)

"Inside every older person is a younger person wondering  
what happened." (Stevie Wonder)

"Old age is like a plane flying through a storm.  
Once you are aboard, there is nothing you can do about it." (Golda Meir)

"The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that  
never happened. (Mark Twain)

"I'm at that age where my back goes out more than I do." (Phyllis Diller)

"Nice to be here? At my age, it's nice to be anywhere." (George Burns)

"First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your  
zipper up; then, you forget to pull your zipper down."  
(Rob Reiner)

"You spend 90 percent of your adult life hoping for a long rest and the last  
10 percent trying to convince the Lord that you're actually  
not THAT tired." (Princess Grace)

"Old people shouldn't eat healthy foods. They need all the preservatives  
they can get." (Bob Hope)

"At my age, flowers scare me." (George Burns)

"It's like you trade the virility of the body for the agility of the spirit."  
(Ed Sullivan)

"The years between 55 and 75 are the hardest. You are always being asked  
to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down."  
(T.S. Elliot)

"At age 20, we worry about what others think of us.. at age 40, we don't  
care what they think of us... at age 60, we discover they haven't been  
thinking of us at all." (Ann Landers)

*with thanks to David Hallmark*

# All about Christmas trees



**How many are sold each year?** According to recent figures, about five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.

**How old are they?** Your typical Christmas tree of six to seven feet is between ten and 12 years old.

**How are they grown?** Seed is collected from trees either in the wild or in specially selected seed orchards. It is sown in a nursery, where the seedlings then grow for three to four years. The young plants are then planted by a grower and grown on for a further seven to nine years. While they are growing, the grower will fertilise, shape and prune the tree many times each year.

**What are the different types of Christmas trees? Here are just some...**

**Nordmann Fir** – the most popular Christmas tree in the UK. Much loved for its symmetry, strong branches and excellent needle retention. The lush, dark green needles provide great background for displaying ornaments.

**Fraser Fir** – the tree with the wonderful fragrance. Pyramid-shaped, it has strong branches with dark green, needles that are silvery underneath.

**Noble Fir** – A bluish-green tree with short, stiff branches ideal for heavier ornaments. A fresh fragrance, and great needle retention.

**Douglas Fir** – Very popular in the USA, with a great shape, and probably the strongest scent of all Christmas trees. Only problem – harder to decorate as usually very dense branches.

**Norway Spruce** – A dark green conical shaped tree with a strong fragrance. Needs to be well-watered for good needle retention.

**Blue Spruce** – This is ideal for your small or second tree. It's beautiful, unique blue colouring and good stiff branches are great for showing off heavy decorations. Needs watering well.

**Lodgepole Pine** – Beautiful tapered branches with green/yellow needles. A tree loved by traditionalists.

The British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) estimates that approximately 75% of the trees sold in the UK consist of Nordmann Fir, with the remaining portion comprising Norway Spruce, Fraser Fir, and a few other less prevalent species. The BCTGA urges people to buy a British grown tree to support the local economy, agriculture and the environment. Find a stockist at [www.bctga.co.uk](http://www.bctga.co.uk).





## St Mark in the Cherry Orchard Diocese of Worcester



### News & Views from St Mark in the Cherry Orchard

**Remembrance Service** St Mark's was delighted to welcome Mike Bunclark to lead this year's service assisted by Eleanor & James Weaver, both looking splendid in their uniforms as serving RAF officers; thanks are extended to mum and PCC member, Sarah, for asking them to join us. The small congregation all enjoyed James helping Mike with the poppy wreaths and listening to Eleanor's clear voice each time she read. Thanks are also extended to Mrs Sharon Cole who spent many hours knitting dozens of poppies and draped them on the choir screen; see photographs

**Recent Quiz Night** We thought that the dismal weather might put people off attending the event but twenty quizzers turned up for an evening of fun and there was lots of laughter. Quiz Master, Alan Matthews, made the brain cells work very hard with many and varied questions and the eventual winners were the vicar's team who had an inspiring time, clutching answers out of thin air, some of which were pure guesses. St Mark's would like to thank those who supported the evening that raised over £70; the next quiz will be in March or April 2026.



**Thank You to the Co-op** All those who work in the **Bath Road Co-op store** are great supporters of the community and, once again, I would like to thank Emma and all her staff, including several who are new to the job, for their cheerful demeanour and all their hard work.

**Church Hall News** to begin with, St Mark's PCC would like to thank all the long term hall hirers for their continued support which is much appreciated; without it, St Marks could not exist.

St Marks was thankful to receive £200 grant funding from St Peters Parish Council. The money will enable the purchase of replacement PIR lights in the hall and a new spotlight by the organ in church; it will also cover the cost of an electrician to fit them all.

Any remaining money may be put towards the addition of WiFi in the church and hall. However, it depends on the cost and there could be a problem with the hall being below ground level; this has always presented difficulties for people trying to use mobile phones because the signal is so poor.

As I write, and following the flood in the entrance to the hall on Friday, 13 June, caused by Severn Trent sub contractors, all has been redecorated and re-carpeted and looks splendid, however, the large door into the hall is currently missing. The carpet fitters were unable to fit underlay and carpet without removing the door that is currently residing, for health & safety reasons, in the east storeroom and, in addition, they could not trim the bottom of the door to accommodate the new flooring because their Workmate would not sustain the incredible weight; those were the days when doors were solidly made and not hollow! It never fails to amaze me how long this saga is taking to settle. As I write, I understand that the decision to claim against Severn Trent has still not been made by solicitors. At this rate, it could be many more months before someone gets their act together and St Marks receives compensation and the refund of expenses, including £250 insurance excess that had to be paid for the repairs to go ahead, and all for a situation that was caused by careless sub contractors employed by a huge multi million pound company. If the ball doesn't start rolling very soon, I will be writing a letter of complaint to the CEO of Severn Trent pointing out that our claim might appear small to them but for St Marks it is money that can't be spared!!

In addition but it can't be proved, a recent party hirer somehow managed to break the side off one of the 8ft pews kept in the hall. I wrongly believed that it could easily be repaired but, on closer inspection, I discovered that the head of the screw that had come loose was sandwiched between two pieces of oak so it was impossible to gain access to the screw to replace it. Having obtained permission from the Diocese, the pew, an original from 1902, was offered to The Men's Shed in St Clements so that they could make use of the large amount of oak that was far too precious to end up as firewood. The pews are incredibly heavy and it took Colin and Ian from the men's shed at least 20 minutes to load it into the car.

**Oddfellows & Heart Support** Please pay a visit to the **Oddfellows Society** meeting on Mondays 2 – 5pm **2<sup>nd</sup> of each month** or the **Heart Support** Mondays 2 – 5pm **3rd of each month**; both groups are very welcoming. **However, NB they DO NOT meet during January.**

**Pilates with Daniela** returns on Monday, 5 January, but there will be a choice of two groups, 5.10pm – 6.10pm or 6.15pm – 7.15pm. Daniela can be contacted on 07906160169 for further details regarding how to register.

**NEW Groups – ‘Zumba’ with Boe’** 6.15 – 7pm on Tuesdays (started on 27 November)

If you look at the list of hall hirers on the back page of this magazine and see something that you might like to attend, **please contact the organiser** because the majority of groups are taking a break in December and January, with some not returning until February.

### **The List of Dates for your Diary, Mobile and/or Calendar:**

**Chat & Cuppa Club** The weather in November was rather wet so we didn’t really expect many people to turn up to the meeting; wrong! Twenty braved the rain and we had to keep getting chairs out to accommodate them all. Everyone is really friendly so please consider adding this **FREE** event to your calendar **First Tuesday of EVERY month from 2 – 3pmish (this includes 2 December, 6 January & 3 February)**. You will receive a warm welcome, a free cuppa and we rarely leave before 3.30pm! You can get to us on the No 32 bus and there are stops both ways very nearby; just ask for St Marks Church.

**‘Ding Dong Merrily’** is the **2025 Opera Worcester Community Choir Concert in St Marks on Saturday, 13 December Church at 2.30pm**. Free entry and refreshments but donations for church funds to help with the cost of heating would be appreciated please. It would be lovely if the church could be so full that the members of the congregation have to stand at the back! The concert will be followed by a quiz night below in the church hall organised by Opera Worcester in aid of their funds. If you are able, please advertise these events on social media; thank you. A Poster is on page 34

**Please see the attached poster for details of the 2025/26 Christmas and January special services including the popular Christingle that is in aid of The Children’s Society**. Get in touch with me if you would like to attend but can’t get to the church and I will endeavour to secure a lift for you both ways. No matter what the time of the year is, you will always receive a very warm welcome when you visit St Marks.

**Its Panto Time Again** and this year **The Worcester Theatres Rep** presents **‘Sleeping Beauty’**. The run began on 28 November and the production ends on Monday, 4 January 2026. *Continued....*

From personal experience, and because I left it later than usual to buy tickets for my family, I am aware that some performances have already almost sold out.

**On behalf of St Mark in the Cherry Orchard congregation, may I wish you a healthy, enjoyable and peaceful festive season and a pleasant New Year.**

Jan 01905 351392 / [janvale810@gmail.com](mailto:janvale810@gmail.com)

### **Services & Events in St Marks Church**



#### **Sunday 14 December**

**4pm All Age Carol Service**

Followed by refreshments including mulled wine

#### **Christmas Eve**

**4pm All Age Crib Service**

Children of all ages are welcome to help create the Nativity Tableau. Lots of dressing up. Come and see the budding Thespians!

**11.30pm 1st Communion of Christmas in  
St Martins Church, London Road**

#### **Christmas Day 10am**

Family Service with Holy Communion



**18 January 2025**

**4pm Christingle**

Arrive between 3 & 3.45pm and make your own orange 'world'  
(Everything Provided)

*Opera Worcester Community Choir*



Proudly Present



*Ding Dong Merrily.....*

in St Marks Church  
Bath Road WR5 3ET  
**SATURDAY 13 DEC**

 2.30pm Start 



*A Celebration of Seasonal  
Favourite Songs & Readings*

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS \*FREE  
CONCERT\* WITH REFRESHMENTS  
DONATIONS TOWARDS CHURCH  
FUNDS GREATLY APPRECIATED**



## The many journeys of the Stone of Scone

Some 75 years ago, on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1950, the Stone of Scone, the coronation stone of British monarchs, was taken from Westminster Abbey in London by four Scottish students as a home rule gesture. They transported it to Scotland but broke it accidentally. It was later left by them in the ruined Arbroath Abbey, repaired and returned to London to be used in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

From 1996 it was kept in Edinburgh Castle, but last year it was moved to a new museum at Perth – two or three miles down the River Tay from Scone Abbey, where it had been used in the crowning of Scottish kings.

The Stone, also known as the Stone of Destiny, is a block of red sandstone that was taken by Edward I “Longshanks” of England in 1296 and used in the crowning of English monarchs since then. It is still used to crown UK kings and queens – most recently King Charles III in May 2023 – but it has returned to Perthshire for the first time in 700 years, and is now freely available to view there.

An old symbol of Scottish monarchy, the Stone was first recorded as being used in 1249 for the inauguration of the boy-king, Alexander III. It was taken by the English as war loot – a symbol of Edward’s perceived right to rule.

There are various stories about the origins and history of the Stone. One goes back to biblical times, naming it as the Stone of Jacob, taken by Jacob from Bethel as described in Genesis 28 and then removed to ancient Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. There are also claims that the Stone at Perth is not the original, and many stories of the intricate measures taken to ensure its safety during the war years.





# Whittington Parish Magazine

## December 25 & January 26 Edition

