

PARISH NEWS

The Beane Valley Benefice

www.achurchnearyou.com

St Mary the Virgin Aston, St Andrew's Bramfield, St Mary the Virgin Stapleford,
St Michael and All Angels Waterford, St Andrew and St Mary Watton at Stone

December 2024 and January 2025



'Have yourself a merry little Christmas' sang Judy Garland in 1944 - a perennial Christmas favourite. But today's Christmas is not *little*. In the long run-up to Christmas UK advertisers will spend £10 billion promoting seasonal products and activities. The average UK consumer is expected to spend £600 on presents, food, decorations etc, rising to £1,000 in London and the SE. A third of families are likely to get into debt. Christmas today is *big* business. The joyful celebration of God coming to be with us in the babe in Bethlehem has become an expensive shopping frenzy, with relentless pressure to buy often unwanted, unnecessary gifts.

'Let your heart be light' the song tells us. But jolly images of family parties rub salt in the wounds of people who are lonely and struggling. Weeks of unrealistic build-up often lead to exhaustion and anti-climax. Much of the world is far from 'merry' with war in the Middle East, Ukraine, the Sudan and other less reported conflicts, millions hungry, homeless, abused and exploited through manmade and natural disasters. Worry, sickness, aging and death affect rich and poor alike, regardless of the Season. For many people the song's original second line, 'It may be your last,' is starkly true.



But Christmas isn't supposed to be something you have 'yourself'. The first Christmas - the 'reason for the Season' - is God coming to us in Jesus, showing humanity a different way to live, inviting us to build peace on earth by treating everyone as we'd like them to treat us. God's generous, *unselfish*, unconditional way of love gives the world reason to be 'merry'. And makes 'our heart be light' when we bring a little joy, hope, peace and goodwill to someone in need, when we care enough to help others have the acceptance, food, shelter, care and opportunities we all need to live well. A phone call or visit, donation to whatever appeal touches us personally, really does bless the giver as well as those who receive, one person, one kindness at a time.



Whatever we believe, whatever our situation, whatever challenges we face, caring for others is the heart of Christmas. Why our village churches support the Children's Society (working with UK children at risk) in our Christingle and Carol Services, the local Women's Refuge in our Gift Services, the Food Bank and charities which change lives for good in this country and the wider world, the new Christmas Lunch in Watton on 28th December - showing God's love in action.

'My friends, life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who make this earthly pilgrimage with us, so be swift to love and make haste to do kindness, and the blessing of God, be upon us and all whom we love and pray, this day and forever more.' Amen.

May we do all we can to make this a Merry Christmas
Rev Jenny

'Somehow, not only for Christmas, but all the long year through,
the joy that you give to others, is the joy that comes back to you.'





Revd Canon Jenny Gray



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF
ST ALBANS

Beane Valley Benefice Services for December 2024

ALL are welcome

Sunday 1st December ADVENT SUNDAY (Countdown to Christmas)



10am WATTON 'Church in the Pub' informal contemporary worship in George and Dragon Contact Sharon 07931325288

11am ASTON Prayer and Praise

11.15am STAPLEFORD Prayer and Praise

11.15am WATERFORD Holy Communion

4pm WATTON **CHRISTINGLE** with blessing of oranges and collection for the CHILDREN'S SOCIETY



Wednesday 4th December Join us for **CAROLS in the Bull** in WATTON

Wednesday 11th December

CAROLS in the George and Dragon WATTON

Sunday 8th December 2nd Sunday of ADVENT

9.30am WATTON Holy Communion

11.15am BRAMFIELD Holy Communion

4pm ASTON Christmas Tree Service (Festival Fri 6th 6pm-8pm, Sat 7th & Sun 8th 12 noon to 4pm)

4pm STAPLEFORD **CAROLS and GIFTS** for children in need



Sunday 15th December 3rd Sunday of ADVENT

10am WATTON 'Church in the Pub' informal contemporary worship in George and Dragon Contact Sharon 07931325288

11.15am STAPLEFORD Holy Communion

11.15am WATERFORD Morning Prayer

6pm ASTON **CAROL SERVICE**

Sunday 22nd December 4th Sunday of ADVENT

11.15am BRAMFIELD Holy Communion

4pm WATTON **CAROLS and GIFTS** for children in need

6pm WATERFORD **CAROL SERVICE**

6.30pm STAPLEFORD **CAROL SERVICE**



TUESDAY 24th December CHRISTMAS EVE

2pm ASTON **CRIB** Service

4pm WATTON **CRIB** Service

6pm BRAMFIELD **CAROL SERVICE**

8pm ASTON **Christmas MASS** by candlelight

11.30pm WATTON **Midnight MASS** by candlelight

11.30pm STAPLEFORD **Midnight MASS** by candlelight (*sung candlelit Holy Communion*s)

WEDNESDAY 25th December CHRISTMAS DAY

10am St Michael's WATERFORD **All Age Christmas Service** (*all are welcome*)

10am St Mary's ASTON **All Age Christmas Service** (*all are welcome*)

Note: No service in Watton, Bramfield or Stapleford today

SUNDAY 29th December

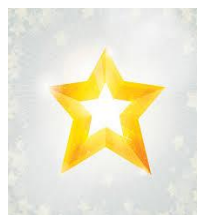
11.15am STAPLEFORD Benefice Holy Communion Service for all our village churches. Please ring or email your Churchwarden if you need a lift.

Note: No service in Aston, Bramfield, Waterford or Watton today

You are warmly welcomed to attend a service in ANY church on any Sunday

To receive our weekly church newsletter and daily Thought for the Day by email contact

jennygrayrectory@gmail.com



'Light of the World 2024' Look out for a large STAR outside Aston, Bramfield, Stapleford, Waterford and Watton churches as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. Could YOU make a star shine outside YOUR house?



Give Love at Christmas....

Bring a gift for a child in the local Women's Refuge
8th December 4pm St Mary's Stapleford
Carols and Gifts Service

22nd December 4pm St Andrew and

St Mary's Watton **Gift and Carols Service** OR Bring to the Rectory (Church Lane, Watton at Stone).

Buy alternative Christmas presents from **Oxfam, Tear Fund, Christian Aid etc**toilets, wells, goats, medicine, school equipment etc that help change lives in places of disaster/need

School Christmas Services/Events



9.15am Tuesday

10th December Stapleford

School Nativity

St Mary's Church Stapleford

(Dress Rehearsal Monday 9th)

6.15pm Wednesday 11th December Stapleford

School Carols St Mary's Church Stapleford

9.30am Thursday 12th December Aston Playgroup

Nativity St Mary's Aston

9.45am & 1.45pm 17th December St Mary's School

Aston Christmas Service in St Mary's Church

9.15am Wednesday 18th December Stapleford

School Christmas Service St Mary's Church

Tuesday 17th December 10am WATTON Holy Communion with CAROLS 128 High St (Linda Tyler) followed by coffee and mincepies.

Tuesday 21st January 10am WATTON Holy Communion 128 High St followed by coffee and chat – all are welcome. Contact Rev Jenny or Linda.

Wednesday 15th January 2.30pm STAPLEFORD Village Tea Afternoon in St Mary's Church - Coffee, Cake and Chat- All are welcome...just come along.



MONDAYS 2pm ASTON Bible Study Fellowship 3 Long Ridge Aston with tea and biscuits (1st and 3rd Mondays) – all are welcome. Contact Pauline pauline.manley1966@gmail.com (*December 2nd and 16th)

NIGHT PRAYER Alternate **WEDNESDAYS 4th and 18th December, 8th and 22nd January 7.30pm** on **ZOOM** contact **Tim Alexander** for link to join tim_alexander3@hotmail.com 01438 880519



Bramfield Church Wednesdays 10am Morning Prayer short said service. Coffee and Chat time to catch up. All are welcome. **NO service 18th December until 15th January**

MISSING YOU TREES

Remembering those we love

WRITE names and messages on a ribbon to TIE to our churchyard 'Missing You' Trees in Aston, Bramfield, Stapleford, Waterford and Watton from

'All Souls' 2nd Nov 2024 to Candlemas 2nd Feb 2025 (Pens and ribbons by trees).



The Hertford and District Food Bank provide emergency help for local people in crisis. **Their urgent Shopping List includes:** UHT Milk, Instant Mashed Potatoes, Cooking Sauces, Pasta Sauces, Tinned Spaghetti, Tinned Custard and Tinned Rice Pudding. Contact: <https://hertforddistrict.foodbank.org.uk> info@hertforddistrict.foodbank.org.uk

Services for January 2025



Sunday 5th January EPIPHANY 'The Coming of the Wise Men' 10am **WATTON** Contemporary informal worship in the Parish

church Contact Sharon 07931325288

11am ASTON Prayer and Praise

11.15am STAPLEFORD Prayer and Praise

11.15am WATERFORD Holy Communion

Sunday 12th January 'The Baptism of Jesus'

9.30am WATTON Holy Communion

11am ASTON Family Service

11.15am BRAMFIELD Holy Communion

11.15am STAPLEFORD Holy Communion

Sunday 19th January 'Come and See'

10am WATTON Contemporary informal worship in the Parish church
Contact Sharon 07931325288

11am ASTON Holy Communion followed by PCC meeting in Church

11.15am STAPLEFORD Prayer and Praise

11.15am WATERFORD Morning Prayer



Michael (Mike) Stephenson

1938 - 2024 aged 86

Mike came to Bramfield in 1982 with his family and was the Herdsman at Greenhall Farm. More recently he was a member of the Churchyard Mowing Team and at various points a member of Bramfield Bowls Club.

Much Loved by his family and friends. A kind gentleman and remembered dearly. 'A Diamond' and an Amazing Father.

The Stephenson Family would like to thank all those who have helped Dad and the family, and all who helped and contributed at his funeral.

We are forever grateful.

Heather and Darren

Sunday 26th January 'Water into Wine'

9.30am WATTON Holy Communion

11.15am BRAMFIELD Prayer and Praise

11.15am STAPLEFORD Holy Communion



Sunday 2nd February CANDLEMAS

(end of Missing You Ribbons)

10am WATTON Contemporary informal worship in the Parish church Contact Sharon

07931325288

11am ASTON Prayer and Praise

11.15am STAPLEFORD Prayer and Praise

11.15am WATERFORD Holy Communion



BAPTISM – we welcome

Thalia Beaumont at St Mary's Aston on Sunday 17th November



Weddings – we celebrate the Marriage of Christopher Waterman and Sophie

Beadle at St Andrew's Bramfield on Sunday 24th November



RIP – we remember with love

Mrs Shirley Whitney whose funeral and burial took place at St Mary's Aston on 31st October

Mrs Jean Jenkins whose ashes were buried at St Andrew and St Mary's Watton at Stone on 3rd November

Mrs Juliana (Julie) Osborne whose funeral and burial took place at St Andrew and St Mary's Watton at Stone on 27th November

'Those whom we love and lose are no longer where they were before; they are wherever we are.'

(St John Chrysostom)

Need someone to talk to?

Rev Jenny Gray: 01920 830035 email jennygrayrectory@gmail.com

For bereavement support contact the ministry team

You can access online help with grief at

griefshare.org thebereavementjourney.org

cruse.org.uk teardropgrief.co.uk ataloss.org

For all enquiries about baptism, funerals, blessings, visits, confirmation or offers to help, please contact Revd Jenny by phone or email. Please note *Mondays* are my usual day off.



NOTE for wedding bookings and administrative enquiries:

Pauline Manley

Pauline.manley1966@gmail.com

Concern for our World:



In December we give thanks for:

the many blessings we enjoy in life

We pray for

those who have very little yet bring happiness to others

those whose lives have been ruined by selfishness and greed

those who bring emergency relief and those who keep us safe

WATTON BOOK WORMS Usually third Friday of the month at 7pm to share supper and thoughts on our book of month. All are welcome contact peterevernden@hotmail.co.uk



CHURCHES OPEN as listed for quiet prayer and visits:

WATERFORD St Michael and all Angels open DAILY 10am – 4pm for more information Contact Church Warden Malcolm 01992 552531
m.t.wandrag@gmail.com

WATTON at STONE St Andrew & St Mary open DAILY 10am – 3pm for more information Contact Church Wardens Ian and Helen

ASTON St Mary open Wednesday and Sundays. For visits contact Church Wardens Tim 01438 880519 Sara 01438 880750

BRAMFIELD St Andrew's Church Open weekends. For visits contact Church Wardens Dorothy 01992 582132 or Peggy 01992 550467

STAPLEFORD St Mary Open weekends. For visits contact Peter 07870 681542, John 07773 392991 or Lesley Atterwill 07773 392992

Opening churches is important. If you would be willing to join a rota to help open and shut any of the churches please contact the Churchwarden. A huge 'thank you' to the churchwardens of all our churches for all the work they do

InTouch Age UK Hertfordshire

offer confidential, non-judgemental emotional and practical support on bereavement, physical & mental health issues, cancer, end of life, a partner with dementia or any other problem. Call 01992 634964/630623 or email intouch@ageukherts.org.uk
Web page [Age UK Hertfordshire | Our Services](#)



CARING for our CHURCHYARDS TUESDAYS Waterford Working Parties – Contact Churchwarden Malcolm Wandrag to offer help
m.t.wandrag@gmail.com

To help in **Stapleford or Watton or Bramfield** contact the Churchwardens.

ASTON Church and churchyard working parties first Tuesday of month 10am to 12 noon. Contact Churchwarden Sara wardenstmarys@gmail.com

All our churchyards are cared for by volunteers. Donations and offers of help are welcomed. To include a loved one in the Book of Remembrance contact the Churchwardens

PRAYER for PEACE in ISRAEL, GAZA, UKRAINE and all areas of conflict

Lord God, though peace seems humanly impossible,
we continue to pray for an end to violence and bloodshed.

We pray your comfort for the fearful and broken – hearted.

Change the hearts of those set on revenge and destruction.

Give wisdom to world leaders as they respond to aggression.

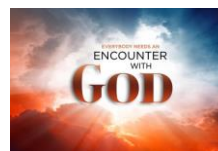
Bless all who work for understanding, reconciliation and justice which alone bring lasting peace. Amen

A Thought for the NEW YEAR 2025

“If you feel stuck in your life, like it’s passing you by, like there’s something way better for you somewhere out there and you’re missing it, try

this—try throwing yourself into the SMALL things and repeating to yourself: This is where I START.” (Rob Bell)

We do not know what this New Year will bring. But, whatever happens, God says *“Set that stuff down! You're carrying burdens you don't need to bear. COME to me all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28 New Living Testament)



'GOING DEEPER INTO GOD' BEANE VALLEY BENEFICE ZOOM BIBLE STUDY AUTUMN 2024

Stories from the Old TESTAMENT of Encounters with God
2pm TUESDAYS

Old Testament passages are read in church on Sundays but we don't usually have time to discuss them. Each Tuesday bible study will look at the background to a story, how a particular individual relates to God and how their story speaks to us today.

Tues 3rd December HOSEA 1:2-10 and 11:1-11
Tues 10th December EZEKIEL Ez 36:24-28 Ez 37:1-14



Play Space

Toddlers and Babies!
**A village place for Mums,
Dads and carers to meet**
Watton at Stone

Tuesday mornings

Memorial Hall, High Street
Parking available.

Time: 9.30am – 12noon

Cost: £3.00 per child, and £1.00 per sibling

A lunch snack will be provided for the children.
Singing time at 11.30am

Run by Take Away Church (TAC), in conjunction with the
Parish church. Contact details:
Sharon @ 07931 325288



Come along and play, draw, paint, read, create, build,
listen, sing, ride, eat and have fun!!!



KIDS SPACE

Friday afternoons

3.30pm—5.30pm

Memorial Hall, High Street
Parking available

Age Range: Up to Year 6

Activities: Crafts, play, games, sewing,
Bible story and singing.

Cost: £3 per child, and £1 per sibling.

Hot chocolate and fruit on arrival and finish
with Pizza and Pasta

*Homemade cakes and scones available
to purchase from the Tea Room*

Run by Take Away Church (TAC), in conjunction with the
Parish church. Contact details: Sharon @ 07931 325288

TAC Tea Room

Memorial Hall
Watton at Stone

TUESDAYS (Term Time only) 9am – 1pm

FRIDAYS (Term Time only) 2pm - 5pm

A selection of homemade cakes, cookies, brownies,
shortbread and scones to enjoy in our Tea Room or to
TAKE AWAY!

We also take orders for birthday cakes.

Pop in or text Sharon @ 07931 325 288
to order any of our products for delivery

Card or cash are accepted.

TAC Tea Room is enabling us to support the
community. Please support us too!!



Rev Jen 10 Top Christmas Traditions



1. The Christmas tree is evergreen, a symbol of eternal life with God. The triangular shape represents the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and points to Heaven.
2. Mince pies, originally made of meat and dried fruit, represent Jesus' manger, topped with His swaddling clothes. The three spices, nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon, symbolise the Wise Men's gifts.
3. Presents recall the Wise Men's gold, frankincense and myrrh; stockings the gold coins given by St. Nicholas, a 4th Century bishop in modern Turkey, the original Santa Claus.
4. The Christmas door wreath symbolizes God's love for all people that, like a circle, has no end. Also birth, death and eternal life with God.
5. The Christmas star recalls the star over Bethlehem when Jesus is born, guiding the

- three Kings/Wise Men/Magi to the stable.
Ditto the star shaped Poinsettia plant.
6. Christmas lights, candles and tinsel all symbolise Jesus 'The Light of the World'.
 7. Christmas angels recall the Angel Gabriel telling Mary she will bear God's Son, the heavenly host telling shepherds of Jesus' birth, the angel speaking to Joseph in his dreams.
 8. Red and white striped candy canes recall staffs used by shepherds who visit Jesus. They remind us Jesus is 'the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep', white for purity, red for sacrificial love.
 9. Holly's prickly leaves recall Jesus' crown of thorns on the cross. Red berries symbolise His blood from His wounded hands, feet and side.
 10. Bows, on presents, wreaths and trees, symbolise the unity of humankind, tied together in goodwill.

BUT what about Christmas Pudding?

It's late to the party, popularised by the Victorians! It began as 'figgy pudding,' served at the start of a meal, a thick broth of meat, dried fruit, spices and wine, thickened with breadcrumbs and ground almonds. Now it should have 13 ingredients to represent Jesus and his disciples and be stirred clockwise to recall the Wise Men coming from the East.



WATERFORD & HERTINGFORDBURY WI

Next Meetings:

Thursday **5th DECEMBER** 7.30pm – Christmas social evening.

Thursday **2nd JANUARY** 7.30pm – Talk by Suzi Clark "An Eventful Life": Life in the Events Industry.

At our October meeting we had an interesting talk from a crime author about researching and writing her novels. In November to tie in with Remembrance the archivist from Knebworth House came to talk to us about the Countess of Lytton's hospital which she ran during WWI. There were some very interesting accounts and stories about the patients and staff.

Over the last few months some of our members have been busy knitting, crocheting and felting poppies....about 750 in all, which were used to decorate inside and outside Waterford church.....it was a lovely display.

New members and visitors are always welcome at our meetings....come along and try!

Can you help?.....

Watton Fete Committee is looking for some storage space to keep donated items for the Watton Fete. We are looking for space ideally about the size of a double garage but something smaller will do. We will only need it from January – end May and all the items will be covered over.

If you are able to offer any space, please email the Parish News – parish.news.beane@gmail.com or ring Denise on 01920 830152.

Thank you.

NEWS FROM THE VILLAGES

BRAMFIELD

WHAT'S ON IN BRAMFIELD

BRAMFIELD CARPET BOWLS

Meets Village Hall

Monday eve 7.pm to 9.pm

Enquiries Mike Jones

01992 550182

Exercise Dance Class

Monday 1.15 to 2.15

£5.50 per person

Contact Sofie Porter

07761 768059

Parish Council Meets

Every other 3rd Tuesday of the Month

Clerk Chris Underhill 07714 711253

Village Hall Committee Meets

1st Tuesday of the Month 8pm

Contact Cheryl Jackson

01992 583958

Bramfield Book Club

Meets 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm at the Village Hall

Contact Louise 01992 583173

Gibbslouise83@gmail.com

Bramfield Parish Council

We meet on the third Tuesday of every other month at 19:30 in the village hall. So this means January, March, May, July, September and November.

Did you know we have a parish website? We have a bit of history, contact details and all documentation such as minutes posted there. Feel free to have a look at bramfieldparishcouncil.co.uk

WATERFORD

ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH

The **Christmas Carol Concert** takes place on 22nd December at 6pm.

We love to encourage children to take part in this lovely family service. As always we will invite the children in the congregation to help us assemble the nativity scene at the beginning of the service and also to sing Away in a Manger but thought it might also be nice this year for some of the children to read a few lines of some of the readings. Please contact Sarah on sarahebaldwin59@hotmail.com if you would like more information or to nominate your child.

The PCC is a very small committee of just 5 people supporting Reverend Jenny. We are looking for a couple of volunteers to join us in the roles of **Treasurer and Secretary**. Do you think that you may have the skills and time to work with us? If you would like to find out more about either of these roles then please speak to any of the committee Malcolm, Sue, Ray, Hannah or Sarah or email sarahebaldwin59@hotmail.com in the first instance.

2025 Dates for your Diary

Quiz Night **15th February 2025** - this event raises money to buy the flowers for the Flower Festival
Service of Celebration for the Reredos renovation in the church **16th March 2025 3.30pm** with Bishop Jane
Flower Festival **5th-6th July 2025**
Harvest Supper **27th September 2025**

The Parochial Church Council of Waterford would like to thank you for the help and support we have received from the community throughout the year and would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Churchyard Thank You

We are enormously grateful for the assistance from the volunteers that turned up to our churchyard working morning: James, Barbara and Steve and Robin Juniper and his team as well as members of The PCC. Robin, who is a professional Tree Surgeon (Juniper Tree and Ground Care Ltd), not only gave his time and expertise freely but also brought some of his team, his equipment and friends of his from Bengeo Freemasons' Lodge as part of their charitable work.



We are also grateful to the people that told us they would have come if they had no other commitments - perhaps next time, which will be on **Saturday 5th April 2025, 10:00-13:00**.

Such was the success of this effort that we will hold regular sessions every Spring and Autumn. Meanwhile admire the results in the churchyard, the War Memorial triangle and the verge in front of the wall on High Road.

News from Waterford

Waterford did it again! We surpassed ourselves with the best ever Bonfire Night. which delighted the sell out crowd. The fireworks were spectacular but low noise, so they didn't terrify the children or the local animal population! The refreshments were delicious; our brilliant band of barbecuing chefs did a great job serving mouth-watering hot dogs to the spectators and the bar, mulled wine and hot chocolate stalls proved hugely popular. All in all it was a great success thanks to our volunteers and most importantly to all those who came along to enjoy the great event.

And talking of great events, we've had reliable reports that the big man, Father Christmas, is going to squeeze a visit to Waterford into his tight schedule, to greet the locals both young and old at our Great Christmas Crafts Café on **SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER** from 2 – 4pm. As well as Father Christmas in his grotto, there will be lots to warm the cockles of your heart; original craft items made by our local crafters; a jewellery stall for those of you who enjoy a bargain, a raffle and a chocolate Tombola as well as crafts activities for the youngsters and our tea-room offering sausage rolls and savoury pastries, cakes and mince pies, together with hot drinks and mulled wine. So while your young Picasso makes a Christmas decoration, you adults can enjoy the delicious refreshments, and catch up with friends and neighbours old and new. A perfect way to begin the festive season!

How can I help, you ask? Well those of you who enjoy baking, get those aprons on and make some cakes for the tearoom and bring them to the village hall on the Sunday morning from 11am. And the rest of you – just come along and enjoy the fun!

This Christmas Craft Café is our final event of what has been a busy but very enjoyable year. We would like to say a huge thank you to all of you who have supported our village during 2024, look forward to seeing you at our next social events in the New Year and we wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas!

WATTON AT STONE

THANK YOU

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to especially Doctor Shah and Doctor Loeffler along with nurse Shah (Steph) and all the administration and dispensary ladies at our wonderful doctors surgery for all the kind care and attention that they all showed to my late husband Ron during his recent illness. Nothing was too much trouble for them and I and my family are grateful to them all. Thank you. Maureen Garratt



Christmas at St Andrew and St Mary's Church

There's lots going on at the Parish church in December so why not come along and join in the festive season?

We kick off with the annual **Christingle Service** in support of the Children's Society on **1st December** at 4pm. Your children will love this family service where every child receives a Christingle – an orange containing a candle, red ribbon and sweets to symbolise the birth of Christ – the Light of the World.

We then have **carol singing** at **The Bull** on **4 December** at 7pm and **The George and Dragon** on **11 December** at 7pm. Come along for a good old festive sing song.

This year our **Candlelit Carol Service** will be held on **22nd December** at 4pm. Bring a wrapped gift for a child in the local refuge to put under the Christmas tree. This truly is a wonderful service and children will be invited to sing Away in the Manger.

The very popular **Crib service** will be held on **Christmas Eve** at 4pm – a wonderful lead up to Christmas Day for adults and children alike.

Finally our **Midnight Mass** service will be held by candlelight at 11.30pm on **Christmas Eve**. What better way to welcome in Christmas Day!

EVERYONE is very welcome to all our services and we hope to see you there!



Watton at Stone Scout and Guide Group

SCOUT MAIL SERVICE



We will again provide our free Christmas card delivery service for Watton at Stone residents.

Post your cards (No stamp required) through the Scout Mail Christmas letter box in Budgens between **2nd and 15th December**.

The cards will be sorted and delivered by Scout members to addresses in Watton village only between 16th to 21st December.

Donations are always gratefully accepted. Cheques should be made out to "Watton at Stone Scout & Guide Group" or cash in a sealed envelope in the mailbox.

BACS donation is preferred. Account name: Watton at Stone Scout & Guide Group, account number 00103348, sort code - 30 94 17
Please put "Scoutmail" as the reference.

Charity number 302602. Any questions to Richard Wing 07393 620103

Thank You.

NEWS FROM WATTON BELLRINGERS



We hope you heard the bells ringing on Sunday, 10 November for our Remembrance Sunday service. They sounded a bit different from normal as they were muffled on one side to allow a softer note on every other strike which is common practice in bellringing for a solemn occasion. For the last couple of years we have introduced a single bell tolling as the congregation moves down to the War Memorial. This year, the tenor was tolled by a female member of our band - the heaviest bell with the deepest tone – it weighs over 660 kilos.

Our band is now growing and we have two new bell handling instructors. We have 8 wonderful bells in the tower tuned as a whole octave. We have established connections with other Towers in local villages so we can exchange knowledge and also practise with other bands creating a warm and welcoming community.

Bellringing can have a stuffy reputation - but it's not! You don't have to be a churchgoer or be particularly strong – it is all about technique. Once you master the basic handling of the bell, there are many methods (tunes) to learn and it is great fun. You meet a lot of people and build strong friendships within the band and you can even ring in competitions if you wanted. It is a tradition which will die out if people don't join in and learn how to ring the bells and a great hobby to take up if you want to get out of the house and away from screens.

The Watton Bellringers are a very friendly bunch and there is an equal spread of men and women in the band and ages range from 30's upwards, but you can start learning as young as 13. Newcomers are always VERY welcome and if you would like to find out more about bellringing or attending a practice session, please contact bellringing111@gmail.com

Wishing you all a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and we'll be ringing out the bells for Christmas !!!!!

Waterford Nature Notes

To Abbotsbury Swannery for the Cygnet Release. Most of the birds at the swannery nest in natural spots but there are a small number of pens, during Winter the pens are left open and will be used by some birds as nesting sites come the season. Other pens are kept closed and are used as nurseries e.g. for a family if one of the adults should be injured or if the cygnets are not putting on weight as they should be. The birds in the pens are released after being weighed and ringed. Each cygnet has two rings fitted, a metal one, inscribed with an engraved number and a plastic one, coloured white for birds hatched at Abbotsbury. After the pens are emptied, as many as possible of the cygnets that have been raised on other nests will be caught, they too are weighed and ringed. Over the next few weeks, the staff at Abbotsbury will gradually catch, weigh and ring the remaining cygnets as they come for the twice-daily feed.



As cygnets reach the point of fledging, that is to say growing wing feathers that are large enough for flight, they will weigh around 6-9 kgs (any that are under that weight at the release are kept in a nursery pen). The adult swans give the cygnets 'flying lessons', all birds can fly instinctively but the adults will demonstrate to their young the techniques for taking off, such as facing into the wind and getting up speed by means of half paddling and using strong wing beats to achieve lift-off. It is quite a sight to see two adults demonstrating the take-off to their young, sometimes as many as seven or eight, that will be following in the footsteps (and wingbeats) of their parents.

Adult Mutes reach a weight of 12-15 kgs, the heaviest I have seen weighed at Abbotsbury was over 15.5 kgs, this is about the limit for flight. There are many birds larger than Mutes but, apart from flightless species, there aren't any heavier, for example the largest vulture is much longer and has a broader wingspan but reaches a maximum weight of 14kgs.

The swans at Abbotsbury are Mute Swans but they do make a noise when angry or threatened, something like a cross between a hiss and a snort. At Abbotsbury there is one Whooper Swan. Whooper Swans breed in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe but migrate here for the Winter in huge numbers, the one at Abbotsbury was collected by them after being found injured, when it regained its health, the migration back to their breeding grounds had ended so this one stayed and has been there ever since - why would you leave a place where you are fed twice a day? On the subject of migration, the crew of an airliner flying at 27,000 feet were amazed to overtake a Whooper, I seem to remember that the aircraft was a DeHavilland Comet, maybe built at Hatfield.

On 27th October, coming out of Stapleford Church, I saw four Redwing fly into one of the trees in the churchyard, then what might have been a Fieldfare but was too quick for the eye, seemed about to fly past but suddenly dived into the Yew tree just by the churchyard gate, a disappointed Sparrowhawk broke off the chase in which it had been engaged.

On the last Saturday in October, in heavy drizzle and, sometimes, steady rain, we held our first attempt at a Parish Working Party in the churchyard and around the War Memorial. The amount the workers achieved was wonderful, we even managed to rake the clippings and cuttings of brambles, grass, bindweed and nettles into piles ready for the brown bin over the next few months. The purpose of raking and disposing of the cuttings is to deny the soil the nutrients it would gain from allowing them to lie and decompose. Impoverished soil allows the plants to compete with the grasses. The churchyard is, in effect, a chalk grassland habitat.



A notice, created by St Albans Diocese, will be put up in the churchyard setting out the rules for graves and their maintenance, what can and can't be planted, etc., if you maintain a grave in the churchyard, please read the notice and abide by the principles. One example is that we are asking that cultivated varieties of Primula are not planted, the churchyard has naturally-occurring Primulas in the form of Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) and Cowslips (*Primula Veris*), Primulas crossbreed very easily so we would eventually lose our natural, wild plants through hybrids taking over if cultivars are planted. We do understand that this is a change for some that have been used to

maintaining graves in their own way without considering the rules so we will be light-handed in our approach to come into line with the rules but it is something that we must do. We are inspected every year and receive a report on our compliance, this is one area in which we do not meet the criteria.

STAPLEFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL NEWS

Spirit of the wild visit

The children were excited to learn about animals from around the world in a recent visit to the school by the Spirit of the Wild. Whilst holding many of the animals, the children learnt about the habitats they live in and the adaptations they have made, over time, to make this possible. It was hard to tell which was the most popular animal but it was a close run thing between the fruit bat, snakes, barn owl, husky and meerkats. What an exciting day!



Children can attend Stapleford Primary School once they have turned 3 years old. Our Nursery class now provides both 15 and 30 hours of childcare provision in this wonderfully rural setting. It really is "Hertfordshire's Hidden Gem."

Places are available at Stapleford Primary School in certain year groups.

Call 01992 583 341 to arrange a tour.

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade **Good**

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- "Calm conduct and polite manners are the norm. Pupils learn to behave this way from leaders and staff."
- "Events, such as singing carols around the Christmas tree and the school country fayre, promote strong ties with the local community."
- "Pupils' parents point out the patience and kindness staff provide as a strength of the school."

Ofsted, May 2024

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Please send any items for the next edition

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- St Mary the Virgin Stapleford
- St Michael and all Angels Waterford

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www.achurchnearyou.com/church/7903/

www.watton-pc.org.uk/news/

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Tim Alexander (01438 880519)
Bramfield: Peggy Wareham (01992 550467)
Dorothy Abel Smith (01992 582132)
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Watton-at-Stone

Sports Clubs Newsletter

Editor: vernon.dunhill@ntlworld.com

Issue
234
Dec 2024/
Jan 2025

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WATTON TENNIS CLUB

Club Website

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/WattonatStoneTennisClub>

The Datchworth Autumn League on Saturday afternoons has now finished, both teams have played really well and had some great matches. The men also have a team in the Herts Winter Mens Vets competition, and we have two teams in the East Herts Winter Mixed Doubles League so there is plenty of competitive tennis to be played over the winter months.

Ladies Club Night - Wednesdays 6 – 7.30pm.

Beginners Coaching included with Ian Vosper 6 – 7pm.

This new session is being introduced after the success of the Beginners Sessions for Ladies that we ran in July. All women club members are invited to come along to the new Ladies Club Night.

There is also a special offer on membership for any new ladies who would like to join the club and take part in these sessions.

For more information contact wattontennisclub@outlook.com or Ian Vosper 07960519373

Club Sessions will continue to run with Saturdays being dependent on court availability due to the competitive matches. The Tuesday session will run if there are any takers. Adult sessions are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (now 2 sessions) and Thursday evenings plus Saturday afternoons and Junior Coaching is on Thursday afternoons.

The Club Adult sessions are organised via WhatsApp groups. If you are a club member who would like to join one of these groups, please contact the club on the email below.

Adult Coaching runs on a Wednesday evening with Mark Roskilly coaching. The session is from 7.30-9pm and costs £10. Newcomers are always welcome, please contact wattontennisclub@outlook.com for details.

Junior Lessons are on Thursdays from 3.30 – 7.30pm. New juniors are always welcome. Please contact the Club Coach, Ian Vosper, with any coaching enquiries: vosperlorri@aol.com or 07960519373.

If you would like a copy of the Club's Annual Newsletter or information about joining the club, please contact the Membership Secretary at: wattontennisclub@outlook.com or 07984690727.

New Players, adults and juniors, are always welcome at the club.

Dates for your Diary:

The Christmas Party and presentations will be on Saturday 7th December 2024.

The AGM will be on Tuesday 7th January 2025

TABLE TENNIS

Table Tennis sessions are held in the Community Hall on Tuesday afternoons from 1.30 – 3.00 pm. The cost is £4 per session, but the first taster session is free. All abilities are welcome.

Three tables are available, and a mixture of doubles and singles are played depending on numbers present.

For further details contact Steve Block on 07870 779949.

WATTON RAMBLERS

Every Tuesday Dec/ Jan

Watton Ramblers are continuing with the short 1-hour slow morning walks for all starting at the Watton Community Hall at 10.00am every Tuesday.

These walks are available for allcomers and worth a try if you are recovering from something or need a little gentle exercise in good friendly company.

(Further details from Maurice Gordon 01920 426344)

Wednesday 1st January 2025

The annual **BEATING the BOUNDS** walk will take place as

usual on New Year's Day, meeting at the Watton Community Hall at 10.30am for Mulled Wine and Mince Pies before setting off on a circuit around the village. All are welcome and can leave the walk at any point, you are never far from home.

The full walk is about 4 miles and will take about 1½ hours.

(Details from Maurice above or Linda Thurlow on 07792 097392)

PILATES

Tis the season - to do Pilates !!

As Christmas approaches, our classes will be partaking in our annual Xmas lunch/dinner at The Bull, donning our festive jumpers and enjoying some fizz and mince pies - it's not all about the stretching :) ! We will also be fundraising to help Herts Young Homeless (HYH), hoping to beat our donation of £240 last year.

We will be taking a break over Christmas and New Year and look forward to welcoming new clients to trial a class when we return. Please get in touch or visit the website.

Laura


www.laurapilates.com


07710 408974


WATTON AT STONE CRICKET CLUB




Watton At Stone Cricket club is looking for players! Whether you're a newcomer to the game, or looking to start playing again, then we are the club for you! We have a Saturday League team and a Sunday Friendly team, and we are constantly looking to expand in size. Training every Thursday from 6.30pm so feel free to come down to The Meadow and show off your skills!

 www.wascc.co.uk

 wattonatstone@gmail.com

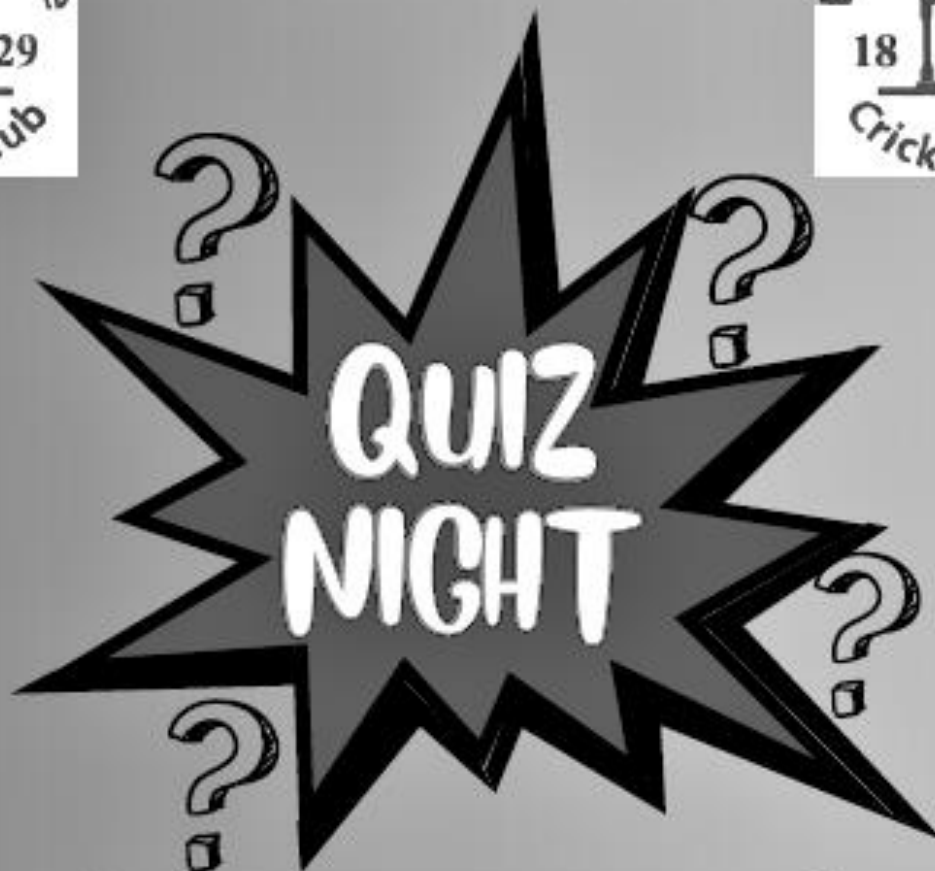
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REGISTER YOUR TEAM TODAY!

To book, contact Dave via email:

davebloomer22@gmail.com

Message us on Facebook: [@WattonatStoneCricketClub](https://www.facebook.com/WattonatStoneCricketClub)

Or message us on Instagram: [@wattonatstonecc](https://www.instagram.com/wattonatstonecc)

