

PARISH PUMP

No 392 parish.pump@gmail.com

February 2026

Happy New Year to everyone



Our ever present friend.

The Cowlinge children made Christmas decorations to go on the tree in the church for the carol service

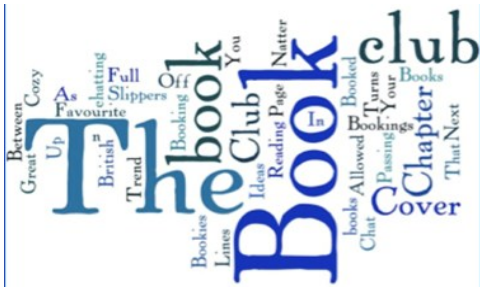


From St Margaret's Church in Cowlinge
Margaret of Cowlinge Church Companions



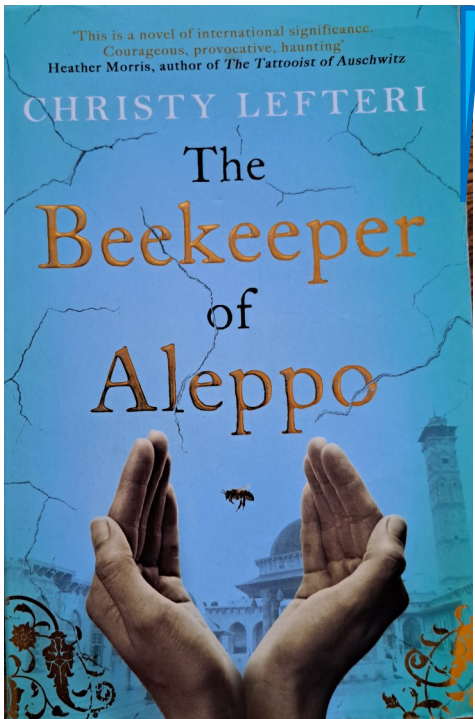
Father Christmas definitely received this letter

Louise Mackrill and her brother Philip's Dad, John, has unfortunately passed away All at Parish Pump send the family our sympathy.
It is with great sorry that we inform you of the death of John David Dennis, aged 96, who passed away peacefully on Sunday 18th January. John was born at Bayments, Stansfield, where he lived until his marriage in 1955 to Sara and moved 1 mile to Laurel Bank, Assington Green. He returned to Stansfield in 1994 where he has lived ever since. There will be a private cremation followed by a Service of Thanksgiving at All Saints Church, Stansfield to celebrate John's long life. Details of the service will follow.



‘Eye opening’, ‘thought provoking’, ‘important’, ‘evocative’, were some of our first thoughts about **The Beekeeper of Aleppo**, by **Christy Lefteri**. This is a harrowing fictional account of Syrian refugees making the journey from war torn Aleppo to an uncertain future in England. It is about navigating a way through profound loss and finding the light again. Drawing on her experiences working in a refugee camp in Athens the author writes with compelling authenticity and understanding, creating characters we can believe in and care about.

We first meet our narrator, **Nuri**, and his



wife, Afra, in a rundown B & B in an English sea-side town, waiting for the authorities to decide their future, ‘they might keep us, they might send us away’. We see this new world through Nuri’s

eyes and when he reads the billboard just outside the B & B which says that ‘there are too many of us, that this island will break under our weight’ we can feel his acute sense of ‘otherness’ and displacement. Both are battered by war and badly traumatized. In these opening pages we learn that **Afra** has become blind and that **Nuri** has killed a man and we are readily drawn into their story: we want to know how they got here and what happened to them.

The plotline moves back and forth as chapters alternate between the present and the past. We enjoyed the innovative structure of the book where, at regular intervals, the last word of a chapter would be missed and appear as a single word in the middle of the next page, set in an intricate faded illustration, and this word would also start the next chapter. An interesting technique that propels the reader from one chapter to the next. We also realized these words are key to representing different parts of their journey and when looked at together, could take us through the narrative arc of the book. A clever idea and beautifully executed.

The darkness of the first chapter contrasts dramatically to the second which portrays the bright happy lives they led in pre-war **Aleppo**, where Nuri worked as a beekeeper and Afra was an artist. When the Syrian civil war starts atrocities are happening all around them and **Afra** sees something so horrific she goes blind. They are forced to flee and put themselves into the hands of the people smugglers. We follow them through Turkey and Greece, on exhausting overland marches, a perilous sea crossing and in the squalid sprawling refugee camps. The dirty and dangerous camps are vividly described, and we can see how even a kind and gentle man like Nuri could fall victim to the dehumanizing conditions. However, even here ‘in the worst of circumstances’ he finds random acts of generosity and kindness enough to convince him ‘that things can change, that hope can prevail’.

Loss is at the core of the novel - loss of loved ones, loss of home, loss of identity. Nuri and Afra are so immersed in their own grief and traumas they

cannot find each other or themselves - ‘when you belong to someone and they are gone, who are you?’ We were very moved by the depths of their suffering and courage which the author draws with such tenderness and empathy.

Seeing/not seeing and ‘what does it mean to see?’ are themes entrenched into the narrative. Nuri is portrayed as the one who can see and Afra, being blind, needs him to guide her. This premise is eventually turned on its head when it becomes clear it is Afra who can really see what is going on and it is she who guides Nuri back to himself, and their love for each other, with renewed hope for the future. There were strong feelings here that the author is using a tired and overused stereotype of a blind woman being a wise woman who sees more than the seeing, leading to complaints that this aspect of her depiction of Afra was clichéd and surprisingly insensitive for someone who otherwise writes so compassionately.

Nuri is a beekeeper and bees play a major role in the book. An illustration of a bee heads up most chapters whilst bees and beehives are integrated into wholesale writing. Bees represent not only vulnerability but also life and hope and these are all qualities we see in our main characters. However, when Nuri finds and nurtures a damaged, wingless bee ‘banished from her colony’ and struggling to survive against all the odds many complained the metaphor was a tad overworked!

Clichés aside, we felt this was a particularly pertinent and significant book to read now in the light of world events. With insights into the lived experiences of individual asylum seekers, it is an antidote to their treatment en masse in the media. We would recommend this book to others and decided it deserved a 4-star rating. Next time we will be discussing *The Five, The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper*, by **Hallie Rubenhold**. Book club meets once a month in and around Stansfield and if you would like to join us please contact annedennis1@live.co.uk or 07557357362

Anne

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2025.

We wish to send a very big **THANK YOU** for all of the support given in raising a total of **£ 4299.75** from the villages of **Wickhambrook, Stradishall, Lidgate, Ousden, Chedburgh and Chevington**. A very special thank you also for the hard work carried out by our house-to-house collectors and static pots sites in the local shops, cafes, and public houses. Without your effort and support

this would not be possible. We would love to hear from anyone interested in assisting with the 2026 Poppy Appeal in November, contact details as follows. **Alan and Kathryn Cordy** (Poppy Appeal Organisers of the **Royal British Legion** Wickhambrook and District)

Email alancordy@icloud.com
Tel 07407308549



Ceramic Poppies in Stradishall Church

These ceramic poppies were for the war dead in the Stradishall Churchyard.
Joanna Gearing, General Manager, YOPEY – the Young People of the Year charity

Phone 01440 821654 07941 645158

Our websites www.yopey.org and yopeybefriend.org



Birds in Stradishall 18th January 2026 No 1.–Blackbird



St Margaret's church at Cowlinge get their act together. Please see our cover page

And so a new year begins

Seeing our Cowlinge church standing patiently beneath January's onslaught of stormy weather, it is hard to believe what a very special Christmas we held within its walls, just four weeks ago, when the weather was calm. The Carols by Candlelight gathering was standing-room only, with everyone cheerfully participating, to be followed four days later by the privilege of the church hosting the Christmas Day service. A joyful conclusion to a busy year. And now our sights are set on what lies ahead. An intensive period of writing is underway for the Companions as we

continue to pursue grant monies for major repairs to the fabric of the church, however we certainly are not neglecting our events programme for the village. The first event of the year in the church is set for March, with the return of This is My Theatre. After the terrific success of their *Pride and Prejudice* performance last year, this talented group of young players will bring us **Jane Eyre, on Thursday, 19th March at 7.30pm**. Tickets are available from www.thisismytheatre.com
 Book early: remember that the church is small and seating is limited. See you there, with warm clothes and

cushions!
Margaret, Cowlinge Church Companions



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Quality dementia care, led by experts

At Care UK's Kentford Manor we're passionate about supporting people to live well with dementia. With expert-backed training and luxurious, purpose-built

facilities, you can trust us to care for your loved one.

When we welcome a new resident to Kentford Manor, our team gets to know them well so that we can tailor care to suit their individual needs. Regular care plan reviews ensure that everyone is supported at every stage of their dementia journey. It's all part of our person-centred approach.

Care you can depend on

We work closely with academic partners and dementia experts to ensure that we stay up-to-date with the latest approaches to dementia care. The **Association of Dementia Studies** also provides bespoke training for our teams. This collaboration means our care and practice is supported and informed by evidence, so that you can be assured your loved one receives the very best, compassionate care.

Supporting people to live well with dementia

At Kentford Manor, our Lifestyle team delivers meaningful activities, including gardening, crafting, baking and reminiscence. We have an upcoming **Staying connected: A guide to dementia-friendly conversation dementia event on 19th of February, 5pm - 7pm** with Carl George, joining us to talk about how to communicate more effectively with people living with dementia. Learn simple, practical ways to stay connected — helping to build understanding, ease frustration, and create more meaningful moments in everyday life.

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Our home has been carefully designed to meet the latest dementia standards, creating a safe, welcoming environment. Everything from colour schemes, signage and furniture to crockery has been chosen to support independence.

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To find out more about dementia care or to book a place at our event, call 01638 438 150. Jeddah Way Kennett Newmarket Suffolk CB8 8JY

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Maria Hristova | Senior Marketing Executive - Connaught House, 850 The Crescent, Colchester, Essex CO4 9QB 07824623627
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Wickhambrook Local History Society News

January 2026

We were very pleased to welcome **Martyn Taylor**, our speaker for the evening, who shared his love of Bury St Edmunds by showing photos of the past and present of the town.

Martyn acquired 4,000 postcards from the now closed Bury Bookshop and he has compiled some of these into his latest book, *Bury St Edmunds Through Time, Revisited*. We really enjoyed seeing Bury in the 1890s and comparing it with how it looks today. The biggest difference was that the modern streets were full of cars, still a novelty at the turn of last century. Lovely to see the market, Abbey Gardens, the Station and old pubs, still recognisable today! Some surprises to all were a photo of a tank, given to the town after the first World War as a thank you to the town for fundraising, which was eventually broken up for scrap, and a weather vane on top of what used to be Mothercare at the top of St John's street which depicts a stork with a baby!



Birds in Stradishall 18th Jan 2026 No 2. Bluetit



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Rector's Ramblings – February 2026 (Love in the Lean Months)



described by poets and artists as the

By the time this magazine reaches your doormats, we will be navigating that curious, "in-between" stretch of the British year. February is often

wrong with celebrating romantic love, for many of us, Valentine's Day can feel a little narrow - or even isolating. This year, I want to invite us all to look beyond the roses and explore a more enduring kind of affection.

In the Christian tradition, we often speak of *Agape*—a Greek word for a love that is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional.

This isn't the flutter of a heartbeat; it is the steady pulse of a community that looks out for its neighbours.

When we move past the 14th, we find ourselves on the threshold of a very different

season. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on 18th



month of "fill dyke," where the grey skies seem determined to soak the earth, and the initial excitement of the New Year has long since faded into the reality of damp mornings and early sunsets. (See Constable's lovely painting above)

However, as we look at the calendar for February 2026, our eyes are naturally drawn to the 14th. High street windows are already awash with Hearts, Roses, and Teddy bears. While there is nothing

February, marking the beginning of Lent. It is a poignant timing. If Valentine's Day is about the "highs" of affection, Lent is about the "depths" of devotion. It is a forty-day journey that asks us to strip away the distractions and focus on what truly matters.

When people think of Lent, they often think of "giving things up"—chocolate, wine, or perhaps social media. While these small acts of self-discipline are valuable, I wonder if this February we

might consider a "Lent of Action."

Instead of merely subtracting something from our lives, could we add something that reflects that *Agape* love?

Checking in on a neighbour who rarely gets visitors.

Volunteering an hour at the local food bank or community café.

Committing to a daily moment of silence to reflect on our place in the world.

Lent is essentially "soul-gardening." Just as the snowdrops (those "fair maids of February") are currently pushing through the cold soil in our churchyards, Lent is the time for us to prepare the ground of our own hearts for the new life of Easter. Life in our parish is rarely static. Beyond the quiet reflection of Lent, we have much to look forward to (check the Benefice website for details!)

As we walk through this month together—through the rain, the mud, and the occasional burst of pale winter sunshine - let us remember that we are never walking alone. Whether you are celebrating a long-term romance or finding this time of year particularly quiet, you are a valued thread in the fabric of this parish and community. May the peace of the season be with you all

Mark The Revd Mark Woodrow (Rector)



Monthly rainfall mm 2024/2025 (Please note the change in units: inches to mm)

2025	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nick Burton- Stradishall	55	31.5	11	22	20.5	23	39	25	47	60	118	41
Tina Lee- Stradishall	45	32	9	25	19	27	30	33	46	63	101	46
Sam Slater- Stansfield	46	30	5	23	21	20	54	24	41	54	99	45
Rod Taylor- Stansfield	64	35	13	25	26	29	59	26	48	59	114	43
Jay Gridley-Hundon	59	26	11	21	26	29	22	25	38	77	122	54
Victoria Pakenham -Fenstead End	73	33	8	21	30	32	32	20.5	43	58.5	98	52
Elaine Plumpton - Great Saxham	63	42	6	23	17	38	51	26	60	58	119	49

2024	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nick Burton- Stradishall	55	115	45	64	96	15	94	14	99	58	47	42.5
Tina Lee- Stradishall	57	119	47	87	91	19	93	16	98	68	31	38
Sam Slater- Stansfield	51	129	55	60	114	19	85	15	76	55	33	63
Rod Taylor- Stansfield	59	121	59	68	99	23	88	16	80	73	42	51
Jay Gridley-Hundon	71	128	57	74	104	21	93	16	108	71	39	39
Victoria Pakenham -Fenstead End	53	132	59	62	106	21	90	16.5	88	38	39	79
Elaine Plumpton Great Saxham	54	129	66	69	78	23	90	16	99.6	52	43	53

Jonathan Dabbs - formerly Stradishall Service Station

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**St Margaret's Church in
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**Birds in Stradishall 18th Jan
2026 No 3 Great Tit**



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CLASP, your long established local Charity, is pleased to announce that **Karla Greenwood** has taken over the role of CLASP **CarAid Coordinator** with effect from Tuesday 16th. Sept. Many of you will know Karla who is the Clare Library Manager. She replaces **John Webb**, who is standing down after seven and a half years in the role. You are reminded that CarAid, using volunteer drivers, takes local residents to and from medical appointments, such as hospitals, doctors surgeries, dentists, opticians and other medical services. This service is free of charge, but most recipients choose to make a donation to CLASP, which can be given to the volunteer driver to contribute towards the mileage allowances payable. CarAid continues to be dependent upon the commitment of its volunteer drivers, and welcomes new applicants to join the team. **If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver, or need the CarAid service, you can call our dedicated phone line 07724698283**

The good news had spread, and **Stansfield church** was filled to the rafters on Christmas Eve for the annual Carol Service. The church had been dusted and polished by a team of hard-working volunteers. Many thanks to all those who donated greenery from their



gardens, which was used by the artistic decorating team, who managed to make the church look welcoming and festive.

Stansfield Christmas Carol Service

Candles stood proudly alight on the windowsills, which added to the warm atmosphere around the church. As the event approached, there was a joyous pealing of the bells letting everyone know that the service was about to begin. **Rodney Bullock** was a veritable maestro on the organ and there was enthusiastic singing of the well-known carols, with the children playing their part by singing Away in a Manger around the crib at the front of the nave. **Stansfield Carol Service** has become a very popular event and this year there were over 140 people in the congregation, which was a record number. Afterwards the crowded church-goers were treated to mulled wine with piping hot mince pies and sausage rolls, which were generously

contributed by volunteers. Stansfield Parochial Church Council would like to thank all those who willingly gave their time and effort to make this such a memorable event. They would also like to give thanks for the generous donations, which raised £509 (plus gift aid) for **Nicky's Way**, a charity which supports bereaved children and young people in our area. Happy New Year to you all!
Sarah



**Birds in Stradishall
18th
January,
2026 No 4:
Mallard**

**You can donate to our pantry by following this link
www.tinyurl/ClareCommunityPantry**

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Jeff's page

Fortified wine. We have all drunk, and enjoyed it, at this time of year, but what is it and how is it produced. It is the same as ordinary wine but is fortified with the addition of a spirit, usually grape brandy. There are two forms of this process, ie during fermentation used for Port, and after, producing Sherry. The idea for this was to prevent the wine from spoiling during its transportation. Port was shipped to many countries, not least England, over the centuries. There are a number of these wines namely Port, Sherry and Madeira from Spain/ Portugal, and Vin doux Naturel, Vin de Liqueur are from France.

Port. When fermentation of the berries has reached an alcohol level of 8/9% grape brandy is added so that the alcohol level is increased to 18-20%. The sugar not converted to Alcohol remains in the mix, which is Port, providing the sweetish taste. The following year the wine is tasted and depending upon the quality is described in one of the these categories. Ruby. A blend of vintages. So called because of its colour. LBV. Late Bottled Vintage. more structured than Ruby. Grapes from one year. Reserve. Ruby Port allowed to age.

Crusted. Blend of vintages. Needs decanting as it contains sediment.

Vintage. From a single vintage, and may be from a single vineyard.

Tawny. Aged over many years. Providing more depth. Colheita. More Tawny

Accompany with strong cheeses, chocolate desserts and nuts. Madeira. Made from the Malvasia grape. aka Malmsey, a very sweet berry. This wine is stored in barrels and is heated during fermentation. Is very long lived, and continues to improve. The dry wine goes well with cheese, dried fruits and chocolate.

Sherry. Made with White wine which is put into barrels, which are not filled. Months after a mold (flor) may appear. The grape brandy is then added and produces

Fino, where flor is present, alcohol will be 15.5%. Oloroso, with no flor, will be 18% The wine is then aged in Soleras (barrels).

Fino should be drunk very young. Serve with salty or savoury snacks and Tapas. Manzanillo, which is the driest sherry, has a slight iodised taste. Charcuterie, nuts.

Amontillado is aged for at least 8 years. Red meat, stews, game, mature cheese Vin doux Naturel. (Naturally sweet wines) From Languedoc-Roussillon region of France. By adding alcohol to the wine the level reaches 14-18% but retains its original sweetness. Muscat-de Beaugues de Venise is one of the well known examples. These wines go well with fruit desserts and blue cheese. The red VDN's are for game dishes.

Vins de Liqueur. A blend of must with grape brandy which has an alcohol level of 16-22%.

There are others but Pineau des Charentes is arguably the best known. These wines are normally drunk without food.

A wine from Western Sicily started by John Woodhouse who added must to the wine to preserve it, is now looked upon as an addition to dishes by celebrity chefs rather than being drunk, as it should be. Is 18% and comes as Dry, Semi Dry and Sweet. The Dry can be drunk as an aperitif or taken with cheese, nuts.

Jeff



He or She was in log shed last year but not this year - such a shame.



The Bansfield Benefice



The Bansfield Benefice is the collective name for the Parishes of Cowlinge, Denston, Lidgate, Ousden, Stansfield, Stradishall and Wickhambrook in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Suffolk, United Kingdom.

Services for February 2026 **DRAFT**

<https://www.bansfieldbenefice.org.uk/services/>

Date	Time	Church	Details
01 Feb	10:00 am	Denston (Candlemass HC)	Celebrant: Revd Eve Bell Organist: [DO] Liturgical colour: [P]
08 Feb	10:00 am	Cowlinge 🛎 (Second Sunday before Lent HC)	Celebrant: Revd Eve Bell Organist: [KI] Liturgical colour: [G]
15 Feb	10:00 am	Ousden (Sunday next before Lent HC)	Celebrant: Revd Eve Bell Organist: [KI] Liturgical colour: [G]
18 Feb	07:00 pm	Wickhambrook (Ash Wednesday HC)	Celebrant: Revd Eve Bell Organist: [] Liturgical colour: [P]
22 Feb	10:00 am	Wickhambrook (First Sunday of Lent HC)	Celebrant: Revd Barbara Sherlock Organist: [DO] Liturgical colour: [P]

Year A



A beautiful gift for 'services rendered' from a friend

HC = Holy Communion; CW = Common Worship Order One; BCP = Book of Common Prayer;
SOP = Songs of Praise; MP = Morning Prayer; CWOT = Common Worship Order Two
[Organist's initials]
Elder: PB = Paul Bevan





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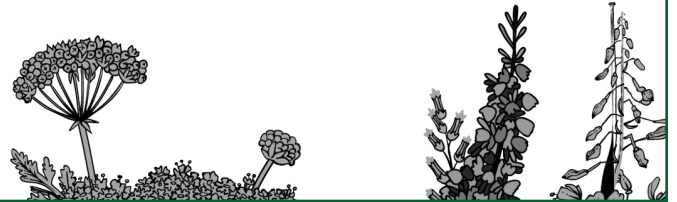
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An extract from an elderly parish magazine ! (Sorry about the photo quality)

FROM THE RECTORY, ST JAMES THE LEAST

My dear Nephew Darren

It really is time to get some new figures for the crib. After a series of accidents over the years, we are now down to two wise men, two shepherds, and one three-legged sheep that only remains upright if it is leaning against a shepherd. Joseph, having been obliged to stand outside the shelter of the stable for the last four decades, is now comprehensively veneered with bat droppings. In a rather desperate effort to enlarge this rather frugal cast, Miss Timmins hit on the idea of introducing characters from the children's Easter garden. This would have all been very well if both sets of figures had been to the same scale, but we now have the shepherds apparently being threatened by two ten feet rabbits.

I am sure your ecologically appropriate Christmas tree, made of recycled dustbin liners will be much appreciated by your congregation, knowing that they are saving the planet for future generations. We however remain traditional, with a tree always donated by the local squire from his estate, even if it is at the cost of adding another degree to global warming. Not only does it look more fitting, but it gives our verger something to do on twelfth night, as he sweeps up several hundred-weight of pine needles.

Last year's decision to have tree lights which flashed in succession was not a success. Those members who stared at them for too long while singing carols tended to fall over – although I suspect that Major Crump's inability to remain upright at the midnight Service was for rather different reasons. Not using flashing lights this year, the Major will have to find a different excuse.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

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People of Poslingford

The church looked especially beautiful as it was lovingly decorated in readiness for the Christmas Service, setting the scene for a truly festive village gathering. It was heart-warming to see the Poslingford community come together once again. **Mark's** service was as engaging and enjoyable as ever, delighting everyone with his imaginative "chocolate version" of the

Christmas story. Several members of the village took part in the readings, making the service feel all the more special and inclusive. A big thank you goes to Mel, who did a fabulous job on the keyboard, adding to the joyful atmosphere.

George and Melody were on hand with warming mulled wine, delicious sausage rolls and mince pies, which were very much appreciated by all. Events like these are a wonderful reminder of the strong community spirit in Poslingford, and we look forward to many more opportunities to gather together throughout the year. **Dates for Your Diary**

PANCAKES

Saturday 14th February
At 2pm
St Mary's Church, Poslingford

Bring your frying pan for a few competitions
Followed by pancake eating

Donations to the Community Pantry are always appreciated

February: Saturday 14th, 2.00pm – Pancakes
March: Saturday 14th, 2.00pm – Pudding Party BYO
April: Saturday 11th, 2.00pm – Bangers & Bingo
May: Saturday 9th, 2.00pm – Plant Swap
June Saturday 13th, 2.00pm – Booze in the Pews & Quiz

July Saturday 25th – Parish BBQ (Time to be confirmed)
Saturday 8th, 2.00pm – Scarecrow Making
September: Saturday 12th – annual Ride & Stride event
October: Saturday 10th, 2.00pm – Pumpkins
November Sunday 8th – Remembrance Service
December Saturday 12th, 2.00pm – Decorations for Christmas
Friday 18th, 6.00pm – Christmas Service



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The Wickhambrook and District Garden Club

Our AGM for 2025 was a good balance between necessary business and an enjoyable social time together. After the 2024 minutes had been signed and the Treasurer and Chair reports given, there was an especial thanks for **Jackie Merry**, who was standing down as Chair after five years. She has been an inspiring and friendly person with whom to work. **Glen Puxley Pituck** was invited to become Chair, with **Polly** as Vice Chair. Of course they accepted. The annual sub. has been raised from £10 to £15, to help towards the speaker's fees, but entrance to meetings will be free, thus avoiding delays at the start of our meetings. Visitors will pay £3.50 at the start of each meeting, as before. At the Summer Show there were 46

Exhibitors, fewer than last year due to the hot, dry weather, but still a very good Show overall. The cookery classes were of particularly high quality. The newly revived Cottage Garden class was popular and will be open to entries from Wickhambrook, Denston and Stradishall, as inscribed on the Cup. As usual, a varied programme for 2026 was presented, with the addition of some new events. In February a 'Post Festive Dinner' at The Three Ways, Cowlinge. In May, a Minibus outing to Beth Chato's Garden. Also, later in the year, a Garden Party at Melford House, Matthew and Audrey's home. **Jackie Merry** asked Members to consider taking part in an Open Garden Event this Summer. (Separate from the

Cottage Garden Cup) Show schedules are going to be more readily available and on line. After the meeting, which closed soon after 8.00 pm, there was delicious hot and cold party food served by Committee members, while Roger Merry had prepared an interesting and fun Horticultural Quiz. Greatly enjoyed by all!
At the next meeting: Monday 26th January at 7.30 in the WI. Hall, Wickhambrook, Sue Stubbley will tell us about The Hedgehog Hospital . Monday 23rd February - Garden Design, from Concept to Completion, with Louise Gilhooly
New members are always welcome!
Ruth

Father Christmas at Stradishall church

On Saturday 13th December, **Father Christmas** kept his promise and arrived at Stradishall church, where he was greeted by children and adults

alike. He was *slightly* early – just a few minutes in fact – because **Rudolph** decided to come up the lane at a spanking trot, rather than a sedate walk.

(Perhaps it wasn't **Rudolph** – maybe **Dasher** or **Prancer** had taken his place?) Once inside the church, sitting in his special chair, **Father Christmas** was soon surrounded by children. The grownups meanwhile were warming themselves with mulled wine and delicious mince pies and sausage rolls. There was also the opportunity to browse and buy from a glamorous selection of pre-loved clothes, provided by Lorraine Callow. The two Magic Branches were soon bedecked with Christmas wishes and memories, written by both children and adults. In with the wishes for particular gifts were memories of loved ones, and hopes that everyone (including **Father Christmas**) would have a happy and peaceful Christmas.



It was a truly heart-warming start to the season of goodwill.

Many thanks to the **Stone family: Denise, David and Father Christmas and his elf helper (not forgetting Tubby, alias Rudolph), Tracey and Clint, Kathy, Carol and Peter.**

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Friday: Clare Market 7.30 to 10am

Lavenham 11am to 1pm

Depden 2 to 3pm



Helen and Ellie



Comfort Food with Louise Mackrill



Treat your family & friends to delicious feel-good comfort food this month. Settle in front of the fire with soothing dishes such as casseroles, bakes & pies to see through the cold, wet & blustery February evenings

Beef & Guinness casserole

2 tbs pl flour, seasoned; 1.25 kg stewing steak, cubed
50 g beef dripping or lard 2 onions, peeled



and sliced
3 carrots, peeled and sliced 2 celery sticks, sliced
2 garlic cloves, chopped:500 ml Guinness
2 sprigs thyme & 2 bay leaves: Zest of 2 oranges
1 x 400g tin pitted prunes in syrup :1 x 400g tin beef consommé :1 x teaspoon redcurrant jelly

Toss the steak in the flour & fry in the dripping to brown, remove to a large casserole. Add a little more dripping & fry the onions, carrots, celery & garlic for about 5 mins. Remove to the casserole. Add the Guinness to the fry-pan and boil, scraping up any pan leftovers, pour into the casserole along with the herbs, dried orange peel or zest, redcurrant jelly, consommé & the prunes with about 1/3rd of their syrup. Bring to the boil, cover and

cook in the oven 160°C/325°F for 2 hours or until the beef is very tender adding more prune syrup if necessary.
Serves 6 - 8

Dauphinoise potatoes

500ml double cream:500 ml milk
3 garlic cloves, crushed:8 large potatoes such as Maris Piper, peeled
Salt & pepper:100g gruyère cheese, grated: In a large saucepan heat the cream, milk, crushed garlic and a good amount of seasoning to simmering point. Slice the potatoes very thinly, add to the hot milk,



simmer about 3 minutes, stirring gently so they don't stick to the bottom. With a slotted spoon remove the potatoes to a wide shallow ovenproof gratin dish, pour over the hot milk, scatter over the cheese and bake approximately for 30 - 40 minutes until soft & golden. **Serves 8**

Bakewell tart

1 x 30cm blind baked pastry case:200g raspberry jam
1 tsp vanilla extract:300g butter
300g caster sugar:200g ground almonds

100g plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
3 medium eggs, beaten
3 tbsp flaked almonds
Spread the jam over the base of the pastry case. Cream butter & sugar, add ground almonds, flour, baking powder, eggs & vanilla extract. Blend well, spoon onto the jam evenly. Bake in oven 150°C for half an hour. Scatter over the flaked almonds, return to the oven for another 20 mins. Serve warm or cold with cream.



St Mary's Church Lidgate
St Marys PCC are looking for a treasurer.



Duties include preparing the accounts and managing the finances (paying invoices and depositing donations). It would be helpful if the treasurer could attend the PCC meetings (4/5 per year) but it is not necessary to become a PCC member. If anyone has a few hours to spare please contact **Janet Mitson on 01638 500587. Nicky Turner** (St Marys PCC Secretary)

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Hello, I am grateful for this opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is Susan, and I live in Bury St Edmunds. I started **LilyLife Home Maintenance** last year after I recovered from a long illness and I was determined to take on the challenge of doing something that I really enjoyed and was passionate about. The name **LilyLife** is a long-standing name between my daughter and myself, that started when she was crafting to make extra pocket money, her name means Life and my name means Lily. She's now all grown up! I have always been a very practical person, and had an eye for interiors, and over recent years have had opportunities to be involved in many aspects of house building and complete renovation. I really love helping people to stay independent in their own homes. I have a high personal standard in my work and the way I conduct my business. I can take on interior and exterior work, garden maintenance, and much more, please ask, happy to do small jobs if it helps you. Will always provide a quote.

Susan

Time to Dance

Happy New Year

The first day of February seems a bit late to wish everybody a Happy New Year and a bit early to ask how your resolutions are going. In fact the world is going through such uncertain times it is difficult to know what resolutions might be relevant.

It is interesting that the new **Pontif**, American born Pope Leo, has been leading with his messages of Kindness in a time when geopolitics seem anything but kind. The rising death toll in **Iran**, the stepping up of horror attacks against the **Ukrainian** people, overt and violent anti-semitic attacks against Jews, and so many theatres of war where hatred and violence boil in a never ending cauldron of misery, where is the Kindness in all that ?

Here impatience over illegal immigration has come to the boil. Nasty demonstrations outside hotels used to house immigrants has turned its focus from impatience over governmental inability to control immigration to hatred of the immigrants themselves. This also seems to be the message conveyed by the display of our national flags. People are angry, uptight, intolerant and tending more and more towards violence. And yet here is the leader of the Catholic World talking about "Kindness". Is anybody listening ?

I found myself mulling over this at Christmas. The whole occasion was wonderful. We went to friends for Christmas Day and were wined and dined with great generosity. We spent the night with them and then moved on to celebrate another friend's Birthday on Boxing Day. This took the form of a delicious and leisurely lunch and some excellent wines - our friend is a Master of Wine, no less. There were presents under several trees and a New Year's Day lunch that has become a village tradition. If I tell you the pre lunch hand me rounds were foie gras and it continued in this vein you will get the picture that my Season of Festivities was exceptional in generosity and execution and, yes, in kindness.

There was, however, one nagging dark cloud on the horizon because on the 2nd of January I had an appointment at University College Hospital in London for a scan for a not very nice type of cancer and I knew the scan was not likely to be very nice either.

Now fortunately I am not a worrier and really do not see the point of worrying about something that might not happen. You will understand, however, that I did have some trepidation when I set off that morning. The appointment was not at the main hospital but around the corner and on walking in I could see it was spotless, airy, spacious and friendly. I was greeted warmly by the Jamaican receptionist who gave me an outline of the morning's activities, told me to be quite at home and

relax and where to sit to wait for my appointment with the Nursing Assistant. I had arrived at least half an hour early but was seen within five minutes by a charming lady from Bangladesh. She checked my details, medication and so on and we had a really pleasant, relaxed chat. I learned her Bangladeshi name meant God's Gift, now that was a good sign when one was trusting in Providence ! Hardly time to make it back to the waiting area and I was called to visit two ladies who inhabited a twilight cave. There I had to drop my drawers and lie down which might have been a promising start to any encounter but they then began to scan my insides, searching for irregularities in kidneys, liver and lights. No opportunity for chatting here, it was serious stuff but carried out with the most attentive manner and the very least discomfort and great kindness.

I had brought a Christmas book and was looking forward to getting into it but now only two pages in and I was called once more and asked to visit another room where I met a Mr Shah and his Chinese Hong Kong side kick. Now this was the Big One. It involved a camera and when you realise the camera is going to be photographing your insides you realise this is unlikely to be a fun experience. In the normal course of events unless they are going to cut a hole in you there are only three ways a camera can be placed inside you and not one of them was designed for the purpose. Of course I knew this was going to be a small camera but I could not help thinking of those large things I had used to take holiday snaps in the Sixties.. Mercifully things have advanced a bit since then and without any time for fear or remorse the camera was inside and sending out colour videos. There was a hush in the room as serious work was in hand and it was definitely not the time to ask Mr Shah how his Christmas had gone. Then all at once it was over and I was pulling up my trousers once again whilst being told that all looked ticket-boo and I was not to worry. I would get a letter and then a call after the boffins had had time to examine my entrails and come to a conclusion. In the meantime there was nothing to worry about. All this incredible service was courtesy of the NHS too ! I left the hospital happy, relieved and grateful but also feeling rather exhausted as I let go of unspoken fears and worries that I had not realised I had been carrying around.

Outside on a sparkling day London was bitterly cold, taking one's breath in such a way as to weaken you. I made various attempts to hail cabs as I slowly wandered the labyrinth of deserted streets round Harley Street and Marylebone.

Then, just as I was feeling really exhausted a tall Arab gentleman in his early thirties stepped up and asked if I was having difficulty. I said I was and he asked if it would help if he called me a

cab. I readily said it would and he made several calls. He told me there were no black cabs available but he would



try one more option and almost immediately a sleek brand new black Mercedes saloon drew up. He had called an Uber, which meant he had already paid for my journey. I told him I must pay him but he waved this aside saying, "I would not dream of it, Sir. Please take this car to your home. Oh! And a very Happy New Year !"

I was stunned and wanted to remonstrate but he had turned and already begun walking away. Now there was Kindness writ large and just when I needed it most. In fact everybody I had met that morning had been kind to me, very especially kind and the sunshine lit almost deserted London with a very special, sparkle. It was so good to be alive.

Finally, on a completely different tack I would like to draw your attention to a relatively new coffee shop in Bury. You may think there are quite enough coffee shops already but this one deserves your attention. Opposite the entrance to The Corn Exchange you will see Alemo (not Alamo where David Crocket wore his terrible hat) which does not shout its presence. Inside you will find a spacious area with many tables, it is light and airy and you sense there is something special going on..... and there is ! On most days and at most times you will see the Patron, Fabian, whose family live in Ecuador. There they grow coffee on the slopes of the mountains. In the rich volcanic soil, they have created their coffee plantation and its beans are sold around the world where fine coffee is appreciated. We are particularly fortunate that it has landed here, in Bury St Edmunds. Here it is that Fabian roasts the beans sent here by his family and it is here where it is brewed into sensationally good coffee. I have been fortunate to travel to many coffee producing areas of the world from South East Asia to Latin America and I can tell you that coffee from Ecuador is among the finest. But here, in Bury, you now have the possibility to taste coffee in a variety of ways grown by a single family who curate and care for it and send their choicest beans from their mountain tops to their son far away over here and he uses the skills he learned from a young age to bring you one of the finest cups of coffee you will have ever tasted. I particularly enjoy their "Cortado" And that is because like all the **Brews it is made with love and served with Kindness. Remember the Alemo !**

MARTIN IS A BIT POORLY AT THE MOMENT. HE IS HAVING HIS EYES 'SEEN TO' AT THE MOMENT. WE ALL WISH HIM THE BEST OF OUTCOMES

with Carol Reay-Glover



Problem page

CAROL is a trained counsellor living locally who can offer advice on personal problems, such as relationships, divorce, child issues, employment, depression - or general worries. Email her in complete confidence at carolreay1@icloud.com

Dear Carol

What would you do if you were me?
My daughter is emigrating to Australia with her husband and young family. The kids are two and four and I adore them. They're off to a place just outside Sydney. Her work takes her there and her husband can work anywhere zigs all exciting for them. But me. I'm a widow and on my own. I only have my daughter here as she's an only child. We are very close. But do have tons of lovely friends here and my activities. I'm an active person and do lots of things. So, they want me to go with them which apparently I could do. I'd be their childcare. But I just don't know. I've never even been to Australia. I've only travelled within Europe before. I'm so torn you wouldn't believe it. It feels such a long way and would be such a wrench but a wrench to be honest either way. I am just so unsure what to do.
What would you do?
E

Dear E,

Oh my goodness that is a big question to be faced with. It must be very hard to think through and even harder to come to a decision.

You ask twice what I would do. I am not you E and this decision needs to be what you wish to do in your heart. The only person you need to think about here is yourself, what decision is going to work for you. Maybe the sensible way forward is to visit them soon after they arrive and stay for a good amount of time. You would be able to see what you think of the place and see if you could imagine yourself building a new life there. That's what you'd have to do if you went there. You are active and have friends so you would need to be able to build that there for yourself. My advice E is to follow your heart. I suspect if you give yourself time, give yourself a visit there to test the water, you will reach a position where you'll be clear what you want to do, for you, not for anyone else.

I wish you all the best.

Carol



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Denston Village Hall 100 Club Quiz night STEFAN, TREASURER 01440 820675 the next one is in 2026. Thanks Stefan

Prices for advertising in this magazine

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	12 months	6 months	3 months
Eighth page	£90	£50	£30
Quarter page	£185	£100	£60
Half page	£275	£150	£85

BACK PAGE

	Price for the period		Price for the period
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Eighth page	£165	£90	£50
Quarter page	£255	£140	£80
Half page	£420	£230	£125

It is clear from our accounts that a single month is not viable

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All contributors & advertisers to submit copy no later than the 18th of the month. Please note the change. Thankyou

Changes to the ways that refuse is collected...awaiting details from WSC.

Date for the Village Fun Day in Summer.

Combining the Village and the Parish Council websites.

Next Meeting of Stansfield Parish Council is Wednesday 11 March at 7pm in the Village Hall

Birds in Stradishall 18th January 2026: 5.Moorhen



A “new house -in-waiting” was how a proposed new outbuilding in Assington Green was described at a meeting of Stansfield Parish Council in January.

Several residents of Assington Green attended the meeting to voice concerns over the proposal which is being considered by West Suffolk Council planning department. (*Planning Application no: DC/25/1871/HH*). The outbuilding at Laurel Bank Farmhouse is proposed to include garages and a log store on the ground floor and



Proposed Front / West Elevation
Scale: 1:50 @ A1

home office, gym, shower room and exercise area/potential guest room on the first floor. Neighbours questioned the size of this outbuilding and its location in relation to the historic old farmhouse. Also questioned was the need for another home office given that two home office areas were also contained within the planning applications to renovate the old farmhouse itself. (*DC/25/2031/HH and DC/25/2032/LB*).

Residents said they broadly supported the renovation plans for the farmhouse but both they and the parish council objected to the plans for the outbuilding. The location is in the protected landscape character area of the Upper Glem Valley, and the outbuilding was said to overlook what could have been the old village green which gave the hamlet its name. Looking at the plans for the building, it could easily be separated off and converted into a dwelling, which was otherwise unlikely to be allowed to be built, they felt. The Parish Council has requested a site visit by the WSC planners before a decision is made.

Other issues discussed at the parish council meeting included:

Checking the old phone box (*now used as a book exchange*) which is leaning over. Researching ways and costs to encourage drivers to reduce their speed in the village as over 700 vehicles recorded in September had exceeded the 30mph limit.

Stansfield films

Happy New Year to you.

Thanks for thinking of us. No we won't be having a film screening in February. We will be re-starting in March. We have no other submissions for February.

Kind regards,

Dolly.

Dorothea Whilems

Secretary - Stansfield Village Hall Management Committee

email: friends@stansfieldvillage.org.uk

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Facebook: [StansfieldVillageHall](https://www.facebook.com/StansfieldVillageHall)



This possibly is not Suffolk!!



Rachel Walsh

16:57

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PARISH COUNCILS - WHO'S WHO in YOUR VILLAGE?

Parish Council	Chair	Vice Chair	Clerks
Denston	Jeff Fellows jefffellows.crown@gmail.com 01440 820 310	N/A	Jeff Fellows
Hawkedon/ Thurston End	Rotating	Rotating	David Jarrold dmj1800@icloud.com
Poslingford	Martin England martin.england@poslingford-pc.gov.uk 01787 278413	Marc Allison marc.allison@poslingford-pc.gov.uk 07958337282	Chris Turner clerk@poslingford-pc.gov.uk 07814246204
Stansfield/ Assington Green	Rex Barnes rexstansfieldsoc@gmail.com 07778 058425 www.stansfield.onesuffolk.net	Andrew Pallett andrew.pallett.spc@btintern.et.com 01284 789434	Annie Lines stansfieldpc@outlook.com
Stradishall	Ian Hutchinson clerk@stradishallparishcouncil.gov.uk 07970717116	Ed Hollingsworth https://stradishallparishcouncil.gov.uk/	Joanne Kirk clerk@stradishallparishcouncil.gov.uk 07880686069
Clare	Rob Eyre rob.eyre@clare-suffolk.co.uk 01787 277 559	Paul Bishop paul.bishop@clare-suffolk.co.uk ,	Davina Neale clerk@clare-suffolk.co.uk
Cowlinge	Linda Aston lindaaston555@gmail.com	Jane Nesham	John Barnett 01440 783 903
Wickhambrook	Mike Lavelle mike.lavelle@wickhambrook.org.uk	Vacancy	Hilary Workman 07508 039 810 parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk

Wickhambrook Parish Council News

Hello, Spring bulbs are starting to appear, and if you're walking past the cemetery, you'll see that the Cherry Trees planted three years ago now have their first blossom appearing. Our first volunteer tidy morning takes place on Wednesday 4th March between 10:30 and 1pm. We'll be meeting at the Chapel of Rest and have a couple of things planned: Cleaning down another of the memorial benches ready for another coat of teak oil. Sweeping up fallen leaves and using them to mulch around the new hawthorn hedge by Cemetery Road, Build dead hedge to left of compost heap & separate out branches from compost, Some levelling

We may not get all of this done, but if you would like to join us, please [contact me](#). The parish council is working hard to advocate on behalf of residents to address a number of issues, including a reduction in the speed limit on the A143 at Wickham Street from 40mph to 30mph and improvements to drainage and surface issues on the Byway and carriageway at **Coltsfoot Green**. Don't forget to check out our [report a problem page](#). If you have any highways or drainage/flooding issues, please report them directly to [Suffolk County Council Highways](#). Issues are prioritised, so the more that are reported, the higher the priority for addressing them. Bird Nesting season begins soon – if you are a land owner and have hedges running along Public Rights of Way or Highways, there is still time to trim them back. At our

January meeting, the parish council considered how to deliver on the Community Actions identified as part of our newly made [Neighbourhood Plan](#). Agreed the budget for the next financial year (beginning in April '26), and the precept **£65,910 based on its agreed 3-year work plan**

Reviewed its Risk Management Policy and supporting General Risk Assessment
Appointed Suffolk Association of Local Councils as Internal Auditor for the current financial year and confirmed that the clerk continue to act as its Responsible Financial Officer

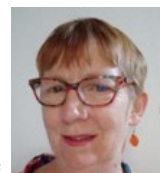
Considered nominations for the **Alf Hicks Biscuit Barrel** Award to be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on 30th April. Noting the volume of nominations and the contribution that she has made to the parish, agreed to award the Alf Hicks Biscuit Barrel Award to **Deidre Smith**. You can find all the [reports here](#) Our next scheduled parish council meeting is on 19th Feb 2026. At this meeting the parish council will be considering the following matters: Renewal of Insurance Cover in accordance with the Long-Term Agreement and Asset Register

Authorising Due Payments for 2026-27 and Direct Debits Donations to Charities and Local Organisations (if you are aware of any local charities which may benefit from some parish support, please ask them to

contact the clerk by 20th Feb. Parish Council Meetings are open to the public so why not come along? If you would like to get more involved there are lots of ways to contribute, by: attending meetings and asking questions

joining in with volunteer events (tidying the cemetery, cleaning play equipment) joining the Road Safety Working Group becoming a Councillor- we currently have two vacancies! If you would like to find out more, please do call me or one of our councillors, or come along to one of our meetings. If you would like to be considered as a councillor, please take a look at the [website](#), and complete and return a co-option application and eligibility form to Hilary. We look forward to hearing from you! If there is anything you would like the parish council to consider at a future meeting, [please do get in touch with me](#). Do feel free to forward this message on to neighbours, friends and family in the parish and ask them to get in touch with me at clerk@wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk if they would like to be included in our e-newsletter mailing list! Thank you once again to everyone who has supported the parish council in its work this year. Wishing you all the best for the New Year, keep safe and well

Hilary Workman Clerk for Wickhambrook Parish Council



Stradishall Parish Council News

A meeting of Stradishall Parish Council took place on Mon 5th Jan 2026. **District Cllr Nick Clarke** attended the meeting along with one member of the public. **District Council Report** District Cllr Nick Clarke spoke about current Community Governance Review which is being carried out by West Suffolk Council. This is a wider review relating to the Local Government Review which is for the whole of Suffolk.

Crime update from the Haverhill Community Policing Team

PC Cheryl Claydon sent through a crime report. At the time the report was written, the only the crimes that had been reported during the previous month were at HMP Highpoint. There have been some burglaries of outbuildings, residential homes and farms in the area. For this reason the team's priority for the next two months is burglaries.

Do you want to be kept up about to date about crimes in Stradishall and West Suffolk?

Rural South Watch

This is a network of local residents who share information about suspicious and criminal activity in the rural part of the Haverhill police sector. Participants report suspicious activity and vehicles which is then shared to the wider group. If you are interested in receiving email updates, ruralsouthwatch@btinternet.com

Suffolk Connected Suffolk Connected is a free messaging service from Suffolk Police, providing news and updates on policing

matters in Suffolk. You can sign up to receive email updates about crime and suspicious activity where you live or work, crime prevention advice and updates from your local neighbourhood policing team. You'll also have the opportunity to reply directly to your neighbourhood officers and have your say on local policing priorities.

To find out more visit <https://www.suffolkconnected.org.uk>

The suggestion has been made to set up a **Neighbourhood Watch** scheme in Stradishall village. To set up a scheme, a volunteer co-ordinator would be needed to act as a point of contact for residents, the Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Association and the Police. If you would be interested in taking on the role of co-ordinator, please email Stradishall Parish Council.

Water leaks & road closures in Stradishall

County Cllr Bobby Bennett and Stradishall Parish Council have been in contact with Anglian Water about the frequent leaks and road closures in Stradishall which cause significant disruption because of the long diversion route. This has been escalated within Anglian Water to the Network Service Support, who has confirmed that road closures are implemented solely to ensure the safety of their teams and the public, while complying with the requirements of the Street Works Act, while they carry out essential repairs. In some situations, temporary traffic lights cannot be used due

to the position of the water main and the extent of the excavation required. Anglian Water has also confirmed that they have submitted plans for a mains renewal, which will significantly reduce the likelihood of future bursts once completed. They are aware of the number of incidents over the past six months and sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this has caused to the residents. As part of their ongoing efforts to improve communication and minimise disruption they will be reviewing the current signage arrangements to ensure they clearly show closure points, and which sections of the road remain accessible. Since this response, Anglian Water has also agreed to notify Stradishall Parish Council of any road closures.

Pedestrians crossing signs for A143 near the Highpoint Estate.

At a recent meeting a resident asked if it would be possible to have Pedestrians Crossing warning signs on the A143 near Highpoint Prison and near the shop and Café 33. **County Cllr Bobby Bennett** has offered locality funding of £750 towards this. The total cost including installation will be over £2,000. The Parish Council will have to secure additional funding to cover some of the shortfall before the work can proceed. Tel: 07880 686069 Email: clerk@stradishallparishcouncil.gov.uk www.stradishallparishcouncil.gov.uk The minutes of meetings are available on the Parish Council website. Draft minutes will be published within 28 days of a meeting.

Joanna, Clerk for the Parish Council

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Get Involved and Support St Nicholas Hospice Care in 2026

St Nicholas Hospice Care is inviting the community to start 2026 all for a good cause by asking people to get involved with its exciting calendar of fundraising events for the year ahead. The hospice is encouraging supporters to beat the winter blues by registering for early access, which will mean they'll hear about event registrations and sign-ups opening before anyone else. The Hospice's much-loved Sunset Walk, sponsored by Greene King, has now officially launched for 2026. Returning

for its third year on Saturday 20 June. Participants can choose between a 10km



or 15km route, complete with live music,

entertainment, and quieter reflective moments to remember loved ones. An earlybird offer is currently running, so sign up quick for a discount. The Sunset Walk is just one highlight of a busy events calendar. St Nicholas Hospice Care's 2026 programme also includes the St Nic's 10K Run, Cycle Ride, Festive Fun Run, Open Gardens, and a series of exciting challenge events, from firewalking to trekking adventures. To get involved and register to be in the know when sign ups open visit: <https://stnicholashospice.org.uk/contact-us/get-involved-in-fundraising-events/>



Stansfield Good Neighbours—The broken village sign

Our Village Sign is missing.....But not for long!

The Stansfield village sign had to be removed on safety grounds just before Christmas. It had been leaning for some time and when examined, the cross bar and fixings on top of the post were found to be rotting.

Good Neighbour scheme volunteers have now cleaned up the metal sign and the Parish Council is obtaining quotes for remounting it, which may be covered by insurance. The actual post is being examined to see if it is useable, otherwise a new post, or other methods of displaying the sign will be considered. Alternative suggestions so far include possibly mounting the metal sign in a brick plinth. **What do YOU think?** Suggestions please to the Parish Clerk at

clerk@stansfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk or via the Good Neighbour scheme Helpline 07827 128511



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Guess what we were doing here, perhaps Jeff would know?



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Our garden path.



Portia sincerely apologises
but calving takes priority
over Parish Pump, which I
am glad to totally agree with.











Another recovered barn, this time in Bourgogne.



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**Mary
Cleaver**

Contact at all costs? Family Law Reform

Understanding the Divorce Procedure

When couples decide to divorce, it is a common misconception that once the divorce is finalised, there are no financial ties left between them. However, this is not automatically the case. Divorce legally ends the marriage, but it does not sever financial ties. To achieve financial separation, a separate legal process must be undertaken. The distinction between divorce and financial matters under the current law in England and Wales is as follows:

Divorce

The law on divorce has undergone significant changes in recent years with the introduction of no-fault divorce under the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020, which came into effect on 6 April 2022. This reform replaced the previous fault-based system and simplified the process, making it less contentious.

Key Features of No-Fault Divorce:

- **Ground for Divorce:** The only ground for divorce is that the marriage has irretrievably broken down. There is no need to prove fault, such as adultery or unreasonable behaviour.
- **Joint Applications:** Couples can now apply jointly for a divorce, promoting a

more amicable process.

- Decree Nisi is now called a **Conditional Order**.
- Decree Absolute is now called a **Final Order**.
- **Minimum Timeframe:** The process takes a minimum of 26 weeks, comprising:
 - A 20-week reflection period after the application is made.

A further 6 weeks after the Conditional Order is granted before applying for the Final Order. While the no-fault divorce process removes blame from the legal process, it is crucial to remember that divorce only dissolves the marriage and does not automatically deal with financial matters.

Financial Matters

To ensure financial independence and prevent future claims, financial matters must be resolved and formalised through a **Financial Order**. This process is separate from the divorce itself, and a separate application is necessary.

Types of Financial Orders:

1. **Consent Order:** If the couple agrees on the division of assets, they can formalise their agreement in a Consent Order. This document outlines the terms of the financial settlement and includes clauses to dismiss

any future claims. It must be approved by a judge to become legally binding. **Court-Imposed Order:** If the couple cannot agree, they may need to go to court, where a judge will decide how assets should be divided.

Importance of a Financial Order: Without a Financial Order, either party can make financial claims against the other in the future, even years after the divorce is finalised.

A Financial Order provides a clean break, ensuring no further claims can be made once the terms are fulfilled.

Timing:

A Financial Order can only be submitted to the court after the Conditional Order has been granted. However, it is advisable to resolve financial matters before applying for the Final Order to avoid complications. While the divorce process itself is now simpler and less adversarial under the no-fault system, financial matters remain complex and require careful planning. Resolving these issues early can provide peace of mind and financial security for the future.

For further advice regarding divorce matters, contact Oslers Solicitors on 01449 774670 to discuss your case with a specialist lawyer. **Mary**

Car Aid Report – November 2025

Meeting: Monday 15th December 2025

Historical Monthly Trips

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	19	19	23	11	18	13	17	17	20	22	26	22
2020	29	23	24	1	5	5	5	6	6	18	13	7
2021	5	17	8	20	23	24	18	19	17	21	38	26
2022	17	24	30	14	28	22	24	22	18	29	21	24
2023	32	32	42	24	41	48	31	26	21	25	35	32
2024	47	62	29	37	38	34	46	33	27	37	31	23
2025	20	24	29	37	23	22	33	23	23	26	27	

	Total	Ave	% +/-
2019	227	19	
2020	142	12	-37
2021	236	20	40
2022	273	23	13
2023	389	32	34
2024	444	37	14
2025*	287	26	-35

*Based on first 11 months

During November 2025, we had:

- 29 trips booked
- 27 completed
- 2 cancellations

We used the services of 18 of our volunteer drivers this month. As always thank you. The number of active drivers currently stands at 25 plus 2 in reserve.

We say farewell to Brian King and thank him for his contribution as a Car Aid volunteer driver.

We provided Car Aid trips to 18 different clients this month.

Our volunteer drivers provided transport to chiropractors, dentists, blood tests, GP surgeries, eye clinics, hospital outpatients, mobile breast screening, MRI & X-ray centres and Covid/flu vaccinations this month.

Going forward, we will be taking booking from clients in Hundon and Wixoe.

We are still short of drivers and so if anyone has a friend or neighbour with a bit of spare time then please tell them how rewarding it is and send them my way.

Karla Greenwood 13/12/2025

**Birds in Stradishall 18th
January 2026 No 6. Sparrow**



Building French barns again—so boring!

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Who is who in our local church benefices?

BENEFICE 	CHURCH (Parish)	RECTOR	CONTACT	ELDERS AND OFFICIALS
BANSFIELD	COWLINGE	The Revd Eve Bell	07815441304	Dr Paul Bevan
	DENSTON			
	LIDGATE			
	OUSDEN			
	STANSFIELD			
	STRADISHALL			
	(Assington Green)			
WICKHAMBROOK				
STOUR VALLEY	CLARE	The Revd Mark Woodrow	01787277515	The Revd Dr Karen Smith
	POSLINGFORD			
SUFFOLK HEIGHTS	HAWKEDON	The Revd Clive Fairclough	01284 615828	Mrs Heather Phillips Mr David Taylor
SUFFOLK HEIGHTS	(Thurston End)	As Hawkedon	As Hawkedon	As Hawkedon

Puzzle Time

Puzzle 9

- Red or Dead or Caspian
- A female sheep
- A 'Sweet' fragrant flower
- A 'Private' satirical magazine
- Comedian Jack with deadpan humour

But who owns the Bow and Arrow?

A *Delphic's Quest* prize pen will be awarded to a randomly drawn correct entry each month. To enter, please submit your answer to delphicsquest@gmail.com (feedback also welcome.) The closing date for submissions is 16th February 2026.

Answer to Puzzle 8: Road Closed

[The number following the village relates to the letter in that village name eg Stradishall 3 = R, Poslingford 2 = O and putting them together gave the answer]

Congratulations to Pauline Stoddart of Stansfield who is the winner of December's puzzle.



Yours to win!



West Suffolk District Councillors

West Suffolk District Councillor for Denston, Stansfield, Hawkedon, Brockley, Wickhambrook, Stradishall, Clare, Hundon, Cavendish, Stoke by Clare, Kedington and others Bobby Bennett
bobby.bennet@suffolk.co.uk

West Suffolk District Councillor for Whepstead Wickhambrook Denston, Stansfield, Brockley, and Hawkedon

Sarah Pugh sarah.pugh@westsuffolk.gov.uk

West Suffolk District Council for Clare, Kedington & Hundon ward

Cllr Nick Clarke -

nick.clarke@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Cllr Marion Rushbrook

marion.rushbrook@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Cllr Karen Richardson

karen.richardson@westsuffolk.gov.uk

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Email: enquiries@memoriesaregolden.co.uk
Website: www.memoriesaregolden.co.uk

Hawkedon buses Apology

We apologise for the error in the November edition of "The Parish Pump" which stated that there was a new bus service going through HAWKEDON to Bury St Edmunds. This should have referred to HAWSTEAD. We offer our sincere apologies to all those affected in either village for this unforgivable error. <apexfour12@gmail.com>



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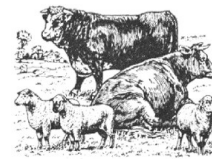
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Stradishall Church. The last leak, that I failed to repair



TRAFFICKING



We think we have problems – the **B1049** in Cambridgeshire has been closed **for two months** while Anglian Water carry out a significant pipe upgrade. Residents living within the closure can only exit in **one direction**, and have been provided with a key code to pass through an electronic barrier. Because frustrated drivers were abusing contractors, concrete bollards were added as part of the barrier. We must all try to remain calm in the face of diversions – but in our picture (the A143), there has been no sign of any work being carried out as yet, so no-one on whom to vent our frustration anyway!

We should be so lucky!

Clement House



Those were the days!

Services at Hawkedon St Mary in February



Sunday, 8 February 9am. Holy Communion BCP
Sunday, 22 February.
11am. Morning Prayer with hymns
All very welcome.
Phillips Many thanks, best,
Heather Tilbury
Phillipstapr@dircon.co.uk
01284 789 250/07774
275656

Birds in Stradishall 18th January 2026 No7. Robin



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