

A lit white candle is the central focus, surrounded by a lush arrangement of red carnations, greenery, and holly berries. The scene is set against a dark, textured background, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere. The candle's flame is bright and steady, casting a soft glow on the surrounding plants. The carnations are in various stages of bloom, some fully open and others as buds. The greenery includes long, thin, needle-like leaves and broad, dark green leaves with small red berries. The overall composition is dense and detailed, with a focus on natural textures and colors.

The Downs and Valley Parishes Magazine No. 9 Dec. 2023

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The Downs and Valley Churches Service Rota December 2023

December 2023	St George's Darlingscott	St Mary's Ilimington	St Mary's Preston-on-Stour	St Peter's Stretton-on-Fosse	St Gregory's Tredington	St Mary's Whitchurch
3rd Advent Sunday		11.00am Holy Communion (1662)	6.00pm Advent Evening Worship	9.30am Holy Communion	11.00am Morning Worship	9.30am Morning Worship
10th Advent 2	4.00pm Carol Service	11.00am Morning Worship	9.30am Holy Communion (1662)		11.00am Holy Communion	
17th Advent 3		6.00pm Carol Service		9.30am Holy Communion	11.00am Carol Service	
		Thurs 21st 7.00pm				Weds 20th 7.00pm Carol Service
24th Christmas Eve		'Longest Night' Service 3.30pm Christingle	6.00pm Carol Service	4.00pm Carol Service		9.00pm Christmas Night Communion
25th Christmas Day		11.00am Christmas Morning Communion	11.00am Christmas Morning Communion (1662)		11.00am Christmas Morning Communion	
31st New Year's Eve	11.00am New Year's Eve Service					

Ministers:

Rector: The Revd Canon Dr Richard Cooke 07952 544820 (mobile) or 01608 544821 (landline) or

Richard.Cooke.Ilimington@Outlook.com

Hon. Assistant Minister: The Revd Dr Tim Seller 01608 682244 (landline)

Reader: Ros Wakefield 01608 682146 (landline)

Reader Emeritus: Malcolm Davies 01789 450793 (landline)

Churchwardens:

Tredington *Posts vacant – contact the Rector*

Darlingscott Doreen McCarrroll 01608 682949 (landline)

Ilimington Jane Downie 01608 682720 (landline)

Preston-on-Stour Andrew Holman - West 07712 193773 (mobile)

Stretton-on-Fosse *Posts vacant – contact the Rector*

Whitchurch Carol Rutter 01789 450795 (landline)

Enquiries about Weddings or Baptisms are very welcome! Please contact the Rector, Richard Cooke. John Craner 01789 450200 (landline)

Richard Cooke, the Rector, writes

I'm Dreaming of a *Blue* Christmas?

Elvis Presley, the King of Rock'n'Roll, once sang, 'I'll have a blue Christmas without you'. His 'Blue Christmas' made the UK charts in 1964, and its surprising popularity was perhaps because it expresses sentiments that many people can identify with. Christmas isn't always happy for everyone.

Christmas can be a painful time, even though we sing "Tis the season to be jolly". For my family it'll be a mixed celebration this year – twelve months ago our little grandson Dylan was very ill, and died in January, so this will be our first Christmas without him. I know it's not just us, either. In our parishes we have had several tragic deaths that rocked our villages this year – Tilly Seccombe and Harry Purcell, Nick Foster and others come to mind. Further afield we are aware of the situation and the suffering in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza. It can sometimes feel that there's not so much to be jolly about.

So this year we are holding a 'Longest Night' service at Ilmington Church on 21 December, at 7.00pm – open to anyone from across the parishes. It will be a short (45 minute) service with the opportunity for silence, reflection, quiet music and few words. Amongst the Carols and mince pies I hope it will be an opportunity for those who may struggle a bit with the jollity of Christmas to know that God is in the blue times too. I hope we might extend this service to some of our other churches next year if it seems to catch people's imaginations.

At the heart of our Christmas celebrations, though it can easily be lost, is the story of two wandering parents and a baby born in a stable for want of anywhere better. The circumstances of the birth of Jesus were hard, yet for Christians it is a sign that God is with us – even in the darkest of situations. Holding on to the sense that God shares our 'Blue Christmases' as well as our joyful ones may be what matters for many of us this year.

Update on Appointment of Associate Minister

Since Stephen and Jean Fletcher moved to Birmingham in November 2022 we have been without an Associate Minister in our group of parishes. Unfortunately, after Stephen and Jean left there was a major flood in Tredington Rectory and the house has required major work to dry it out and then repair the extensive damage, all tied to a complex insurance claim.

I gather that the house should be ready to be occupied again sometime after the end of January 2024, so I hope that we will be able to advertise for a clergyperson to fill the vacant Associate Minister post around that time, with the appointment taking effect from Easter 2024. The post is unpaid, though the house is provided free in exchange for up to 3 days' work a week, including Sundays, and would suit someone recently retired, or looking for a break from full-time ministry, or who has another job – if you know anyone who might be interested, please let them know.

Downs and Valley Churches Christmas Services 2023

Sunday 10 Dec	4.00pm	Darlingscott Carols
Sunday 17 Dec	11.00am	Tredington Carols
	6.00pm	Ilmington Carols
Weds 20 Dec	7.00pm	Whitchurch Carols
Thurs 21 Dec	7.00pm	Ilmington 'Longest Night' service
Christmas Eve	3.30pm	Ilmington Christingle Service
	4.00pm	Stretton Carols
	6.00pm	Preston Carols
	9.00pm	Whitchurch Christmas Night Communion
Christmas Day	11.00am	Preston Christmas Morning Communion
	11.00am	Tredington Christmas Morning Communion
	11.00am	Ilmington Christmas Morning Communion
Sunday 31 Dec	11.00am	Darlingscott New Year's Eve Service

From the Registers

Banns of Marriage

At Preston on 22, 29 October, 5 November - Lydia Rose Forbes Bates and Angus James Harley, of All Saints, Leamington Spa. (Marriage to take place at Preston on 9 December 2023.)

Baptism

At Ilmington on 18 November - Lyla Matilda Goldwater, aged 9 months

Editor's Note

Season's greetings! The deadline for copy for the January 2024 issue is Saturday 16 December to Susan Brock, Editor, E. s.brock9@btinternet.com, Daisy Cottage, Front St., Ilmington, CV36 4LA. Please note that the limit for editorial articles is 150 words. **Why not make a note in your diary of the deadlines for next year. See p. 12.**

Enquiries about advertising to Tim Seller: E. Tim.Seller@outlook.com, Long Barn, Back St., Ilmington, CV36 4LJ. **2024 advertising rates are on p. 13**

Thank you to everyone who has sent in wonderful **artwork** to adorn our cover. This image is by Richard Sharratt of Ilmington. If you would like to submit an image yourself—a painting, sketch, photograph - email it to Susan Brock as a jpg or PDF file (portrait layout). Submissions from readers of any age very welcome.

Nature Notes December 2023

Traditional images at Christmas show Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem with Mary riding on a donkey. The donkey is known as a beast of burden and can be seen in other countries carrying heavy loads. They are highly intelligent, sociable and calm, capable of independent thinking and decision making. Their large ears help to keep them cool. Donkeys are known for being obstinate, planting their feet and staying put regardless of how hard a handler pulls. This is because they may sense danger so will stand their ground giving them time to make their own decision about whether or not it's safe to keep going forward. Donkeys can be naturally aggressive towards foxes, jackals, wolves etc so they are sometimes used as protection for livestock. The livestock see the donkeys as protectors and gravitate toward them when sensing danger. These creatures are a wonderful blessing to us. Happy Christmas everyone.

Gill

A Message from Sydney Australia

I wanted, through this wonderful publication, to wish all residents of the 5 parishes who are recipients of it a wonderful Christmas and festive season but also to thank particularly: its editor for printing my original enquiry as to someone who might be prepared to lend me their house for a home stay in the summer months; Tom and Jane who entrusted me with their home in Tredington; Michele and Laura at Ilmington Village Shop and Café, who took me on as a Volunteer; all the other Volunteers I encountered while doing so; and the Patrons who endured my incompetencies. I know that those who will be alone over the Christmas period in your villages have the hard working and devoted Volunteers of the amazing Shop and Cafe looking out for them. I am planning to return next summer and look forward to meeting all of you again.

Stuart Hetherington

ILMINGTON

St Mary's Church

In addition to our usual services, we hope you'll be able to join us for our **Christmas Carol Service** at 6pm on Sunday 17 December, and our **Christingle Service** at 3:30pm on Christmas Eve, Sunday 24 December. There's also a new '**Longest Night**' service on Thursday 21 December at 7pm – specially designed for those who find Christmas a hard time of year, as many do. If you are missing someone this year, or finding the world situation difficult, this will be a 45 minute service with

with silence, reflective music, some short prayers, and stillness. If you'd like to be part of the **Christmas choir** singing at the Carol Service, please contact Helen at hockeyhelen59@gmail.com or on 07903 186722 for details. Finally, in the midst of all the busyness, please remember St Mary's is open daily. Peace, quiet and space guaranteed. Warmth, not so much - you might want to bring a blanket!

Jane Downie, Churchwarden

Ilmington C of E Primary School

Ilmington children recently visited the war memorial in the village for an act of remembrance led by Rev Richard Cooke. This was a quiet and respectful time where the children thought about the meaning of the event and shared poems about remembrance. Our oldest and youngest child laid the wreath at the foot of the cross. December is always an incredibly busy month in primary schools and Ilmington is no exception! As I write this, the Reception and Keystage 1 children have just started rehearsals for their nativity play in early December. This is a wonderfully special time of the year. We have many other exciting things planned in December including a Christmas jumper day, Christmas parties and our usual end of term carol service. Our amazing PTA are also preparing for their special events which include a Wreathmaking Workshop and Breakfast with Santa! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Paul Crouch, Headteacher

Ilmington Community Shop and Café

It's Advent, and we'd love to entice you into the shop for tastings in the run up to Christmas. Every Saturday morning through December, there will be goodies to taste, gifts to browse and our lovely 2024 calendars to buy. We'll be serving mince pies and mulled wine all month in the Café too. On Saturday 2nd December at dusk we celebrate Lights in the Dark, with carols, mulled wine and the lighting of our Christmas tree. Remember we close the Café on 21st December to prepare your Christmas orders - forms for these are available now. Wishing all our customers, members and volunteers a wonderful festive season.

Ilmington Shop and Café Committee

Ilmington Village Hall

Christmas decorations will adorn the village hall to make it an excellent venue for your festive season party. Due to an unfortunate accident, telephone enquiries will take longer than usu-

al. Whilst messages can still be left on the recorder, we encourage all those wishing to book the village hall to use the online booking facility at www.ilmington-villagehall.com or for more information use ilmingtonvhbookings@gmail.com.

Please come and join us for kurling on Thursday afternoons and tai chi on Fridays. On 23 November, the village hall volunteers will be providing a delicious food offering at the farmers market for which it is recommended to book early via the community shop. Lis Ribbans will be challenging your grey matter at the annual quiz on 24 February 2024 and we have another top class folk offering on 23 March 2024 with Wilderness Yet.

Bryan Clifford, Chair

Ilmington Horticultural Society Plant Sale

Thanks to everyone who came to buy plants for their gardens on 18 November. We made over £200 which will help to fund our Spring and Summer shows. Look out for our garden trips which will be advertised in this magazine and in the 20:20 circulation. Everyone's welcome.

Susan Brock, Secretary

Wednesday Club Next Meeting on December 6th

Our last meeting was very interesting with many wanting to contribute their own personal experiences besides that of our speaker, Amanda. A big thank you to her for providing such an involving talk. Our next meeting will be on **December 6th at 1pm in the Village Hall** where we shall have our glad rags on to celebrate Christmas. Please remember to bring £5 for the meal and a nice gift for the raffle (unwrapped please).

Sheila Ribbans is our only birthday girl for the month of December. A very happy birthday to you Sheila on the 13th!

Edith Tuohy wishes to thank everyone who has sent their good wishes for a speedy recovery but she is sad that she will not be able to send any Christmas cards this year. Edith is now based at the Leamington Rehabilitation Hospital.

That just leaves me to wish everyone a happy Christmas and a healthy 2024!

Carole Clifford, Chair

PRESTON-ON-STOUR

Preston-on-Stour Village Hall

Film Nights: There will not be a film in December as the holiday season will be in full swing at the end of the month. Please put Friday 26th January on your 2024 calendars for the new year of films.

The Preston Quiz - Saturday 3rd February : Our quizmaster, Mick Jennings has once again started creating the notori-

ously popular quiz. Tables of four people maximum, bring your own drinks and the village hall committee will provide a plate of snacks all for £5 per person. To book your table contact Mick, either by phone on 01789 450797 or email mickandsally76@gmail.com.
Margaret Brocklehurst

TREDINGTON with DARLINGSCOTT

St George Darlingscott

Our Carol Service is on Sunday December 10th at 4pm

We shall be decorating the church on Saturday December 9th from 10am, if you would like to help but would prefer to come on the Friday 8th December please do so. As usual we shall be providing finger food and drinks after the service on Sunday, any offers of help providing food would be appreciated. Thank you to everyone who has helped at the church over the last year it has been a very special year, well celebrated, 150 years anniversary. I hope that everyone has a happy, healthy Christmas.

Doreen McCarroll Churchwarden.

Tredington Clock Chimes

Thanks to those who responded to last month's note about restoring the Church clock chimes as the clock is repaired. Eight responses were received, which were overwhelmingly in favour, though there were requests for the chimes to be turned off between 11pm and 6am. The overall cost of the clock repair is over £7000, and the chime interruptor mechanism a further £2500. If you'd like to donate towards these costs, please contact Richard.Cooke.Ilmington@Outlook.com.
Richard Cooke

Qigong, Breathwork, & Meditation Class

8th, 15th, 22nd December at 9.30am, WI Hall Tredington.
NEW: Tuesday evening classes starting 2024! Explore ancient Chinese and Indian techniques that rejuvenate mind, body, and spirit. Join me for an experience that blends gentle movements, tranquil breathing, and mindful meditation. Whether you're a beginner or seasoned practitioner, Qigong (pronounced Chee-Gong) has been shown to reduce stress, enhance energy levels, and improve overall well-being. Classes are open to all levels of experience, and to all physical abilities, as exercises may be done standing or seated, and gentle options will be given for each exercise. Absolute beginners welcome! Visit <https://breath-therapy.uk/events/> to secure your spot (spaces limited) or email

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Alissa Powell, *Breath Therapist*

Tredington and Blackwell WI

In place of our usual meeting on Thursday 14th December 2023, we will be having a WI Christmas Lunch at The Lion in Tredington at 12.30pm. Our next WI Meeting will be on Thursday 11th January 2023. Our speaker will be Julie Mitchell: *From IT to Tai Chi and beyond*. If you would like to attend any of our WI meetings, please contact the WI Secretary. For further details, email: secretary@tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk. Visitors are always welcome at our friendly and thriving WI. Information about our WI or to hire Tredington and Blackwell WI Hall, please see our website: <https://tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk> and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/tredingtonandblackwellwi>

'Welcome to Tredington' Booklet

For many years, Tredington and Blackwell WI has produced and maintained a '*Welcome to Tredington*' booklet, which provides details of the activities that take place in Tredington and the local area, with names of those to contact should you wish to know more or join in. It also provides some practical information in relation to other services and facilities in the area which you may need. As it is a 'live' document, it is regularly updated and is available for you to view, download and print from: <https://tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk/welcome-to-tredington/> We hope you find the booklet informative and that it will be useful to new and existing residents alike. If there are any groups or societies that would like to be considered for inclusion in this booklet, please contact Patricia Macpherson, Secretary, telephone 01608 682102 or email secretary@tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk

WI Community Film Night

Our next film screening in the Tredington and Blackwell WI Hall, Armscote Road, Tredington, CV36 4NP will be on **Friday 8th December 2023. (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE)**. Bar opens at 7pm with the film starting at 7.30pm. It is a warm-hearted British romantic comedy. (Cert. 12A, 2022), running time 90 minutes, plus interval with bar and ice creams. Booking is now open. For more details of this, and other forthcoming films, to join the email list or to book places, please contact Gill by email: treasurer@tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk or text: 07789 810877.

Craft and Chatter

Our next Craft and Chatter meetings are on Thursday 7th December 2023 and Thursday 4th January 2024 in Tredington and Blackwell WI Hall, Armscote Road, Tredington, CV36 4NP, at 2.00pm. EVERYONE welcome – including non-crafters. There are opportunities to share tips and learn other crafts in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. Bring your own knitting, sewing or craft to work on whilst having a cup of tea, a piece of cake and a chat.

NEW! Chatter and Craft

Monday 18th December 2023. Due to popular demand, we now hold an *additional* meeting on the **third** Monday of every month, 2pm in the WI Hall, where we would like to build up a social group alongside our crafters – the emphasis will be more on Chatter than Craft! There is a small charge of £1 for tea, coffee and cake at our C&C meetings. Please contact Vanessa for details: 07818 599353 or email: vanessa@tredingtonandblackwellwi.co.uk
Secretary, Tredington and Blackwell WI

WHITCHURCH

Nine Lessons and Carols

St Mary's Whitchurch 20 December 7pm

If you'd like to read one of the lessons, please email Carol Rutter c.rutter@warwick.ac.uk. Volunteers welcome!
Carol Rutter, Churchwarden

'HELP' to Keep the Churchyard Maintained

'Men and boys: HELP!' That call went out from the rector to the parish at Christmas, 1861. St Mary's Whitchurch was due to reopen at New Year's after substantial restoration and renovation. But torrential rains had made a quagmire of the churchyard which only that August had benefited from an enlargement, a gift of additional land from the West Estate at Alscot Park. It looked like the reopening would be postponed. But the 'men and boys' responded. The Stratford *Herald* reported that 'volunteers, to the number of fifteen to twenty appeared on the spot after their day's work...and, working with a will, enabled the task of levelling and enclosure to be completed'. In 2023, St Mary's still asks 'Help'. If you'd like to join a work party to cut ivy, clear gutters, and get ready for Christmas, come to the church on **Saturday 2 December, 10.00 - 1.00**. Bring your secateurs!
Carol Rutter, Churchwarden

OUTSIDE THE PARISHES

We charge £6 for editorial articles about events outside the five parishes to cover our costs. Contact the Editor s.brock9@btinternet.com

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Issue	Deadline copy Saturday	Deadline editing Sunday	To printer Monday	Collect/distribute/deliver Friday-Saturday	Publication
JAN. 2024 10	16 December '23	17 December '23	18 December '23	22-23 December '23	30 December '23 (Saturday)
FEB. 2024 11	20 January	21 January	22 January	26-27 January	30 January (Tuesday)
MAR. 2024 12	17 February	18 February	19 February	23-24 February	28 February (Wednesday)
APRIL 2024 13	16 March	17 March	18 March	22-23 March	30 March (Saturday)
MAY 2024 14	20 April	21 April	22 April	26-27 April	30 April (Tuesday)
JUNE 2024 15	18 May	19 May	20 May	24-25 May	31 May (Friday)
JULY 2024 16	15 June	16 June	17 June	21-22 June	30 June (Sunday)
AUG. 2024 17	17 July	18 July	19 July	23-24 July	31 July (Wednesday)
SEPT. 2024 18	19 August	20 August	21 August	26-27 August	31 August (Saturday)
OCT. 2024 19	14 September	15 September	16 September	20-21 September	30 September (Monday)
NOV. 2024 20	19 October	20 October	21 October	25-26 October	31 October (Thursday)
DEC. 2024 21	16 November	17 November	18 November	23-23 November	30 November (Saturday)
JAN. 2025 22	14 December	15 December	16 December	27-28 December	31 December (Tuesday)

DOWNES AND VALLEY PARISHES MAGAZINE

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