



The Downs and Valley Parishes Magazine No. 33 Dec. 2025

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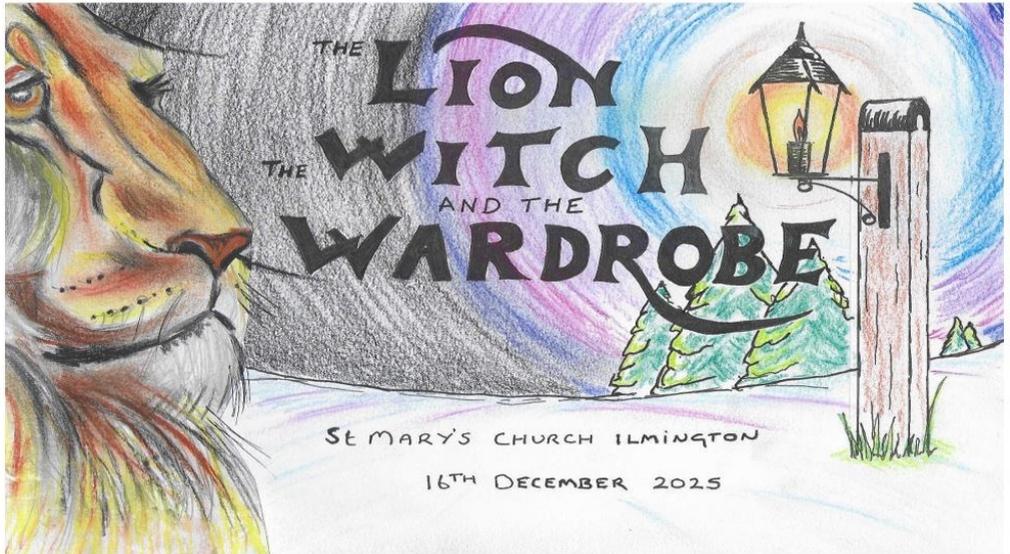
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Tuesday 16th December: doors open at 6-30pm, show starts at 7pm

A dramatised reading by a cast from Ilmington. Tickets £10 adults, £2.50 children under 16, on sale at Ilmington Community Shop include a mince pie and mulled wine or juice. A fundraiser for St Mary's.



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SERVICE ROTA December 2025

December 2025	St George's Darlingscott	St Mary's Ilmington	St Mary's Preston-on-Stour	St Peter's Stretton-on-Fosse	St Gregory's Tredington	St Mary's Whitchurch
Advent 2		2.30pm Ordination with Bishop Sophie				
14th Advent 3	4.00pm Carol Service	11.00am Morning Worship	9.30am Holy Communion (1662)	9.30am Holy Communion	11.00am Holy Communion	
18th Thursday		11.00am Holy Communion			6.00pm Carol Service	7.00pm Carol Service
21st Advent 4		7.00pm Carol Service				
23rd Tuesday		3.00pm Christingle Service	6.00pm Carol Service	4.30pm Carol Service		9.00pm Christmas Night Communion (1662)
24th Christmas Eve		11.00pm Christmas Night Communion				
25th Christmas Day		11.00am Christmas Communion	11.00am Christmas Communion (1662)		11.00am Christmas Communion	
28th Christmas 1	11.00am Morning Worship with Carols					

Church web-pages - For further information, please search for the Church name and click on the relevant 'A Church Near You' page. (This is more effective than searching 'A Church Near You' directly.)

Ministers:

Rector: The Revd Canon Dr Richard Cooke 07952 544820 (mobile) or 01608 544821 (landline) or Richard.Cooke.Ilmington@Outlook.com

Assistant Curate (from 7 Dec): The Revd Ros Wakefield 01608 682146 (landline)

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

Reader Emeritus: Malcolm Davies 01789 450793 (landline)

Churchwardens:

Tredington Posts vacant – contact the Rector

Darlingscott Doreen McCarroll 01608 682949 (landline)

Ilmington Jane Downie 01608 682720 (landline)

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

Stretton-on-Fosse Posts vacant – contact the Rector

Whitchurch Carol Ruter 01789 450795 (landline)

Paul Clark 07868 526830 (mobile)

Richard Cooke, the Rector, writes

'Always Winter and Never Christmas'

I wonder what your favourite story book was as a child? I very clearly remember my first encounter with mine, the Autumn term when I had just turned seven. Our headmaster used to come and read a chapter of a book to our class for the last half-hour or so of every Friday. He introduced us, I remember, to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Stig of the Dump*, but the book that really caught my imagination was C.S.Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Its story of Lucy who stumbles through a wardrobe into the land of Narnia was like nothing I'd ever heard before, and I was hooked straightaway.

What slightly terrified me was the portrait of a land where it was 'Always Winter, and never Christmas', as Narnia lay under the rule of the White Witch. It was an awful thought, and I was very relieved when the Witch's spell was broken – though I won't spoil the story any more if you haven't read or heard it yourself! The image of a world captured by cold, with just a few hours of light each day, was dreadful to contemplate. No Christmas to break up the gloom, no celebration to puncture the darkness: it felt terrible.

I suppose that thinking of a world, even an imaginary one, where it was always Winter and never Christmas, made me think for the first time about Christmas itself, and perhaps realise that alongside the warmth of home and food, there was also warmth in the family relationships we had, the glow of seeing grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins (I had quite a lot of them!). How terrible it would be if this festival didn't happen, I thought. Not to mention the absence of presents (I was a pretty standard 7-year old).

This year *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* turns 75, and for me it remains an exciting and creative way of trying to tell the Christian story in a very different way. What would our world be like without Christmas – our yearly remembrance of God coming into the world as the Christ-child? When the world seems so troubled, Christmas can be an escape, but it can also offer us aspiration for a gentler, kinder world. In our churches, as we tell the good news of great joy once again at Christmas, we too, in a sense, stumble into a different world of new possibilities just when it would be so easy to give up. Of course we come back into our own world pretty soon, but sharing the stories and the carols makes us a little different, I think, a little more hopeful, a little kinder too, maybe, and a little more able to face the Winter of our world once more.

Ros Wakefield's Ordination Service

2.30pm Sunday 7 December at St Mary's Ilmington

With a group of churches that have a history going back perhaps 1200 years or more I'm wary of saying that something has never happened in them before! But I'm certain that we have never ever hosted an ordination in one of them, because ordinations almost always take place in a Cathedral. For various good reasons, though, Bishop Sophie

is coming to ordain Ros as a deacon on 7th December and everyone from our parishes is welcome to come, and join the celebrations afterwards in Ilmington Village Hall. As is customary when the Bishop visits, that will be the only service in our churches on that Sunday.

Carol Services

Sunday 14 Dec	4.00pm	St George's Darlingscott
Thursday 18 Dec	7.00pm	St Mary's Whitchurch
Sunday 21 Dec	6.00pm	St Gregory's Tredington
Tuesday 23 Dec	7.00pm	St Mary's Ilmington
Christmas Eve 24 Dec	4.30pm	St Peter's Stretton-on-Fosse
	6.00pm	St Mary's Preston-on-Stour

The Parish Giving Scheme is the best way to support your local church financially. Go to www.parishgiving.org.uk and you will be able to locate your parish church and make a donation, either regularly or as a one-off gift, or find the dedicated Church website (see above) and click on the '**Supporting St Mary's/Peter's/Gregory's**' button to make a donation.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

At St Mary's Ilmington on 16 November, Edith Agnes Kanzian Stefanowicz, aged 5 months

Interments of Ashes & Burials:

At St George's Darlingscott on 6 November, Judith Marjorie Wyatt of Wellington, Somerset, aged 82 (formerly of Darlingscott)

At St Mary's Preston-on-Stour on 12 November, Doreen Dee, died 1995, formerly of Preston (remains transferred from Chipping Campden in accordance with Ministry of Justice Order).

Editor's Note

The deadline for copy for the first issue of 2026 is **Saturday 13 December**. Send copy 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. Enquiries about advertising to Tim Seller: E. Tim. This month's cover image is from Steven Prosser of Ilmington. If you have a piece of art work or a photo you would like to share don't hesitate to send it in to me. It should be portrait shape so it fits on the cover and a jpg or PDF file makes my life easier!

Susan Brock, Editor

Six Parishes Christmas Shoebox Appeal 2025

Grateful thanks to everyone who has supported this year's Link to Hope appeal...106 beautifully wrapped shoeboxes, £265.00 in donations, plus six cartons of knitted hats, mittens, scarves, knee blankets and other warm items are now on their way to Eastern Europe. Your generosity means this Christmas will bring some joy to impoverished children, families and the elderly across Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and Bulgaria.

May it bring joy to you all too, knowing you are helping someone living a thousand miles away in such different circumstances to share in some festive cheer. Wishing everyone a peaceful and happy Christmas.
Wendy Lewis Edwards, Appeal Coordinator

Nature Notes December 2025

Have you ever made a natural Christmas wreath? You can buy a wreath frame or make your own out of hazel or willow which will bend into a wreath shape. You will need a few lengths, so you have something reasonably sturdy to attach your decorations to. Now the fun thing, finding things to attach to your wreath some evergreen foliage, holly, mind the prickles, can you find pinecones, some foliage with berries, some ivy? Prepare small bundles of foliage and wire onto your frame, overlapping each one. Wire on any cones or other items you can find, make a hanging loop, tie on some colourful ribbon and enjoy. To Christians a wreath symbolises that God is eternal. The red berries symbolise the blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross and if we believe in Him, we will have the eternal life that He offers.

Gill

Nature Notes will be taking a short break in the New Year, so may you have a blessed Christmas and a very happy and healthy 2026.

TREDINGTON WITH BLACKWELL AND DARLINGS COTT

Newbold and Tredington C of E Primary School

Since returning from half term, it has been wonderful having the children back in school and hearing all about their individual achievements and news. This term, all of the children have already enjoyed a school trip to the Think Tank Museum in Birmingham. Each class participated in a special workshop and they thoroughly immersed themselves into the interactive activities on offer and explored forces in the Science garden. A highlight from the day was meeting a high-tech robot who could be programmed to move, speak and change colour! As Christmas approaches, we look forward to watching our youngest children perform their Christmas Carols and Nativity productions, as well as our Christmas Fair and wreath making workshop. There is so much still to look forward to!

With warm regards, all of the children, parents and staff at Newbold and Tredington C of E Primary School.

Tredington & District Garden Club

There is no meeting in December. We will kick off the new year with our annual lunch on Thursday 15th January at the Lion in Tredington. Members will be contacted about the lunch by email nearer to the time. Wishing all members a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.

Marian White, Chair

Tuesday Morning Qigong

Start your day with balance and energy by joining our 45-minute Qigong class at 8.00am—perfect for those heading to work. This class is designed to suit all levels of experience, from beginners to seasoned practitioners, and is accessible to everyone, with seated exercises available for those who prefer them. £7 per person (cash/card on the day or via <https://breath-therapy.uk/events>.)

Gill Goodlad, Hall Secretary & Trustee

Tredington & Blackwell WI

Members will meet for Christmas lunch on Thursday 11th December at 12.30pm

Marilyn Payne, WI Programme Secretary/Hall Trustee

Craft & Chatter

The next meetings will be held at 2.00pm on Thursday 4th and Monday 22nd December in the Community Hall. Bring a craft project if you wish, and join us for social conversation, tea and cake. £1.00 per person, no membership required. For more information contact Vanessa on 07818 599353

Vanessa Ward, WI Secretary/Hall Trustee

WI Community Film

The next film is on Friday 12th December in the Community Hall. It is a warm-hearted “modern festive classic” about the unexpected consequences of a transatlantic house swap over Christmas. Doors open at 7pm with bar, the film begins at 7.30 with a short interval for drinks and ice creams. Free admission (donations welcome from non-members). For enquiries or to book places contact Gill at gillgoodlad@hotmail.com or text 07789 810877

Gill Goodlad, Hall Trustee

For information about more regular events at Tredington Community Hall:

see the monthly programme displayed on the notice board or visit www.tredington-community-hall.org

St George Darlingscott

Our Carol Service is on December 14th at 4pm. All welcome. Refreshments will be provided after the service. Any help with the refreshments will be much appreciated. We hope to see you there. The Music is always excellent and so are the refreshments!

Doreen McCarroll, Churchwarden

STRETTON ON FOSSE

Soup Lunches

at the Village Hall fortnightly throughout the Winter months. Next dates are Dec 3rd and 17th. Watch this space for January dates. Come and choose from 3 home-made soups (one always vegetarian) with rolls and butter. Tea or coffee (and sometimes cake or biscuits) to follow. Donations welcome. If you need a lift to and from the village hall, please contact Geri Hunting on 07968 338848. Hope to see you there!
Geri Hunting

PRESTON ON STOUR

Preston Village Hall

Margaret Brocklehurst

'The Story of the Dancer' - 7.30pm Wednesday 10th December

The Story of the Dancer is a spoken word story by Donald McCombie and Adderbury Village Morris, with song and Morris Dancing. It tells the story of a soldier and Morris dancer who survived WW1 and was part of the 1914 Christmas Truce. There will be carol singing and celebration of the day singing stopped a war. It is a tale of international fellowship and the later revival of Morris Dancing, also significantly this day will be International Human Rights Day. There will be no charge but donations to the village hall kitchen refurbishment fund will be welcome.

Film Night

Please note that there will not be a film in December. The next date for the new calendar will be Friday 30th January 2026.

The Preston Quiz

Also add 7th February on the calendar for the ever popular annual quiz held in the Village Hall. Teams of four to be booked in advance.

ILMINGTON

Shipston Home Nursing - Village Carols at Christmas

Join us at St Marys church in Ilmington for Village Carols at Christmas on **Saturday 20th December**. Julian Harris will be at the helm with readings by Anton Lesser and solos by soprano Mollie Smith. All funds raised will come to Shipston Home Nursing. For further information and to book tickets, please visit www.shipstonhomenursing.co.uk/events, email fund-raising@shipstonhomenursing.co.uk or telephone 01608 664850.
Kate Bamford, Shipston Home Nursing

Ilmington C of E Primary School

Recently the school visited the memorial in the village where we, along with other members of the Ilmington village community, spent some time remembering those who were involved in wars. The children shared wonderful poems and prayers and we all respectfully reflected during the two-minute silence. Our keystage one and reception children are now in the midst of practice for the nativity where the children will be performing "Knock Knock" in the church in the second week of December. After Christmas our keystage two children will be performing "Ali Baba and the Bongo Bandits" and are already beginning their rehearsals for this. We are looking forward to seeing our children perform which they always do so well. Christmas is a special time of the year in schools and we are looking forward to many exciting events towards the end of term. Happy Christmas from us all at Ilmington School.

Paul Crouch, Headteacher

Screen-on-the-Green

There will be no film this month as Ilmington Cinema Group takes its usual festive break, but we wish everyone a happy Christmas and look forward to returning in January for our 20th anniversary year, when we will be screening Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale (30th January). Meanwhile, we are always grateful for donations of prizes for our interval raffle, so would be pleased if you'd think of us if you have any unwanted Christmas gifts. These can be left in a dedicated box at the village shop (next to bookcase) - thank you.

Lis Ribbans, Ilmington Cinema Group

Ilmington Community Shop: Christmas Made Easy

A brilliant way to support the Community Shop, and a shortcut for anyone who hates queuing in the supermarket, is to order our Christmas in a Box! We provide two easy order forms and a complete shopping service, ready for collection in Christmas week. We can source top turkeys, great geese, pigs in blankets and any other meats you need. We can bring you locally-grown fruit and veg, Christmas cakes and puddings, wine and spirits, chocolates and sauces, treats and trimmings. Order forms are available now.

Also look out for our Saturday tastings:

6th Bakewell and Browne Mince Pies

13th Spirit of Ilmington

20th Royd's Mulled Wine

Don't forget our unique 2026 calendars are on sale in the Shop. And finally, Knit & Natter moves forward to Wednesday 17th December at 2pm. We've got Christmas all stitched up!

Ilmington Community Shop Committee

Ilmington Village Hall

November has been a busy month for the Village Hall, with Lis Ribbans challenging our grey matter on Quiz Night, Paris Swing treating us to a delightful evening of jazz and Jean Moon serving up a lovely

supper at the Christmas Market. Rick and Wendy Burgess organised a fun table tennis knock competition followed by fish and chips and prosecco at the Red Lion. We plan for a quieter December whilst there are many other entertainments on offer but the regular well-being events will continue as follows:

- Tai Chi on Mondays 09:30
- Table Tennis on alternate Tuesdays 14:00-15:00 and Thursdays 18:00-20:00
- Keep fit Tuesdays 19:30-20:30
- Yoga Wednesdays 17:30-18:30
- Morris dancing on Wednesdays 20:00-22:00
- Indoor kurling on Thursdays 14:30-15:30
- Children's drama on Saturdays 09:30-11:30

Bryan Clifford, Chair

**Wednesday Club Christmas Lunch
on 3rd December at 12 for 12.30pm, Village Hall**

We picked the perfect wet day to watch our matinee performance of Murder on the Orient Express. It was all very cosy especially with the mulled wine! As it was so enjoyable, we might do it again. Our thanks go to Screen on the Green for their generous donation. Our next meeting is a week earlier than usual due to a previous booking. On 3rd December, we will be having our Christmas Lunch, all for the price of £10! A real Christmas bargain! Please be there for 12 to 12.30 when we start off our celebrations with the singing of an excellent choir.

There is only one birthday for December and that is Sheila Ribbons who celebrates on 13th. Happy birthday to you on the day Sheila. Paul Crouch, head of our primary school, has invited members of the Wednesday Club to see the children's nativity. It will be performed in the Church on 10th December at 2pm. A sensible thing would be to go a little earlier as there could be many adoring parents. We just have 2 tickets left for the RSC production of the BFG. Members only pay £20 so if you are interested please give me a ring on 682996.

For the last time as chairperson, I wish you all a lovely Christmas and hopefully a peaceful 2026.

Carole Clifford, Chair

WHITCHURCH

As storm Claudia passed through the parish on 14 November the Stour burst its banks. Overnight the river that was so low in August that, stood on the Alderminster Bridge, you could see the riverbed, was now a torrent, flooding some local grazing land but missing the churchyard. The parish wasn't so lucky in 1725. That year, after the harvest ended on 20 September, on 8 November 'A great flood came out of the Stower into the lower rooms of the Parsonage House' -- which at that time stood just beyond the church -- 'about

a foot high'. Again, three days later, 'Another flood came into the House'. (Little wonder that the rectory was eventually relocated to higher ground in Wimpstone.) No deaths were attributed to the flood. But in the summer of 1709 the Stour claimed two victims, recorded 'drowned by misfortune' and 'buried in woollen only'. Why that last odd detail? From 1666 a law in support of the nation's wool trade stipulated that shrouds in England had to be sewn from wool cloth.
Robert Howe

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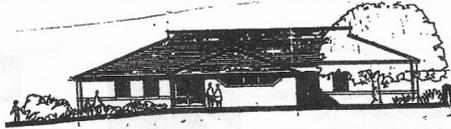
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A COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS

Thursday 20th November

Join us in the Village Hall for our annual Christmas Market.

Browse our stalls for thoughtful gifts, enjoy a drink from the bar and don't forget to pre-book your two course supper.

Saturday 29th November

Lights in the Dark

A magical start to the festive season with carols on the Café terrace, the lighting of our Christmas tree and plenty of mulled wine and mince pies.

Order Today

Let us take care of your festive shopping list

Order forms are available in the shop for you to pre-order Christmas meats and vegetables from our trusted local suppliers. We can also supply your puddings, chocolates, mince pies and alcohol to see you through the season.



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