

# Parish News

A white ptarmigan with red eye-rings is standing in a snowy field. The bird is facing slightly to the right, and its body is mostly white with some subtle feather patterns. The background is a bright, textured snowfield.

**St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden**

**St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End**

**Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry**

**February 2026**

**FREE**



Above: The choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge (dir: Matthew Martin) performed Choral Evensong for BBC Radio 3 on 10 December *photograph by Martin Hugall*  
Below: Service of 9 Lessons & Carols on 21 December



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*Front cover photograph by Gilly Hayes*  
*Rear cover photographs by Martin Hugall*

## PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the previous month. Hence, the deadline for the **March** issue is **Sunday 1st February**.

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Links also at the bottom of our website pages

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## The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew

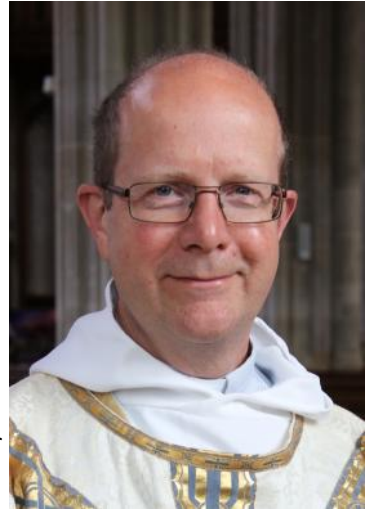
Jeremy writes.

The role of a priest means many different things to many different people, even amongst those who are licensed as priests. The Apostle Peter described the whole community of believers as a “royal priesthood”, and we are. Through our baptism we are incorporated into the body of Christ and become ministers of its good news, or “Gospel”. We do that in many different ways; through our work, our relationships, our activity and prayer. Some of us even do it with the “Colgate ring of confidence” around our necks, leading in those tasks the Church has come to understand as sacramental.

I am taking a sabbatical in the Summer (from 27th April to 26th July, inclusive). This will be the second I have taken during my 29 years of ordained ministry. I intend to reflect on those years and my own strengths and weaknesses and pray for wisdom as I enter the last decade of my licensed ministry. I have no plans for retirement yet, but I’m not likely to earn another sabbatical!

During the first I travelled in the Holy Land, both visiting many pilgrim sites associated with the story of Jesus, meeting indigenous Christians and trying to understand their plight in modern Israel, and revisiting places and projects where I worked in the mid 1980’s as a limnologist, helping in the creation of a national park and nature reserves.

This year I will return to the theme of pilgrimage, walking a good length of the Via di Francesco (Way of St Francis) in Italy, ending up at Assisi. I will return to my former Diocese (Exeter) and walk some of the pilgrim routes developed there since I left five years ago. I will also head North to Scotland and retrace a pilgrimage of another kind my six-times great grandfather made as a barefoot youth, walking twenty-five miles to buy a Bible. That journey changed him, and in turn, many others. I don’t know if my journeying is likely to have such a profound effect, but I am hoping to reflect on the theme of journey and pilgrimage that runs through the Bible and Christian history, and see what insights I can learn from a process that





continually alters our perspective, as the scenery changes, and thus our understanding of faith and calling.

This Lent I will be offering a six-session course called “Travelling Well Together – Sustaining Ministry”. This is developed from Bishop Guli’s call to the Diocese to travel well together, and what that means, and looks especially at the ministry we share together in as God’s people, to pray for the world and one another and to live out the Gospel in our own way. Rev’d Hilary Walker will also be offering this course separately, which should allow opportunity for many to take part.

We begin our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday (18th February). Let us walk in one another’s company

Best Wishes

Jeremy

### **A Prayer for February**

Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us to the beginning of this shortest month of February.

Thank you for the lengthening daylight hours, and the promise of spring as bulbs begin to emerge, birds begin to nest, and the northern hemisphere begins to warm.

Thank you for your promise of season following season despite the effects of humankind upon the balance of creation.

Help us to listen for your guidance in every detail of our lives - for you are our creative and loving Father whose wisdom is infinite, and whose knowledge is unbounded.

We pray for a restoration of order in the political life of this beautiful planet, and for a more equal sharing of the earth's resource with the whole human family.

We pray that we, your worshipping family, might look to you at this time of Lent, to understand afresh the cost to your dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, of the salvation of the world.

Help us to bear our own part in accomplishing the coming of your Kingdom upon Earth.

We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN'

*Provided by the Prayer Team*

## SERVICE OF LIGHT

**St Mary's Saffron Walden**  
**Sunday 8th March, 6.30 pm**

Please join us for this special choral service to dedicate ourselves and our new lighting to God, to see it fully in use, and to give thanks for the huge number of people who have helped in so many ways to bring the project to fruition – regulatory bodies, designers, contractors, grant-givers, and all of you who have supported the work with your practical help, your donations, your suggestions, and most importantly your prayers.

The service will include the first full performance of Three Spark Motets, with music composed by Brian Moles to words by Paula Griffiths in memory of Chris Ferland, together with well-known hymns and Bible readings on the theme of Light.

**Followed by refreshments and a demonstration of the lighting.**  
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*Please mention Parish News when responding to an advertisement.*

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## **YOU in the PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop

### **Jane Knight**

Born in Kings Lynn, Norfolk, youngest of 3. Most childhood summers were spent at Heacham beach in a caravan, which I loved. We also had a beach hut but this was washed away in the awful '53 floods.

My senior school was the Convent in Kings Lynn where I became Head Girl; that time did challenge my C of E faith.

I trained in London as a hairdresser; but my first love was flowers. When I qualified I

started at a salon in Bury St Edmunds where my sister lived. This was how I met Chris, who, at that time was a server at the Cathedral. When I moved back to Kings Lynn, Chris would often visit at the weekend, consequently missing church sometimes. The provost enquired whether he was "courting a heathen." He was one of three clergy who officiated at our wedding in Kings Lynn.

Our married life started in Dorchester where Chris worked at County Hall. It was lovely for me to be near the sea again, Weymouth is just over the hill from Dorchester. I built up a mobile hairdressing business with clients in the many lovely villages in the area.

We moved to Redbourn, near St Albans, by which time we had 2 girls so I gave up hairdressing to be a mum. Flowers came back into my life with a flower arranging course which I enjoyed.

After other moves, firstly to Maldon and then on to Thaxted, we had our 3rd precious baby daughter, I became involved in church flower arranging and also festivals at Tilty church, where we had joined the congregation. I am a founder member of Thaxted Flower Club and with one other member won 2 gold medals at Chelsea Flower Show. I was a school governor at Great Easton PS and became chairman. With a friend, I opened a small shop in Thaxted.

In 2000 we moved to Saffron Walden as with advancing years we wanted amenities close by. We joined St Mary's congregation and felt at





home immediately. It was a joy to be able to walk to the 8am Holy Communion. And soon after, Pam invited me to join the flower arranging rota and later, also to help with Flower festivals - we have designed 2 Festivals in St Mary's. Flower arranging has taken me into many churches here in Essex and around East Anglia including Ely and Bury Cathedrals. Now i regularly arrange in St Mary's, which I really enjoy, especially on the big occasions, flowers for the bell was a unique occasion

Chris and I are both welcomers at the 8am Holy Communion service, but also help out with other events as needed. There have been many moments whilst sitting in a pew in church which have made me think, but one which I often reflect upon is during COVID when churches were closed for services. When they reopened for a limited time and i was on duty and folk were so grateful as they left, we really felt that in a small way we had helped them on the road to normal.

My family motto would be - Be thoughtful, stay calm and carry on.



## Radwinter Road Cemetery Saffron Walden

Radwinter Road Cemetery is a peaceful space which offers a natural environment for all types of wildlife and is an important nature conservation resource. There are spaces set aside which are allowed to grow naturally and which provide a habitat where insects and wildlife thrive.

Daily maintenance and gardening are carried out to ensure the space is a welcoming and peaceful place for visitors.

The Cemetery is predominantly laid to lawn, but there is also a Traditional Area, Garden of Remembrance, an area for scattering ashes and a designated section for children. There is a separate section for war graves which are cared for by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The small, refurbished Victorian Chapel is non-denominational and available to hire for both religious and secular services.



**Saffron Walden Town Council**

**01799 516501**

**[enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk)**



SAFFRON WALDEN  
TOWN COUNCIL



## A Quiet Morning

### *Windows*

Led by  
The Rev'd Andy Colebrooke

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

The Parish Rooms

More details soon

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### Freshwell Street

This month I have been exploring the origins of Freshwell Street. If you wander down Freshwell Street, you will pass houses of varying ages and sizes, but no noticeable sign of a water source other than the pump in the garden more or less opposite Freshwell House. This may come as a bit of a surprise if you have explored the villages of Ashwell, Hertfordshire, or Burwell, Cambridgeshire. Both of these villages have bubbling chalk springs, Freshwell Street does



not, although the pump may well have supplied the street with fresh water before piped water became available.

There is, of course, water down by the pond, but it seems likely that this water does not explain the name of the street. In fact, early deeds describing properties in Freshwell Street talk of it originally being called Fullerestret. In a 1471 deed held in the Essex Record Office the property is described as being in 'a street called Fullerestret now called Freshwell hundryd'. So, it would appear that Freshwell Street is the third name of the street.

The first name, Fullerestret suggests a link with the wool trade which was the main source of Saffron Walden's wealth in the mediaeval period. The water in the pond would have provided a useful source of water for trades such as fulling and dyeing, the latter quite probably making use of the ready supply of saffron.

As late as 1758 the street was known as Freshwell Hundred. It is shown as such on the 1758 Eyre map of the town. The use of the term 'Hundred' is quite surprising as Saffron Walden was, and is, firmly in Uttlesford Hundred. So, over time, the word Hundred became replaced with Street.

If, like me, you enjoy looking at old buildings, a walk down Freshwell Street is very rewarding with houses of all kinds from different periods, even if the pond is now a great deal smaller than it was originally. I can also recommend the chapter on Freshwell Street to be found in the first of the three volumes of '*Down Your Street in Saffron Walden*' by Jean Gumbrell.

Hilary Walker



## A Rush to Judgement

The director Alfred Hitchcock is remembered as the master of suspense through such films as *Psycho*, *The Birds* and *Rear Window*. His films often involved mistaken identity, creating great dramatic tension, yet invariably with a touch of dark humour. Also, audiences got used to Hitchcock's cameo appearances raising a smile, easing the tension. But there is one film where the humour is dropped all together, Hitchcock doesn't put himself into the action, but introduces the story to stress that, unlike all his other films, this one is true.

*The Wrong Man* (1956) starred Henry Fonda, but it didn't do well at the box-office and it's largely forgotten today. This year marks the 70th anniversary of its release and critics are reappraising it, calling it a forgotten masterpiece. Fonda gives a sensitive performance as Manny Balestrero, an ordinary man with a wife and children, arrested and jailed for a crime he did not commit. His story is told with frightening realism using the actual New York locations where the events took place - The Stork Club where Manny played bass in the band; the Prudential Insurance Office where an armed robbery had been committed; and the courtroom where Manny's trial was conducted. In truth, Manny had visited the Insurance Office to enquire about a loan against his wife's policy to pay for her necessary dental work. However, the office staff rushed to judgement, identifying Manny as the man who had robbed them a few days earlier. The resulting nightmare of Manny's trial and imprisonment led to a harrowing nervous breakdown for his wife Rose.

Filmed in black and white, often in deep shadow, *The Wrong Man* has all the menace we expect from Hitchcock, although it's abrupt ending may unsettle modern audiences. My interest in the film lies in its strong catholic overtones. Upon arrest Manny is allowed to keep his rosary which he then holds throughout the courtroom scenes. When Manny is at his most desperate and his mother asks him if he prays, he says he prays for help, and she tells him to ask for strength. As he prays before a Sacred Heart painting, Christ's face slowly dissolves into Manny's before the true thief's countenance is revealed superimposed over his. What is Hitchcock saying? Is Manny, like Christ, suffering for the sins of another? (Hitchcock's other 'catholic' film *I Confess* (1953) has an innocent priest walking his own via dolorosa for someone else's guilt.) Or is *The Wrong Man* showing us prayers answered by the first appearance of the true thief, soon to be arrested? Whatever else the film says, the real Manny Balestrero spoke of the dangers of rushing to judgement: 'Before you accuse anyone, you should think, because you can destroy a family, physically and mentally, like mine could have been destroyed.'

*The Wrong Man* can currently be streamed from Amazon Prime, Sky Store, Apple TV, and YouTube – or you can borrow the DVD from me.

Andy Colebrooke





## FRIENDS OF THE PARISH CHURCH

The Friends of the Parish Church is a very active group and has been so for over 90 years. We are able to help financially with minor and major projects at St Mary's. They range from the new Advent candle which we have just purchased to a substantial sum to help the proposed Lighting Project.

Almost 40% of our members have active and varied roles in the Church. We have a bookstand with an assortment of items on sale and next to that a dedicated noticeboard which will keep you up to date on our many activities. We are also on the Church website under "Groups" so do take a look.

If you would like to learn more, pick up a leaflet from the bookstand which also includes an application form to **join us**. Just hand it to any of the Friends' Council members or pop in the Parish Office letterbox. If you feel that you would like to leave us a legacy, there are forms available on the bookstand for this too.

Chairman: Denis Tindley, Secretary: Pamela Mugliston, Treasurer: Sandra Marsh

## Friends of St Mary's: Dates for Your Diary

The detail relating to the next **Cathedral trip** will be in the March Parish News and on the website. You will also receive an email so can then start booking.

Work on the **Recipe book** continues. If you have submitted a recipe, or two, could you please let me have your related comments so that we can make the book more personalised, e.g. "This was the first dish I cooked with granny back in the 60's and it is still a family favourite today." You get the picture. I don't mind a paragraph; it will all add interest. Any more granny/ family photographs would be great too.

A forward date to put in your diary is our **Bring and Share lunch**, which will be in the Parish Rooms as usual, on Sunday 12th July.

Pamela Secretary.



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# The Calendar

*This calendar is provisional. See The Grapevine or the church website for the latest information, **especially for Ash Wednesday services***

## St Mary's, Saffron Walden

One service in church each Sunday is streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website. Coffee is served after the Sunday 10.30am services.

### *Sunday 1 February—Candlemas*

- 8.00am BCP Holy Communion  
10.30am Holy Communion [Y] with Sunday Club at 10.25am  
Service setting: *Mass of the quiet hour* – Oldroyd (Jones Gloria)  
Motet: *When to the temple Mary went* - Eccard

### *Thursday 5 February*

- 10am Silent Prayer in the Parish Rooms

### *Sunday 8 February*

- 8.00am BCP Holy Communion  
10.30am Holy Communion [Y] with Sunday Club at 10.25am  
Service setting: *Mass of St Thomas* – Thorne  
Motet: *To thy humble supplication* – Jacob  
4.00pm Choral Evensong  
Setting: *Dyson in D*  
Anthem: *God, who set this world in motion* - Moles

### *Sunday 15 February*

- 8.00am BCP Holy Communion  
10.30am Holy Communion [Y] with Sunday Club at 10.25am  
Service setting: Malcolm  
Motet: *Sicut cervus* – Palestrina

### *Ash Wednesday 18 February (NB See above)*

- 8.00am Morning Prayer  
9.30am Holy Communion with imposition of ashes  
7.30pm Choral Eucharist with imposition of ashes  
Service setting: Merbecke  
Motet: *Thou knowest Lord* - Purcell



*Sunday 22 February*

8.00am	BCP Holy Communion [Y]
10.30am	Family Service
4.00pm	Taizé service

**Regular weekday services at St Mary's**

*Tuesdays*

5pm	Evening Prayer by Zoom, see weekly bulletin for login details
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*Wednesdays*

8am	Morning Prayer downstairs in the Parish Rooms
9.30am	Holy Communion (with Prayers for Wholeness and Healing on the 1st Wednesday of the month) in the Parish Rooms

**St James', Swards End**

*Sunday 1 February—Candlemas*

10.30am	Holy Communion
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*Sunday 15 February*

10.30am	Morning Praise
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**St John's, Little Walden**

*Sunday 8 February*

10.30am	Family Service
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*Sunday 22 February*

10.30am	Holy Communion
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**From the Registers**

**Baptisms**

2nd November:	Alex Evan How
30th November	Felicity Faith Chapman
14th December	Ben Bryan Wright
	Alicia Tamzin Battley
	Ivyana Heidi Georgina Wright
	Vinnie Ben Wright

**Funerals**

8th November	Jack Golding
11th November	John Reid (Swards End)
17th December	Linda Moore

## News from the Younger members of the Church

We had a very busy Christmas, with lots of extra services to celebrate the birth of Christ. As normal the Lighting of the Christmas tree services on Christmas Eve were really busy, especially the 4pm one. Once again during that service lots of the children dressed up, some having come in costumes, others choosing from our selection, the live pageant during the service had lots of angels and kings.

### **Sunday club**

Sunday club ran during Advent, and we followed the stories from Isaiah. We decorated mountains and fashioned pipe cleaner swords into spades and other farming tools in response to chapter 2 v1-5. We made an arrow of words to show us the way, after reading chapter 11 v1-10. We then finished Advent on the Sunday before Christmas with the story of the birth of Jesus, reading it using the new book *'The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas'*.

### **Tinies**

Last term, we approached Advent hearing about Ruth, one of God's faithful women. The craft was to 'dress' Ruth by sticking fabric onto a cut out. Our final meetings were 'Angels visiting Mary' and then the birth of Jesus. Our new term has started, and we are following the stories of Jesus as a boy, starting by celebrating the arrival of the Magi by making crowns and playing in the sand.

### **Aftershock**

The members of Aftershock had spent the term looking at the Gospels and comparing the first four chapters of each, and different versions, enabling us to read the different accounts of the birth of Christ. We finished the term with some fun activities, a scavenger hunt around the town centre under the Christmas lights, a games evening and pizza. In our new term we are going to be learning and discussing more about Jesus, play more fun games and have a couple of visitors booked to come and share their knowledge, and of course, more eating!

### **Youth Bible Study**

This is held jointly with Saffron Walden Community Church and hosted by them, we have been looking at what evidence exists to show the truth behind scripture. There have been some very in-depth discussions around it, starting with Genesis and the question 'How did we get here?' We have also looked at the miracles of Jesus and his crucifixion and resurrection.

Julie Lester



## Who has an influence on us?

*A tribute to Chad Varah by Margaret Collingwood*

“The naughtiest boy in the village” was brought up in the vicarage of St Peter’s in Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire. Born in 1911, Chad Varah is remembered for founding The Samaritans, the telephone helpline for despairing and suicidal people. He died in 2007, aged 95, having retired from the Church of England at 92, the oldest serving clergyman.

His father, Canon William Edward Varah, was the vicar of St Peter’s. His son wrote of him, “a man of principle with firm beliefs and convictions, and a man with the moral courage to speak what he believed.”

The seed for the Samaritans was born in 1935 when Chad Varah, a new curate, conducted his first funeral. It was for a 13 year old girl who had committed suicide. She wrongly feared that the onset of menstruation meant she had a venereal disease. “Here was a life that could have been saved if only there had been an intelligent person she could bring herself to talk to,” he said. He vowed at her graveside to devote himself to helping other people overcome the sort of isolation and ignorance she had suffered.

He found an old phone that had survived German bombing in the basement of his church and took that as a sign. In 1953 the helpline was born. Soon there were about a hundred callers a day. This little helpline run by a few volunteers in the crypt has become a model for crisis hotlines of many sorts. The Samaritans take over four million calls a year, have almost 20,000 volunteers and over 200 branches. *Befrienders Worldwide* is the international offshoot which he also instigated, following the same principle of “active listening therapy”. The novelist Monica Dickens set up the first American branch. She spoke of it as so simple, so direct, and so purely human that it can work anywhere in the world.

When I read of Chad Varah’s amazing achievement and his commitment to the good of others I am reminded of what he said of his father, and hence of the influence his father has had, unknowingly, on so many of us down the generations. A clergyman in a village might well have taken the place of a paternal figure to many whose own fathers were absent. Certainly Canon Varah was a father figure to my own father, whilst his Dad was in the war and later died. My father used to quote “*Do all the good you can, for you pass this way but once.*” I carry that on a card in my handbag to this day. I wonder whether he learnt it at the feet of the vicar of St Peter’s Barton on Humber. Incidentally, that’s how I learned of the reputation of his son as the naughtiest boy in the village, because they were mates growing up together in Barton-on-Humber.



Muniments  
Room

## From the Archives

A monthly record of pieces of interest from  
our past Parish Magazines

Compiled by our Archivist, the Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop

February 1952

### The Rood Screen

The new Rood with attendant figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John, the Apostle will be dedicated on the same occasion as the re-opening of the organ at 7.30 pm on Saturday, February 9th. The Bishop of the Diocese has told me that he will be very glad to come and perform the ceremony.

The addition of the Rood and the two figures is not a new idea for our Church. When the present screen was erected by the late Mr. W. Favill Tuke in 1923, in memory of his wife, the original drawings by the eminent architect, the late Sir Charles Nicholson, incorporated the Rood and figures (for the primary object of a Rood Screen is to support a Rood), but only the screen was completed at that time. In recent years, however, Mr Anthony Tuke had expressed a wish that if ever an opportunity presented itself, he would like to complete the work begun by his father and in his memory. The opportunity came and the work has been completed under the direction of the equally eminent architect, Mr S E. Dykes-Bower. As a parish, we should indeed be most grateful to Mr Tuke who at great expense, has restored to our Parish Church an adornment which was once there, but has been missing since the original Rood was destroyed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

*[Shortly after this article was published, a second Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne]*

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What will a New Year teach us ?



From France comes "One meets his destiny often in the road he takes to avoid it", and from Denmark comes "He who gives to me teaches me to give."

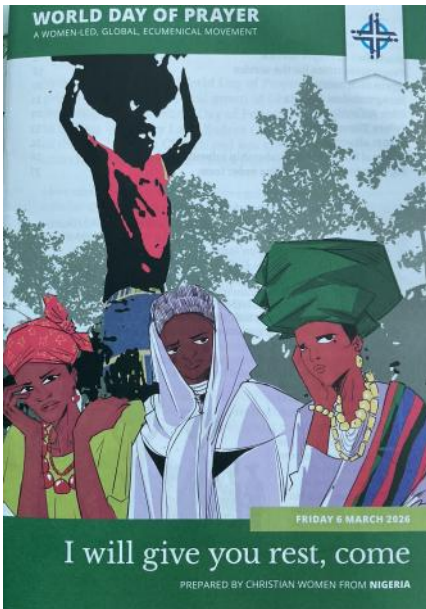
## World Day of Prayer Friday 6th March 2026.

10.30 am

at St Mary's Parish Church.

The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women in the U.S. and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and abroad. It is from such roots as these that WDP has taken its present shape.

Each year women from different countries write the service. This year the women of Nigeria have prepared a wonderful service titled 'I will give you rest, come'.



Please come and join in this wonderful, inspiring service prepared by the women of Nigeria. All are welcome. This is particularly relevant with the current unrest in Nigeria.

**Refreshments after the service in Church.**

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## St Mary's Music News

December was a very busy month for all the music groups at St Mary's. We must start by paying tribute to Kate Beare for all her incredible work, most notably for the tremendous commitment she has shown to Joyful Noise: not just a choir in its own right, but an essential tool in encouraging young singers to join the Junior Choir. Kate has worked tirelessly to prepare young singers with the musical and intellectual tools they will need in their progression to the church choir. We are extremely grateful to Helen Counsell who has agreed to take over the reins and continue the joyful noise of Joyful Noise.

The choir of Gonville and Caius sang at a well-attended choral evensong, broadcast by the BBC Radio 3. Readings by Vivian Falk and Hannah Razzell were delivered with mellifluous distinction. Thanks go to Peter De Vile for his Indefatigable work to maintain the organ and persuade it to behave impeccably for the broadcast. Undeterred by the solemnity of the occasion, the organ managed one high-pitched cipher, before Peter beat it back into submission, thus soothing the ears of any troubled Radio 3 listeners who might be reaching for the telephone to request a doctor's appointment for tinnitus.

The Christingle service saw the joint forces of the Juniors and Joyful Noise perform to a packed church (see picture below). The annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols was a particular delight with choirs, brass group and violins all performing with aplomb.

The service was concluded with the annual SMMA Mulled Wine and Mince Pies. This event is held to thank parents of the Juniors and the



Responsible Adults who ensure their well-being whilst at the church. Oli King thanked Jeremy Allen for his incredible contribution to the music at St Mary's, as he steps back a little from his role as Assistant Organist. Thanks also went to Peter

De Vile for his never-ending work in keeping our ailing organ from giving up the ghost. A final thanks went to Oli himself for his vision, musicianship, hard work and determination to keep music alive at the church for current and future generations.

The choirs were involved in three services on Christmas Eve. The 4pm and 6pm Tree Services were manned by the juniors, the adults and choral scholars. At Midnight Mass, James, the current organ scholar played Bach before the service and former organ scholar Elliot conducted the choir. A tribute to the fine musicians nurtured by Oli and Jeremy.

A reminder for February. Choral Evensong will be held on the 8<sup>th</sup>, after which drinks and nibbles will be served. Please do come along!

Philip Sunderland

Photograph by Martin Huggall

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## Grove Lodge 2026

The garden at Grove Lodge will open again in 2026 under the National Garden Scheme to raise money for the mainly nursing charities supported by the scheme. In 2025, over £3.8 million was donated with major donations to Hospice UK, Marie Curie, Macmillan, Parkinson's UK, Carer's Trust and Queens Institute of Community Nursing. All that money came from garden visits.

The garden will open on **February 22, March 8** and **June 14**, all Sundays and all between 14:00-17:00/2 pm-5 pm. Tea/coffee will be available as usual with excellent home-made cakes. All are welcome - the more visitors who come, the more money is raised. The garden is also open to groups of any size throughout the year, by arrangement.

In February, the garden has thousands of snowdrops flowering which are joined by crocuses, winter aconites and hellebores. In March, crocuses and daffodils reach their peak flowering.

Full details are available on the NGS website under Grove Lodge/ Saffron Walden:

<https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/42216/grove-lodge>





Games

Guests

Bible Study

**Aftershock Youth Group**

For age 11 – 18

7 – 8.30 pm Sunday Evenings at

St. Mary's Parish Rooms, Saffron Walden

**Spring Term 2026 dates**

January – 11th; 18th; 25th

February – 8th; 15th; 22nd

March – 1st; 8th; 15th; 22<sup>nd</sup>

For more details email [stmaryschildrenandyouth@gmail.com](mailto:stmaryschildrenandyouth@gmail.com)

Fun  
Activities

Food

## Our New Lighting—Initial Experience and Next Steps

It seems like a long time since my last update in the Parish News and a lot has happened since that was written on 2nd November. At the end of November, about 40% of the project was complete and temporary controls were handed over. The lights we can now control are for the south aisle, north aisle and downlights for the pews in the nave.

The large number of services and concerts in December, many when it was dark, gave us a very good opportunity to assess the lighting and identify areas where it appears to be insufficient.

Before all that, Paula Griffiths, Vivian Falk and I spent some time setting the matrix, so that we can press one button on the temporary control,



to bring on the lights which are needed for the 8am Sunday service, the 10:30am service on the first Sunday of the month, the 10:30am service on the second Sunday etc. We'll add to these settings when we get the rest of the lighting handed over to us in February.

What have we found during December? First, we received a lot of very positive comments about the atmosphere and ambience which the new lighting creates in the building. Areas specifically mentioned include the uplighting of the side aisle ceilings, the highlighting of the cross in the Remembrance (South) Chapel, the highlighting of the statues in the north and south aisles and the font. Thank you to all who have commented and all who provided feedback where the lighting appears to be insufficient. Your observations have been added to those we identified ourselves and we have provided the list to the lighting designers. Vivian and I met them on Monday 5th January and they have indicated that many of the items in our list are because only a portion of the lights for those areas have been passed over to us so far. E.g., we noticed that the area below and on the chancel steps, which is used to lead services and for our choir as well as by





performers at concerts, has darker patches – we don't yet have all the lights for this area. The same is true of the children's corner which is much too dark except on a very sunny day. And we don't yet have any uplighting in the nave, affecting the overall brightness there. We also spotted about four pews on the south aisle which are very poorly lit, and we've been told that the light for these needs to be re-focussed. Our lighting designers will review our comments and propose solutions. In the meantime, if you spot anything or experience poor lighting in the side aisles or the nave, please let Vivian or me know, so that we can ask for this to be addressed.

The electrical contractors re-started on Friday 2nd January removing the choir stall lights so that

they don't get damaged when there is work going on above them. The work to remove the old lighting in the sanctuary and chancel started on Monday 5th January and you'll have noticed the scaffold towers used by our contractors in this area during January. On the side of the chancel where the organ is located, we have had scaffolding in place. We also have some damage to and cracks in the plasterwork on that side which we are taking the opportunity to address while the main altar is out of use. As towers will not safely reach high enough for the plasterwork repairs, the scaffolding will also be used by the lighting installers. I'm hopeful that by the time you read this, the scaffolding will have been removed. While all of this work was going on, the main altar, chancel and sanctuary have been out of use. Thank you for your patience with this, in particular to our choir members who have been displaced for the whole of January, and to our 8am congregation who have been worshipping in the south aisle and receiving Holy Communion at the south altar.

The installation plan for January was to tackle the chancel and sanctuary from 5th to 23rd and complete the installation in the south chapel/choir vestry from 26th to 30th. The north chapel and the nave lighting will be completed in

the first two weeks of February followed by final fixing of all the new cabling in the north and south aisles. Then, Paula, Vivian and I will reset all the scenes after further control panels have been installed at the west door, south chapel door, in the north chapel. The temporary, main panel on the welcome furniture at the west end of the nave will be replaced. Further training will then be given on how the controls work and what to do when unlocking and locking the church.

The intention is to have all of the internal lighting completed well in time for the Service of Light at 6:30pm on Sunday 8th March – see page 6 for more details. It is possible that some of the external lighting, (e.g. at the west entrance or the disabled parking area) will be finished in March. Watch this space for more details or see the display at the back of the church.

Steve Hasler  
7th January 2026

## Noel Starr

On December 21st the SMMA and Choir presented Noel with a loyal service medal from the Royal School of Church Music. We wanted to recognise the outstanding contribution Noel has made, not just to the choir, but to the church as a whole. For many years Noel organised the guild of servers, ensuring that services had properly trained crucifers, servers and taperers as required. When local facilities disappeared, and the church felt it should be offering support to job seekers in the town, Noel was a very regular member of the Transition Project, offering a listening ear and support in completing job applications etc.

Noel has sung with the current choir since our previous Director of Music, Andrew Malcolm, was asked to pull together a small group of singers to sing at the Carol Service of 1985. We still have four members of that group in the choir today. Since then, Noel has sung regularly, been a longstanding member of the SMMA, helped to organise events like the car treasure hunts and, with his wife Judith, has hosted the choir on many, many occasions – not least the annual apple peeling Fridays in the days when we had an annual apple pie fundraiser.



For many years Noel was responsible for the monthly choir contributions to the parish magazine, keeping the wider church aware of the musical life of the church. Shortly after our current DOM, Oli King, arrived he and Noel discovered that they both wanted to bridge the gap between the juniors and the adult choir, and together they set up the very popular

Choral Scholar scheme – and Noel became the first Choral Scholar mentor. Although he handed this role over a year or two back to Ellie Beare – and now Lewis Colley – Noel has always retained a huge interest in the Choral Scholars. We've all benefitted from this scheme: those teenagers remain with us until they leave for work or Uni – and many of them return to sing with us when they're around over Christmas. The choir at the midnight service on Christmas Eve is very largely made up of former Choral Scholars! Some of the earlier scholars like Alison, Rebecca, Ellie, Lewis, Nathan and now Hayden have returned and signed up as members of the adult choir.

We have so much as a choir, a music association – and as a church - to thank Noel for and we wanted to mark this as he approached his recent big birthday (90 years young at the end of December). So, the loyal service medal has been inscribed as follows:

*Noel Starr  
For services to music  
St Mary's Saffron Walden  
1985 – 2025*

And long may it continue!

Bron Ferland

*The photograph (by Patrick Li) shows Bron presenting Noel with his medal.*



# Christmas Fair 2025

