

**Rostrum wishes all readers
A Merry Christmas and
A Happy, Peaceful New Year.**

Thank you to all our contributors and advertisers for their help in 2023 and to our street distributors for delivering the magazines promptly to their neighbours.

(Special thanks to Wateringbury School children for their drawings especially Maryam in Bluebell Class for our cover picture and Ellie in Primrose Class for this inside picture)

VILLAGE DIARY

December 2023

- 3rd Footpaths Walk** – 2pm – outside Hall
- 5th Parish Council Meeting** - 7.30pm - Hall
Followed by Planning Committee
- 9th Tickets for Village Pantomime go on sale**
At Post Office and Handy Stores – CASH ONLY
- 9th Voices Across A20 Christmas Concert** – 7.30pm - Church
- 12th Footpaths Walk** – 10am – outside Hall
- 14th Carols by Candlelight** – 8pm - Church
- 17th Local Market** – 11am-1pm – Hall and Car Park

January 2024

- 5th Parish Council Meeting** -- 7.30pm – Hall
Followed by Planning Committee
- 7th Footpaths Walk** – 2pm – outside Hall
- 11th/12th Tours of School for prospective families** – 10am
- 11th WI talk on the Titanic.**- 2pm - Hall
- 12th Footpaths Walk** – 10am – outside Hall
- 17th Slavery Abolitionists of Teston** – Talk – 8pm - Hall
- 21st Local Market** – 11am-1pm – Hall and Car Park

February

- 2nd/3rd Cinderella – Village Pantomime** - Hall

FREE FILM NIGHT – TUESDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Do go along to the church at 7pm on 19th December to enjoy **"Nativity" from The Chosen.** Festive refreshments too.

A BIT OF AN EARLY CHRISTMAS SING PRESENTED BY VOICES ACROSS THE A20

SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER

AT 7.30PM

WATERINGBURY CHURCH

Come and enjoy

Christmas Songs, Carols and Readings

With opportunities for the audience to sing along

No tickets needed suggested donation £5 children free

Refreshments available

ADVERTISING IN ROSTRUM IN 2024

We are in the process of arranging our advertising support for Rostrum in 2024. We thank all 2023 advertisers for their support which has allowed the magazine to be distributed free within the village. All should have been contacted inviting them to renew their adverts. Any businesses interested in advertising in Rostrum in 2024 please contact us as soon as possible (rostrum2@hotmail.com) .

COUNCILLOR SARAH HUDSON WRITES

Are you, or someone you know, dreading Christmas this year, as it will be your first since a bereavement or change in your circumstances.

I am setting up a Christmas Lunch Club on Friday 15th and Friday 22nd December if the response is big enough (only 10 people per session) as an opportunity for village residents to meet others in a similar situation and to start building new friendships over a two course Christmas meal and a cracker! Lunch will start at 1pm at The Wateringbury - Restaurant & Pub. The food will be free, you just need to buy your own drink(s).

Please message me privately if you are interested, or know someone who would benefit from a social gathering at this difficult time of year if you are alone. My email is sarah.hudson@kent.gov.uk.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Christmas Lights Switch on. And a huge thanks to KCT Timber for their sponsorship of the tree and decorations. I hope that this is the first of an annual village event.

Wishing all residents a joyous Christmas & a peaceful New Year.

WATERINGBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

As we come towards the end of the autumn term the excitement of Christmas begins to build in our school. The children in Key Stage One have started rehearsing for their nativity plays with enthusiastic singing and tinsel covering the school. The children in Key Stage Two are excited to start learning the songs for their production which will be performed at the church. We also have our atmospheric Christingle service to look forward to which is always a highlight of the year.

Despite the appalling weather this term, we have had some lovely adventures in and out of school. Our Year 3 children went to visit Horton Kirby to learn more about rivers (including walking in them!). We have had football matches against other schools and have been so pleased with, not only the victories but also the high level of sportsmanship we see amongst the children from our school and the schools we play. In their outdoor learning, the younger children have been creating tree trolls, building the three pigs' houses and making bird feeders. They also made yummy pumpkin soup which everyone tried. All of the children in Year 5 and 6 are busy practising lots of songs ready for their visit to the O2 in January with Young Voices which is one of the most exciting days of the year and certainly something that the children never forget.

I have been so proud to show a lot of families around our school over the last few weeks. If you are looking for a school place (either for September 2024 or now) in a small, family focused, outdoor loving, nurture based school, please contact us for a tour. We love showing off what we do. We can arrange individual tours for families at a time convenient to you. Alternatively, we will be holding two more open morning tours on Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th January 2024 both at 10am.

We all wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year. *Debbie Johnson*
(Headteacher)

VILLAGE PEOPLE Please let us have your news and tributes by 17th January for our February 2024 magazine. Entries are free.

Email www.rostrum2@hotmail.com

RIP Jane Mackay (27 Nov 1926 to 16 Sep 2023)

Jane died recently aged 96. She had lived the last 40 years of her long life in Wateringbury off the Tonbridge Road. A daughter, Willa, by an early marriage to Sir Francis Cook, predeceased her, but she leaves a family, spread across the world, of grandchildren and great grandchildren.

She (*née* Jane Audrey Nott) was born, the middle of three siblings, in Hythe. Her education was disrupted by WWII and included a spell as an evacuee in Devon. She trained at the Byam Shaw College of Art in London and later worked as an archaeological draughtsperson, making accurate drawings of artefacts as they were found, working in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. On one of these expeditions she met archaeologist Max Mallowan and his wife Agatha Christie.

In 1971 Jane married Leslie Mackay, owner of Yotes Court in Mereworth, who died in 1982. The house was sold shortly afterwards. She maintained a great affection for Yotes Court, both garden and house.

Jane moved to Wateringbury where her range of interests was extensive. She set up, along with a small group of friends, Kent Painters Group (KPG), which ran an autumn exhibition. To date, over 30 years, £330,000 has been raised to support local mental health charities in Kent. She was a brilliant artist exhibiting pictures at KPG and elsewhere. She was a clever conservator and spent a long time painstakingly restoring the Lucas hatchment in Wateringbury Church.

Jane was a keen gardener and loved and tended her garden off the Tonbridge Road. She used the flowers from her garden in flower arrangements for friends and for several years was a flower arranger for Wateringbury Church.

Jane remained during her time in Wateringbury an adventurous global traveller, visiting places off the beaten track, to see family, to paint or just for interest and fun, well into her later years. She was a keen and very competitive scrabble player right up to a few days before her death. Jane was a lady of style and character with a keen sense of humour, who made an impression on all she met. She will be much missed. A memorial service was held for her on 31st October at St Dunstan's, West Peckham, where her husband Leslie is buried. (Terry Bird and Elizabeth English)

Happy Retirement to Mrs. Elizabeth Humphrey

I couldn't let this moment pass without paying tribute to the amazing career of Mrs Lizzie Humphrey, for well over thirty years School Secretary/Office Manager at Wateringbury C.E. Primary School. For those thirty-three years she has been a constant in the front office and the point of first contact for anyone and everyone coming into the building. Her role was always wide-ranging - from comforting grazed-kneed children to sorting out school admissions. For seventeen years she was my right-hand person, with friendly advice, information when needed and constructive criticism when appropriate, and she had a unique ability to decipher my handwritten notes.

Lizzie was a most valuable part of the team we assembled at the school, and helped make it a happy, settled place of which to be part. People often say, jokingly, "You'll miss me when I'm gone!" I know that will be a reality at the school, now that Lizzie has turned in her calculator. (Richard Arnold)

MORE VILLAGE PEOPLE

New Baby Congratulations to Thomas and Emily Best-Shaw who are delighted to announce that their son and daughter-in-law (Josh and Ellie Best-Shaw), had a little girl, Ophelia Merryn, in Bath hospital, on 9th November 2023. **Nell and Vivian Rubin** are delighted in becoming great grandparents.

Thank You from the Jazz Advocates to the audience who attended their concert in Wateringbury Village Hall on 22nd October. Your support enabled them to raise £550 for the MS Society and Guide Dog

training for the blind. The Jazz Advocates are planning another concert in the Village Hall early in 2024 and will also be playing at the Ramblers' Rest. Look out for more details in Rostrum.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

On behalf of the **Parish Council the Chairman Sarah Hudson and the Clerk Steve Hill would like to wish** all residents of Wateringbury and surrounding area a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Council thanks you for your support in 2023 and please feel free to come along to a Parish Council Meeting in 2024 if you would like to hear what goes on or you have any matter that you would like to put to the councillors. Please visit our WEB Page: <https://wateringburypc.org.uk/> and follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WateringburyParishCouncil>

Sam and Dave at The Handy Stores wish all customers a **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year** and remind us of their Christmas and New Year opening times: Sunday 24th 7am–2pm, **Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th – Closed** 27th to 30th – 7am - 8pm, Sunday 31st and Monday 1st – 7am – 2pm. Then from Tuesday 2nd Jan back to normal opening hours of 7am – 8pm

SEASONS GREETINGS FROM THE WATERINGBURY PLAYERS :

Panto season is nearly upon us and we are enjoying our rehearsals for our 2024 **Special 40th Anniversary Panto ... Cinderella**. The panto will be performed at Wateringbury Village Hall on the evening of **Friday 2nd February and Saturday 3rd February 2024** plus a Saturday matinee. **Tickets will be on sale from 9th December** at Wateringbury Post Office and The Handy Store. Cash Only.
All tickets are £12. Child concession tickets available for matinee only £6 (16 and under)
Friday 2nd February 7.30pm (doors open 7pm)
Saturday 3rd February
matinee 2pm (doors open 1.30pm)
Saturday 3rd February 7.30pm (doors open 7pm)
Look forward to seeing you all there.

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

As Winter closes in, much of our wildlife sensibly decides to hibernate. Other species migrate to warmer climates although some bird species migrate from more northern countries, such as Scandinavia, to here. Our smallest European bird, the beautiful Goldcrest may be among them, although some spend all their time in this country. I was lucky enough to see a pair of these recently in the shrubbery against my house, near the bird feeders. It is unlikely that they were feeding on the food that I offer as they generally eat small spiders, insects and their eggs, so I consider myself very fortunate.

With the expectation of cold weather, it is now particularly important to clean all bird feeders and keep them and bird baths topped up. There is a wide range of bird food available to buy but stale bread, biscuits, cake and cheese are also popular. It's best to shred or crumble any food that you offer so that it's not all devoured by Starlings, Magpies and other large, aggressive birds. Having said that, I have a small flock of local Sparrows that descend as soon as I put any food out and devour it in minutes! Although this can be rather annoying, Sparrow numbers have apparently decreased alarmingly in recent years, so it is heartening to see them thriving here.

I also make my own bird food, often with my Grandchildren, who enjoy mashing bird seed into portions of lard and then squashing it into a variety of receptacles that can then be hung or just placed on the bird table. We can then watch through the window of a warm kitchen to see who the first visitors to the feast will be. *Pauline Knutton*

WATERINGBURY FOOTPATHS GROUP

In November there was a big turnout for the Sunday walk, probably because few of us had walked much in recent days due to the rain of Storm Ciaran and its aftermath. Fortunately the weather was dry and bright for our walk and I had chosen a route that wasn't very muddy. As usual, the walk was repeated on a weekday morning when the day started very wet, but the sun was beginning to appear as we met and we had another lovely walk in dry, mild but windy conditions. Our route took us along footpaths from the village pond to Gibbs Hill and Pizien Well Road, returning via the Wateringbury Stream waterfall and Old Road. As usual, we had lovely views to the north.

Our next walks will be leaving the village hall at:
2pm on Sunday 3rd December, 10am on Tuesday 12th December
2pm on Sunday 7th January, 10am on Friday 12th January,
Everyone is always welcome! Please contact me if you want any more information. Season's Greetings from the footpath walkers! *Lisa Dean 077 5953 9032*

HISTORY SOCIETY

Our meeting on 20th December starts a little earlier at 7.45pm and is a Social evening. David Cope is coming along to entertain us with some Christmas themed readings and there will be a table-top quiz to do while enjoying a glass of wine or juice and nibbles. The Society's publications which make easy to post Christmas gifts will be on sale most are £3.50 each. As usual members free and visitors £5.

On 17th January at 8pm local historian **Terry Bird** is coming along to tell us about **The Slavery Abolitionists of Teston**. Free tea or coffee from 7.45pm.

WATERINGBURY GUIDES

Guides have been busy with a wide range of activities – Autumn crafts through to Tobogganing and snow tubing at Chatham Snowsports Centre. We made jolly jars for the Christmas Bazaar at Wateringbury church, and thought about what other people need and how we can support Children in Need to help them.

We took a group of guides to Blacklands in East Grinstead for a weekend of Spooks and Sparklers at half term. We did the crate challenge in the rain, the low ropes and night line in the rain, built shelters in the rain, and did fire lightingin the rain! We did get wall climbing, cake and biscuit decorating and our Spooks Ball in the dry and despite the weather, an enjoyable weekend was had by all. Thank goodness we were indoors and had radiators to put our wet clothes on to dry.

We had a drier evening at the Climbing Experience in Maidstone with girls pushing themselves to climb higher than ever before. One of our newer members made her promise while her older sister who has recently returned to guides, renewed her promise, well over half way up the wall hanging on very tightly!

We were very proud of the girls who attended the village Remembrance Service as they were smart and respectful. Well done to Daisy, Lucy and Freya who were the colour party, to Harriet who read the names of the fallen, and to Emma who laid the wreath on behalf of Girlguiding in the village.

Before now and Christmas, we have sweet making, Christmas craft and swimming at Larkfield among other activities. If your daughter would like to join our fun, you can contact me on 01622 815416 or email to wateringburyguides@hotmail.com
Sheena Stewart and team. 1st Wateringbury Guides

UKRAINE APPEAL

Unfortunately, due to personal reasons, both contacts I had in Barming who coordinated donations for Ukraine are no longer accepting donations. Therefore please do not drop items off to me. I'm really sorry and again thank you for your amazing donations over the past year. Hopefully we can start collecting again in the very near future. Nevertheless – on a positive note – Kent Relief has opened a Charity Shop specifically to raise funds for Ukraine. The shop, in Tunbridge Wells, is located on the Upper Level of Royal Victoria Place (next to Claire's Accessories). The shop is manned solely by

volunteers seven days a week. Please pop in – maybe volunteer to work an hour or two – or make a donation or buy a bargain!

Again thank you all for your amazing donations. Wateringbury alone must have filled at least one lorry! Rest assured that all donations reach those most in need in Ukraine. Thank you all.

Sue symcollins@live.co.uk

FLOWER CLUB

Our November meeting was a terrific event as we had Helen Hare with her demonstration Starry Night - Helen is an exceptional demonstrator and produced a wonderful selection of Christmas designs which produced a rush of extra raffle ticket sales to try and win one of the floral arrangements. The evening was a terrific success and we look forward to seeing her again for a workshop in 2024.

In December members get together for a social evening with food and drink and party games. There is no meeting in January. So Happy Christmas to all our members.

Jean Schofield, Wateringbury Flower Club.

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING RAMBLERS GUIDED GROUP WALKS

Our friendly group is one of 13 Ramblers groups in Kent and part of the national Ramblers walking organisation. We explore the beautiful countryside of Tonbridge and Malling and surrounding areas. Walks usually start mid-morning. There's a short break half-way through (bring refreshments) and we usually finish near a pub. Most walks are dog-friendly (see website). You don't have to be a Ramblers member to try up to three 'taster' walks with us, to help you decide if you'd like to join. For details of all our mid-week and Sunday walks, start times and locations, and walk leader contacts,

www.tonbridgeandmallingsramblers.org.uk.

Sunday 3rd December A leisurely and gentle 3.5 mile circular walk around Mereworth Woods. Sunday 24th December Three churches walk of 5 miles from West Malling. Fairly flat; moderate difficulty.

Thursday 28th December Walk from Wateringbury Station along the Medway Valley then up over the hill past Roydon Hall and back down via Pizien Wells. Moderate difficulty. (6 miles)

TESTON AND WATERINGBURY PRE SCHOOL

The focus book for this term is Stickman by Julia Donaldson and Alex Scheffler. Stickman lives in the family tree with his stick lady love and their stick children 3. We have been learning about the relationship of family and how they are important to us. Seasons play an important and huge visual part of this book with nature and travel. We have enjoyed making our own Stickman, yummy Stickman snacks. We will be ice cube painting, snowflake making, Stickman Christmas cards, pine cones and glitter and much, more! We will be making decorations for our setting, gathering glitter and sparkly things to create ornaments to hang on our Christmas tree. We will be wrapping 'presents' to put under our tree too.

We will be setting up a 'secret' den outside with a pretend 'fire' and logs to sit on. We have some lovely trees in our garden and we have been watching them change colour and fall. We have also put coloured streamers into our trees so the children can watch them dance on windy days. Our book corner will include books about seasons, The Christmas Story and other seasonal titles.

We finish the term with our fabulous Christmas Concert a truly festive treat for our children and families. We would like to Wish you All A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY PEACEFUL NEW YEAR. If you would like your child to be part of our amazing preschool 'family' please contact us to book a visit.

testonpreschooladmissions@gmail.com tandwgroup@gmail.com

Tina Driver Tel: 07805796353 **see us on facebook too.**

NETTLESTEAD AND WATERINGBURY PRE-SCHOOL

The children have enjoyed exploring all the donated natural materials, these were collected over the half term and now following

the Curiosity Approach, the children are using these within their activities every day. Parents also donated any pumpkins they no longer needed/used at home, we have introduced these into our home corner, sensory activities, and mud kitchen outside. Discussing the different colours, sizes, and textures of them.

The children created their own enterprise, making and selling decorated biscuits for a fundraising opportunity for the setting and the children raised £80.

With the setting continuing with our journey of the curiosity approach accreditation, we have been asking our families and the staff for any treasures. All families have been very generous, with their donations and the staff have been implanting these items and resources into the playroom, from pots and pans, utensils, craft, lamps, tables, dressing table, general clothing for the children. All the children enjoy exploring new resources weekly and helping the staff find it a new home within the setting.

The children have also been busy rehearsing for their Christmas Concert this term, doing very well learning the lines of all their favourite Christmas rhymes with some fabulous actions. This year we have the honour of performing in Watringbury Primary School and we have invited the reception class to come and watch the children sing as well.

We would like to wish all our families and children a very Merry Christmas and a fabulous 2024! Looking forward to seeing all the little ones in the new year and finding out about all the fun they have had! 😊 *Kay Severn*

WI – Inspiring Women

At our November meeting we welcomed Brian Nobbs who gave his talk on Gardening for Wildlife which emphasised the importance of gardens to many small wild creatures. This was illustrated by photos of his own lovely garden. The competition was won by Sandy with Kathy as runner up. The next meeting will be our Christmas party for members only. This will be held at the North Pole pub and will be a Cream Tea. On 11th January 2024 we will welcome Eddie Asquith to talk on the Titanic. His last talk on his life as a commercial air pilot was very much enjoyed by members. Visitors will be welcome to come along to the Village Hall at 2:00pm.

CHRISTMAS TREE AND LIGHTS

Well done to Watringbury Parish Council especially Councillor Sarah Hudson and Parish Clerk Steve Hill for organising the very first Christmas Lights in the history of the village.

The Christmas Tree also adds to the seasonal celebrations. Thank you to Emma Doyle for co-ordinating the wooden disc decorations and to the families who participated and made donations to the Young Lives vs Cancer charity. A big thank you too to KCT Timber Supplies at the Station Yard for their generous sponsorship of this year's tree; and to the children of our school for decorating the trough the tree stands in.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF – WELLBEING HINTS AND TIPS

Midwinter blues are tricky. If you struggle a bit during these darker days try these tips:

- 1) If the sun comes out, get into its rays, whether inside or outside, just for a short spell. The sun's rays on your face for just 20 minutes can really help.
- 2) Sing loud and with wild abandon in the shower. Go for it and throw all reserve to the wind. You are that star for a few minutes anyway.
- 3) Turn the TV or computer screen on and search on YouTube for a slow landscape, or even a snowscape. Whatever you like. You want one of those long videos,

perhaps in nature, or a person canoeing down a long river. Let it play in the background.

4) Perhaps you don't or can't have a wood fire. Search for one on YouTube and play it full screen - again on your telly or computer. With a crackling sound it's a great comfort.

5) Get out an old photo album. You can do this with a phone screen but I prefer the feeling of the weight of the big album on my lap. And turn the pages for a trip down memory lane.

6) Light a candle or two. There is something about candlelight which creates warmth and a sense of security.

7) Try a weighted blanket to sleep under. Particularly helpful if you toss and turn during the night. The weight can help you feel safe and secure.

8) An old fashioned hot water bottle is such a boon. Get one with a furry cover and cuddle right up.

Remember the planet will keep on its path and eventually spring will spring up again in our little valley.

Bob Bowie

NOVEMBER PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

Allotments - Generally plots are well tended, there were however a few which needed more TLC.

Budget for 2024/25 - The clerk had prepared a draft which councillors discussed in some detail and some changes proposed. The present draft budget will mean an increase of 1% on the parish precept – roughly £1 per house for the year.

CCTV at village hall – Sarah Hudson said she had been contacted several times by the police, the latest being following the fatal road traffic accident in East Malling, asking for access to the footage from the CCTV camera on the hall roof. She requested, and obtained, approval for estimates to be obtained to update this CCTV camera.

Cemetery - the clerk was asked to obtain further quotes for necessary tree work and for the removal of the pile of sub-soil. Councillors agreed to an additional charge of £100 being made if prospective plotters/relatives wished for a site meeting to choose the location of a burial plot. There will be no charge if the clerk simply allocates the plot.

Crime Report – no crimes were listed on the police website.

Overflow car park for playing fields – the proposed work to improve the state of the overflow car park, which is owned and managed by the Parish Council, was discussed together with the estimate which had been obtained. Members of the Football Club committee who were at the meeting felt that the proposed work would not solve the water problems. They are very keen for the work to be done since parking is at a premium on some match days. A member of the Club offered to help the Clerk to find specialist contractors so further quotes could be obtained.

Public Question Time - Concerns were expressed about the dangers and public nuisance/inconvenience caused by:

Pedestrians crossing diagonally at the cross roads instead of across each road separately
Residents leaving their refuse bins permanently out on pavements

Overhanging low tree branches/vegetation which made it difficult to negotiate the village's very narrow pavements.

Parking all four wheels of vehicles on pavements thus making pedestrian access extremely difficult and impossible for those with buggies or wheelchairs.

Vehicles blocking the zebra crossing on Tonbridge Road when in a traffic queue. The poor state of the beacons. (Sarah Hudson said she had organised for the beacons to be cleaned and additional fluorescent strips to be put on the poles)

T & M Councillor Matt Boughton said he was pleased to be able to attend the meeting. (He is usually prevented from doing so by being required to attend other meetings). Car parking charges had been reviewed, fortunately our village car park will still be free. A meeting has been arranged with Clarion Housing to try to solve problems in Glebe Meadow. The Scrap Metal Dealer policy is being reviewed.

KCC Councillor Sarah Hudson reported that £35 million of expenditure cuts had been identified but there was still a big hole in the financial budget with little left to cut. KCC Conservative councillors had a meeting about the proposal to close several Recycling Tips (Tovil being one) and it was hoped to find other ways to make the required savings.

Traffic matters – the proposed KCC traffic survey at the traffic lights had been postponed until the work to repair the damaged water pipes in Bow Road had been completed. No further progress had been made in implementing the 20mph speed limit in the vicinity of the School at opening and closing times.

Defibrillator for Pizienwell area - Councillor Wells reported that no suitable site, with a link to electric power, had been found so it would not be possible to progress the plan.

Planning Applications – Councillors had no objections to the following applications:

External improvement and enhancement works to front and rear of premises. To include hard and soft landscaping, construction of covered pergola with lighting and timber arbours. New planting and lighting at Wateringbury Hotel Tonbridge Road.

Two storey side extension and loft conversion with skylight windows to side at 57 Bow Road.

Next Meetings of Parish Council will be at 7.30pm in the upper room of the Village Hall on **Tuesdays 5th December and 2nd January**. Members of the public are very welcome and there are two opportunities during the meetings to raise matters of local interest. *Approved minutes of council meetings will appear on the Parish Council website www.wateringbury.pc.org.uk in due course*

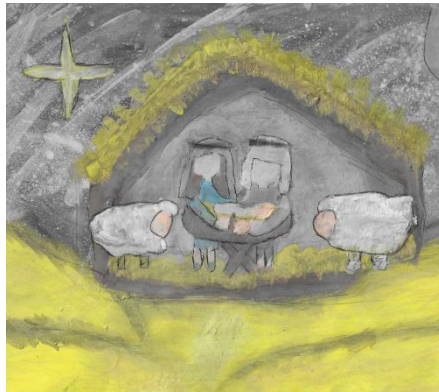
All Residents are requested to help improve the quality of village life by:

Removing waste bins from pavements as soon as possible -, we have several partially sighted residents who on dark nights cannot see the bins

Cutting back overhanging trees and shrubs which will make it safer for pedestrians to walk on our very narrow pavements

Park on the road not on the pavement - blocking pavements with vehicles means those pushing buggies or using wheelchairs or motorised buggies have great difficulties and often have to go into the road

Taking care not to block the zebra crossing on the Tonbridge Road when queuing to get through the traffic lights at the cross road.



Thank you to Matilde of Honeysuckle class for the picture

*Rev Gary Townsend
Rector of Mereworth, Wateringbury and West Peckham
The Rectory, 72 The Street, Mereworth ME18 5NA
gary.rev@outlook.com ☎ 01622 813178*

Beneath the angel-strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong.

Those words are from a poem by Edmund Sears popularized by its resetting as the carol, *'It came upon a midnight clear'*. Writing this article just after Remembrance Sunday and thinking ahead to Christmas and the New Year I'm struck by the carol's frank acknowledgement that the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has not put an end to conflicts and human wrongdoing. The angels sang of his birth and men have sung of it ever since but despite the birth and the songs which tell of it the wrong he was born to save us from is still with us. Quite recently a young person asked me what the birth, sufferings and death of Jesus have achieved; she felt it had made no difference. Judging by the words he wrote I think EH Sears would say the story isn't over yet, there is a golden age to come, brought in by the second coming into this world of the Prince of Peace. With this I heartily concur. But I would add that to a person who has turned away from substance abuse, violence, theft, pornography, hatred, cruelty, or any other form of social and moral evil because of Jesus that person would say his birth has made all the difference in the world to them. It would also have made all the difference in the world to those most hurt by that person's actions. I think the birth of Jesus set in motion a gentle, quiet, lowly but steady revolution that in its true and eternal operation has transformed the lives of one individual after another. And so, the real difference his birth has made has gone largely unnoticed by those who criticize religion, The Church and Christianity – sometimes quite justifiably – but who never consider Jesus himself. As another carol puts it:

*How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.*

The two thousand years of troubled human history since the birth of Jesus is easy to see but we have also had two thousand years of individual men, women, and children from every place on earth who would say: 'Jesus has brought me peace and hope.' That's not so easy to see but just try asking someone you know who truly believes in Him and you may be surprised at just what an impact Jesus Christ is still having in people's lives.

As you enter the season of Christmas and move on into a New Year with resolutions to improve yourself in one way or another perhaps it's time to let Christ's gentle and loving presence make inroads into your life.

Where meek souls will receive Him, Still the dear Christ enters in.

WATERINGBURY CHURCH SERVICES IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

[Benefice website](http://www.mwwwpchurches.org) www.mwwwpchurches.org

DECEMBER

Saturday 2nd 3-5pm Messy Church Nativity At 4.15pm we invite everyone to come along and enjoy watching the children perform their version of the First Christmas and to stay for a cup of tea and a mince pie.

Sunday 3rd – 10am – Morning Praise

Sunday 10th – 10am – Communion Service

Tuesday 12th – 2pm – School Carol Service

Our school celebrates the Christmas message.

Thursday 14th - 8pm - CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

A candlelit service with well-known carols and traditional readings.

Sunday 17th – 10am – All Age Worship

Christmas Eve

10am – Communion Service led by Rev Gary Townsend

5pm – Crib Service led by Barry Fisher

A service for all ages where young children can help to fill our stable with the traditional visitors. Well-known carols for all to sing.

11pm – Midnight Communion led by Rev Gary Townsend

A service that brings us into Christmas Day with Blessings and Communion

Christmas Day – 10am Family Communion led by Rev Jim Brown

A less formal Communion and Blessings service. Children are invited to bring a favourite gift.

Sunday 31st – 10am Joint Benefice Communion Service in West Peckham Church

JANUARY

Saturday 6th – 3-5pm - Messy Church

Sunday 7th – 10am – Matins led by Barry Fisher

Sunday 14th – 10am Holy Communion with Rev Gary

Messy Church on Sunday meets in the vestry during this service

Sunday 21st - 10am - All Age Worship

Sunday 28th - 10am – Holy Communion with Rev Gary

FEBRUARY

Sunday 4th - 10am – Morning Praise with Barry Fisher

Refresh Benefice Services in Mereworth Church at 5pm For those who enjoy less formal worship will be held on: 3rd, 10th and 31st December.

COFFEE BREAK

An amazing £471 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Care at the coffee morning on 1st November. Thank you to all Coffee Break members who donated such delicious home-made cakes and worked hard serving tea and coffee. Thank you to all who donated items for the bumper raffle or items for the White

Elephant Stall. And of course a big thank you to all who came along on the morning and made such generous donations to aid the work of Macmillan.

There will only be one meeting in December on Wednesday 13th. However because so many find January a difficult month we will be meeting on every Wednesday in January so 3rd, 10th, 24th and 31st. Do come along to enjoy good coffee, cake and company. Suggested donation £1. All meetings in the church social area between 10.30am-12.30pm. On 17th January we will be going to Spadework in Offham for a browse and coffee.

CHRISTMAS CRAFT BAZAAR THANKS

The annual bazaar raised a fantastic £1165 despite the rainy day to help with the running costs of the village's ancient church building. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way.