

Malherbe Monthly

Number 246
January 2025

Happy New Year



The one that got away
by John Collins

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The views expressed in "Malherbe Monthly" are not necessarily those of the Production Team; publication of articles/adverts does not constitute endorsement and we reserve the right to edit! Anything for the **February** edition should be sent to the Editor Carol Hulm via email (carolhulm@gmail.com) by **25th January**

Message Board



This is a new section for people to post their messages or any thoughts they would like to share with the community. Send your messages to the editor within the deadline for each month, details can be found on the previous page.

A message to my Friends from Ron Galton

As most of you know this Christmas could have been my last, and I wanted to thank you all who gave me support and cards over the holiday to which I was too weak to respond individually.

I was most appreciative and hope you will continue to drop in for a cuppa and chat from time to time.

With my best wishes to al for the New Year

A message from Liz Burgess

What a wonderful Carol Service at St. Nicholas church up on the hill on Sunday before Christmas, the candles, the Christmas trees and the crib all made a beautiful setting for the choir to sing so joyously, their harmony setting off the congregation's signing. It was a peaceful joyful service.

Suggestion: Renaming this Magazine

Hello, I've had some feedback that we should consider changing the name of the magazine to include the village name of Grafty Green. So, I am canvassing you all to ask for suggestions. I will then put these to a vote in the next edition. I would also like to hear if you feel that the name should stay the same.

Thank you.

Carol (carolhulm@gmail.com)

News from St. Nicolas Church – January 2025

Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year.

After God's message of hope at Christmas, with his most precious gift to the world of the baby, Jesus, may we carry that hope in our hearts through the year. That message of peace is definitely not just for Christmas, it is for all, for ever. It is up to us to listen to that message and act on it, not just wring our hands and expect God to do it for us. He gave us the Messenger, listen to him.

Reminders

The church porch is open at all times. Make a hot drink, listen to the rural peace and take that break. Use the prayer request cards and they will be prayed for at Monday morning prayer time. The bible on the windowsill can be helpful. Make use of the mini food box if you need. There is a larger food bank at the back of St. Mary's church in Lenham, open daily 10am-4pm.

The main church building is open for services, meetings, cleaning etc. please contact the church wardens for a key, if you wish to visit at other times.

Church service times are on the notice boards by the porch, by the bench on the roadside, outside the village hall in Grafty Green and in the magazine.

Celtic Morning Prayer is usually said in the side chapel on Monday mornings 9.00am-9.30am. An informal time to remember the needs of others, friends, neighbours, world issues and ourselves, a thoughtful way to start the week.

Village 'Cake and Coffee Time' takes place each Tuesday 12 noon - 2.00pm and coincides with the Post Office 12.45 - 2.15pm. Donations are shared, equally, between the church and a charity, chosen by the regulars. Just before Christmas £150 was donated to the Red Cross and a charity giving Christmas presents to needy children.

The Carol Service on Sunday 15th December was well supported as usual. The church looked welcoming and festive with 2 decorated trees inside and one by the porch. Many thanks to the Goodwin family for their work. Inside, the many candles gave a warm glow to the event. Many thanks to those who helped with the mulled wine and mince pies after the service, they were much appreciated. Thanks to the choir for leading the music.

The Crib Service on Christmas Eve. The nativity story was well received, with much audience participation and the 'starring' roles, enthusiastically played by Jon, Angela and Kenneth, thanks to them and to David and Karen for stepping into the roles of Mary and Joseph at the last minute. Our thoughts and prayers, too, were with friends who could not join us this year.

Christmas Day Service. A time to worship together after the business of the Christmas preparations and to give thanks. A time, also, to remember in our prayers those in our community who are grieving.

Thank you, Kenneth and Jon, for the glass of sherry and chocolates.

After the turbulence of 2024 may we follow 'the Messenger' and look forward to 2025 with renewed hope and expectation.

Happy New Year

Sally Alexander

Church Choirs

In common with our sister Churches, our church is liable to lose its choir unless we can find a few more voices.

We attend three services a month, all very different. The first is Evensong on the 2nd Sunday at 3.30 in the winter and 6.30 otherwise. The next one is Eucharist, which is at 9.30 in the morning on the third Sunday of the month. The last one is on the fourth Sunday of the month and is a meeting of all four Churches and choirs for a service at one of our Churches.



There is always tea, coffee and cake afterwards and a chance to have a chat. We're a friendly lot!

If you, or someone you know would be interested, why not give me a call on 01622 850287. Maybe you could only manage one or two of the services. The Christmas Carol service would be a lovely one to start!

Doreen Hulm

59 Bus News

Commencing on **Wednesday 22nd January**, a change of route and timings of the Wednesday only service to and from Maidstone will be introduced by the operator, Nu-Venture. This is designed to improve the reliability of the service which has been badly affected by the seemingly never-ending road closures in the area, especially when Chartway Street is closed because there are very limited alternatives suitable for buses.

The service will now start from Kingswood and then serve Ulcombe and Grafty Green before continuing to Maidstone via Headcorn and the A274 (and Otham). It will no longer serve Chart Sutton and Boughton Monchelsea. The advantage for Grafty Green is a reduction in journey time of around ten minutes.

The bus will leave **Grafty Green** village at **09.56**, stopping in **Headcorn, Forge Lane junction**, (opposite Costcutter) at **10.05**, **Sutton Road (Morrisons) 10.26**, due to arrive in **Maidstone Town Centre** at **10.39**.

It returns from **Maidstone, King Street stop L2** (outside of Greggs) at **12.45**, fifteen minutes earlier than previously, and runs via the A274 to **Sutton Road (opposite Morrisons) 12.57**, **Headcorn (Forge Lane junction) 13.18**, and **Grafty Green** at **13.27**, before proceeding on to Ulcombe and Kingswood.

The English National Concessionary Travel pass, available to anyone who has reached state pension age, can be used on the bus, and for those without a pass the return fare is £4-90.

As ever the message is very much **'USE IT OR LOSE IT'**, so you are encouraged to make good use of this service to help ensure it continues.

John Collins
(On behalf of Boughton Malherbe Parish Council)



Start 2025 in the most tree-mendous way possible by recycling your Christmas Tree with Heart of Kent Hospice.

Last year, with the help of our amazing corporate supporters, parish councils and volunteers we collected 686 trees for chipping and raised £9.5K. This year we're expanding our reach to cover more post codes and our goal is to recycle 1000 trees. **But we need your help...**

You can support the Hospice, and the planet, by recycling the Christmas waste from your Parish. **We can** provide you with everything you need to spread the word in your newsletters, Facebook groups, website and any locations that see a large footfall. Please email Christie and the [Community Partnerships team](#). If any willing parishioners would like to volunteer their time and driving skills then please contact David and the [Corporate Fundraising team](#).

Event Information

Our amazing volunteers will brave the pine needles and the cold to collect your real (spruce, fir or pine) trees over three days on Friday 3, Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 January 2025, from your front garden or driveway, allowing you to stay cosy and warm indoors!

We kindly ask for a **suggested donation of £15 per tree** to continue providing exceptional specialist care for people with a terminal illnesses.



We will collect Christmas trees from the following postcodes and areas: **ME5 9, ME6 5, ME14, ME15, ME16, ME17 3, ME17 4, ME18, ME19, ME20, TN12 5, TN15 7, TN15 8, TN15 9, Shipbourne, Plaxtol, Hadlow, Burham, Wouldham.**

Have a hassle-free, environmentally friendly festive season – and Please, please, please recycle your trees with Heart of Kent Hospice this January!



Scan here to book your christmas collection!

End of year article by Maidstone Borough Councillors Martin Round and Ziggy Trzebinski, Ward Members for Headcorn and Sutton Valence

Dear residents of Boughton Malherbe

To describe last year in short and simple terms with only potted summaries would be nigh impossible as Headcorn and Sutton Valence Ward is such a diverse and active area. The ward was large enough but became bigger with the addition of our friends at Sutton Valence earlier this year. Conversely the number of Borough Council Members is smaller. Seven less in fact. Combined with a move to four yearly elections from yearly, when a third of seats were decided, MBC has saved nearly £220,000. It does mean a lot more work and effort for all. Both Sutton Valence and Headcorn have grown in size with new homes, and with the 3 Parishes of East Sutton, Ulcombe and Boughton Malherbe/Grafty Green all add to the increase in workload. There has also been lots of population change, with many new people joining the community.

The early part of 2024 was taken up with the local elections in May, that resulted in a new Leadership of the Council by the Green Party, supported by some of the Liberal Democrats and some Independents. This has led to some inaction, as a large number of councillors were inexperienced. Hopefully the new councillors will start contributing to the council chamber soon. The Local elections were closely followed by the General Election. We spent a lot of time out and about talking to residents and noting the feedback, which we assure you is very important to us when we represent you in council.

As a result of some unexpected departures as a result of the electoral process, the originally intended "mayoral line" had to be reset. As a result, Headcorn and Sutton Valence Ward Member Martin Round was inaugurated as Deputy Mayor to assist John Perry from Staplehurst as Mayor. Martin hopes to serve as Mayor from May 2025. He has plenty of events, celebrations, anniversaries and special activities planned and to attend, particularly in our home Ward and Parish.

Many other issues call for our time and attention and the initial change of the Waste contract proved to be a massive challenge. Our Ward proved to be one of the more difficult to get right too and until December still was not 100%. For weeks Ziggy and Martin were out "bin checking" as reports of various problems were discovered and chasing for collections and generally trying to pressurise the council into developing a better service. Ziggy raised the issue at full council twice and we are hoping that by January all the problems will have been solved.

In the last year we have probably heard about more Housing issues than ever. We have been pro-active in sorting out problems of damp and other maintenance in a few residents' homes and have called into account the companies that are responsible for looking after them.

Planning for new homes and other developments is another area of our involvement and can always be controversial but that work must go on. Our Local Plan, which was agreed in April, defines the bulk of where housing goes. Whilst realising everywhere must have new housing we need to see some advantages to the increase in built up areas. We need improved infrastructure and services, especially in recreation and better/safer traffic flows and both of us are working with Parish Councils, developers and MBC to maximise the advantages that new developments can bring with them.

Two other areas of major concern to us have been the potholes and the water leaks, both of which lead to road closures, which sometimes are lengthy both in extra distance travelled, and time to complete the repairs. We have been lobbying the water companies as the many leaks are one major cause of the potholes and are now pleased to report that some dialogue is starting to take place.

At least one of us has attended all the Parish Council meetings, unless they have clashed with MBC meetings, and feel we have contributed positively and assisted to resolve some of the problems raised by residents.

Lastly we both wish you a prosperous and happy 2025.

Village Hall News – January Newsletter

Dear All,

Firstly, thank you to you all for your support of the village hall throughout 2024 and on behalf of the trustees I would like to wish you a healthy, prosperous and happy New Year.

December seemed to pass in a flash with lots going on in the village, there was the lighting up of the Christmas tree on the green kindly sponsored by the Parsh Council, the Christmas quiz, the panto and the carol and nativity services at the church all of which were well supported so thank you again for making Grafty Green such a vibrant and friendly place to live.

Coming up shortly we have the following events at the hall:

Farmer's Market at the village hall every Friday from the 28th February between 1 and 3 pm

We will have more details about stalls nearer the time, but we are hoping they will include; pet treats and accessories, knitted crafts, plants and flowers, a meat stall, homemade curries, Kent and Sussex cheeses, a fruit, vegetable, eggs and juices stall, homemade cakes and the organisers will also be serving teas and coffee so you will be able to come along and buy local produce and enjoy a relaxing cuppa and a natter with friends and neighbours.

If you have something you think would be suitable to sell at the farmer's market please contact Jon on 07932112730 and he will pass your details onto the market's organisers. This will be for an initial 3-month trial, and I would urge you to support this new venture if you would like the opportunity to purchase locally sourced produce in the village on a weekly basis to continue beyond the initial trial period.

Pancake Evening – Tuesday 4th March 4 to 6 pm

Once again, we will be hosting our annual pancake evening. We will be offering a selection of sweet and savoury pancakes together with the usual refreshments so please come along and enjoy a delicious pancake or two and spend some time over a cup of tea with friends. As well as the pancakes there will be activities to keep the children entertained.

Kind Regards

Jon Thompson Village Hall Committee Chairman

jon@grafygreenalpacas.co.uk www.grafygreenvillagehall.co.uk

facebook – grafygreenvillage

We are very excited to announce that a Farmer's Market is coming to Grafty Green Village Hall! From Friday 28th February there will be a weekly Farmer's Market from 1pm-3pm

We will have more details about stalls nearer the time, but we are hoping they will include:

Pet treats and accessories
Knitted crafts
Preloved books
Plants and flowers
Hogget, mutton, goat and beef
Homemade curries
Kent and Sussex cheeses
Fruit, vegetables, eggs and juices
Homemade cakes

They will also be serving teas and coffee

If you have something you think would be suitable to sell at the Farmer's Market, please contact Jon on 07932112730 and he will pass your details onto the market manager



GRAFTY GREEN VILLAGE HALL ANNUAL PANCAKE EVENING



TUESDAY 4th MARCH 4PM TO 6PM
COME AND MEET YOUR FRIENDS &
ENJOY
SWEET & SAVOURY PANCAKES £2.50
EACH

Lots of children's activities

Evening Art Classes

with Cathy Hill



Exciting, artistic adventures!

Starting January 8th

Wednesday Evenings at **Little Chart** Village Hall 7pm - 9pm

Thursday Evenings at **Grafty Green** Village Hall 7pm - 9pm

The fee for each course, of 7 classes, is £96 (this includes one free class@ £16).

Learn big, bold drawing skills, boost your confidence and lose creative inhibitions, playing around with colour, line and form.

We'll do some 'mixed media' and move into painting and 'composition-making'.

Suitable for beginners or improvers

Book your place now!

Contact me, Cathy Hill at: cathyonthehill@hotmail.com Telephone:

07927054708

PILATES CLASSES
Grafty Green Village Hall
Tuesdays 0930 to 1030
Small friendly mat class

*Pilates teaches ease of movement and good posture.
Conditioning the whole body by lengthening,
strengthening and rebalancing, helping you enjoy
daily activities with greater ease and less chance of
injury.*



Mixed Ability (Beginners/Improvers welcome)
To book your place please contact Cheryl
Mobile: 07852 602369
Email: c.stubbs8@btinternet.com

Grafty Green Village Hall

Bookings 01622 850898

Regular Weekly Events

Yoga – mixed ability

Susan Burch 01622 850381

Mondays 9.30 – 11am

Thursdays 9.30 – 11am

Wednesdays 7 – 8.30pm

Pilates

Cheryl Stubbs 07852 602369

Tuesdays 9.30 – 10.30 am

Post Office

Tuesdays 12.45 – 2.15pm

Thursdays 11.15 – 1.15pm

Coffee morning

Tuesdays 12.00 – 2.00pm

Short Mat Bowls

Joan Marriott 01622 858100

Tuesdays 2.30 – 5.30pm

Dance Fit

Sharon Harris 01622 890170

Wednesdays 11am – 12.30pm

Tai Chi

Rhonda Bailey 07985 001782

Thursdays 2.00 – 3.00pm

Craft Group

Janis Carter 01622 850898

Fridays 10am -12.00pm

Art Class

Cathy Hill 07927054708

Alternate Wednesdays 1 – 3.30pm

Alternate Thursdays 7-9pm

Farmer's Market

(With effect from 28th February)

Friday 1- 3pm

Regular Monthly Events

Gardening Club

Doreen 01622 850287

First Tuesday 7.30 - 9pm

Digital Kent

Fourth Tuesday 11.30-1.30



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The Brown Barn, Bull Hill, Lenham Heath, Kent, ME17 2JA (Off the A20)

The Grafty Gourmet

A great stew with an Italian twist. Simple and comforting on those cold Winter nights

CHICKEN ARRABBIATA STEW WITH PARMESAN DUMPLINGS

For the stew

2 tablespoons of [olive oil](#)
1 [onion](#), thinly sliced
8 skinless and boneless [chicken thighs](#), halved
2 large [garlic cloves](#), crushed
1-1½ teaspoons of [chilli flakes](#)
4 tablespoons of sun-dried tomato pesto
250ml of chicken stock
2 x 400g cans of [chopped tomatoes](#)
5 [thyme sprigs](#), tied
2 teaspoons of sugar
½ small bunch of [parsley](#), finely chopped

For the dumplings

80g of cold [unsalted butter](#), cubed
150g of [self-raising flour](#)
80g of [parmesan cheese](#), grated
50-60ml of [milk](#)

1. Heat the oil in a large shallow [casserole dish](#). Fry the onion over a low-medium heat for 7 minutes or until soft and turning translucent. Turn up the heat slightly, add the chicken and fry for 5 mins until beginning to brown around the edges. Tip the garlic and chilli into the casserole and fry for 1 minute. Stir through the pesto, pour in the stock and tomatoes, then add the thyme, sugar and some seasoning. Turn the heat to low and cover with a lid. Cook gently for 40 mins. Remove the thyme and check the seasoning.

2. Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. To make the dumplings, put the butter and flour in a bowl with ½ teaspoon of salt, then rub the butter into the flour with your fingertips until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Mix in 50g of the parmesan cheese and pour in 50ml of the milk, then swiftly combine with a cutlery knife until everything is well distributed and you have a soft dough (add more milk if it's too dry). Briefly bring the dough together on a worksurface, then divide into eight balls.

3. Arrange the dumplings over the stew, then scatter each with the remaining cheese. Put in the oven and bake, uncovered, for 25 minutes or until the dumplings are doubled in size and golden brown. Scatter over the parsley and serve.

Grafty Green Gardening Club

Meetings take place in Grafty Green Village Hall usually on the first Tuesday of the month and begin at 7.30. Members contribute £2 for each meeting where we have a speaker and guests (always welcome) £4.

Outings take place from May to August this year and the cost and final details will be sent out prior to the event.

Membership £5 - contact Doreen Hulm (Treasurer) 01622 850287

Programme for 2025

Date	Speaker/Event	Topic
14 th January	AGM & Philip Oosterbrink (head gardener at Walmer Castle)	The Jungle Garden
4 th February	Robin Smith & David Walker RSPB	Birds of the Medway estuary
4 th March	Jaqueline Aviolet	A the nursery – demonstrations + plant sales
1 st April	Spring Show & Steve Edney	The Kitchen Garden + plant sales
26 th April	10 – 12 am Plant Sale Village Hall	
6 th May	6pm outing to Frittenden, Brickwall Cottages, TN17 2DH	
9 th – 11 th May	Weekend away to Suffolk, The Mill Hotel Sudbury, Middleton House, Melford Hall, Flatford Mill and Markshall Arboretum	
3 rd June	6pm outing to Woodchurch, Boldshaves TN26 3RA	
1 st July	TBA	
5 th August	Outing to East Malling CommuniGrow educational wellbeing garden charity.	
2 nd September	Autumn Show & Rachel Castle (Swallowfields Nursery)	Shine a light on bulbs!
7 th October	Kevin Tooher	The Edwardian gardens of Sussex
4 th November	Ed Flint (head gardener at Tidewell Manor Robertsbridge)	Roses and friends
December	Leeds Castle light show	

Sue's Nature Notes

Speckled Wood butterfly

Brown wings with pale yellow spots - This butterfly spends most of its time low down amongst grasses feeding on tree sap, and aphid honeydew. They will also feed on the nectar of the cuckooflower, dandelions, privet, fleabane, bramble and ragwort.

Eggs are laid in the grass in a shady area with three broods a year. Caterpillars feed on a variety of grasses such as common couch, tor grass, meadow grasses etc.

Sue

Yoga classes in Grafty Green Village Hall

Monday *and* Thursday mornings 9.30 till 11

Wednesday evenings 7 till 8.30

No classes the week beginning 21st October

New term starts October 28th until last practice on 12th December.

To book call Sue Burch (British Wheel of Yoga teacher) on 07803 962339

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Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

The Old Oak

Friday, January 10th

Performance begins 19.30, doors open 19.00

Running time 1hr 53 mins

The pub, the lynchpin of any village, is irreplaceable, yet The Old Oak, at the heart of a former mining community in County Durham, is struggling to stay open. Warm-hearted and compassionate, **The Old Oak** (15, 2023) is the triumphant last film from the legendary director Ken Loach and it is a superb statement of adversity and hope. The pub is the last pub standing in the once thriving village, a gathering space for a community that has fallen on hard times. The landlord TJ Ballantyne is doing his best but the future looks bleak. Even the refuge offered by The Old Oak seems threatened when Syrian refugees are thrust upon the village and, as the villagers see it, these Syrians are invading their territory. But TJ is not defeated. One refugee in particular offers hope. **The Old Oak** is a superb way to raise a glass to 2025, so do come and enjoy it with us.

Greeting us on Friday 14th February will be St Valentine of course. What better way to spend it than watching **You've Got Mail** (PG 1998), in which Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks bring romance to this unforgettable comedy.

Please get in touch for more information or to join our mailing list.

Admission: Adults £5, under 16s £2; cash only, card payments not accepted.



lenhamfilmclub@gmail.com



www.lenhamfilmclub.org



@lenhamfilmclub



Dear Friends,

I am afraid this Christmas letter is later than usual owing to very painful legs which are keeping me away from my computer. But herewith I do hope this finds you and your families well. I am 92 next June and am amazed that so many of our contemporaries are still with us.

One of the major problems of old age is not driving. I gave up some time ago and it leaves one feeling trapped. Fortunately, I have some very good neighbours and friends in the village who give me lifts when they can. I am more grateful to them than I can express. Another problem is my deafness. I am totally deaf and my hearing aids are not always effective. One of the things that annoys me is people who say, 'Have you got your hearing aids in?' Because it's the first thing I do when I'm dressed!

I get regularly to church, and on the fourth Sunday, when there is no service at Ulcombe, I go to Pathways Church in Lenham which is very different from an Anglican service. The people there are very warm and welcoming-just like Ulcombe. I managed to get to a spirituality course which one of their members ran, which was very good and helpful.

Then I attend, monthly, the Roundabout Club, the Lunch Club and the History Society - all of which I started. With The Friends of Ulcombe Church we had a very successful Bingo Evening and an Auction of Promises.

On the domestic front, Alex has to have an LVA operation on her right arm to try to fix the lymphedema she suffers with following her breast cancer. The date is fixed for 24 December, and she won't be able to use her arm for at least two weeks! I am sure the family will rally round and not let her do anything over Christmas. Genevieve and Oscar will be there, but Toby and Naomi are in North America on their long overseas trip. They will be spending Christmas with Naomi's uncle in Houston. They are having a lovely time.

I am spending Christmas with Justin and Eve. They are having a houseful of people needing care – Eve's sister Tracey who need a lot of care, and Charlie and me! I feel guilty that I cannot help. Justin's household have the addition of a lovely golden retriever, Iris. She is still a puppy and very exuberant but lovely. My cat, Holly, continues to give me great pleasure and comfort. She is going back to her former owner for Christmas.

I am back, after a year, in my bedroom. The flood I had a year ago did a lot of damage and I had to move into one of the guest bedrooms! But I did not expect to be there for a whole year!

Well, this brings me to the end of a very rambling letter. I send all good wishes to you and your families.

With love, and God Bless

Molly The Old Dairy, Street Farm, Ulcombe, ME17 1DP, 01622 842988

Egerton Film Society



EGERTON MILLENNIUM HALL
THURSDAY 30th January 2025

Doors 7.00pm - PERFORMANCE 7.30pm

Admission £6.00

Email: egertonfilm@btinternet.com for more information



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Len Valley Benefice

January 2025



Everybody is welcome

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear;
I will help you. *Isaiah 41:13*

Sunday 5th January

9.30am Boughton Malherbe: Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

9.30am Harrietsham: Family friendly Morning Worship

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Wednesday 8th January

9.30am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

11.00am Harrietsham: Chippendayle

Sunday 12th January

9.30am Harrietsham: Holy Communion

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

11.00am Ulcombe: Holy Communion

6.30pm Boughton Malherbe: Choral Evensong

Sunday 19th January

8.00am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30am Boughton Malherbe: Holy Communion

9.30am Harrietsham: Holy Communion

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Ulcombe: Holy Communion

11.00am Lenham: Morning Worship

Sunday 26th January

11.00am Benefice Holy Communion at St John the Baptist, Harrietsham
'Re-Sourced in Christ - Foundation'

Christian Message January 2025

January. Christmas is over! Are you relieved, or sad? But *is it over?*

Well, in a way, it's not, because the traditional date to remember the Magi or wise teachers from the East visiting Mary, Joseph and Jesus is 6th January. This is sometimes called an epiphany (a revelation or showing from above) or, in the Orthodox Church, a theophany (a showing from God). The Biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus are anything but ordinary, but the visit of these wise teachers after his birth is remarkable in that it revealed Jesus as, not just another wonderful new-born baby, but as somebody extraordinarily special. Indeed, as the very earliest Christians pondered this moment, they realised that the message was that *God* had come to them in this otherwise ordinary human baby.

Whatever the scientific explanation, a "star" shows the wise teachers where to go. To quote some liturgy from the orthodox Church, "Using a great star as its mouth, heaven proclaims the presence on earth of him who has overwhelmingly become poor for our sake".

Gifts are given to Jesus. Frankincense was an expensive perfume associated with worship and proclaims Jesus as a priest. Gold was representative of ultimate wealth and proclaims Jesus as king. And myrrh, another expensive perfume, used at funerals, proclaims Jesus as the king *who will die*- for you and for me!

What on earth did Mary make of it all, as these wise dignitaries bowed before her tiny baby in the humble surroundings of a manger- an animal feeder?

And what do we make of it? Now that the twinkle of the Christmas lights fades away and we start our New Year diets to get rid of the goose fat, will we still bow before the tiny baby who was God made human? Will we still wonder at the grace of a God who comes *to* us to seek us out? Will we bring gifts? What about the greatest gift that we can bring: the gift of lives offered to a God who seeks love as a way of living?

Rev. John P. Huggins (01622 850280)

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Police, Non-Emergency - (Including PCSO) **101**

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Headcorn Surgery (*out of hours listen to*) **01622 890294**
Lenham Surgery (*recorded messages*) **01622 858341**

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Or **01243 508866**

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