

# The Giant

Brede & Udimore  
Parish Magazine  
February 2026



# **The Giant: the Brede & Udimore Parish Magazine**

**... BUT MORE THAN JUST A PARISH MAGAZINE!**

The editorial team consists of Benjamin Barnard, Darryl Bird, John Crook, and Nick Weekes. Contacts: benno.barnard54@gmail.com or john@john-crook.com

We welcome articles on a wide variety of subjects. It must therefore be understood that the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of our two churches.

If you disagree with the opinions expressed in an article please approach us. We welcome debate and are happy to publish a rejoinder.

Material for publication must be submitted between the 1st and the 15th of the month prior to publication. Items sent later may not be included.



The Giant writes : 'When in around 1530 I built the Oxenbridge chantry chapel for myself and my family, I decided the east window should be of 'flamboyant' design, with flame-like upper lights. This was a fashionable late Gothic style in France in the fifteenth century, less commonly used in England. On the exterior I signed my work with two label stops at the ends of the hoodmould. The left-hand stop shows an Oxenbridge lion holding my family coat of arms (a lion rampant) quartered with the intertwined chevrons of my Etchingham ancestors; the other, an angel holding what is now a very eroded armorial shield, possibly showing my arms combined with those of my relations, the Fiennes family (three lions rampant).'

*Front Cover: 'The Lamb is the Word made flesh' by Darryl Bird. Mixed media.*

## **The Benefice of Brede with Udimore and Beckley and Peasmarsh**



### **Benefice Clergy**

#### **RECTOR**

Post Vacant  
Church Enquiries: 07900 300587

#### **ASSOCIATE VICAR**

Post Vacant

#### **LAY READER**

Mrs Lesley Curtis  
Fairlight View, Udimore Road  
UDIMORE TN31 6BG (T 07506 780044)

#### **RETired CLERGY**

The Revd Dr Bill Dolman  
Little Belhurst Cottage, Hobbs Lane  
BECKLEY TN31 6TT (T 01797 260203)

### **Church Officers**

#### **ST GEORGE'S BREDE** [www.stgeorgesbrede.org.uk](http://www.stgeorgesbrede.org.uk)

##### **CHURCHWARDEN**

Mr David Oliver  
2 Bellhurst Cottages  
Chitcombe Road  
BROAD OAK TN31 6EU  
davidoliver489@gmail.com  
07792 517614 / 07900 300587



##### **CHURCHWARDEN & ORGANIST**

Mr Duncan Reid  
Perryfield, Stubb Lane  
BREDE TN31 6EH  
duncandgary@gmail.com  
01424 882412

##### **TREASURER**

Mr Steve Edwards  
[chitcombesteve@gmail.com](mailto:chitcombesteve@gmail.com) or 07702 173839

##### **CAPTAIN OF BELLRINGERS**

Mr Colin Mitchell  
Contact via the Secretary : Mrs Wendy Burchett  
[wendyhayler@outlook.com](mailto:wendyhayler@outlook.com) or 01424 882727

**CHURCHWARDEN**

Mr Hugh Pye  
hughpye@hotmail.com or 07484 709316

*Udimore requires another warden. If you are interested in this role please contact Hugh Pye for further information.*

**TREASURER**

Mr Harry Curtis  
(Honorary Treasurer)  
Fairlight View, Udimore Road  
UDIMORE TN31 6BG  
harry@ecooftice.tax  
07572 878858



## February Services at St George's Brede

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Sunday 1st 10.00 a.m. | Benefice Eucharist at Beckley, celebrated by the Revd Bill Dolman |
| Sunday 8th 9.30 a.m.  | Parish Eucharist, celebrated by the Revd Yvonne Adam              |
| Sunday 15th 9.30 a.m. | Parish Eucharist, celebrated by the Revd Barry Carter             |
| Wednesday 18th        | Ash Wednesday – time and celebrant tbc                            |
| Sunday 22nd 9.30 a.m. | Parish Eucharist, celebrated by the Revd Yvonne Adam              |

Each morning at 8 a.m. (except Sundays), a small group gets together for informal worship, which includes singing a hymn. All are welcome to come along and share any thoughts on the readings, and join in quietly praying for those we know who are in need.

## Forthcoming Events, St George's Brede

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| February 4th  | Mothers' Union 1.30 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. at 2 Bellhurst Cottages, Chitcombe Road, Brede. See p. 37 for more information.    |
| February 6th  | Drop In Friday (Coffee, Chat and Games) 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. at Udimore Village Hall. See p. 27 for more information |
| February 15th | Dragons starting 10.45 a.m. in the church   |

**Little Giants**, for toddlers (and their parents), is currently on hold due to a lack of volunteers. Please contact Rhiannon Oliver on 01424 882037 if you are willing to help out.

**Dragons**, led by Jo Oliver, is for primary school children (and their siblings). It is a free, fun Sunday school based activity session with singing, craft, a Bible story, and a light discussion to get the children thinking about the meaning behind the story. Although it's aimed at primary school children it's open to all kids, both younger and older.

In January, we focused on Epiphany and being receptive to God. The Wise Men didn't just see the star: they travelled far and brought thoughtful gifts, and they listened to their dreams telling them not to return to Herod. Likewise, Joseph listened to his dream when he was visited by an angel telling him to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Even children's lives are busy these days, surrounded by technology, and it's easy not to hear God calling us and speaking to us, it's easy to ignore what is being shown to us, it's easy to be drawn away from Jesus and good things happening all around us. So to reflect all this we decorated stars, we made prayer stars full of our hopes and dreams for 2026, and then we planted crocus bulbs in pots to take home, as plant bulbs feel the temperature changes, search for the light, and are very receptive to their surroundings.

We hope you can join us in the church on Sunday 15th February at 10.45 a.m. We will be focusing on love! Because God's love for us is always there, whatever may happen.

Jo Oliver



Next Dragons  
Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February  
10.45am in the church  
Free craft and fun session for children

## Lent Lilies



This is the time when we think of our loved ones. If there is someone you would like to have remembered, we can do an arrangement of lilies and write his or her name on a list that will be displayed in St George's Brede. The cost this year will be £4 per lily. Kindly contact me as soon as possible if you wish to purchase one: Rhiannon 01424 882037 (please leave a message if we are not available).

## February Services at St Mary's Udimore

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Sunday 1st 10.00 a.m.  | Benefice Eucharist at Beckley, celebrated by the Revd Bill Dolman |
| Sunday 8th 10.00 a.m.  | Family Service, led by Lesley Curtis, followed by refreshments    |
| Sunday 15th 11.15 a.m. | Parish Eucharist, celebrated by the Revd Barry Carter             |
| Sunday 22nd 11.15 a.m. | Parish Eucharist celebrated by the Revd Christopher Breeds        |

## Forthcoming Events, St Mary's Udimore

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| February 4th | Mothers' Union 1.30 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. at 2 Bellhurst Cottages, Chitcombe Road, Brede. See p. 37 for more information. |
| February 6th | Drop In Friday (Coffee, Chat and Games) 10.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m. at Udimore Village Hall.                               |

## THE PARISH OF UDIMORE

### St Mary's Community Hall – Classes and Activities

#### PILATES: Monday to Thursday 9.15–11.15 a.m. (Term time)

Susan Taber: 07858 518504 susantaber66@yahoo.co.uk

#### ELEVATE YOGA: Flow Yoga suitable for all. Tuesday 7.00–8.00 p.m. (all year round)

Rachael: 07921 854105, elevateyogaclass@googlemail.com

#### SLOW FLOW TO YIN YOGA: Monday 7–8.15 p.m.

Jo-Jo Hancock: jojo@yogacreative.co.uk

#### STUDIO JAMIE BALLET: Tuesday 11.00 a.m.

Aysha Jamieson: 01424 883238, studiojamie@icloud.com

#### VINYASA FLOW: Friday 8.00 a.m.

Jo-Jo Hancock: jojo@yogacreative.co.uk

*All classes in term time stop over half-term and school holidays*

*Enquiries contact Community Hall Booking: udimorehallbooking@gmail.com*

### St Mary's Community Hall Hire

Our hall, nestling next to the Church, is set amidst apple orchards. It is bright and modern with central heating, a large car park, a well-fitted kitchen, and facilities for the disabled.

#### Monday – Friday £15.00 per hour (Events 1 to 6 hours duration)

*Events on Friday may have to finish by 2.00 p.m. if there is a weekend wedding.*

#### Saturday and Sunday £20.00 per hour (Minimum Booking of 3 hours)

**Bouncy castle use at the hall surcharge:** £10 (internal use), (£20 for external use).

#### One Day and Evening Hire

|                     |                          |         |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| <b>Sun to Thurs</b> | 08.00–23.00 (max 15 hrs) | £240.00 |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------|

|                    |                            |         |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| <b>Fri and Sat</b> | 08.00–23.30 (max 15.5 hrs) | £350.00 |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------|

Hire charges for some events over 6 hours may be negotiable.

#### Weddings

For information and hire charges email: [udimorehallwedding@gmail.com](mailto:udimorehallwedding@gmail.com)

### Readings for February 2026

#### Sunday 1st February (Candlemas 2nd February)

Malachi 3: 1-5  
Psalm 24: [1-6], 7-10  
Hebrews 2: 14-18  
Luke 2: 22-40

#### Sunday 8th February

Isaiah 58: 1-9a [b-12]  
Psalm 112: 1-9 [10]  
1 Corinthians 2: 1-12 [13-16]  
Matthew 5: 13-20

#### Sunday 15th February

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20 or  
Ecclesiasticus 15: 15-20  
Psalm 119: 1-8  
1 Corinthians 3: 1-9  
Matthew 5: 21-37

#### Sunday 22nd February

Leviticus 19: 1-2, 9-18  
Psalm 119: 33-40  
1 Corinthians 3: 10-11, 16-23  
Matthew 5: 38-48

## Knowing God: The Bible

by Duncan Reid

Many people enjoy reading. There is so much available: the classics, modern novels, poetry, technical manuals, whodunits, pop-up books, guidebooks, cartoons, and so on. Amongst my friends who especially enjoy reading, however, I can recall only a couple who claim to have read all their books from cover to cover. Most people, I would maintain, are like us—we have loads of books. Have we read them all? No. Do we intend to read them all? Probably not. Shall we get rid of some of them? No way! Quite a few we have read at least once, and they are our firm, reliable friends. Others may be regularly dipped into or consulted for various reasons or whims, but certainly not trudged through from cover to cover. And then there are the remainder, pretty much untouched, but still possessing a mysterious power and interest—waiting patiently for the right moment (if it ever comes) to come out and be brought to life in our minds and hearts.

Maybe the Bible (literally meaning ‘books’, plural!) is a bit like our bookshelves. There are the favourite passages: the thrilling stories in the Old Testament—Joseph, Jonah, David and Goliath, and so forth—the intriguing accounts of Jesus’ life in the Gospels; favourite poems among the Psalms; travel journals in Acts. And then there are the books we tend to shy away from to a greater or lesser extent, the ones with less appeal. Even the Church of England regularly omits large chunks of what it might refer to as ‘Holy Scripture’ in its Lectionary as we negotiate the ecclesiastical year.

St Paul, writing an encouraging letter to his friend Timothy, tells us that all scripture is God breathed and as that comes from Scripture itself, we are probably bound to believe him. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that we find a great deal of that scripture, that is to say the Bible, pretty hard going, not to say shocking at times. Yet we still do not want to consign any passage to the recycling bin. We trust in our forebears who compiled the Bible, and who can say how these difficult passages may speak to us in future?

Anyway, if scripture is indeed ‘God breathed’, where better to find and experience God? And where better to start than the Gospels, the ‘Good News’ of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John where we meet Jesus, the Word of God, almost face to face. He, for one, was... is... without doubt, an ‘all the books’ reader, completely involved in and familiar with the Old Testament writings. Suddenly, on Our Lord’s lips, those dry old Prophets become gloriously, well... prophetic. Jesus himself, in his life and ministry demonstrates by actions, words and stories who God is and how we might know him.

Reading! What an amazing tool it is!

## National Trust Rye & District Association | Monthly Flyer

We offer a range of enjoyable events each month to members and non-members of our association in support of The National Trust.



### Walks September-June | Talks October-June

Our 5 mile circular walks cost £3 and begin at 10.00am. All walks end with a rewarding pub lunch and a quiz. Our talks with popular guest speakers cover a range of topics and are held from 2.00pm at Brede Village Hall, and cost £5 for members/£10 for non-members – including refreshments.

### Outing | Quebec House & Emmett's Gardens Wednesday 22 April



Enjoy an outing to both **Quebec House**, the once home of General James Wolfe in Westerham, and **Emmett's Gardens**, the Edwardian garden of the plantsman Frederic Lubbock. There is the option to walk 4–5 miles from Quebec House to Emmett's. There is a cafe at Emmett's. We have chosen this time of year so that we can enjoy the beautiful bluebells.

### Spring Lunch at Flackley Ash Saturday 9 May 12.30pm



This year we return to the **Flackley Ash Hotel**. A charming privately owned Georgian Country House Hotel set in 5 acres of mature gardens. There is a three course menu, for a special price of £39.50 pp (including coffee, mints and gratuities). It's a wonderful opportunity for us all to get together and enjoy good food and conversation again in this beautiful setting.

### Theatre | Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury Wednesday 20 May



The year is 1943 and we're losing the war. Luckily, we're about to gamble all our futures on a stolen corpse. **Operation Mincemeat** is the fast-paced hilarious and unbelievable true story of the twisted secret mission that won us World War II. Don't miss out on this miraculous musical comedy sensation. The cost for the theatre ticket and coach is £86.00 per person.

### SOME FUTURE EVENTS TO ADD TO YOUR DIARY: Talk: A Year of Garden Birds Thursday 19th February | Walk: The Cove, Fairlight Thursday 12th March

**Contact:** Dee Williams (membership) 07760 115413 membership@ryenationaltrust@gmail.com  
Julie Etches (bookings) 01797 225317 julie.etches054@btinternet.com

## 100 Years Ago

John Crook

In the previous two issues I reported on the works going on in St George's during the winter of 1925/6: moving the font, and creating the Maud Mary Frewer memorial window at the west end of the north aisle. The window was installed in time for a service of dedication on 3 February, conducted by the Archdeacon of Hastings, the Venerable T. W. Cook, whose daughter Hester had designed and assembled the window.

Three days later, Hester Cook sent a receipt to the 'Old Rector', Canon G. E. Frewer, who had paid for his daughter's memorial window: £115, equivalent to £6,100 today. The project was complete!



Cover of dedication service sheet



Miss Hester Cook

Hester Cook's receipt



## Talk to Udimore Friends in Udimore

by Frank Langrish

*Here is a brief flavour of what my talk will be about on 21st February at St Mary's Hall, Udimore.*

I am the third generation of our family to farm locally. My grandfather came to Ludley Farm, Beckley, in 1914; my father was born in 1921 and started farming in the 1930s, and managed to rent and buy land on Pett Level. My son Edward is now the fourth generation, and his daughter Bonnie and son Freddie are at agricultural college, so will hopefully be the fifth. The type of extensive livestock farming we do is sometimes known as 'Dog and Stick', a reference to the fact that the only tools we need are a good sheep and cattle dog and a hazel stick.

We have farmed land on Romney Marsh for over eighty years, and my talk will be about this unique area between Pett Level and Rye Harbour. I will cover in some detail how the agriculture and certain major events over the last 150 years have altered the landscape and to an extent the wildlife.

Agriculture and land use has gone through many changes since the Enclosures Act of 1773, which was really the beginning of the Agrarian Revolution and the end of subsistence farming. While I won't talk about the early history of agriculture, it is the starting point for many of the features of the landscape we see today. The hedgerows of the Weald and the dykes of the Marsh were created as living boundaries. The local woodlands have in the past been cleared for growing crops and then—when this was no longer economic—many of these fields became woodlands again. Now there are schemes to take land out of production, paying the farmers subsidies in return, and plant trees again as a political gesture to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>.

Having been involved in farming and agricultural politics for over five decades, I have seen radical changes. The greatest one has been the efficiency of food production, which has led to huge reductions in the number of farms and farmers. This process has continued to accelerate, and the consequences are that we have lost the critical agricultural infrastructure such as abattoirs, farm supplies, livestock transporters, specialist farm buildings, and many other things we had come to expect would always be there.

The wildlife has also suffered as the changes in agriculture have occurred. It has been popular to blame chemicals and factory farming for the reduction in biodiversity, but the reality is very different. In the last two decades we have seen at least ten new species emerge. The trouble is that they are all predators! When there were more people on the land, they had the time to manage the main predators, and the balance of nature was preserved.

My talk concentrates on the small area from Pett Level to Rye Harbour, which has been changed so much by agriculture, the sea, gravel extraction, and war, with sea level changes over centuries adding an extra dimension.

I look forward to a full house at Udimore on 21st February.



Frank Langrish with his sheepdogs

## Out and About

by Gary Marriott

'There are so many beautiful things to see when you look about you on a walk,' said Sylvia one morning, referring to her walk round Pat's field. I often think of that when rambling about as it is so very true. How much better one can feel after such a walk, than after listening to the news or being hooked for hours by algorithms through your computer or small screen?

Just look over the Brede Valley at the moment. There is still much floodwater lying about, adding so much to the quality of the morning mists, which earlier today were a thick cushion of silver glowing in the bright sun. The effect was rather mystical and so fleeting that by mid-morning it had gone. The fallen leaves in the woods are now sodden and no longer have the life in them they had in November, which made them dance and skip through the air; they now make a different sound as they get ready to settle and disappear to become part of the soil once more and play their part in the continual cycle of life and death.

There is a surprising amount of colour about, if you look. For example, in gardens, the witch hazel can be seen, a funny scraggy little flower in pink or yellow, or the viburnum and the heavily scented daphne, both pink. Add to that the abutilon flowers which are still hanging on despite adverse conditions, the crab apples and rose hips and the glowing reds of the willow branches as their buds form, and the red berries of the ruscus. It's all there—if you take time to look!

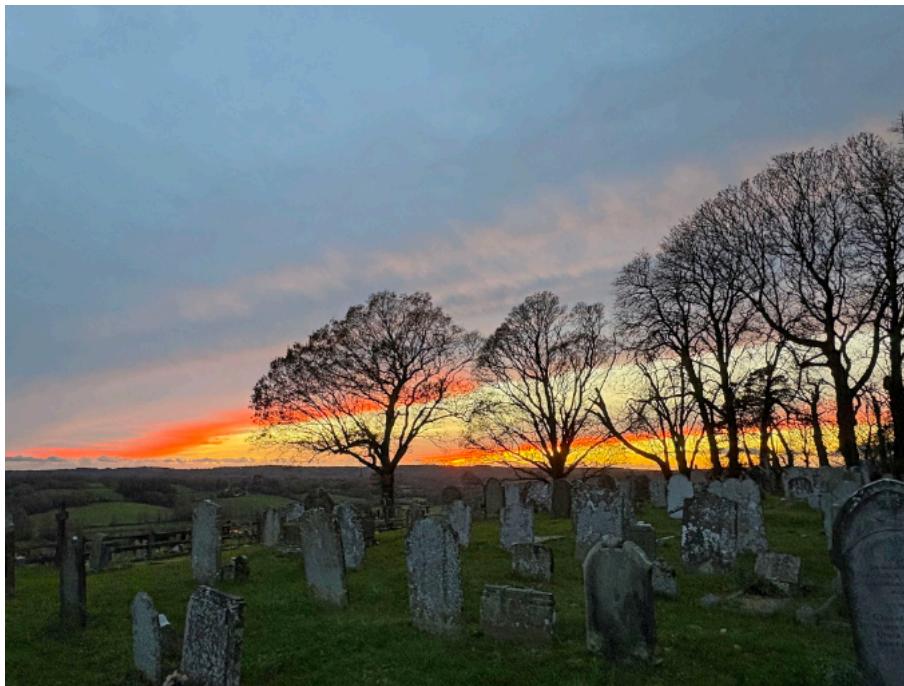
Speaking of red berries, the holly trees in our front garden are normally stripped of theirs, before the end of November, by the visiting redwing and the blackbirds, which both belong to the thrush family. In fact, in Russia the blackbird is known as the black thrush. But this year the holly trees still have their fruit in the middle of January. What has happened to the redwings? I do not know, but I hope they return.

We still note the reduction in jackdaw numbers, which perhaps can be explained by the reduction in trees for roosting and the increase in night lighting in this locality. But it is both pleasing and reassuring to see the blue tits flitting about the catkins, along with the wrens, and the robins—always interested in whatever you are doing in the garden, in case you uncover for them a bonus bug—and the sparrows at their favourite chattering spots, i.e. the corner of Pottery Lane and the top of Stubb Lane.

Last night, while driving from Doleham to Brede, I couldn't help wondering as I avoided a slightly pointed stone, probably from one of the many potholes, if it was indeed a stone? I stopped and walked back to find it was a toad sitting stock-still and upright in the middle of the road, staring down the

oncoming traffic. I asked him if I could help in any way, but he just nonchalantly walked to the side of the road and slipped away into a puddle.

You are so right, Sylvia, there are many beautiful things to see, if you look hard enough!



Brede Valley from the churchyard, early morning. John Crook

## The Secret Room

by Ro Gardner

I was indulging in one of my favourite pastimes—which, at the age of seven, was trying to comprehend how a Polyphon worked—when I became aware that everything was deathly quiet, and there was not a sign of anybody else around. With this sudden realisation that I was alone in a warren of underground chambers, I also remembered that I was not nearly as brave as I liked people to think. I stopped what I was doing and ran along the stone passageway towards the bottom of the steps that led up to ground level. As I ran, a cold hand clutched at my heart, because I was only too aware that any second the underground lighting could be switched off from upstairs. The door at the bottom of the stairs was shut. I knew that this door invariably stayed open all day and was pulled shut by the last person to leave. As I

grappled desperately with the latch, even in the midst of my panic I couldn't help noticing that in the wall, normally covered by the door when it was open, was a very small entrance into an unlit room. I wrestled the door open to find my Mother, having just realised that I was missing, descending the stairs to look for me.

It was several days after my rather frightening experience that I remembered to ask my Mother what was in the 'room behind the door'. To my amazement, she said she knew nothing of such a room, and that I was to ask my Dad when he got home from work.

At this point, I should explain that my Father had owned an antique shop on the Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells for the previous five years. Although the shop frontage was very small, if you descended the stone steps at the back of the shop, before you lay a warren of passages and a series of three large chambers, all excavated from the sandstone bedrock, which served my Father as showrooms and storage areas.

By the time my Father arrived home, I was bursting to ask him the all-important question, and even more surprisingly, he knew nothing of the room either. Looking back, I think my parents must have thought that my fear of being trapped in a pitch-black underground room had caused me to hallucinate, and that the mysterious room was a figment of my imagination. I must have been very insistent though, because next morning all three of us climbed on the bus, and scorched rubber on the way to S. A. Gardner, Antiques.

Upon reaching the shop, having switched on all the lights, we descended the stairs, my Father in the lead, Mum and I following behind with not a little



The Pantiles, 1950s. Postcard, Francis Frith Collection

trepidation. He unlocked the large, rough-cut door, and, as always, it swung open of its own accord, to rest against the wall. We stepped down the stone step, and as we did so, my Father remarked that no one had ever seen the door closed from the passageway side. He pulled the door away from the wall, and there, rather to my relief, was an opening into an unlit room. My Dad went back upstairs to retrieve his torch (power cuts were still quite common in 1949) and returned to us. His light revealed a quite small room, I suppose about eight feet square, empty except for something attached to the back wall. This proved to be a very old, ornately carved water pump, clearly dated 1636.

At this point, my Mother, who, like myself in later years, was a frustrated historian, instantly swung into action. Whilst my Dad opened his shop for the day, Mum and I went to the local library to find everything we could about the history of the Pantiles.

It was revealed to us that the original buildings on the site of the present-day Pantiles were erected about 1630, shortly after Lord North had been cured of 'whatever ailed him', by the mineral waters from the nearby spring. As a result of the worthy Lord's testimony, Queen Henrietta Maria, shortly after giving birth to the future Charles II, came to take the waters.

The Royal seal of approval resulted in Tunbridge Wells' becoming known as 'Royal Tunbridge Wells', to the great advantage of the local traders. Consequently, this patronage meant that the area became intensely Royalist when the Civil War started in 1642.

Although there is a good deal of speculation about why the sandstone underneath the Pantiles was so extensively excavated, no one knows for certain. It seems likely that the labyrinth was built as emergency hiding places, in case the Royalist cause faltered, and that there was probably at least one secret tunnel leading to the wooded areas of the nearby Common.

There was a huge amount of material available on the subject, and for weeks my Mother spent every spare moment in the reference library, looking for a specific reference to either our secret room or the mysterious water pump. I should have mentioned that immediately after its discovery, my Dad tried to persuade the pump to work. Although the arm pumped up and down willingly enough, not surprisingly, no water emerged. After a couple of days, my Father remembered a rather elderly acquaintance of his, who had used his village pump as a lad. The elderly gentleman was called in for his advice, and told us that if a pump had not been used for many years, it needed priming before it would work. Armed with this knowledge, my Dad poured a kettleful of water in the top, and sure enough, it pumped water as if it was new.

After much diligent research, my Mother too struck gold. Having sifted through the reams of historical narrative, she came across an almost whimsical footnote: the Legend of Sir Edwin Bickerstaffe.

Some weeks after the Civil War had ended, whilst Cromwell's soldiers were still carrying out mopping up operations, a few diehard Cavaliers, under the leadership of Sir Edwin, had taken refuge amongst their Royalist sympathisers in Tunbridge Wells. Cromwell was not known for his generosity of spirit, and there was no amnesty for the defeated King's supporters: those who were unable to disappear were hunted down and slaughtered. There was a price on the head of Bickerstaffe, who had been knighted for gallantry at the Battle of Roundway, and was a favourite of the King.

Cornered by a company of Roundheads, Bickerstaffe and his five remaining soldiers fought a heroic rearguard action. Sir Edwin vowed to defend the stairs leading to the underground passageways, and urged his men to make good their escape through a secret tunnel. After a few minutes' skirmishing, the gallant knight was wounded by a thrust from a pike. Slamming the door behind him to delay the Parliamentarians, he staggered downstairs to the underground chambers. He had not enough time to make good his escape through the hidden passage to the Common, but he found refuge in 'a secret room'. It was nearly an hour before Cromwell's men found him. Although he sold his life dearly, within a few minutes it was all over. Then came the interesting bit: 'At the end, Sir Edwin was repeatedly run through, and he clung for support to a water pump built into the wall. As his blood mingled with the water, he called down a dreadful curse upon Cromwell and all his descendants. And to this very day, it is said that if anyone uses the pump at five minutes before eleven o'clock, on the night of the 31st of May, the pump will spout blood instead of water.'

By sheer coincidence, the 31st of May was my Mother's birthday, which may have been one reason why, despite my Father's protestations, when that day came round, they both caught the last bus to the Pantiles.

When they told the story to me the following morning, I waited with bated breath for the bit where, on the stroke of five minutes to eleven, my Father activated the pump. For a few seconds, nothing had happened except the sound of subterranean gurgling. And then, flowing noisily, there emerged a copious spout of ... water.

It must be at least thirty years since I last remembered this boyhood adventure. But as I wrote the concluding few lines of this piece, a thought occurred to me. In 1651, there was no British Summer Time. So, what would have happened if Mum and Dad had pumped the accursed appliance at five minutes to twelve?

## **Eat the Seasons February – Forced Rhubarb**

by Gill Potterton



*Forced Rhubarb – Vibrant pink excitement*

There is a Great British delicacy, of which we should be proud, which is still grown in vast quantities using nineteenth-century techniques, production being mysteriously restricted to a small area of West Yorkshire, known as the 'Wakefield Triangle'. This otherwise agriculturally unpromising area notably had the ideal climate, rainfall, and heavy clay soil to support the concentrated cultivation of Forced Rhubarb.

Also known as Champagne Rhubarb, this crop brings some vibrant pink excitement to an otherwise dull period from January to March, and indeed the original reason for its production was to fill a gap in the dessert fruit calendar.

In this bizarre form of agriculture, large quantities of plants are grown in long, low sheds, subjected to heat and darkness, so that the tender shoots grow quickly in a desperate search for light; in fact so quickly that popping sounds can be heard throughout the sheds as buds burst open. The rhubarb is harvested by hand, by candlelight, as natural light spoils the colour of the leaves. The result is a pretty stem with fine bright pink skin over a white interior, crowned with small lemon-yellow leaves.

Forced rhubarb is of course simply the early season crop of its outdoor cousin, distinguishable by its thick red and green mottled stems and large dark leaves. The rhubarb plant is of Siberian origin, first imported to Great Britain in the fifteenth century and used primarily for medicinal purposes. Rhubarb is easy to grow, thrives even in neglected gardens, coming up year after year, its rosy green stems simply asking to be snapped off and cooked.

Champagne rhubarb is a delight to cook with. Botanically, rhubarb is not strictly a fruit, but it is certainly a pudding-provider, and that's good enough for me. The slender, tender baby-pink stems have a fresh flavour far less sour than those of its outdoor cousin. As it is available for only a short season, now is the time to try this very English 'fruit'—try adapting some of your favourite pudding or dessert recipes to accommodate its beautiful flavour and texture. Here are some tips and ideas:

- The best way to cook rhubarb and retain all its wonderful flavour is to 'roast' it in the oven. Stewing it risks reducing it to a soggy tasteless mush. Instead top and tail the rhubarb, cut it into even chunks, spread them out on a baking tray and sprinkle with 2-3oz / 50-75g caster sugar per 1lb / 500g fruit. Bake at Gas 6 / 200c for 15-20 minutes until tender. This way the chunks hold their shape and flavour.
- To make a Champagne Rhubarb Fool, strain the cooked rhubarb through a sieve, retaining the wonderful pink syrup, and leave to cool completely. Whisk some double cream (or a combination of cream with crème fraîche or yoghurt), to soft peaks. Stir the cool rhubarb gently through the cream and pile into large wine glasses. Decorate with chopped stem ginger, nuts, or orange zest, then drizzle with the saved rhubarb syrup.
- Once cooked and well strained, rhubarb can be treated like any soft summer fruit; use it to fill a flan or roulade, at the base of a custard tart, or even in a meringue pie—keep the rhubarb quite tart to offset the sweet meringue, and thicken the syrup with arrowroot, then stir it back into the rhubarb before filling your pastry case and piling on the meringue and baking.
- Cooked rhubarb can also be used in cake baking. Take any tried and tested cake recipe for apple cake, plum cake, etc., and substitute with rhubarb. Remember its affinity with ginger, orange, and also cinnamon.

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## A Passage To India On the road from Ranthambore to Agra

by Mary Barrett

'Good morning everyone! I hope you all slept well last night, and I am delighted that you all seem to have survived the extremely slippery marble floors in your showers. We usually get one or two casualties as a result of overconfidence in the shower ... Welcome aboard for our drive to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. I hope you all enjoyed the visit to Ranthambore National Park yesterday. Sorry about the pre-dawn departure—but, as you've gathered, traffic jams in the morning rush hour are something else.'

He is right. Six lanes nose to tail, stationary. Although a great chance to savour the variety of transport options. Our coach, obviously, and not the only one on the road. Cars, almost invariably scratched, or dented. And my favourites, the tuk-tuks. These little open-sided three-wheelers, usually green bodied with yellow canopies, seating four people officially ... as ubiquitous here as black cabs are in London, bustling about busily, transporting families (mother, father, three kids, granny, baby, and a couple of chickens), young entrepreneurs on two different mobiles, European tourists pretending not to be terrified, with white knuckled grips of the roof struts, traders cradling huge packages: all human life is here. Except for the majority of human life, which is on a motorbike, swarms of motorbikes. Two people to a bike is unusual; there is competition to see how many humans can be accommodated on a two-seater. Helmets strictly optional.

OK, somehow we seem to have made it out of the city and on to the motorway, together with a wonderful assortment of trucks and lorries, affording us an opportunity to appreciate the artistic skills of their drivers. No flat surface goes undecorated on these vehicles, including, rather alarmingly, the windscreen and the wing mirrors. This probably accounts for the demand on the backs of them, in at least two languages: 'Sound horn!' (I may not be



able to see you, but it's useful to hear you.) Everyone seems happy to oblige.

You think motorways should be reserved for motorised vehicles? Don't be silly! They are much more interesting if shared with those tuk-tuks, bicycle rickshaws, motorbikes (of course), the odd camel cart, and cows. Especially cows. A cow on the M25 is in serious trouble, and so is the traffic; a cow on the Indian equivalent is normal, and perfectly at home, browsing peacefully on the central reservation while the traffic thunders past, or strolling, often with a couple of pals, across three lanes of hooting, sharply braking vehicles decelerating rapidly from sixty mph to a standstill.

'I'd like to call your attention to a feature of our roads and motorways which we go to great trouble to maintain: the rubbish!' And a wonderful assortment it is, an almost unique variety of litter is strewn not only along both verges of the tarmac but also on the central reservation. Occasionally you will see a small area of roadside verge which is free of rubbish: rest assured, this has been noted and will be rectified in the very near future, probably when the driver behind us finishes his snack, or his cigarette, or just decides to tidy up his messy car.

'Weren't we lucky yesterday at Ranthambore?' What a cheerful chap! But he is right. The open-sided trucks with seating for twelve behind the driver weren't terribly comfortable, but they took us safely into the wild, just as the sun heaved up out of what one of us rather optimistically called 'the mist'. And after about an hour's drive into the park, Shere Khan obligingly strolled out of the undergrowth not more than twenty feet away, paused, observed us, sniffed disdainfully, and strolled on into the next clump of brushwood, but not before our truck listed sharply to the left as everyone surged to the side for the best-ever photo op. Just how lucky we were that morning we realised later that day when we went back again and could only find a tiger two or three hundred yards away, flat out asleep with its back to us.

And so to Agra. The problem with all these famous honeypot visitor icons is that we all know what we are going to see. Too many travel articles, too many pictures, yes, yes, seen it all before, ho-hum. Prepare for anticlimax.

Fully prepared for anticlimax, I decamp from the bus, pull the shoe covers on, and walk through the massive red sandstone western gate, to the view that everyone knows, all the pictures show, the great tourist-in-India cliché.

I was wrong—totally, utterly, completely wrong—the Taj Mahal is, quite simply, the most beautiful building in the world.

And it is a monument to love.

## Leave those Kids Alone – Reclaiming Campus for All

by Blake Larkin

The most revered academic institutions in our country, historically 'shining lights on hills' for free thinking and speech, are today in darkness thanks to loud minorities who look to extinguish the wicks by any means necessary. Indeed, their thirst to support ostracisation, coercion, and even, in some cases, terror, have made universities a living nightmare for anyone who dares to think differently from the herd. I write this on my return to *The Giant* as an issue I have seen become prevalent amongst friends who are still at university across the country. Whilst a few heads have been turned about some of the themes in my previous articles, I still am blessed that my head hasn't rolled. Granted, I write under pseudonym, which makes me somewhat of a coward, yet the reality is this: if they knew you, they would want to take everything from you.

In the week that I write this article, The Free Speech Union, the largest support network of free speech on campus and elsewhere, has been subject to a vicious cyber attack. The hackers are part of a cell of trans rights activists, known as 'Bash Back', a name which is a subtle play on their wider warped world view, and how the FSU is categorised in this: 'Bash the Fash' (Fascists). The heist included the confidential data of the names and addresses of any donors that had given one-off payments of £50 or more to the FSU. Following an emergency High Court injunction claim by the FSU, Mr Justice Bright, named the 'respondent' in the injunction. This respondent is a graduate of cyber security at the University of Warwick, a Russell Group known for its excellence in several faculties. 'They' go by the name of Autumn Redpath and during their graduation proudly wore the *keffiyeh* and unveiled the 'trans flag' with the words 'Free Palestine' on it. The absurdity alone of this unholy alliance is on a par with some Monty Python sketches.

Bash Back has been encouraging all 'trans liberation' campaigners to form cells just like their own and to target, for terror, high profile 'transphobes'. Militance on campus is not new, but in the digital age, with all the hyper-interconnectivity it has ushered in, the fear that surrounds speaking out is at an all time high. In a similar vein, this story broke in the same week that the United Arab Emirates expressed its intention to withdraw its funding from UK universities, following concerns about the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood on UK campuses.

Yet, braver souls than I dare to speak without masks or pseudonyms. A counter-revolution against this fearsome intimidation is taking shape across the country. Whether you are politically aligned with these courageous souls or not, they deserve nonetheless our undivided support, as does the FSU. Because at the fabric level of this finely woven heirloom we call Britain is the

God-given right and liberty of speech. May 2026 be full of fearless free thought and speech. May we once again strengthen our friendships through healthy disagreement. And may we always remember our heritage of faith guided by our conscience.



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### **Villanelle**

by Stephen Wrigley

Hello. What gives these days? It's been a while.  
Please hang around and chew the cud with me.  
I had forgotten how you'd always smile.

Clichés aside, meetings can be a trial;  
Memories may differ, you will agree.  
Hello. What gives these days? It's been a while.

One can recall physique, a lack of guile,  
An openness of manner but you see  
I had forgotten how you'd always smile.

Too soon we lived apart; a country mile  
Divided us, your fields, my cargo quay.  
Hello! What gives these days? It's been a while.

Marriage. Children. Our daughters walked the aisle  
Then guests raised glasses to our one, your three.  
I had forgotten how you'd always smile —

Gently, when loss came or calamity.  
The steady word not silence was your style,  
A hand upon an arm. Yet, poignantly,  
I had forgotten how you'd always smile.

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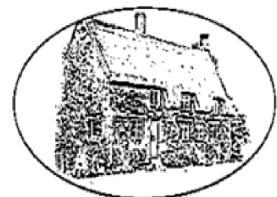
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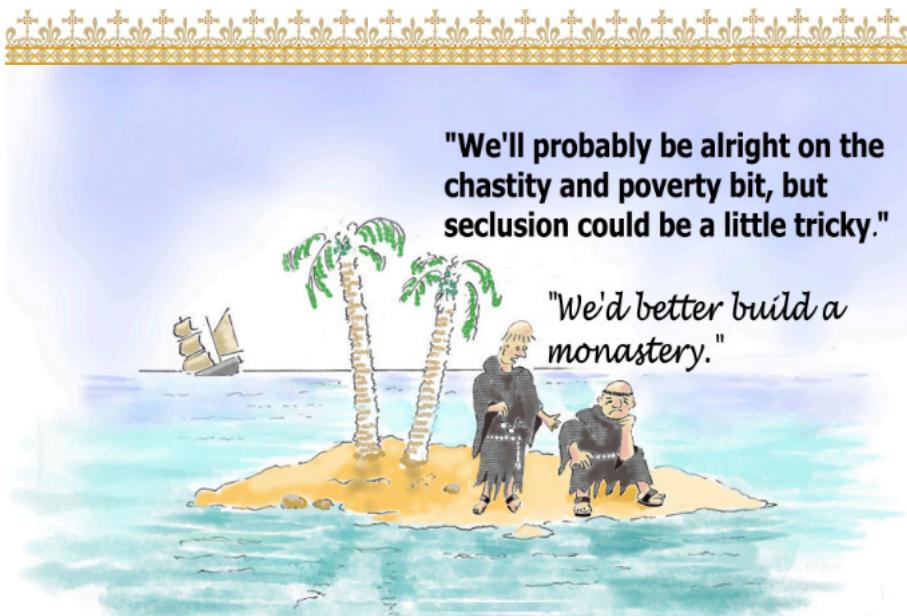
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*View of St George's, Brede from the roof of Hillside. Photo by John Crook*



Cartoon by Mike Bone

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## Brede Residents 75 Years ago

by RoseMary Musgrave and Jennifer Sparkes

*... continuing our series of memories of Jennifer Sparkes and RoseMary Musgrave, who compiled these childhood memories of local residents as a COVID lock-down project in 2020–21. Our account resumes at the north end of the Village Green.*



*North end of village green. Centred on Wayside and Jasmine.*

In the triangle at the top of Stubb Lane is a pair of attached cottages. The one nearest the main road (Wayside) was bought in the mid-1950s by a retired Swiss chef, M. Duprez, and his English wife Dorothy. We cannot recall who was there before.



*North side of Jasmine and Wayside.*

In the other cottage (Jasmine) lived Jack Apps and his wife May (Maggie). Jack was the blacksmith and farrier. His forge was a short distance up the main road. They had a daughter, Connie, who was deaf and dumb; she married a man who was similarly afflicted. Fortunately, Connie's daughter Marigold did not inherit this condition, and often stayed with her grandparents.

A little further up, on the right the footpath went across the fields, dividing so as either to come out beside The Cedars or continuing behind the houses to Broad Oak. It was the quick way for us to go to Joe Warne's shop in Cackle Street, to use our Sweet Ration and spend our pocket money!

Going up the main road and set slightly back is the white weather-boarded Forge Cottage where Mrs Horton lived. We have a feeling that her sister may have lived there as well. William Horton was the blacksmith before Jack Apps, which would explain why the forge was close to the house.



William and Ellen Horton and their son son Leslie outside Forge Cottage c. 1902.

I can remember going to the forge—the building was at right angles to the road with the entrance facing down it. Looking through the wide doorway the furnace was central, with anvils on both sides of it. Everywhere there was a mass of bits and pieces—large and small—that no doubt would ‘come in handy one day’. The smell varied with the work. We had to take our carthorse there to have his hooves trimmed and to be shod. The smell was quite revolting when his hooves were being singed to fit the shoes. Jack had



William Horton working in the forge c. 1902.

Parfitt, a farmer who lived at Steeplands Farm in Pottery Lane, retired to Ashleigh next door with his housekeeper Norah Ashman.

Opposite Forge Cottage was Gordon Cottage, originally two cottages, occupied by Mr and Mrs Frank Cruttenden, then by their son Jack and his wife Alice *née* Paine. Then came two pairs of houses (Church Farm Cottages), in one of which lived Annie Sellings, Fred Jenner's half-sister, and her husband George. We can remember two of their five children. One was Audrey who married Billy Allen (from the shop); and for a time they lived in a flat opposite a shop owned by Mr Warner senior (now a barber's shop). The youngest daughter was Sylvia.

On the right up a drive is Roselands. Jennifer's godmother Cicely Scott had some connection there—probably family. Her husband was John Scott, the son or nephew of the Scott family of Pelsham Manor in Peasmash. Probably in 1938 they moved to Dartmouth where John taught at the Naval College. Our mother with Jennifer aged about 18 months was evacuated there in early 1941, but returned after a short time as more bombs were falling there than in East Sussex.

a particularly good way with animals. We continued to have a carthorse after the war because Fordson tractors were too wide to go down the hop aisles: these could not be widened because the weight of the hop bines would have brought down the ‘strings’ (we did not have wires). Once the smaller Massey Ferguson tractors were introduced the carthorse was kept on but was put into retirement! The forge has since been replaced by Anvil Cottage.

Between the forge and the drive leading to Roselands was a pair of cottages (further houses have been built there since the 1950s). Marley Platt, the house nearest the forge, was owned by Fred Jenner's mother and her partner Fred Waters; after we left Fred and Ruth Jenner moved into the house, and Mr



*View from Roselands, with Church Farm Cottages.*

After the war Roselands became a guest house. We do not know its use during the war during the war. Before that it was a tea shop run by Miss Howlett; it was advertised in a booklet called the *Illustrated Guide to Brede* (1931): *Morning Coffee, Luncheons, Teas. Light Meals always ready. Open on Sundays after Morning Service, and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Parties and Special Meals arranged for at any time and tables reserved. Phone Brede 20.* In the 1950s it could not have been a B & B because there was nowhere near to have an evening meal. The Red Lion was just a village pub —almost exclusively for men.

After the bend in the road on the right side is a weather-boarded house, Spring Cottage, owned by Victor and Faye Tyler. The next house up on that side is the Old Posting House (now 'Old Post Office'). For a short time in the 50s it was lived in by Mrs Kate Barham and her two late teen/early 20s sons. Tragically, they were both killed in a motorbike accident. There was some link with the bird sanctuary on Skokholm Island in Pembrokeshire. It was then bought by Miss Frances Briggs, who for many years had been Laurence Olivier's secretary. Was it a coincidence that she came here or was she prompted by Olivier? He and Oswald Frewen knew each other and it is said that it was at the Sheephause that he proposed to Vivien Leigh.

Then comes a house on the top of the bank, Sant Roc, which was owned during the war by John Proctor. He was linked with our family by scouting and the Home Guard. Shortly after the war he moved to Winchelsea Beach

and the house passed to Miss Chandler, who loved animals and ran the Brownies. The path to the house was beside the spring of water and up some steep steps.



*Looking SE down the 'Village Street', showing (left) a row of cottages, now Tamarisk Cottage, Rose Cottage, Lymholme, Springfield, and West View. Lion Cottage on the right.*



*Spring Cottages, Brede.*

*The same view after road widening in the mid 1950s.*

In the adjoining row of cottages Mr Standen lived in Tamarisk at the north end; he was a jobbing gardener. In another lived Mr and Mrs Charles Edwards; he was ex-Royal Navy and worked as a decorator and general handyman.

In that stretch of road we have no recollection of Mr and Mrs Mills, who lived in The Hollies on the left. Opposite, just before Warne's shop, was Alpha Place, a large house that was set slightly back and had a big tree beside the road. Built on the site of the old workhouse, it had a large white gate that opened on to their drive; we used to call it 'White Gates'.

That brings us to 'Crouch's Corner', named after Crouch's Store, and the junction with Pottery Lane.



*Crouch's Corner*

*We are grateful to Wendy and Jamie Burchett, and to Sylvia Butler, for their further input into these memories of 75 years ago.*



## Brede and Udimore Luncheon Club

The Lunch Club Committee sends good wishes to all our members for a Happy and Healthy 2026.

We last met at the Red Lion in December for our celebratory Christmas Lunch; and what a happy and festive occasion it was! The two-course meal, with coffee and chocolates to follow, was enjoyed by us all. Many compliments and thanks winged to Arianne, Spencer, Tracey, and Helen for their hard work and efficient service in making our Christmas meal so special.

We next meet on Tuesday 24th February at 12.30 p.m. at the Red Lion. For information about the Club please contact me on 01424 882007.

Frances Parnham (Membership Secretary)

## Brede Women's Institute

Our first Meeting of the year got underway with a warm welcome from our Joint President, Jennie Drew, to visitors, members and our speaker, Lucy Jenner.

Plans are in place for 2026 and we are looking forward to a mixed programme of activities and events.

Detailed information for the 2025/26 Resolutions were on display and during the meeting members were requested to vote for one of the five short-listed options. Our votes will be combined with those cast nationwide and the Resolution receiving the most support will be debated at the WI's National Annual Meeting in June.

Following the business part of the meeting, the members celebrating their birthdays in January received pot plants and cards with our good wishes.

We then settled to focus on Lucy Jenner's talk, 'Move it or Lose it – a New Year's Resolution!' Lucy's introduction explained that the National Programme, 'Move it or Lose it', was set up eleven years ago in the Midlands to encourage people in their older years to stay young and strong whatever their age. And so it wasn't long before Lucy got us all moving as she demonstrated some simple exercises to lively music. Our repertoire of moves gradually increased as we gained confidence, concentrating particularly on our coordination and balance. Lucy's final encouraging words to us all were, 'Exercise little and often—just a little bit every day'.

Diana Good gave the vote of thanks and commented that, 'I'm sure we all feel better for taking part!' It certainly was a fun afternoon and we really welcomed our reward of afternoon tea.

The competition, 'Sports Memorabilia', was won by Louise Hull.

Our next Meeting is on Wednesday 11th February at 2.00 p.m. in Brede Village Hall. The speaker is Jo Larcombe, and her talk is entitled 'Vibrate'.

The competition is 'An Old Kitchen Utensil'.

For information about Brede WI, please contact Sue Orchard (Joint President) on 07305 693745.

Frances Parnham

## News from Trinity Methodist Church, Broad Oak

**Church Services.** We meet for worship every Sunday at 10.30 a.m. When there is a fifth Sunday in the month, an informal Service is held in the Hall at 3.30 p.m. All are welcome to join us and stay for refreshments after the Services.

**Meet-on-Mondays.** Every week between 2.00 p.m. and 4 p.m. (except Bank Holidays). Come and join our friendly group for various activities: games and quizzes, crafts, talks/discussions and book swap (we have a large selection of paperbacks), and then enjoy afternoon tea.

**Wednesday Welcome.** Every Wednesday 10.00 a.m. – noon. Call in and join us for morning refreshments. There's a choice of machine made coffee, a selection of teas, and cakes and biscuits, all to be enjoyed in a warm and friendly space.

**Community:** The New Year has begun well, with David Swales, our Community Lay Worker, resuming his pastoral care visits to Roselands Care Home. The residents told him how much they look forward to his visits and also mentioned that they loved the hand-made Christmas cards they received from the children and helpers from Brede Primary School.

David's contact with Brede Primary School is now well established and plans for the Easter Term are well underway, with arrangements being made for church and school visits, activities and assemblies.

For further information about Trinity Methodist Church Broad Oak, please visit our website: [www.trinitybroadoak.org.uk](http://www.trinitybroadoak.org.uk).

Frances Parnham

## Brede Friendly Circle

Our group goes out for coffee at various locations in the wider area. The drive is never longer than 15 miles and we always aim to be at the venue by 10.30 p.m. We have a few drivers who can offer transport to those who require it.

We have fun and friendship within our group and if you feel that this is something you might enjoy please contact our membership secretary, Carol, on 01424 883262.

Rhiannon Oliver

## Brede Mothers' Union



Our meeting this month will be on Wednesday 4th February at 1.30 p.m., at 2 Bellhurst Cottages, Chitcombe Road. Please phone me if you are interested: 014242 822037.

In March there will be a District meeting: the 150 years of the Mothers' Union will be discussed and the celebration we may hold in East Sussex to mark the year. Our aim is to support marriage and family life.

Rhiannon Oliver (Branch Leader & Bexhill District MU Chairman)

## Brede Design with Flowers

The next meeting of our happy group of flower arrangers will be on 9th March at 7.00 p.m. at 2 Bellhurst Cottages, Chitcombe Road.

In January, at our first meeting, we did a green vegetation design. We then met on the 26th and did 'All for Love', with an eye to St Valentine's Day. There is no meeting in February.

Our next subject is a design for St Patrick's day. If you fancy having a go, do phone me at 01424 882037 and join us for a fun few hours. You will take home a masterpiece for all to admire!



Rhiannon Oliver

## Nursery Rhyme by Liz Miles

Mary had a little lamb,  
Its fleece was pure as snow,  
And everywhere that Mary went  
That lamb was sure to go.

Its fleece was white as snow alright,  
The kind you shouldn't eat,  
And everywhere that Mary went  
It piddled on her feet.

Mary had a little lamb,  
Its fleas were not so white,  
And everywhere that Mary went  
They hopped in for a bite.

Now Mary has a larger lamb,  
No longer her cute button,  
She took him to the abattoir  
And sold him on for mutton.



Any suggestions or requests? Contact me at [lizmiles77@outlook.com](mailto:lizmiles77@outlook.com)



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#### Editorial Team

Benjamin Barnard, John Crook, Darryl Bird,  
Nick Weekes  
[benno.barnard54@gmail.com](mailto:benno.barnard54@gmail.com)

#### Subscriptions

Steve Edwards  
[chitcombeSteve@gmail.com](mailto:chitcombeSteve@gmail.com)  
07702 173839

#### 4CHARITIES

Mrs Liz Turgoose 01424 882657

#### BREDE MOTHERS' UNION

Mrs Rhiannon Oliver 01424 882037

#### FRIENDS OF ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

Dr John Crook [john@john-crook.com](mailto:john@john-crook.com)

#### FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

Mrs Elizabeth Dean 01424 882206

#### CHURCH FLOWERS

|         |                     |              |
|---------|---------------------|--------------|
| Brede   | Mrs Rhiannon Oliver | 01424 882037 |
| Udimore | Zoë Wilmot          | 07771 657670 |

#### DEANERY SYNOD ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

|         |            |              |
|---------|------------|--------------|
| Brede   | vacant     |              |
| Udimore | Zoë Wilmot | 07771 657670 |

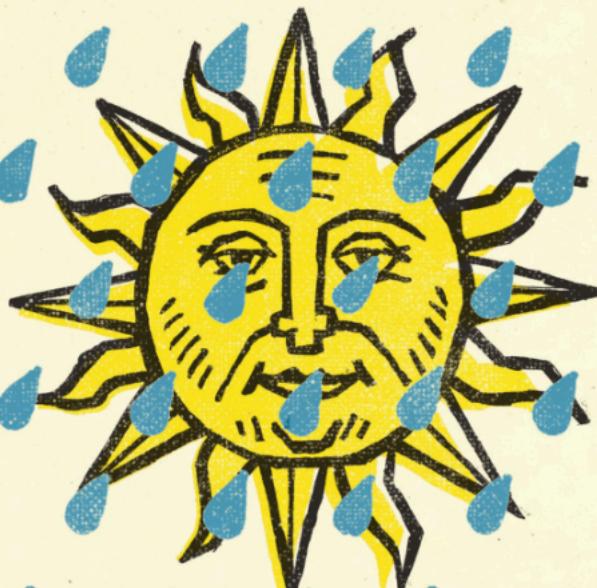
#### PARISH GIVING SCHEME

|         |  |  |
|---------|--|--|
| Udimore | Jonathan Cornwell  |  |
|         | <a href="mailto:jonathancornwell@me.com">jonathancornwell@me.com</a> |  |

*Rear cover by Graham Johnson*

Nº 6

Old Sussex words  
&  
their modern translations



Monkey's Birthday

Sudden, unexpected sunshine  
during rain.