



## The Window

February

2026



### Robin (of the) Hood triumphs

*The Panto is behind us. Oh no it isn't! Oh yes it is, sadly—But what a pantomime!*

*Robin Hood was fantastic and very funny, and was thoroughly enjoyed by packed houses and all ages.*

*Congratulations to all the brilliant cast and crew!*

In the king's absence his wicked brother, Prince John (**Steve Daniels**), ruled with his henchmen, the Sheriff of Nottingham (**Richard Moberly**) and the Deputy Sheriff (**Beaux Bliss**).

Prince John started his 'reign' by arresting Robert of Locksley (**Guy Hildred**), whose wife Lady Locksley (**Mark Eagle**) had a lot of fun in his absence. Robin (**Harry Francis**), his son, found himself homeless and with his able friend Will (**Siobhan Bennett**) set off for the Forest.



The tale began in peaceful Sherwood, under the rule of Good King Richard (**Roger Paisley**). One day the King mysteriously disappeared and nobody knew why. Although it looked as if the cause might lie with a spell that had gone wrong from the witches in the woods (**Liz Yates, Kate Slack** and **Merit van den Berg**).

## Robin (of the) Hood t



Living in the Forest was a group of friends who had banded together to defend the poor against the ruthless Prince.

We met the Merry 'Men' – this year played by panto stalwarts **Jesse-Mae, Holly Bliss, Eddy Hildred** and newcomer **Clifford Jordan** as Friar Tuck – a truly merry band.

Also in the woods were the Twiglets, who all acted and sang beautifully (**Molly Wilkinson, Isobel Barry, Poppy Johnson** and **Aubrey Smith**), and dogs (**Jack McQuade** and **Casey Cooper Bliss**), who escaped regularly but were also very good at tying up the baddies.

The motto of this merry band was 'To friends in need, we're friends indeed'. They gave us lots of great acting, singing and laughs, as well as trying to train Robin in the ways of an outlaw, with mixed success and fun along the way.

As the tale went on, resourceful Maid Marian (**Heather Banyard**) was found by the Twiglets and brought to the Forest, where she met and fell in love with Robin Hood.

However, the Prince and his henchman arrested her and put her in prison. Thankfully Robin found her, and the key to the prison 'door', but found himself swapping places in a classic panto mix-up.

Meanwhile, to complete a spell to restore things to the old order, the witches stole three items from the Merry Men and in a flash an alarmed King Richard was returned to England.

Back in his rightful place he banished his dastardly brother Prince John, who fled, with Lady Locksley in hot pursuit, last seen crossing the A4074 towards North Stoke.



We also enjoyed the reprise from last year's panto of the 'Griggaclear' broadband installers Sid (**Martin Griggs**, who also doubled as a taxi driver, appearing every time 'taxes' were mentioned) and Fred (**Richard Moberly**). Once again, they hilariously tied each other up verbally and with their cables.

## Triumphs (continued)...

This year's clever script was written by **Lottie Rundall** (also playing an Estate Agent) and the tale was fresh, fun and full of surprises – including brilliant improvisations as required! Expertly directed by **Liz Yates**, who reminded us at the outset what a panto is all about.

The clear storytelling of **John Blair** and **Kate Moberly**, the

producer, guided us through each performance, with **Jack Eagle** (crew) displaying the passage of time.

The set was a magical masterpiece, and beautifully painted by **Penny Eagle** who also managed scene changes and props, while lighting and sound were very ably led again by **Hamish Cassels** and **Damian Slack** respectively. **Steve Daniels** was Music Director, and we enjoyed the cleverly chosen songs sung with gusto by the cast, including Robin's 'I shot the sheriff' and a rousing chorus of 'Men in Tights'!

Creating the wonderful range of costumes this year was **Sylvia Beeton**. **Holly Bliss** led the make-up again (she must have run out of rouge by the end?).

It was great to see smiles on everyone's faces from beginning to end and lots of enthusiastic audience participation off stage and on. Huge thanks to all involved for entertaining us so royally, and for all the very hard work involved over many months.



**Donations from money raised this year is to be shared between Ipsden Church, the Village Hall, our local foodbank and St John's Air Ambulance.**

Additional thanks to **Jacqui Mullins**, front of house and bar staff, and **David Coldwell** for the photographs.

# Colourful lights and quiet C



St Mary's Church lights dazzling beneath a twilight sky



Festive lights and decorations in The Street glowing under the moonlight



A home in Newtown adorned with colourful bright lights

# Christmas nights in Ipsden



The Grade II listed Woodhouse Farm lit with draping vivid lights and featuring a nativity scene



# Tinsel, Toddlers and Tradition



We enjoyed a lovely walk up to the church, stopping at the war memorial to visit our poppies once again. We felt very proud of them and took time to remember which poppy each of us had made, carefully checking that our names were still written on the back.

Before we left, we signed our glittery Christmas tree thank-you card for John. At the end of the service, we presented him with our sparkly creation and a small gift to say thank you for making us feel so welcome throughout the year.

John then shared a beautiful story about an owl who grows rather grumpy over Christmas as more and more visitors arrive at the barn where he is staying to meet Baby Jesus. We made our Christingles while John explained what each part represents—and we did incredibly well to only nibble one or two decorations along the way. We finished with carols and a lively rendition of *Christmas Pudding*.

We were invited back to help decorate the Christmas tree and set up the nativity scene. We were lucky to enjoy some sunshine on the way and stopped to check on our poppies at the war memorial. There were lots of curious questions about the engraved names.

Susie and her wonderful team welcomed us. They showed us boxes filled with flowers, holly and pine cones at the front of the church. We enjoyed our snack while watching them work for a little while.

Lucy was carefully guided in helping to create the nativity scene, where we learned that all the figures are made from porcelain, which is very fragile! Susie also very kindly treated us to a chocolate snowman each, instantly earning her a place among our favourite people.

Working together beautifully, we decorated the tree, making sure it was covered in festive decorations from top to bottom.



I too used to come to the church on the last Friday before Christmas to decorate the tree. It felt so special to continue the same tradition. We walked back to the nursery to discover that our chef, Amber, had prepared a full Christmas lunch for us—what a magical morning!

**Rebecca Fern**

# Where did Christmas go?

Ash Wednesday is fast approaching us and I feel we must put in *The Window* archive that Christmas did not just pass us by.



Apart from the usual flurry of family preparations, overloading the fridge and freezer and somehow fitting in the wonderful range of village parties (and of course a bit of carol singing), the serious business began in a packed Ipsden Church on December 18 for the Early Days' Christingle Service. It was a delight to be able to share the Christ story in such a fun way.

Large congregations in both Ipsden and North Stoke celebrated separated Festivals of Nine Lessons & Carols, of course with a masterclass in campanology from Tower Captain, Tim, in North Stoke.

Finally, Christmas night and morning were celebrated respectively with Holy Communion in Ipsden and North Stoke.

The Christmas morning service is always a good chance to show off what Santa had left during the night before family time.

For us in the vicarage, Christmas was a different experience this year. We had just buried Jean but our home was still filled with laughter, cheer and a little tear but we still pulled crackers, wore silly hats and ate too much.

We will miss Jean very much and maybe the 'bubbly' had lost some of its sparkle but we want you all to know how we have all been so moved and buoyed at the same time by the love, support and prayers of the lovely people in these two villages.

The truth is, we don't have to let Christmas just pass us by...

If you have heard the angels sing at all, then the abundant opportunity for its spirit will carry you through the year.



## **The Work of Christmas**

by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with the flocks,

then the work of Christmas begins:

to find the lost,

to heal those broken in spirit,

to feed the hungry,

to release the oppressed,

to rebuild the nations,

to bring peace among all peoples,

to make a little music with the heart...

And to radiate the Light of Christ,

every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say.

Then the work of Christmas begins.

## Church flower arranging guys and girls visit Braziers Park



**Susie Williams**

The group, plus a few village residents, were invited to the park on two visits. The first in October to tour the garden and walled vegetable garden and the second in November to have a private tour of the house.

The Grade II listed house was built originally as a farmhouse in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and has been remodelled over the years, most notably in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and then in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century into a Strawberry Hill Gothic Style. The later renovations were carried out by the Fleming family before they moved up to Joyce Grove in Nettlebed.

Since the 1950s it has been home for a secular intentional community run as a School of Integrative Social Research and registered as a charity. Glyn Faithful lived and ran the house for many years, father of the famous Mariann, who spent her early years growing up here.

The walled Garden and old greenhouses provide an abundance of vegetables and fruit for the residents, all worked organically to promote and enhance nature and wildlife.

There are plans to provide woodland coppicing and wild meadow management to work the land as ecologically as possible, with all the work being undertaken by volunteers and residents.

On our house visit we were toured the lovely old, panelled rooms, the first floor with a galleried staircase right up to the attic rooms and out on to the fire escape where we could view the gardens surrounding the house.

On both occasions we were given a welcome cup of tea and cake in the old wood panelled dining room, with a magnificent, panelled ceiling recently beautifully restored.

# The Gift of Time

Paul and Julie are having a party, and we haven't replied yet.

Lets take the plane somewhere warm and tropical. I suppose it will be peak season, but it's NEW YEAR!

I mean, last year wasn't much to shout about, was it? She isn't missing out. It was a dreadful start with Alan turned away from A&E and told to take paracetamol—shocking.

Are you doing anything for New Year? Shall we head off somewhere? I've got a bit of leave owing but I know, it's getting late to plan anything.

Yes, staying up late to watch the fireworks on TV is a bit lame. I run out of steam at about 10.30pm these days.

Poor Molly at the hospital has to work through now they're not on strike. I told her she ought to look for a post in the private sector.

Seriously thought, I saw old Harry in the shop yesterday. He had a walker and came over to say hello. We've got to make the most and go away!

I know... Alan and Jim had everything going for them in their lives. Then just like that, their time had gone. I wonder what it means to live fully in the time we've got, however little that might be.

I think we'll both have a great time. No telly, no screens. Just a good chat, a knit and a pot of tea— That'll do brilliantly. **The world needs a bit more making and mending right now, don't you think?**

Why don't you come over on New Year's Day instead. I'll put the kettle on and we can sit by the fire and sort the world out? - Bring your knitting!

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6-13**

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

<sup>6</sup> a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,

<sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

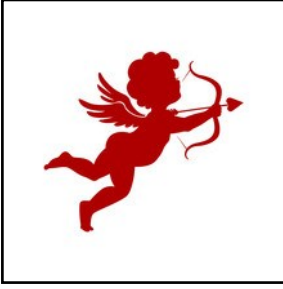
<sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

<sup>9</sup> What do workers gain from their toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the burden God has laid on men He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. <sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.



**Rev Canon Kevin Davies**

# "Love is in the air but so is pancake batter!"



February is quite the spiritual and culinary juggling act. It's short and cold, yet somehow manages to squeeze in romance, pancakes, and the start of Lent.

Valentine's Day is that special time when we celebrate love. Of course, nothing says "I adore you" quite like a hastily bought card and a box of chocolates that mysteriously disappear before the big day.

For some, Valentine's is a grand affair — candlelit dinners, roses, and poetry. For others, it's a quiet evening with a cup of tea and the cat. Both are perfectly valid expressions of love.

But true love is patient, kind, and often found in the small, ordinary acts. These are the everyday miracles that keep relationships alive.

As we recover from Cupid's arrow, along comes Shrove Tuesday and pancakes. A simple dish, yet somehow capable of turning the kitchen into a scene from a disaster movie — it's less culinary elegance and more Olympic discus throw.

It was traditionally the day to use up foods before the fasting of Lent. It's not about giving up chocolate to lose a few pounds, it's about making space for God.

It invites us to quieten down, set aside distractions, and listen for the still, small voice of God.

It's a time to reflect on Christ's journey to the cross and to ask ourselves: What needs clearing out in my life? What habits, attitudes, or fears are cluttering my soul? - It's not about punishment, it's about freedom.

The beautiful irony is that the season that begins with pancakes and ends with Easter is, at its core, a love story. Not the sentimental kind, but the sacrificial kind.

The greatest love story isn't written in roses or rhymes, but in the outstretched arms of Christ. On the cross, love took on flesh and bore the weight of the world. That's the love we're invited to live out — a love that forgives, serves, and gives without counting the cost.

So how do we make this real? Well, here are a few ideas:

**Fast from noise:** Turn off the TV for an hour and sit in silence. Listen for God.

**Give generously:** Not just money, but time. Call someone who's lonely. Offer a helping hand.

**Pray with purpose:** Each day, thank God for one thing and pray for one person.

**Acts of kindness:** Leave a note of encouragement. Share your pancakes (even the wonky ones).

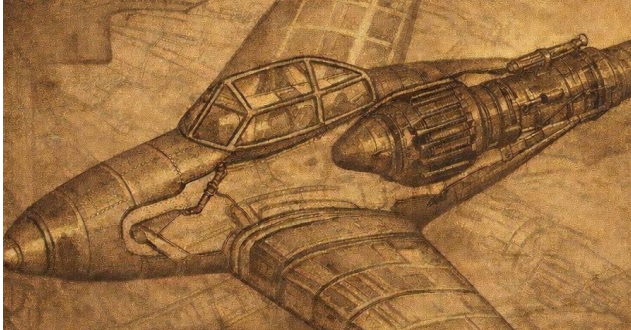
Flip your pancakes with joy and share your chocolates generously but as Lent begins, consider what you might lay down as an act of love. When we make space for God, we discover that the love we celebrate on Valentine's Day is just a shadow of the love that holds the universe together.



**Canon John Blair**

# What's on?

## Another Journey Through Cholsey's Past



Remarkably, it's almost three months since **A Journey Through Cholsey's Past** played to a packed house (if you were there, you know I mean that literally), and a very enjoyable evening it proved to be.

A selection of local stories and appropriate music will hit **The Cholsey Pavilion on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February, starting at 7.30 pm**. As before, admission will be just a fiver at the door and includes a nibble and drink in the interval.

This time I can tell you that we will have something aeronautical, something from World War 2 and, by request, something about Fair Mile Hospital. Versatile folk musicians **Three Pressed Men** have racked their brains for songs and tunes that tie in with the subject matter – and have come out slightly ahead of the challenge.

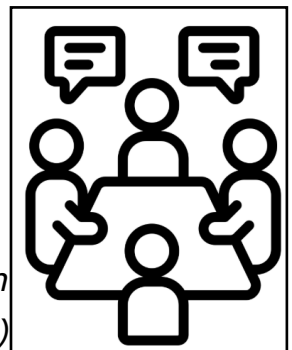
**We'd like to hear from you if you intend to come**, so that we can plan refreshments and so forth, but we are not offering seat reservations as such. On the other hand, we will do our best to help anyone with particular needs.

Email [archive@cholsey.com](mailto:archive@cholsey.com) or phone 01491 652295.

## Ipsden Parish Council

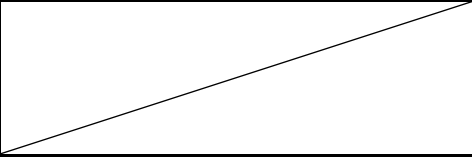
Thursday, February 2026 in the village hall at 6.30pm

*The agenda is posted a few days before the meeting on the **Ipsden Village Website Home** (PC Agendas & Minutes page) and on the **Parish Council** notice board outside the village Post Office.*



**All are welcome.**

# Church Services

Date	Ipsden	North Stoke
<b>Sunday, February 1</b> (Candlemas)	Holy Communion at 9.30am	Holy Communion at 11am
<b>Wednesday, January 4</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, February 8</b>	Service of The Word at 10am Zoom ID: 188 513 761	
<b>Wednesday, February 11</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday February 15</b> (Sunday before Lent)	Holy Communion at 9.30am	Holy Communion at 11am
<b>Wednesday, February 18</b> (Ash Wednesday)	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
		Team service, including Imposition of Ashes, at 7.30pm
<b>Sunday, February 22</b> (Lent one)	Morning prayer at 9.30am	Morning prayer at 11am
<b>Wednesday, February 25</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, March 1</b> (Lent two)	Holy Communion at 9.30am	Holy Communion at 11am
<b>Wednesday, March 4</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, March 8</b>	Service of The Word at 10am Zoom ID: 188 513 761	
<b>Wednesday, March 11</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, March 15</b> (Mothering Sunday)	Holy Communion at 9.30am	Holy Communion at 11am
<b>Wednesday, March 18</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, March 22</b> (Lent five)	Morning prayer at 9.30am	Morning prayer at 11am
<b>Wednesday, March 25</b>	Evening prayer at 5pm. Zoom ID: 410 935 129	
<b>Sunday, March 29</b> (Palm Sunday)	Holy Communion at 9.30am	Holy Communion at 11am

## Ipsden lottery winners

Date	No.	Winner
November 8	44	Bill Parkinson
November 15	25	P Bennett
November 22	35	
November 29	46	C Hives
December 6	40	Ann Hemming
December 13	59	
December 20 (Christmas draw)	47	Mr Herron
December 27	21	K Miller
January 3	4	Liz Yates
January 10	9	G Kelley

## The grumpy owl's Lenten journey



He had never intended to get tangled up in Lent. Christmas had been enough with children giggling at him, teachers smiling as if he were some sort of feathery entertainer and toddlers pointing with sticky fingers. He had tolerated it, of course, because he was dignified. But Lent? Forty days of humans giving things up and pretending not to mind? He wanted no part of it.

Unfortunately, no one had asked what he wanted. They had simply assumed he would "share his journey," as though he were some wandering monk with feathers. He muttered to himself, "**I don't give a hoot,**" but he knew he was already caught.

He watched Ash Wednesday from his perch, at a safe distance. Humans wandered about with smudges on their foreheads, looking terribly pleased with themselves. One woman even tried to explain it to him, "It's a sign," she said gently.

The Grumpy Owl blinked at her. "I have perfectly good eyesight," he replied, and flew off before she could say anything else. He disliked conversations that required nodding sympathetically.

A few days later he discovered that humans were giving things up. Chocolate. Crisps. Social media. Her teacher tried to correct her, but the child stood firm.

If the owl were to give something up, it would be squirrels. They were smug, twitchy, and far too pleased with their fluffy tails. Instead, he decided to give up unnecessary flapping— a noble sacrifice as it was his favourite hobby.

Midway through Lent, he found himself in the churchyard, minding his own business, when a plate of hot cross buns appeared on a bench. He knew they were not meant for him. He also knew owls did not eat hot cross buns. But the smell—oh, the smell. He hopped closer but he was not going to eat one, he was simply conducting research.

A robin landed beside him and chirped, “You’re not supposed to have those.” The Grumpy Owl bristled. “I am an owl. I am supposed to have whatever I decide to have.” But he didn’t eat one. Not because of Lent, but because the robin was watching and he refused to be judged by a bird that weighed less than a teabag.

As the days passed, he noticed that Lent was quieter than Christmas. No jingles. No tinsel. No inflatable snowmen. Just a slow, steady waiting. Humans seemed softer during Lent and even the children were gentler, as if someone had turned down the volume on the world. The Grumpy Owl found himself enjoying the stillness but he would never admit this, saying **“I don’t give a hoot.”**

On the final day of Lent, the children gathered again to talk about what they had learned, what they had managed and what they had failed spectacularly to do. The Grumpy Owl listened from his branch. One child said, “I didn’t keep my promise every day, but I tried.” The Grumpy Owl found himself nodding realising it was like flying. Even owls had off days and occasionally misjudged a branch—Perhaps Lent wasn’t about being perfect but about paying attention.

He stretched his wings, feeling unexpectedly light. “Well,” he said to no one in particular, “that wasn’t entirely dreadful.” And with that, The Grumpy Owl launched himself into the dusk. He was still grumpy and wise, insisting **he didn’t give a hoot**, but he carried a small flicker of hope tucked beneath his feathers.

## **Distribution of the Window**

The Window is available online on the Ipsden village website and some paper copies are held in the Ipsden shop for individual collection.

The copy deadline for the March edition will be **Friday, February 20**

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