

# Whatlington News

DECEMBER 2022

GET IN TOUCH: STEVE TURNER 01424 870041

## Christmas in Whatlington

Pageant is back but it's an earlier kick-off

Carols, candles and a visit from the Bishop

Festive Supper tickets selling quickly



# A Whatlington Christmas

## Historic pageant returns to bring nativity to life

**SUNDAY  
18 DECEMBER  
2pm  
Whatlington  
Church**

### But there's an earlier kick-off to avoid World Cup final clash

The Whatlington Pageant – centrepiece of the village's Christmas celebrations for more than half a century – takes place on Sunday 18 December.

It is the first time since 2019 the event has been held, with the 2020 and 2021 services cancelled due to Covid.

But with the World Cup final in Qatar scheduled for the same day the starting time for the service has been brought forward to 2pm.

From its start at Whatlington Church the pageant procession moves through adjoining lanes to Leeford Farmhouse where the stable scene unfolds.

On its journey from church to stable, via a cheerful bonfire, the Christmas story is told through readings and carols,

accompanied by a brass band.

The event will be led by Rev John Hawkins and at the end of the service there will be refreshments supplied by Lesley and Hugh Apthorp.

Traditionally a large crowd of people takes part and seasoned pageant-goers know the benefit of wearing warm clothing and sensible footwear, and bringing a torch.

Cars can be parked at the Village Hall and marshals will be on hand to control traffic where required.

■ If you would like to read one of the lessons, or need any further information, contact Yvonne Underhill at [underhilly@msn.com](mailto:underhilly@msn.com)

Whatlington Singers Christmas performances: page 8



# A Whatlington Christmas



This year's Festive Supper takes place in the Village hall this Saturday, 3 December, at 7.30pm.

There are only a few tickets left for this popular event, which raises funds for the upkeep of the hall.

Tickets are £10 a head to include a glass of wine on arrival, boeuf bourguignon, raspberry pavlova, mince pies and coffee.

You are welcome to bring your own wine or other drinks to have at your table.

There will be a raffle and a fiendish quiz to exercise your brains after the meal.

Call Annette Williams on 01424 871629 or 07484 638253 to see if there are any places still available and to book your ticket.

## Candles and carols at the church

**Sunday 4 December:** the Second Sunday in Advent, Holy Communion at 9.15am

### Sunday 11 December:

**10.30am** – Holy Communion and Confirmation service Led by Rt Rev Will Hazelwood, the Bishop of Lewes (*see below*)

**4pm** – Candlelit Carol Service The church will be decorated for Christmas, with candles spread around the building adding to the atmosphere. Come along and join in the singing of favourite carols and hear the Christmas story told with Bible readings.

*Both services will be followed by refreshments in the church, and the village hall car park will be open for churchgoers' use.*

**Sunday 18 December:** Whatlington Christmas Pageant at 2pm (*see opposite page*)

**Christmas Eve:** 10pm Holy Communion – an early Midnight Mass in the candlelit church, a lovely way to start Christmas, it is always popular and will be followed with refreshments and, again, the hall car park will be open.

**Christmas Day:** no service at Whatlington, instead there is a united service at Sedlescombe Church at 10.30am.

## Bishop's visit and first Communion service in years

"Our service on Sunday morning, 11 December, is a particularly special one," says Churchwarden Jeffrey Bridges.

"It is special on two counts, firstly that we have a Confirmation, perhaps the first such service to be held at Whatlington for many years. These services being usually held at larger churches.

"The second count is to have the Bishop of Lewes, the Rt Rev Will Hazelwood, coming to lead our worship – quite a coup for a small village church! This comes about thanks to the Bishop's kind offer to come and support us as we look to find a new priest following Kevin Mepham's retirement.

"We have been running adverts in the Church Times, but so far without any suitable applicants

and so the process continues.

"The churchwardens ensure that we have cover for all services and that everything functions as it should.

"We are particularly grateful to Rev John Hawkins, who has taken the majority of services since Kevin's retirement last year."

The wardens should always be the first point of contact for anything to do with the church.

**Call:** Jeffrey on 01424 772535 or 07746 903239, or John Crouch on 01580 880681 or 07788 416903.

**Email:** [whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com](mailto:whatlingtonparishchurch@gmail.com)

**Web:** [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/5226/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/5226/)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/whatlington-parish-church](http://www.facebook.com/whatlington-parish-church)

# Help as times get tougher

Times are tough and likely to get tougher for many people. Finding good advice, information and support on the cost of living can be confusing. So East Sussex County Council has drawn up a list of what the government, local councils or volunteers can offer in terms of help with money, food, heating, mental health and more. You can find it here: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/support-with-the-cost-of-living](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/support-with-the-cost-of-living)

## Help with food or bills

If you need urgent help with food or utilities (gas, electricity or water) you might qualify for emergency support from the Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme. Find out more here: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/benefits/discretionary-east-sussex-support-scheme-desss/food-utilities](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/benefits/discretionary-east-sussex-support-scheme-desss/food-utilities)

## Free advice on benefits

There is an East Sussex helpline that gives free and confidential advice on the benefits you can claim. You can call on 0333 344 0681 between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday, or email [benefitseastsussex@harcuk.com](mailto:benefitseastsussex@harcuk.com)

There's more about benefits, including for sickness, disability, family situations and universal credit, at: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/benefits](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/benefits)

## Help to stay warm

The free Warm Home Check service offers advice and support to anyone struggling to stay warm at home. If you are on a low income you may also qualify for a free home visit to assess how to keep the property warm. This could include help with things such as repairs to heating and boilers or even home upgrades in some cases. To find out more, text WARM to 80011, phone 0800 464 7307 or apply online at [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/support-to-stay-at-home/keep-warm](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/support-to-stay-at-home/keep-warm)

## Food banks

Emergency food supplies are available from Battle Food Bank at St Mary's Church, open on Wednesdays 1-3pm. It operates in conjunction with Bexhill Food Bank in Station Road, which opens Tuesday 1-3pm, Thursday 10-12am and Friday 3-5pm. Find out more at <https://bexhill.foodbank.org.uk>

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# I will never let the locals down



## Oak landlord Hasan brings a new menu and new commitment to the community

"I will never let the locals down – they are my bread and butter and the people that will support me."

That's the view of new Oak landlord Hasan Fikret a month into his tenure at the village pub.

He says: "I've had a fantastic reception from local people – they have been welcoming and helpful.

"Even when, at the beginning, it was difficult to find staff they would step behind the bar and pull a pint.

"I've spoken to people who say the Oak was part of the reason they moved to Whatlington, so how can you let them down?"

Hasan has been encouraged by the way custom has been growing despite what many might be consider the worst possible time to take over a pub, with rising energy prices and pressure on household budgets.

Add to that the night-time closure of the A21 which means customers are leaving early to avoid the diversion or can't reach the pub at all.

"It's difficult but I figure if I can succeed now

then I've cracked it," says Hasan, who formerly ran a huge nightclub in North London.

It had been his and partner Selda's dream to run a country pub and they fell in love with the Oak the moment they stepped inside.

The immediate change has been to the menu.

"It's traditional pub food," says Hasan. "I think if people want Italian or Greek food they will go to a restaurant.

"But if they come to a country pub they want traditional meals."

The couple are determined to become part of the community and plan the return of the popular quiz nights and the film club.

He also hopes to host

local talent nights and perhaps a monthly Turkish evening, reflecting his Turkish Cypriot heritage.

He said: "I have a one-year lease at the Oak but I have put a lot of time, effort and money into the place already and if it finished after 12 months that would be a waste.

"My aim is to be here for the long term."

**The Oak is now taking bookings for Christmas lunches with a festive menu throughout December as well as a special menu for Christmas Day. You can find out more at [www.royaloakwhatlington.co.uk](http://www.royaloakwhatlington.co.uk)**



*'I believe a country pub should serve traditional food'*



Villagers may be asked their views on plans for further safety improvements to the A21 through the village.

The plans, which might include pavements and 'gateways' at the entrance to Whatlington, are in addition to the current overnight work currently being carried out.

These are aimed at making junctions, including the one at Park Lane, easier for motorists to negotiate.

National Highways has informed the parish council that it intends to hold local consultation before any work goes ahead.

It is not yet clear if this will mean a public meeting or exhibition, mail survey or a meeting with councillors.

■ Delivery vehicles and tankers emptying cess pits at houses in Woodmans Green Road **ARE**

# Residents may be asked views on A21 safety plan

allowed to park on the road.

Following problems over the parking of a lorry while emptying a septic tank parish council chair Roger Fisher raised the issue with police.

He was told there is no law against vehicles stopping on the road while making deliveries as long as they were parked sensibly.

Problems arise because some properties do not have the space for vehicles to reverse into. Councillors agreed to raise the issue with National

Highways as part of the A21 safety review.

■ The village Speedwatch group has been active on the A21 in recent weeks, with 16 vehicles being reported for exceeding the 40mph limit in the past month.

Local police officers have joined the group on the sessions by way of showing support for members and underlining the importance of their work in making safer one of the South East's most dangerous stretches of road.

## Jean quits parish council

Parish councillor Jean Scott has stepped down from her role on the village local authority.

She has been on the council for six years but feels she no longer has time to give the commitment the role deserves.

But she says her departure provides an opportunity for somebody to bring a fresh perspective to the council.

"I think it's good to have new people with new ideas and skills.

"The parish council is the basis of local democracy and represents residents at the grass roots level.

"All councillors live in the village and want the best for the locality and its people.

"We can use our local knowledge and experience to make the village's views known on issues that matter to the residents."

With parish elections due on 4 May, council chair Roger Fisher said there was not time for a new councillor to be co-opted and receive the required training before having to possibly seek re-election.

He added: "I'd like to thank Jean for her constructive contribution to our meetings. She brought skills and knowledge that aided our deliberations.

"This application of a person's life experience is the essence of a good councillor and Jean will be missed."

## Pauline steps down from hall role

Pauline Lyon is stepping down from her role as bookings clerk for the Village Hall.

A member of the hall committee, her spell in charge of bookings has helped to establish a steady stream of income to underpin fundraising events.

“Pauline has played a significant part in maintaining the hall as an asset for the

community,” said the committee’s Annette Williams.

“She has been a key member of the group of volunteers who took over responsibility of the hall and I’d like to thank her for all of her hard work.”

■ **Nicola Evans** is taking on the role of bookings clerk from 1 January and anybody interested in hiring the venue for family gatherings, hobby or craft groups, rehearsals or business meetings can call her on 07855 418940 or email [oldfarm9@sky.com](mailto:oldfarm9@sky.com)

## Heart restart kit on the blink

The village defibrillator, used to revive those who have suffered a cardiac arrest, is itself in need of resuscitation.

The lifesaving kit, fixed to the roadside wall of the Royal Oak, has been found to be faulty during regular checks by parish council chairman Roger Fisher.

The Sussex Heart Foundation, which provided the equipment, has informed the parish council that its six-year guarantee runs out this December.

So the defibrillator has been sent to the supplier to be fixed or replaced for free. A temporary kit is in place in the meantime.



## ‘Old style’ stamps to be scrapped

Regular stamps without a barcode will no longer be valid after 31 January 2023.

Royal Mail advises you can either use up these stamps before this deadline or swap them for the new barcoded designs.

The stamps that are changing are those that feature the profile of the late Queen on a plain coloured background.

Special stamps with pictures on as well as Christmas stamps without a barcode will continue to be valid and don’t need to be swapped.

The barcodes will enable new services by connecting physical stamps to the digital world through the Royal Mail app.

■ **Find out more at [www.royalmail.com/sending/barcoded-stamps](http://www.royalmail.com/sending/barcoded-stamps)**



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**AUGUST**

*The field adjoining the Village Hall car park shows the dramatic change in rainfall*



**NOVEMBER**

# From dry to drenched

## November is third wettest on record

From drought to downpour – Whatlington has gone from the driest July in more than 20 years to a November that’s the third wettest on record.

With 205.5mm (more than eight inches) of rain it was the wettest November apart from those in 2009 and 2000, when our Whatlington weather watcher first began recording rainfall.

By contrast last November was the driest with only 11mm.

It follows an exceptionally dry summer when the total rainfall from May to August was only 104.5mm. In July there was only one day of rain and the 19th saw the highest temperature ever recorded in the village at 39.8C (103.6F).

Despite the downpour South East Water is one of three water companies yet to lift its hosepipe ban.

The company said its current ‘temporary use ban’ will remain in place “for the foreseeable future”. This is because water levels at reservoirs and aquifers are “much lower than normal after the dry, hot summer”, according to Head of Water Resources Lee Dance.

“Although we are receiving some much-welcome rain we will continue to monitor rainfall through the winter and evaluate whether changes can be made.”

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# Singing out for Christmas

By **Yvonne Underhill**

Whatlington Singers are going from strength to strength under the leadership of Liz Bryson.

Our concert in Battle Festival was well received by a large and appreciative audience

Once again, the choir premiered an arrangement of a Keane song, Fly To Me, written by band member Tim Rice Oxley and specially arranged for the choir by his brother Tom.

The wide-ranging programme covered music from all ages and genres; Ave Generosa by Ola Gjeilo was particularly well liked.

In October, we reprised a selection for the St

**Whatlington Singers has grown from eight members to 32 over the four years of its existence. There is a vacancy for a tenor and an alto, so if you are a competent singer and can read music, please get in touch by emailing [whatlington.singers@gmail.com](mailto:whatlington.singers@gmail.com) We are a friendly choir and we rehearse on a Monday 7.15pm -9.15pm in Whatlington Church.**

Michael's Hospice Big Sing, helping to support this very worthy local cause.

Our next two performances are of varied Christmas music and readings, conducted by internationally renowned mezzo-soprano Louise Winter. Karen Drury will delight us with Christmas readings and the programme will include congregational carols.

The first concert is on Friday 16 December at St Mary's Church, Battle, 7.30pm, in aid of the mayoral charities Demelza House and The Mothers Union. Tickets are a minimum donation of £8.50, which includes a glass of wine. Under 18s go free. Tickets available from British Design, British Made in Battle High Street or online at [what\\_sing\\_tix@yahoo.com](mailto:what_sing_tix@yahoo.com)

Our second concert is at St Clement's Church in Hastings Old Town on Monday 19 December at 7.30pm. The programme will include solo singers, as well as Karen and the Whatlington Singers in a varied programme of Christmas music and readings.

Admission is £10 to include refreshments. Tickets are available at British Made in Battle High Street or by emailing [durhamford@btinternet.com](mailto:durhamford@btinternet.com)

This concert is a fundraiser for the English Song Awards to be held at Ashburnham next May.

■ Find out more about the Singers here: [www.whatlintonsingers.wordpress.com](http://www.whatlintonsingers.wordpress.com)

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# Village could offer free meals in warm surroundings to combat soaring cost of living

A Warm Up hub, where those struggling to meet food and heating costs can get a free meal in heated surroundings, could be launched in Whatlington.

Several parish councils, including Fairlight, have funded the hubs in their village halls on two days a week, to varying degrees of success.

Some have been poorly attended while others have been warmly welcomed as a result of the soaring cost of living and the onset of winter.

The offer ranges from simply a cuppa and chat with fellow villagers to a hot lunch.

While parish councils are unable to run the events they can contribute to the costs of heating and food.

Whatlington Parish Clerk Valerie Bennett heard about the scheme at a recent meeting of fellow clerks and parish councillor Simon White, also a member of the Village Hall committee, has agreed to raise it with committee members to see if a similar scheme would be feasible.

**ST. MARYS CHURCH  
BATTLE**

## **CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND VERSE**

**Friday 16th December 7.30pm**

## **WHATLINGTON SINGERS**

**Guest Director LOUISE WINTER**

**Piano JONATHAN ZOOB**

**Actress KAREN DRURY**

**TICKETS: £8.50 (inc refreshments)**

**£10 on door Under 18s free**

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# Driving stray dogs from the church and bringing moral delinquents to justice

Whatlington churchwarden **Jeffrey Bridges** uncovers the history of the ancient role

**T**he position of churchwarden is an ancient one and can be traced back to the Council of London in 1127.

It is later mentioned in the Rolls of Parliament in 1341, when they were described as “wardens of the goods of the church”.

That primary function of the office extended to taking care of the church building and its contents, including the responsibility of providing for the repairs of the nave, and of furnishing the utensils for divine service.

The constitution of Robert Winchelsey, Archbishop of Canterbury 1295 – 1313, specified the furnishings that the parishioners were required to provide in a parish church for the conduct

of worship. Compliance with these requirements was to be the responsibility of the churchwardens. Another duty was to present moral delinquents to the ecclesiastical courts.

The churchwardens having custody or guardianship of the fabric and furniture of the church continues to this day.

Wardens are still the legal guardians of the church’s moveable goods, such as furniture, plate and ornaments.

We are required to keep an accurate, up-to-date inventory of these items and so there is a detailed inventory of everything in Whatlington Church.

Although our church is relatively small it is surprising just how many possessions it contains.

There was a case some years ago when the wardens of a church sold an ancient chest to raise funds, doing this on their own authority. They were severely censured, fined and required to make good the value of the sold item out of their own pockets by the Consistory Court, whose origins stretch back to the Conqueror, and which has legal oversight of the church to this day.

The law relating to churchwardens was brought together in written form in 1964 in the Churchwardens (Appointment and Resignation) Measure.

This was superseded in 2001 by the Churchwardens Measure. All parish churches in the C of E have wardens, with two wardens being usual, though it can be difficult to fill vacancies. Such was the case at Whatlington from 2015 to 2020, when I served alone, also covering the role of Secretary to the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

Churchwardens have Staves of Office, usually made of oak and with a brass top, one having a crown, for the People’s Warden and one a

Bishop’s Mitre for the Bishop’s Warden, though these titles are no longer used.

These staves have their origins for use in the keeping of order in the church, driving stray dogs out and suchlike. In many churches the wardens staves may be seen in holders at the ends of the wardens pew and this was the case at Whatlington prior to the fire of 2010.

They are now kept in the Vestry, but come out for special

occasions. I read recently about a situation in Victorian times where the wardens and clergy disagreed and it came to fisticuffs, fortunately nothing of this kind happens at Whatlington!

Nowadays churchwardens are elected annually at the Vestry Meeting held immediately before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The role is entirely voluntary. Holders must be Baptised and Confirmed into the Church of England, of good character and without any skeletons in the cupboard!

**Next issue: what it’s like to be a 21st century churchwarden**



**The Consistory Court dates back to the time of the Conqueror**

## GARDENING

Tom Schollar

Winter-flowering plants are especially welcome on a cold grey day and there are more of them than you might imagine.

Mahonias produce their fragrant lemon flowers from mid-November and they will be in garden centres now, as we are all more likely to buy when they are in flower. You will see Charity most often, but look out for Lionel Fortescue, which has more upright flowers.

My own favourite is *lomarifolia*, which has very long racemes. All of these can cope with partial shade.

Winter flowering *Viburnum*, such as *Farreri-Bodnantense* Dawn and Charles Lamont all have delicate pink flowers and wonderful scent.

In January, the display put on by *Daphne Bholua* 'Jacqueline Postil' (pictured) is even better. We grow ours by the front door, so that we can enjoy the scent and flowers whenever we go out or come in.

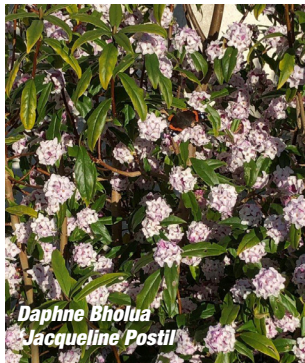
*Iris unguicularis* is one of the few herbaceous perennials to perform around Christmas but the stars of the winter garden are the trees and shrubs with interesting bark.

*Acer griseum* has shiny bark

# Brighten up those grey winter days



*Mahonia*



*Daphne Bholua*  
*'Jacqueline Postil'*

that looks like polished bronze. *Betula Utilis* (Himalayan birch) is a very superior Silver Birch and other birches have red and brown bark.

Various cultivars of *acer x conspicuum* add silver, grey, orange and emerald green to the colour palate.

For below the trees, look no further than shrubby Dogwoods (*Cornus*) which come in orange, red, scarlet, purple and bright green.

*Cornus* are usually coppiced every year in late March to encourage vibrant new stems, but the orange ones (and the purple to some extent) don't re-grow so quickly, so I only cut these every few years.

Even if you don't grow any of these (yet), quite a few gardens open specially to show off their winter colour.

To find one near you go to: [www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/seasonal/winter-gardens](http://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/seasonal/winter-gardens)

## SEDLSCOMBE AND DISTRICT GARDEN SOCIETY

[www.sedlescombegardensociety.org.uk](http://www.sedlescombegardensociety.org.uk)

### Get gardening and help to combat climate change

**Our aim:** to promote to residents of Sedlescombe, Whatlington and surrounding areas an interest in all aspects of gardening and the garden environment, including maintaining the rich diversity of garden plants to help combat the effects of climate change.

**How we do it:** two shows a year, speakers, trips and social events, regular newsletter.

**How to join:** Contact Secretary Brenda Page on 01424 870455 or email [sdgs.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:sdgs.secretary@gmail.com)

**What it costs:** £9 per person per year or £12 for joint membership.



### UPCOMING EVENTS

(all at Sedlescombe Village Hall)

Tuesday 6 December at 2pm:  
Jane Scotchmer will give a talk about garden design.

Entrance free for members and £5 for non-members, including afternoon tea.

Saturday 21 January at 11.30am: AGM, for members only, followed at 12.30pm by a free light lunch for members. Non-members can join us for lunch at £5 per head.