

Whatlington News

DECEMBER 2025

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Youngsters breathe new life into ancient story

21 December
Sunday 3pm

Pageant's youngest cast for years

Village youngsters will be turning out in forces to play all the main characters in this year's Pageant.

For nearly 60 years the event has been at the heart of Whatlington's Christmas festivities as it retells the nativity story both in and outdoors.

Led by Rev John Hawkins and starting inside the ancient St Mary Magdalene Church with the traditional readings and carols, the procession moves outside to the shepherds' warming bonfire.

From that point readings and carols will be accompanied by a brass ensemble.

From there Mary and Joseph will seek respite at the Mill House but, after being

turned away, they eventually find a place for the baby Jesus to be unveiled to the world in a stable scene at Leeford Farmhouse. It's a tableau captured by cameras from the crowd of followers often numbering up to a hundred.

Leeford's Lesley and Hugh Aphorl once again arrange refreshments on a night when good weather is prayed for but it's worth wearing warm clothes and waterproof footwear.

■ Free parking is available at the Village Hall (none allowed behind the church) and please aim to be at the church in good time before the service starts.

Still time to be an angel or a shepherd

No Village Pageant would be complete without a throng of fledgling angels and shepherds. So any local children not already contacted by the organisers but who would like to take part they welcome to come along to the church at 10am on Saturday 13 December to meet the rest of the cast and to collect a costume.



Village Hall Festive Supper

LAST FEW PLACES LEFT

Saturday 13 December 7pm
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Quiz and Raffle

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Field parcelled up and ready for sale

A prominent village field originally up for sale for £600,000 is now being offered in parcels of land ranging from around £15,000 to £150,000.

Woodman's Field is bordered by Riccards Lane, the A21 and Whatlington Road.

The plots are being marketed as suitable for 'small scale development' subject to planning permission from Rother Council.

MP called on to bring end to road freeze fears

The call for action on the problem of overflowing drains causing flooding for properties around the Village Hall has been raised to a higher level.

Residents fear the colder weather could create a freezing hazard for motorists.

It's a long-running saga that has now been escalated to MP Kieran Mullan and Nick Skelton, Assistant Director Communities at East Sussex County Council.

Poppy display to grow

The display of poppies in the village for the Remembrance Festival has been praised by residents, with some suggested changes for next November: that the large plastic poppies should be arranged across a wider area of the village and a big display of knitted versions produced by villagers.

■ The Remembrance Service at the village church saw Parish Council Chair Roger Fisher lay the authority's first wreath at the ceremony in 45 years. Other wreaths were laid on behalf of the church, the Village Hall and to mark the death of Anthony Cundy a village airman killed on his way to join the war.

Full story next issue

The district authority has strict policies that govern new buildings in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, within which Whatlington sits.

The smallest plots are each of 0.2 acres while the largest lot currently showing for sale is 4.5 acres on offer at £150,000.

The steeply sloping land originally belonged to the Moore family but was bought by a property investment company.

The sale of the land was raised at the most recent parish council meeting with no further action to be taken.

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WHY THE RUSH? They've got 100 questions to answer in 60 minutes

Nearly sixty people took on the challenge of answering 100 questions in under an hour in the Whatlington Connectors Speed Quiz.

Each of the ten sections consisted of multiple choice questions ranging from children's TV and Movies to Local Knowledge and Missing Headlines.

Held in the Village Hall, the event raised £150 for Battle Food Bank to offer emergency food packs and practical advice to some of the area's most vulnerable people.

Quizzers enjoyed snacks at their tables and refreshments at half time, when a league table was displayed to show teams how they were doing.

Connectors Secretary Pauline Lyon said: "We had many messages of thanks afterwards, with praise for the usual friendly and informal atmosphere enhanced by the unique multiple choice format. It was another really enjoyable night."



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1 What order of monks founded Robertsbridge Abbey?

A Benedictines B Cistercians C Dominicans D Franciscan

2 What is on top of Staplecross War Memorial?

A Two clock faces B Reclining lion C Maltese cross D Bronze winged figure

3 Where in 17th England would you have found the Gallowes of Whoorne?

A Cripps Corner B Paines Corner C Woods Corner D Johns Cross

4 The Bayeux Tapestry features more than 620 human figures, but how many are women?

A 73 B 19 C 3 D 41

5 Myth states that prior to the Battle of Hastings Harold Godwinson left his wife for safety in a house in Whatlington. What was her name?

A Matilda the Fair B Eleanor Proudfoot C Edith Swan-neck D Gunnhild of Mercia

6 What year did the M1 open?

A 1956 B 1958 C 1959 D 1960

7 Name the pilot of Thunderbird 5

A John Tracy B Virgil Tracy C Gordon Tracy D Alan Tracy

8 The Lord Mayor's Show, when the new Mayor travels to Westminster to swear loyalty to the Crown, dates from when?

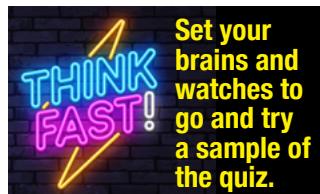
A 1215 B 1205 C 1225 D 1245

9 Which soap aired the first gay kiss on British TV?

A EastEnders B Brookside C Casualty D Coronation Street

10 Which cult UK kids' programme was based on the French original called Le Manège Enchanté in 1965?

A The Clangers B The Magic Roundabout C Animal Magic D Captain Pugwash



11 Which brand of soft drink was invented by pharmacist Charles Alderton?

A Lucozade B Pepsi-Cola C Dr Pepper D Coca-Cola

12 What is the UK's most popular pub name?

A Plough B Red Lion C Royal Oak D White Hart

13 This is actor Timothée Chalamet who was Willy Wonka in 2023 and the following year he was a celebrated singer-songwriter, but which one?

A Buddy Holly B James Taylor C Paul Simon D Bob Dylan

14 Originally, what was Mickey Mouse going to be called until Disney's wife intervened?

A Morris B Mortimer C Melvin D Milo

Answers page 9



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From centuries-old music and poetry to a contemporary art exhibition including a fish made from a water tank – the final events in a year that has marked the 750th anniversary of our village church

A successful evening of poetry and music saw pieces chosen from each century, from early medieval times up to the present day.

A small local choir began joyfully with Sumer is y-cumen in (The Cuckoo Song), one of the earliest English lyrics and probably written at around the time the church was built. They then sang their way from Tallis to The Carpenters.

The choir was supported by two talented pupils from Battle Abbey School. Rupert Sheppard accompanied and gave a spellbinding performance of Bach's Cello Suite as well as an exuberant piano rendition of Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag. Phoebe Garvey sang Handel's O Had I Jubal's Lyre beautifully. Sam Freers entertained with his new jazz composition as refreshments were being prepared at the end of the evening.

The music was interspersed with poems from each century, read by Charlotte Moore, Michael



Wilson, Frances Crouch and Jeffrey Bridges. The poems were chosen to reflect church and village life over the centuries.

Poets represented included Chaucer, Shakespeare, Bunyan, Thomas Gray, Hardy, Kipling, Edmund Blunden, Larkin and U A Fanthorpe, as well as some anonymous lyrics.

Charlotte Moore and Yvonne Underhill

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Tuesday - Saturday: 9am - 5pm
 Sunday: 10am - 4pm
 Monday: CLOSED

The church underwent its most radical transformation to date into a contemporary art space for the Scalard's Art group exhibition of recent work.

Clever use of vintage cheese boards and imaginative furniture arrangements meant that the art was displayed with no interference with the structure of the building.

The range of art was wide, from traditional oil and watercolour works through collage and abstract, a light installation and a display of decorated boxes as part of a recycling theme.

The star of the show was a huge copper fish suspended from a beam and made out of a hot water cylinder



Giant fish helps to transform church into art space

by Greg Wilcox.

The weekend started with a private view and on the Saturday morning Chris Clarke ran an art workshop for half a dozen youngsters.

SPEED QUIZ ANSWERS

1 – B
Cistercians
2 – B
Reclining lion
3 – A Cripps Corner
4 – C 3
5 – C Edith Swan-neck
6 – C 1959
7 – A John Tracy
8 – A 1215
9 – A
EastEnders
10 – B Magic Roundabout
11 – C Dr Pepper
12 – B Red Lion
13 – D Bob Dylan
14 – B Mortimer

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Never has there been a greater need for the world to find a Saviour

F Dear Friends,

It is the Season of Advent. The time when we prepare for the great feast of Christmas. Advent has a double meaning – it is about preparing for the arrival of the Christ child; but its root is in the Latin ‘advenio’ – adventure. It is a time of joy as we welcome those who arrive and adventure as we arrive in new places.

But it is also about preparation. Are we ready for the new arrival? For the Christ child to be born in us today?

We don't have to wait for the 25th – we can all examine our lives today and ask where we are heading and what place we have for God. And we surely need God to come into our lives.

When we look at the world today, we see the commercialism of the Christmas season that tries to hide the real state of things – the economic chaos that leaves many struggling. War and terror all round the world; famine and pestilence; floods and earthquakes made worse by global warming.

Closer to home there are problems in agriculture, housing, schools, health service and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

Never has there been a greater need for the world to find a Saviour.



**By Rev John Hawkins
Rector, Whatlington Church**



The Good News is that God has provided that Saviour. Jesus came – ‘the Word made flesh’ – if we will accept him.

Sadly, many have no time for him. For them it has become ‘Always Winter but never Christmas,’ as the faun told Lucy in the land of Narnia. But if we believe in Jesus, we can become children of God. Winter melts away and

a new Spring dawns. Our lives can be transformed and so can the whole world, if we allow the Prince of Peace to come in.

In our preparations for Christmas, I hope you will join us at pageant on the 21st (see page 3). Yet I know that many of us are busy at Christmas in one

way or another and that brings its own difficulties. Let us take these days leading up to the feast to prepare – not just the presents and the turkey, but our own lives.

Set aside ten minutes each day and start to read the Christmas story in one of the Gospels; and as you do, ask Jesus to come in to your life. You'll be amazed at the change this makes.

Have an adventurous Advent and a joyful Christmas!

John

Church inspection leaves list of repairs by Jeffrey Bridges

The church building has had its five-yearly inspection and we are digesting the architect's findings. While there are no horrors, there are things that need attention, quite a few in fact.

The most significant is the poor condition of the drains at the east end of the church, these are soakaways and are silted up. There is also stonework repairs needed and broken tiles replaced.

We shall have to find the necessary funding to do this and other work.

This ‘Quinquennial’ inspection by an architect is part of the care and maintenance regime of the

church that includes the electrics. There is also a periodic inspection of the lightning conductor – Whatlington has two. In addition we have an annual inspection of the fire extinguishers.

The churchyard is also subject to its own set of regulations and we have just completed a review of the Churchyard Guidance, covering burials, memorials, what can and cannot be placed on graves such as no artificial flowers and that dogs are not allowed to run free, or foul in the churchyard.

A copy of this guidance is in the porch at the church, it can also be found on the webpage.

12 Days of Christmas? That'll be £110,000k!

G You may remember that last year, I analysed the symbolism in the Christmas carol 'The Holly and the Ivy'. This year, I thought I'd examine 'The 12 Days of Christmas' and apply some rigour to the mathematics of the lyrics.

I read one article by an academic who stated that the 12 Days was a pro-bird song and he said that by the end, you would have 23 birds. This person is clearly not a statistician as the gifts accumulate.

At the end of the song, you are the proud owner of 184 birds, you have 12 Pear trees, 40 gold rings and you have to find accommodation for 140 people . . . tricky as you've got pipers, drummers, dancers, leapers (Health & Safety would be a nightmare) and where do you put 40 milkmaids and their cows? Would they fit in the Royal Oak?

Not only is the logistical planning for the recipient of the gifts a challenge, somewhat like organizing the first Lunar landing, what about the cost? I won't go into detail but the recipient has to house those 140 people for a total of 305 nights.

The Premier Inn in Hastings charges £59 so that is £19,000 off the bat and I'm not allowing for the Lords and Ladies expecting better rooms than the staff. Add in meals and you are up to £25k! And what about cooping up the birds?

A bargain at £1,050 and they take up to 12 birds so that's another £16k.

Then what about the cost to the generous

Martyn Ho-Ho-Hole tots up the cost of declaring your love in traditional fashion



gift giver? I reckon the birds will cost about £65k and assuming film extra rates for the humans (£120/day) for 315 days (cumulative), this will cost £40k, the rings (from Ratners naturally) about £1k and the same for the trees.

So it costs 'My True Love' at least £110,000 and the poor recipient at least £40,000 and that is just the start.

What about the produce you will get? Eggs, fruit, milk and, if you are not vegetarian, you could eat the birds.

Over the 12 days, your gifts will deliver a ton of pears, 7,680 pints of milk and around 650 eggs of various types but for the non-vegetarians, I have some bad news: the term Collie Bird is derived from the same word as coal and indicates a black bird. This means you will only have enough birds for one and a half pies.

One last thing. Good luck finding a partridge in a pear tree.

While they can fly, mainly to migrate or escape predators, they are ground dwelling birds (including their nests). Google 'Partridges in Trees' and you'll find lots of drawings but very few photos (unless they are Photoshopped, staged or it's different species like quail.)

Forget it, can I just have a chocolate orange please?

Merry Christmas to you all



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