JANUARY • FEBRUARY 2026

Bengeo Magazine

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF BENGEO, CHAPMORE END AND TONWELL



Holy Trinity Flowers







A small group of dedicated flower arrangers aim to ensure that the flowers in church are welcoming and attractive. Unfortunately, the money in the Flower Fund bank account is dwindling and unless we have some donations there will be little left by this time next year.

The group try to get foliage from gardens and the churchyard and buy flowers from outlets as reasonably priced as possible. In fact, there was one arrangement this autumn with only local foliage and berries, so no cost there. This looked fine but is not possible all year round.

We love to produce a number of attractive arrangements at Festival times, such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, but we do need to generate more funds if we are to continue at the current high standard.

If you have a special anniversary to commemorate or would like to remember a loved one, then please talk to us about donating an arrangement. We would also love to have contributions from parishioners who wish to see the church flowers looking beautiful all year round.

If you wish to donate, the Bank Transfer details are:
Account Name: **Bengeo Holy Trinity Flower Fund**
Account No: **00796069**
Sort Code: **20 20 37**

Please put your surname as the reference.

Alternatively, cash or cheque made out as above can be given to me.

Pam Thain
Flower Fund

Bengeo Parish Magazine and Community News



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After the excitement of Christmas, we are looking forward to the New Year with new ventures for the Love Bengeo group and our old favourites too.

In these pages you can find out about what is going on in Bengeo, explore the countryside to look out for the shy violets that Bridget is describing and marvel at the ingenuity of the latest Yarnbombers Post Box Toppers around Bengeo.

Happy New Year

The Editorial Team

The views expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Editorial Team or the PCC. Whilst every care is taken, we cannot be responsible for the action of any of the contributors or advertisers in this magazine.

Front cover: **The long winter shadow cast by the Lonely Oak Tree on Bengeo Field.**

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HERTFORD SHOWROOM

2nd Bengeo Scouts update

It has been a busy Autumn Term at 2nd Bengeo. All sections enjoyed taking part in the annual District Night Hike in September, with one of our Beavers teams coming 3rd as well as one of our Cubs teams! A great result with some strong competition!

In October, the Beavers and Cubs had a joint sleepover at Wymondley Wood Scout and Guide Centre. They took part in many activities such as archery, den building and obstacle courses which helped to earn some of their challenge badges.

Hertford Scouts have been chosen to be one of the charities supported by the Mayor and 2nd Bengeo Scout, Zoe Rapson, has been chosen to be the Mayor's Scout. What an honour! Zoe has also been selected along with Idris to take part in an upcoming international trip with the Scouts. Another of our Scouts, Joseph has been selected to take part in the World Scout Jamboree taking place in Poland in 2027. It's sure to be an incredible experience.



Zoe Rapson with the Mayor, Steven Watson.

We finished up the term with our annual Christmas Carol Service at Holy Trinity Church. A huge thank you to Melanie Delaney for organising a wonderful service. The evening culminated in four of our members earning their Chief Scout Awards. Beavers, Jude Martin, Louis Guise and Daniella Guise, all earned their Chief Scout Bronze Awards; two Cubs, Leo and Daniel earned their Silver award and Scout, Idris Murray, earned his Chief Scout Gold Award. These are the highest awards they can earn in their sections and is testament to the hard work of the children. Well done all!

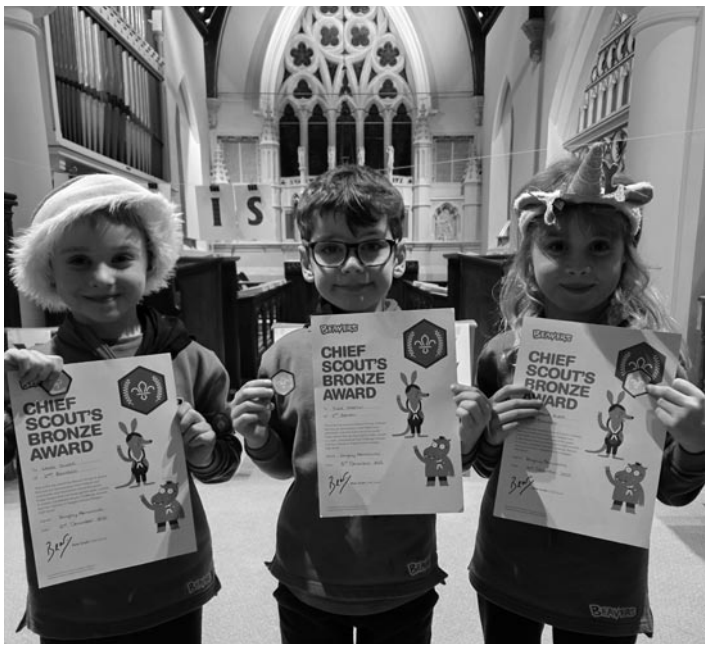


Photo credit: HAYLEY ARAHAMS

Beaver Scouts with their Chief Scout award. Louis on the left, Jude centre and Daniella on the right.

We are still looking for adult volunteers in all sections. If you think this could be a role for you, please get in touch via the following email address **debbie.ryan@hertfordscouts.org.uk**.



Award for Ash

Congratulations to Ash at Good News in the Avenue shops for winning a Community Award from 'I Love Hertford'.

We will miss Ash's cheerful face when he retires in 2026.

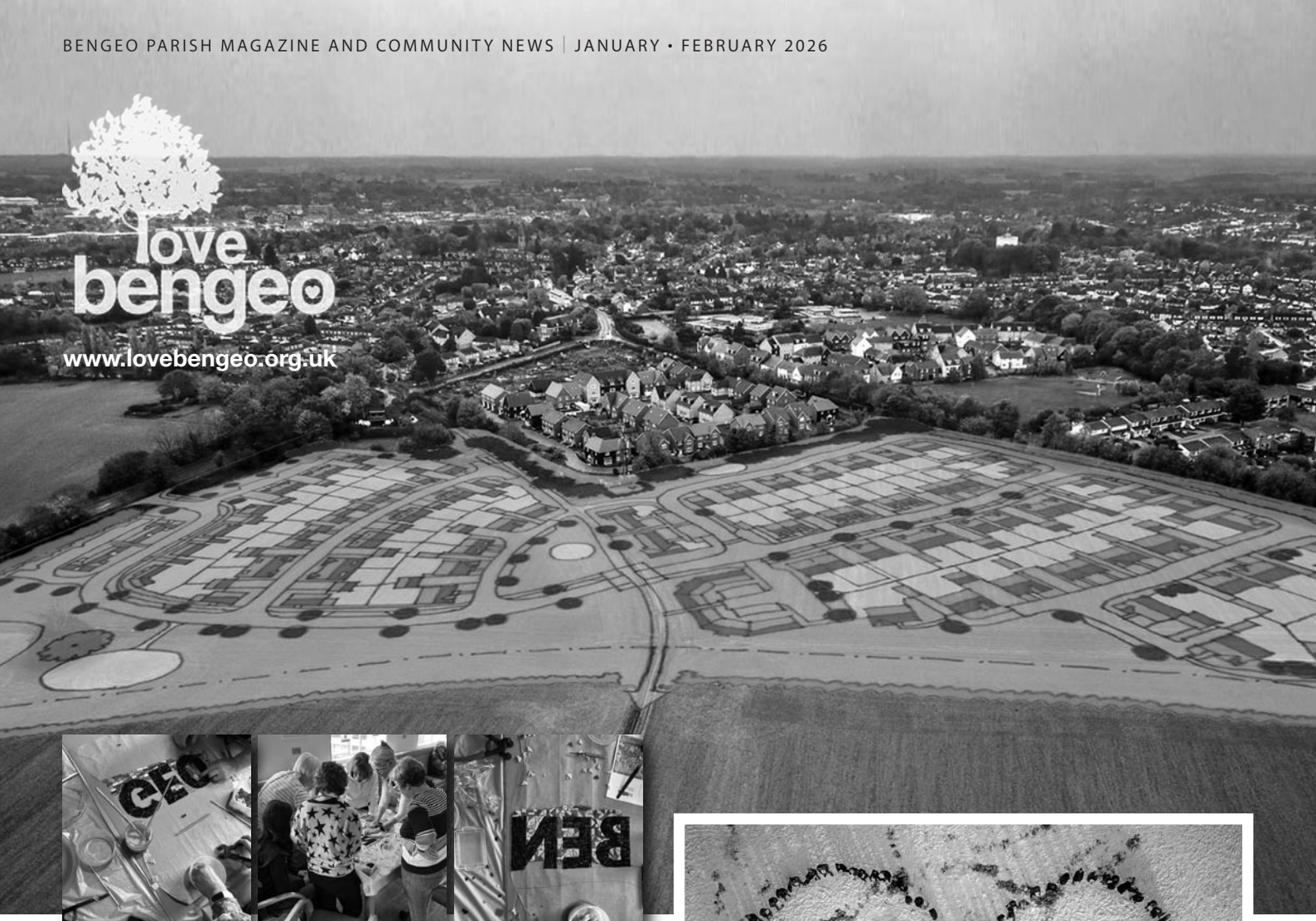
Shoe Box Appeal 2025

Thank you, everyone, for your generous support of the appeal.

Through your efforts, particularly the Brownies, we collected 37 wonderfully filled boxes and donated £186 to cover transport costs. A really worthwhile effort to bring joy to children who have nothing this Christmas.

Thank you and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Eileen and Jim Smith



Love Bengeo Group – Bengeo Mosaic

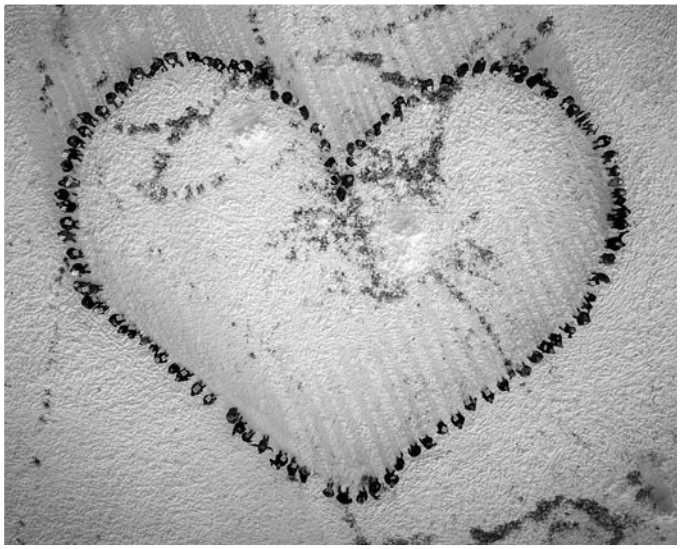
We are delighted to share that the Bengeo Mosaic is progressing well. We now have the mosaic frame produced and the final design will be soon completed.

Here is how you can get involved: Crafts, laughs and a comfy pub seat – what more do you need? Book your space at our upcoming Bengeo Mosaic workshops at the White Lion on Mondays 12th and 26th January from 7–9pm. For more updates you can join us on Facebook: Bengeo Mosaic.

PLUS: If you have a street-facing wall onto Bengeo Street and would be happy to jazz it up with our community masterpiece – please get in touch with us!

For any questions or to book your space on the workshops, please email **catherinegeering@me.com**.

All projects can be contacted via info@lovebengeo.org.uk and there is a Facebook group 'Love Bengeo' and website **www.lovebengeo.org.uk**.



Bengeo Trail

Bengeo Trail is our newest Love Bengeo Group project focused on promoting the places of interest in Bengeo and creating a trail to promote walking and learning about Bengeo.



We already have lists of places to include but all thoughts are welcome. Join our Facebook page to find out how you can be involved.



Health Walks

On Tuesday mornings Hertfordshire Health Walks welcome you to our newest short stroll from The Bengeo Club and to our longer walk from The Avenue shops. All our walks are led by trained volunteers. Find details on www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks.

Update on the granting of planning permission for 118 homes on Bengeo Field

At the start of November we heard back from the Planning Court that our claim for permission to apply for Judicial Review had been refused.

However, our claim was not struck out as being "totally without merit". In addition, in the last six months we have substantially improved our claim. We therefore have taken the opportunity to apply for a reconsideration of the decision not to grant Judicial Review. Grounds for reconsideration were submitted in early November. It is not uncommon to apply for reconsideration, and we remain hopeful that we will be granted Judicial Review.

A reconsideration hearing has now been scheduled at the Planning Court in mid January for us to present our case as to why we believe a Judicial Review should be granted. East Herts Council and Durkan will be attending the hearing to argue why a Judicial Review should not be granted.

If we are granted a Judicial Review we intend to open a Save Bengeo Field Ltd membership scheme at an annual cost of £10. If you are interested to support the Save Bengeo Field campaign and become a member of SBF Ltd, please send your name and email address to askawp@yahoo.co.uk, so that we can contact you with further details. Thank you for your support.



Community Garden

Bengeo residents will have noticed some tree pruning and removal and fresh shells on the path. We have added soil improver and lots of new plants as well as improving the compost box.

In 2026 we will review the location of the waste bin and see if we can create a small shallow pond. When planting we met three resident frogs and have plans for better access to water for them – and the plants. Thanks to all our helpers and neighbours and roll on Spring.



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Memorial Garden Holy Trinity Church

We initially visited the Memorial Garden a while back to view a plot where we could have somewhere to remember our parents, Don and Angela. With many of their friends within the garden and Holy Trinity Church being a special place in our hearts, it seemed the natural place to finally lay them to rest. Whilst walking around it seemed like the gardens could just do with a little helping hand. As a local family landscaping business, we thought it would be a good idea to offer our services.

We discussed a few ideas with the Rector, Robert, including replacing plants and strimming down and clearing some overgrown vegetation. With this in mind, we sent in a team to replace the dead Lavender plants, tidy up the edgings and have a general tidy up.





The Buxus plants that represent the Twelve Apostles within the bed next to the entrance had also suffered. These were replaced with Ilex, which are a hardier type of plant and less susceptible to pests and diseases.

We have agreed to maintain the Memorial Garden in the future and have a few ideas but we will engage with those involved or within the local community for any further suggestions.

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Christmas Lunch at the Church Hall

On a dull December 8th I arrived in the rain to find Christmas lunch waiting for me in a warm and brightly lit hall. The tables were laid with white cotton cloths and each one decorated with candelabra. There were also carafes of red and white wine on each table and a bottle of water.

We started with Champagne cocktails and then moved on to prawn cocktails. This was followed by roast turkey, served with pigs in blankets, roast potatoes, sprouts, carrots, stuffing, cranberry sauce and gravy. There was a short pause and then we were given Christmas pudding with custard, or cheese for those who preferred it. The whole delightful meal ended with mince pies and tea or coffee. This time it was £25 which was extremely reasonable. But it was a very good Christmas lunch. Thirty-six people came, and I hope they enjoyed it as much as I did.

Please come again to the monthly lunch for a very reasonable £20 and encourage your friends to come as well. If we keep the numbers up there is a chance that we might go back to two lunches a month.

The lunches in the New Year will be on Monday 12th January (Burn's Night, served at lunchtime! Please wear Scottish dress if you wish) and Monday 9th February. Ring Claire at the Lobster Pot on **07887 543464** to make a booking – ideally 7 days in advance.

Janet Guilbride



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Hertford Adult Learning Group (HALG)

Spring Course 2026

Our tutor will be Clare Gittings, a local art historian, who has been a regular member of HALG (previously the WEA) for several years and will be known to many of you. The course is entitled: *Portraiture in Britain: highlights across five centuries*.

This course is a fascinating look at portraiture dating from the sixteenth century and will include artists such as Hans Holbein, Anthony Van Dyke, William Hogarth, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough. It then moves forward to the pioneer Victorian photographers and radical artists of the twentieth century including Patrick Heron, Francis Bacon and Maggi Hambling.

The final two sessions will be on the diversity of artistic approaches.

This will be a 6-week course. 1.5 hours per session, 10–11.30am on Tuesdays, starting on the 20th January 2026 and ending on the 3rd March 2026. Half -term date is 17th February 2026. Venue Bengeo Parish Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Hertford SG14 3DA.

If you wish to join this course, then please email or telephone Wendy Celia, HALG Enrolment Secretary, on **01992 589538** or email **w.celia1@outlook.com**.

The cost of the 9-hour course is £15.

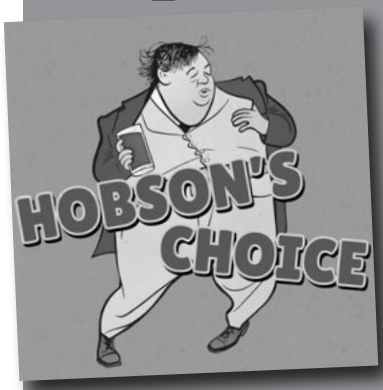
Please pay early to avoid disappointment. The course will be full after the first 60 people have paid the fee.

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The Children's Society

Christingle Service on Advent Sunday

Thank you again to Rachel at the Co-op for kindly donating the oranges for our Service. I am grateful to everyone in the Christingle Group who made it such an enjoyable morning assembling all the 70 Christingles on the Saturday morning.

The Christingle Service is always delightful it was so good to see so many families there. We especially enjoyed the children all interacting with Robert who led the Service and Anne Sentance who gave an entertaining and interesting talk on the symbolism of the Christingle. It is always amazing to hear the Christingle explained in so many varied ways over the years!

It is really such a lovely scene at the end of the Service when we are all gathered round in a large circle holding our lit Christingles, the overhead lights being dimmed.

Thank you to everyone who helped in any way at the Service, we are very pleased to say that just over £300 was raised for the Children's Society.

House Box Collection

The boxes have now all been counted and I am pleased to say that the amount raised was £900.

As I have already mentioned in the previous magazine this will sadly be our final year for having house boxes. However, we do hope that the people of Bengeo will continue to support the very worthwhile work of the Children's Society in the future.

We will still be holding a Spring Bring & Buy Coffee Morning, the date to be announced in the next Magazine and, of course, the annual Christingle Service on Advent Sunday.

Our grand total raised in 2025 including the Coffee Morning, House Boxes and Christingle Service was £1,748. Our grateful thanks to all our dedicated supporters.

Best wishes for the New Year

Libby Shillito

Friends of St Leonard's

After a lovely Christmas season, the Friends of St Leonard's are looking forward to 2026.

One of our final activities for 2025 was to create a tree for the Christmas Tree Festival. Our Treasurer, Anthea Nott, and our New Members Secretary, Sue Patterson, created a beautiful tree that included memories of all the activities at St Leonard's during 2025.

We then finished off a very successful 2025 with a Christmas Wassail with Magpie Lane on 19th December. The church was packed and we all enjoyed a fantastic concert with some rousing singing-along. We also sold walnuts from the tree in the churchyard (which had a bumper crop) to help fund the work to repair the roof.

The Friends have started thinking about what to do in 2026 and we need more ideas. If you have any thoughts on special events or activities in St Leonard's, please get in touch as we would love to hear them – **Secretaryfriendsofstleonards@gmail.com**.

The programme of activities will be advertised on the website so keep an eye out for updates **www.stleonards.parishofbengeo.com/events-and-concerts-at-st-leonards**. Or you can follow us on Facebook: Friends of St Leonard's Bengeo.



Membership

If you would like to get more involved, we would be happy to welcome you into the Friends. A very reasonable £5 for individuals and £10 for families for a year's membership gets you advance warning of our events. You can join through our website **www.stleonards.parishofbengeo.com/friends-of-st-leonards** or just get in touch via my email.

We are always looking for assistance with keeping the church open, so if you are interested in offering some of your time to help out, we would be very glad to hear from you.

Helen Fleming
Secretaryfriendsofstleonards@gmail.com

Bengeo Afternoon WI

At our last meeting, we welcomed Bill Hamilton who was a high-profile reporter and journalist covering major news stories and events during his working life.

Bengeo Afternoon WI do not meet in January therefore our first meeting of the New Year will be on Wednesday 4th February at 2pm in the Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo SG14 3DA when we will welcome Mr R Butler, his talk is titled *Transport and Travels*. Hopefully transporting us to warmer climates than our weather in February, but who knows?

We look forward to seeing you. Please contact Janet Butler 07961 906860 for more information.

On The Doorstep – Violets

My flower for this article is wild violets, there are approximately 15 species of Viola found in the UK, many of which are considered as native and include violets and pansies. The different species flower at different times of the year, but the earliest is probably the sweet violet which blooms from March to May, but can occasionally be seen in February, so something for you to look out for towards the end of February.



The varieties I will be looking at are: Sweet violet (viola odorata) and common dog violet (viola riviniana), these two are very similar to each other and quite tricky to differentiate. The main difference is that the sweet violet has a scent and the common dog violet is unscented, hence its name being dog. They have a different flowering time, sweet violet first as above and dog violet flowering in April to June, as you can see, they overlap so a chance to get them mixed up. Both varieties have heart-shaped leaves with a slight serrated edge, but the sweet violet's usually have slightly hairy leaves and grow from runners, whereas the dog violet does not have runners. The other good way to distinguish between them is that the sweet violet has blunt sepals and the dog violet has pointed sepals.

The flowers of each variety are usually purple, although can vary with some being lilac and white. The flowers have five petals, two pointing up, two to the side and one pointing down as a landing pad for pollinators. The lower petal may also have dark stripes and a white area to attract insects. The flower is visited by a variety of insects. The fritillary butterfly lays its eggs on the violet as the plant is the caterpillar's sole and primary food source.

Violets, despite their delicate appearance, are a tough flower and can tolerate mowing, moving, poor soil, sun, shade, damp and dry conditions. The habitat that is preferred however, is woodland and the damper side of hedgerows.

The violet has been used medicinally for headaches, depression and insomnia. Sweet violet has been used for perfume, dating back to ancient Greece, and in medieval times was used as an early household deodorant in Britain. There are various myths and legends about the violet, one is that you can only smell the sweet violet once and then the flower steals your sense of smell. There is some truth in this as the flower contains a chemical, beta-ionone which temporarily shuts off smell receptors. Another is that the Greek god Zeus had a lover, Io and in order to hide her from his wife, he turned Io into a cow. As a cow Io ate the grass and began to cry because of the bitter taste of the grass, so Zeus turned her tears into sweet violets so that she had something sweet to eat. Not sure that is quite what Io would have been looking for! The ancient Greeks and Romans believed that if you wore a wreath of violets around your head, it would prevent intoxication and alleviate a hangover.

In the language of flowers, the violet symbolises modesty, faithfulness and love. Napoleon was said to have liked the sweet violet and pressed sweet violets from his wife's (Josephine's) grave were found in his locket at his death, a sign of his love for his wife, perhaps.

The violet and its close relation the wild pansy, are delicate beauties and although small, make a big impression when found growing wild.

Bridget Hersant

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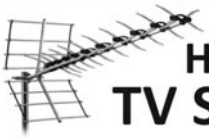
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Mill Mead Primary School



Ducklings class have enjoyed books about families and rainbows with activities linked to those themes. They used paints, pens, pencils and chalks to make rainbows of all shapes and sizes. In Maths, they have begun to explore subitising to five (which is knowing how many there are without having to count each item).



Mice class have been blending sounds to read simple words and segmenting to spell them. In maths, they have been exploring both 2D and 3D shapes. The children took part in a perform workshop about People Who Help Us and role-played different community helpers.



Birds class have learnt how to use a compass, explored aerial maps of the school grounds and even made messy maps of their classroom. In Science, they have been exploring their senses: tasting things, smelling things and walking across the playground while blindfolded (with a helper!).



Hedgehogs class have been learning about different types of graphs in Maths and how to interpret and represent data. The children have enjoyed writing winter poems inspired by Pie Corbett. In Geography they have explored examples of human and physical features and our local woodland habitat. In PE they have been developing gymnastic actions which have been very entertaining!



Squirrels class have been learning about Ernest Shackleton in Geography and planned their very own 'expedition' to Antarctica. The class text *The Witches* by Roald Dahl inspired them to talk about what makes a story engaging and they learned how play scripts are written.



Owls class built electrical circuits in Science and watched bulbs light up. They finished the brilliant book *The Wild Robot*, which inspired lots of great discussions. In Writing, they began crafting their non-chronological reports by turning facts into fantastic information pages. In RE, they have been learning all about Pentecost and how it marks a powerful moment for Christians.



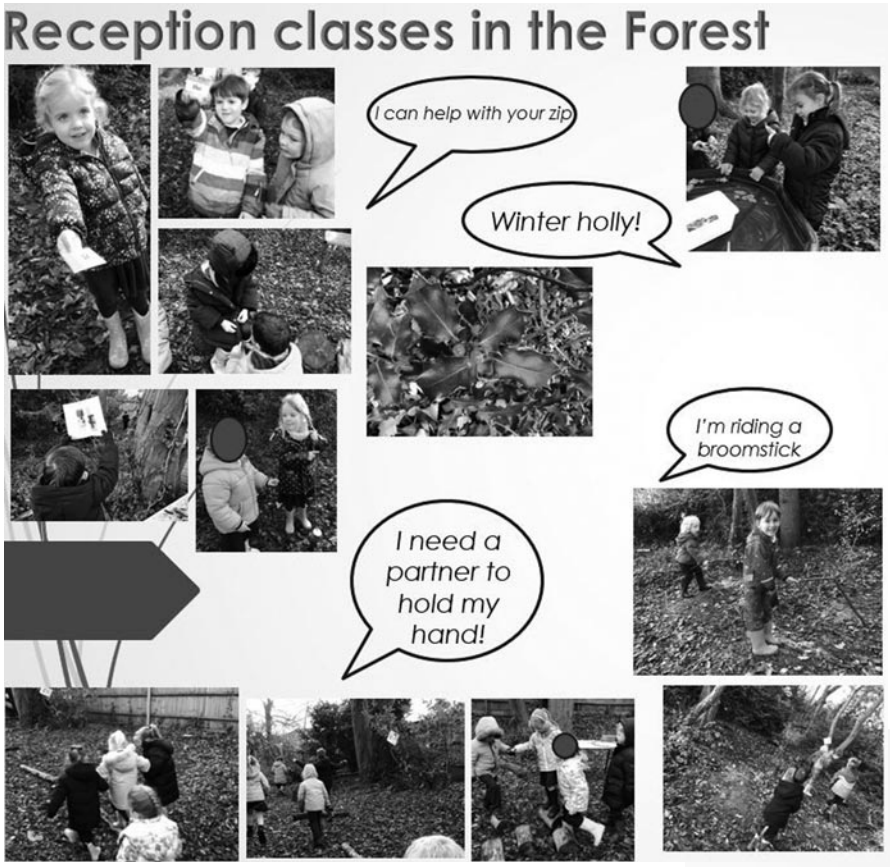
Badgers class have begun a Programming unit in Computing and have created their own musical sequences using code. In Science, they have been learning about life cycles and have explored plant reproduction by dissecting flowers.



Foxes class' highlight of the past few weeks has been the sensational production of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar which took to the stage at the Beam Theatre. Every student gave a wonderful performance, and they were praised by the festival producers for their exceptional professionalism and teamwork on the day.

Bengeo Primary School

Reception classes in the Forest





Reception noticed the holly as a sign of winter approaching and used ivy to make winter wreath. Arthur noticed that an upside down oak leaf looked like a Christmas tree shape! Together they used team work to tackle an obstacle course and found some 'tricky words' hidden throughout the forest school area

Amwell View School – Tonwell Satellite







Following one of our Parent Governors informing Amwell View about 'Winter Wishes', Tonwell Class Teachers applied for and were successful in acquiring tickets to visit Winter Wonderland during their event on 19th November 2025.

Hayley Warrington, Tonwell 1 Class Teacher said, "This special event sees Hyde Park closed to the general public, operating on dramatically reduced numbers in order to support those less able to access the park under normal circumstances".

Parents and carers were given the opportunity to attend alongside their young person for this offsite visit trip and twelve family members accepted the invitation, joining the pupils and staff for an amazing day in London.

Hayley said, "The pupils were fantastic. They very much enjoyed the long coach journeys to and from Central London, as well as the excitement in the park. A highlight was visiting the Magical Ice Kingdom which was -10 degrees Celsius! It was an experience the pupils have never had before and found very exciting. Being able to spend time alongside the pupils and their families was lovely and we are so pleased with the number of adults who were keen to attend".

w: duncombe-school.co.uk

Duncombe School

An Independent Day School and Pre-School nestled in the beautiful town of Hertford, for children aged 2-11 years.

Nurturing Young Minds

Open Morning:
Friday 6th February

Little Chestnut Toddler Group:
Dates throughout January!

Contact **admissions@duncombe-school.co.uk** or **01992 414109** to find out more.



Duncombe School
An Independent Preparatory School and Nursery

Duncombe School

5 reasons to consider investing in Pre-prep education

If your child is coming up to school age and you're wavering over starting them off at a state school or investing in their education early with an independent Pre-prep, this advice from Jeremy Phelan, Head of Duncombe School in Hertford, could help you nail the decision.

A STRONG FOUNDATION

Embarking on an early start in independent education offers numerous benefits for children. A child-centred structure, specialised and broad curriculums and the commitment of qualified and experienced staff, along with smaller class sizes, ensure a well-rounded learning foundation. This all helps to establish a supportive and stable environment for exploration and risk-taking, too. Prep schools like Duncombe, prioritise a holistic approach and nurturing atmosphere, fostering character and soft skills, such as confidence and independence. An emphasis on character development also instils core values early on, making for a seamless transition throughout a child's educational journey.

LONG-TERM SAVINGS

While the ultimate decision rests with each family, empirical evidence supports that a strong foundation in early education enables children to excel in state secondary schools, offering a valuable head start. Financially, weighing up the cost of Pre-prep and Prep against Senior School may reveal long-term savings by investing in education early. Additionally, an objective assessment of the quality of your local primary versus secondary schools is crucial in making an informed decision. Research consistently shows the lasting positive effects of a child's early years' experience, so ensuring the right foundation during these formative years will put them at a substantial advantage.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The Early Years Intervention Foundation has published insights into cognitive development in young minds, showing that highly nurturing and stimulating early environments are strongly associated with future life chances. The research indicates that such environments protect children from poor cognitive outcomes later in life, while studies in developmental psychology show how children acquire, process, and apply knowledge, and how language plays a crucial role in this. Investing in these formative years could be seen as a cornerstone for providing children with the best possible start to learning, aligning with these research-backed cognitive development principles.

AN ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT

At Duncombe we integrate research findings into our enrichment strategies, which include dynamic interactions between pupils and staff, an engaging learning environment, cutting-edge digital learning practices, and a purposefully developed feedback program, which all builds confidence and resilience over time. Parents should look for a well-resourced and varied curriculum, favourable pupil-to-teacher ratios and learning which extends beyond traditional confines, encompassing creative arts, outdoor education, and specialist language teaching from a young age. As with many Pre-prep and Prep schools, Duncombe's educational philosophy is rooted in recognising and responding to each child's individual needs and interests, tailoring activities to their developmental level. This holistic approach, underpinned by the best research, leads to excellent learning outcomes.

STILL DECIDING?

In the quest to choose the right school for your child, take a thoughtful and unhurried approach. Engage with the Head and staff and ask questions. Trust your instincts and pay attention to the children's interactions with each other and staff to gauge the atmosphere and ethos of the school. Consider the approach to learning – for Early Years children, reflect on whether a fully play-based setting or a more structured approach aligns more with your child's needs. Scrutinise facilities and resources, assessing the curriculum's breadth, specialist lessons, and the use of both indoor and outdoor spaces. Consider what truly matters to you, considering your child's personality, learning style, and interests. The decision is unique for each family, so prioritise finding the very best fit for your child. Careful selection of the right educational environment will be the most powerful investment in their future that you can make.

Interested in visiting Duncombe School?
There are OPEN DAYS on Friday 6th February and Friday 24th April 2026, contact us to find out more.

A Word from The Rectory

Confession over coffee

From The Vicar, The Revd Robert Thompson



Hardly ever does a Sunday morning end in church without me standing around with someone drinking coffee and getting exercised about the evils and injustices of the world. Despite having just spent a pleasant hour in the peace of God's presence there are still plenty of things to get angry about. Even a supposedly uneventful news week gives us drones over Ukraine, horrors in the Middle East, shootings and stabbings in our cities, more child abuse, and, as if that isn't enough, scandal in the royal family.

Members of our congregation get pretty worked up about these things: 'What kind of idiots do this stuff? How can they get away with it? They should fine them, they should lock them up, they should strip them of their power, they should banish them from the realm.'

Sometimes, when we run out of people to blame or events to get cross about, we might even get angry at the non-intervention of a God who ever lets such terrible things happen on God's good earth.

Of course, some of this anger is motivated by genuine compassion and sympathy, and by a desire for justice to be done. However, it's interesting how quickly God-fearing people, claiming a hope for a better world, degenerate into name-calling and finger-pointing, frustrated at their powerlessness to do anything about it, so give up trying. When our protests don't reach beyond the level of angry reaction our righteous anger soon becomes self-righteous.

What is a creative response to the litany of bad news presented to us on a daily basis? How can we remain open to all these human tragedies without becoming overwhelmed or depressed? If a cloistered withdrawal from the world isn't the answer, and blaming people or God gets nothing done, what are we to do?

Perhaps the answer starts with us making a connection between the nature of events and the true nature of our hearts. Is the deception revealed by a COVID Inquiry, for example, or a war waged in the Middle East, or the lust and mania driving so much cultural gossip so far from what's going on inside every one of us?

'Hmph. Church-goers – they're no better than anyone else.' No, we're not. It seems dishonest, maybe even deluded, to think so. The theologian, Henri Nouwen, wrote that 'the cruel reality of the world is the cruel reality of the human heart, our own included.'

We openly confess as much. Doing so requires some form of soul-searching, and that doesn't come easily – even in church. We don't often think of our personal confession as having a wider effect but being provoked by the peace and forgiveness of God into acknowledging our own anger, mistakes or disordered desires can bring a liberation that connects them with the bigger picture.

As it says in the letter of James, 'Confess your sins to each other so that you may be healed.' It's easier, even preferable, to rant about the world's problems, but if we can find a way to confess our own involvement in the problems of humanity we can become part of a true and worthy answer.

This New Year we'll keep on with that, beginning each new week by praying an apology. That way we can find the remedy for our own ills as well as the healing we seek for others.

With my prayers,

Robert Thompson

New café venues

We are pleased to announce that we can continue to run our Bereavement Café, having secured two new venues in Hertford.

The Bengeo Bereavement Café

Farewell to Jo



From its inception in September 2021, the Bengeo Bereavement Cafe, run twice monthly, has been diligently hosted by Jo at the Secret Garden, who has shown great generosity, wisdom, and compassion to all who have attended the sessions. Sadly, Jo has hung up her apron after 22 years at The Secret Garden in its various forms, but in recent years running it as a well-loved café.

The volunteers and all attendees thank Jo for all she has done for us, and we wish her the very best in her retirement, and any new projects she may take on. The site will be closed for a few months until new owners take over.

Manic Ceramics

On the third Thursday evening of every month the Bereavement Café will meet from 6.30pm to 8pm at Manic Ceramics, 22 Port Vale, Hertford SG14 3AB, commencing on 19th February 2026 (date to be confirmed).

Debbie Bonfield has kindly agreed to host the café along with her other ventures. She is well known for her community activities, raising funds for Hertfood, Hertford Pantry and Ukraine, and carrying out paint your own pottery classes at the site.





Nourish Café

On the first Wednesday afternoon of every month, we will welcome people from 2.30pm to 4pm at **Nourish Cafe, Vale House, Cowbridge, Hertford SG14 1PN**. These sessions commence on Wednesday 7th January 2026.

We are grateful to Heidi Dickinson, who runs Nourish Café, for the new venue. She provides homemade healthy bakes, cakes, soup, paninis, sausage rolls and salads, along with boardgames and books, plus other local sales items. Coffee is roasted across the road in Chambers Street by 'Coffee Story Roastery'. The Café is also a location for the Menopause Café and painting workshops.



Parish Calendar JANUARY 2026

Sunday 4th January	**The Epiphany**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 6th January	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 7th January	
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Café, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 8th January	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
Sunday 11th January	**The Baptism of Christ**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 13th January	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 14th January	
10am	Craft Club, Church Hall, Duncombe Road – all welcome
Thursday 15th January	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
Sunday 18th January	**The Second Sunday of Epiphany**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 20th January	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Thursday 22nd January	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
Sunday 25th January	**The Conversion of St Paul**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
3pm	Hertford and District Churches Together Unity Service, URC
Tuesday 27th January	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Thursday 29th January	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road

Parish Calendar FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday 1st February	**The Presentation of Christ (Candlemas)**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	All Age Service
Tuesday 3rd February	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 4th February	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Cafe at Nourish Cafe, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 5th February	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
Sunday 8th February	**Second Sunday before Lent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 10th February	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 11th February	
10am	Craft Club, Church Hall, Duncombe Road – all welcome
Thursday 12th February	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
Sunday 15th February	**Sunday Next before Lent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 17th February	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 18th February	**Ash Wednesday**
8pm	Holy Communion
Thursday 19th February	
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road
6.30-8pm	Bereavement Café at Manic Ceramics Pottery Shop, 22 Port Vale Hertford (to be confirmed)
Sunday 22nd February	**First Sunday of Lent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 24th February	
8pm	Quiet Time, Holy Trinity Church
Thursday 26th February	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall Duncombe Road

Parish Prayers

Daily Prayers for January

1. The New Year
2. Local Pubs and Clubs
3. Local Businesses
4. Epiphany
5. George Street
6. Christians Against Poverty
7. Christians in North Korea
8. HMP Burlington
9. Cancer Research
10. Local Sports Teams
11. Our Choir
12. Glebe Road
13. The Society of Friends, Hertford
14. Christians in Somalia
15. HMP Bure, Norwich
16. Age Concern UK
17. Local Farms and land Use
18. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
19. Glebe Close
20. Hertford and Ware Foodbank
21. Christians in Yemen
22. HMP Cardiff
23. Hertford and Ware Street Pastors
24. Future Hope Hertford
25. Hertford and District Churches Together
26. Globe Court
27. Bengeo Coffee Pot
28. Christians in Libya
29. HMP Channings Wood, Newton Abbot
30. Manchester Cathedral
31. Our Bereavement Café

Daily Prayers for February

1. All Who Preach at Holy Trinity
2. Gosselin Road
3. The Alzheimer's Society
4. Christians in Sudan
5. HMP Chelmsford, Essex
6. Young Life and Wyld Life Hertford
7. Our 2025 Lent Charity CHiPS
8. All Who Clean the Church
9. Grange Court
10. Christians in Eritrea
11. Craft Club
12. HMP Coldingley, Bisley
13. Prison Chaplains
14. Those We Love
15. Christian Churches in Gaza
16. Grove Walk
17. Children in Poverty
18. Ash Wednesday
19. HMP Cookham Wood, Rochester
20. All Who Use the Church Hall
21. UNICEF Child Action
22. All on the Church Coffee Rota
23. Hartham Villas
24. Mission Aviation Fellowship
25. Christians In Nigeria
26. HMP Dartmoor
27. Newcastle Cathedral
28. Local Doctors and Health Centres



Quiet Time

The weekly Quiet Time sessions will be as usual on Tuesday evenings in Holy Trinity church at 8pm.

The themes for Lent will be announced later.

Church Contacts

Team Vicar: The Reverend Robert Thompson
The Rectory, Byde Street, Bengeo, SG14 3BS
T: **01992 413691** E: **info@parishofbengeo.com**

Associate Priest: Fr. David Pepper
T: **07583 985266**

Reader: Bob Kelly
T: **01763 274653**

Churchwardens:
Diana Howarth T: **07711 571272**
Graham Squires T: **01992 553465**

Parochial Church Council
Chairman: **Rev Robert Thompson**
Honorary Secretary: **David Greely**
T: **01920 412485**

Director of Music and Organist:
Dr Andrew Sentance

Assistant Organist: William Sarjeant

St Leonard's Church
Friends of St Leonard's
New Member Secretary: **Sue Patterson**

Addresses
Holy Trinity Church
New Road, Hertford SG14 3JJ
St Leonard's Church
St Leonard's Road, Bengeo, SG14 3JW

Local Contacts for Help and Advice

Below are links to local services.

Medical and Health Advice
www.nhs.uk

Domestic Abuse

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline
0808 808 8088 [Freephone Monday to Friday, 9am–9pm; Saturday and Sunday 9am–4pm]

Refuge Free and Confidential Helpline 24/7
0808 2000 247

Financial Advice

Hertfordshire Support Fund
If you need help, regardless of whether you qualify for benefits, please call HertsHelp on **0300 123 4044**, email **info@hertshelp.net** or visit **www.hertshelp.net**.

For more information about the support on offer for residents both locally and national, please visit **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/costofliving**.

Money Advice Unit
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/benefits

Citizens Advice Service – East Herts

Local Message Line 01920 459944. Monday to Thursday, leave a message with your details, and an adviser will call you back Monday to Thursday, between 10am–4pm.

Out of Hours Helpline 0800 144 8848. Monday to Wednesday, 4–8pm, Thursday and Friday 4–9pm, and Saturday 10am–4pm.

Local contact centres: **Hertford Sele Community Hub, 18 Fleming Crescent, Sele, Hertford, SG14 2DJ**. Open Wednesdays 11am–1pm. **Ware Contact Centre, Ware Priory, High Street Ware SG12 9AL.** Open Tuesdays 11am–1pm.

National Debtline
www.nationaldebtline.org
Helpline 0808 808 4000. Monday to Friday 9am–8pm, Saturday 9.30am–1pm, Sunday closed.

Advice on avoiding scams

Sign up for scam alerts from trading standards
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/updateme

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline
0808 223 1133

Mental Health Advice and Support

NHS Mental Health Services in Herts
Call for free **0800 644 101** this number is open 24/7 or call **111** and choose option 2
E: **hpft.spa@nhs.net**

Herts Mind Network
www.hertsmindnetwork.org
020 3727 3600 | **0300 777 0707** [8am–7pm]
Nightline: **01923 256391**

Emotional Support and Practical Help

Samaritans
116 123 lines open 24 hours a day, calls are free
www.samaritans.org

Childline
0800 1111 or webchat
24-hour counselling service for children and young people 24/7
www.childline.org.uk

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HITCHIN • 01462 438422
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BUNTINGFORD • 01763 274111
WELWYN GARDEN CITY • 01707 390018
WELWYN • 01438 714686
HERTFORD • 01992 582052
WARE • 01920 468551
LETCHWORTH • 01462 684292
HODDESDON • 01992 471709
HARWOOD PARK • 01438 812515
HARPENDEN • 01582 762570

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On the Doorstep – Violets

Photographs of Violets.
See Bridget Hersant's article on page 12.











Hertford Yarnbombers are celebrating our Happy Places to raise funds for Hertford Pantry.







