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Bengeo Magazine is looking for an experienced Editorial Assistant

The Editorial Team is looking for a person with editorial experience and good computer skills living in the Bengeo area to join the team and assist in preparing and editing the copy and images. We are a small team and would welcome someone who is willing and able to help us.

Please contact **mail@bengeomagazine.co.uk** in the first instance to let us know your interest in our local magazine and your experience with publishing. We would love to hear from you.

You will find plenty to do in Bengeo in the run up to Christmas in the magazine this time with church and community events at CoPS theatre and Courtyard Arts.

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 Christingle Service is at 4pm on Sunday 29th November in Holy Trinity Church.**
Photograph by: **Bridget Hersant.**

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Editorial Team
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SCAN ME

HERTFORD SHOWROOM

HALG Spring 2027 Courses

Tuesday mornings at the Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo, SG14 3DA

Recent Hertford Adult Learning Group (HALG) courses have been very popular – people enjoy learning something new in a welcoming and convivial atmosphere. The current course, *'Discovering Ukraine through its Culture',* was sold out within a week! We usually meet every Tuesday morning in term time at the Parish Church Hall, Duncombe Road.

In the spring we are trying something new: two short courses to be sold as one. The start time is also reverting back to 10am. Further details including the fee and how to pay will be sent out after half term to everyone on the mailing list.

'Great British Comic Artists' with Martin Attridge will look at the popular art of Hogarth, Gillray, Cruikshank and others, and how it evolved from English art before the 18th century. 5 sessions of 2 hours from 12th January to 9th February.

'1945: The First Months of Peace' with Stephen Barnard will be an engaging blend of social, cultural and political history, as those who have attended his previous courses will know. 5 sessions of 2 hours from 23rd February to 23rd March.

Everyone on the mailing list will receive information about upcoming courses at the same time, and places are allocated on a first come, first served (paid) basis. If you would like your name to be added to the HALG mailing list please send your name and email details to me at **halgcontact@gmail.com**.

Thank you

Janet Sheail
HALG Committee

Bengeo Afternoon Women's Institute

We meet monthly in the Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm.

This month we welcomed Janet who provided us with everything needed to create beautiful Christmas cards. Richard Thomas will be our speaker on Wednesday 4th November when his talk will be about the Gunpowder Plot and Guy Fawkes. Richard is an exceptional historian, and we are looking forward to hearing him. In December the u3a Ukulele Group will provide entertainment at our Christmas social.

Do come along to any of our meetings where you will find a warm welcome and a cup of tea. Looking ahead to 2027, we do not meet in January so may we take this early opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year too.

Janet Butler
Secretary

Christingle Service

Advent Sunday 29th November at 4pm in Holy Trinity Church

Please come and join us for another delightful Christingle Service, a Service for all ages to raise money for the Children's Society. Pass the word on to family and friends to come and receive a Christingle in return for a donation.

Thank you for supporting the Children's Society for their invaluable work with youngsters in difficult and desperate circumstances.

If you need any more information about the Christingle Service, please contact me on **01992 583979**.

Many thanks

Libby Shillito



2026: A year in the life of the Love Bengeo Community Group

www.lovebengeo.org.uk

This year has been a busy one!

In January, we held the first Love Bengeo Community Group meeting of the year, and, with Claire Costello, hosted a Bengeo Mosaic workshop.

In February, we published the first four Bengeo Trails, supported the Hertford Castle Greenspace Renewal planning application, and held another Bengeo Mosaic workshop.

In March, monthly Saturday volunteer gardening sessions started at the Bengeo Community Garden, we held a fundraising Bingo event at Bengeo Parish Church Hall and celebrated the first anniversary of the Bengeo Front Gardens and Wildlife Corridors Facebook Group.

In April, we opposed an appeal to build on Green Belt land at Ware Park and supported the Grade II Listed Wallace House planning application.

In May, the lovely Bengeo Mosaic was installed on Bengeo Street and monthly Bengeo Litter Pick sessions coordinated by Alex Daar started. The month also marked the five-year anniversary of the public referendum on the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan.

By the end of June, we'd responded to the consultation on the new Local Plan and written and published 12 more Bengeo Trails and a compilation of all 16 trails.





Over the dry July and August period, there was lots of maintenance at the Bengeo Community Garden.

In September, we had a stall at the All Saints Church Environment Day and in October, we held a community plants and crafts event, which included a



presentation from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. We also opposed a planning application to build a house on the Port Hill Quaker Burial Ground. The Neighbourhood Plan policy used in the response will help inform East Herts District Council's decision.

In November, we're holding a wreath-making workshop at Bengeo Parish Church Hall, and we'll respond to the consultation on the Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan. In December, we'll end a busy year with the fourth of our quarterly meetings.

Thank you to the community for their wonderful support this year with the Love Bengeo Community Group projects and thanks are also due to Costello Mosaics, Councillors, Hertford Town Council, the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Mudlarks, and Thomas Childs and Co.

We are looking forward to a busy and enjoyable 2027. **www.lovebengeo.org.uk**.

Bengeo Community Garden

Our garden is now ready for autumn as several people came along to our most recent monthly volunteer session to tidy up and dig in new plants. Sessions are usually on the first Saturday each month and new volunteers are welcome.

We recently held our 2nd Bengeo Garden Community Day in Bengeo Parish Hall. Working with other Love Bengeo projects: Bengeo's Front Gardens and Wildlife and Bengeo Trails we were able to offer plants, seeds and bulbs along with bird boxes, rope art, and copies of Bengeo trails, all of which proved extremely popular.

Kate Sheard from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust gave an interesting and useful talk on small changes that benefit wildlife and The Coffee Pot were on hand to provide refreshments. Visitors and helpers gave generously, and we were delighted to raise over £400. All funds raised will be spent on the Bengeo Community Garden plants, extra mulch, edging to stop soil slipping on to the path, Mudlarks maintenance, and ongoing improvements to our watering system.

Next year we hope to offer an Introduction to Gardening for Wildlife – a short course delivered by HMWT, but before that why not come along to sip mulled wine and enjoy a mince pie while making a Xmas wreath. Book your place at our Wreath Making Workshop on 21st November. Please contact us on **garden@lovebengeo.org.uk** to find more details.



Beane Marshes update

A lot has happened down at Beane Marsh over the last year. In the spring we had an information board put up by HMWT. The board features some of the species seen on the marsh including purple loosestrife which has made a recovery perhaps due to grazing of the land. We believe that there are now water voles on the River Beane at the marsh and have also seen tawny owls and little owls. It is pleasing to see the number of species on the marsh increase and makes all our hard work worthwhile.

This year we have a number of Dexter cows and calves grazing. They have been doing very well and have made a massive difference to the marsh helping to clear many of the nettles and rough grass. We have a rota of volunteers who do a fantastic job daily keeping an eye on the cattle.

As winter approaches the cattle will be removed but they will graze the marsh again in early 2027.

HMWT continue with their programme of cutting a third of the marsh each year. This works alongside the grazing programme to encourage the development of native plants. They are photographing the marsh annually from several fixed points so that they can build up a picture of what impact these measures are having.

Beane Marsh is a unique chalk stream marsh on the River Beane and is one of only 260 chalk streams in the world. As a charity Save Beane Marshes keeps an eye on the land and has regular liaison with HMWT (Hertford and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) We also have close ties with the River Beane Restoration Association RBRA, including undertaking school talks and education liaison.

To find out more about the marsh you can visit the HMWT webpage www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/beane-marsh or our Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/savebeanemarshes.

To find out more about the River Beane Restoration Association visit their website at www.riverbeane.co.uk.

John Howson and Jill Digby

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FOSL Winter 2026

We had a busy summer season at St Leonard's. We were very happy to welcome visitors at our Sunday open days – many people enjoyed visiting this beautiful church and discovering its long history. We also had some lovely music and a lot of tea and cake was consumed.

Our open season enables us to raise money to maintain St Leonard's which shows some signs of her age. We are enormously grateful to all of the volunteers who give their time and their baking skills to allow us to do this.

Keep in Touch

To keep in touch with our plans for 2027 at St Leonards, please follow us on Facebook (Friends of St Leonard's Bengeo).

If you have ideas for events for our open season, we would be glad to hear them.



If you want 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.

Helen Fleming
Secretaryfriendsofstleonards@gmail.com

Monday Lunch

Our first lunch for the Autumn was on 14th September. It was a nice day, but not as hot as some we have had. The hall was, as usual, a pleasant sight, with white tablecloths, nicely laid places and flowers on the tables. A carafe each of red and white wine and a bottle of water were on each table.

For the first course we had mackerel paté served with toast and salad. Very nice on a warm day. For the main course we had Boeuf Bourguignon accompanied by mashed potatoes, lightly cooked cabbage and a mixed dish of peas and carrots. This went down very well! For pudding we had blackberry and apple crumble served with custard, which seemed very appropriate for an Autumn day. Afterwards there was tea and coffee and chocolate mints.

Our October lunch was on the 12th, and it was much cooler. The tables were set out as before and we were given cheese and tomato tart with salad for a first course. The main course was Lasagne filled with salmon, served with peas and beans. Quite delicious, if you are like me, a fish enthusiast! The pudding was Pineapple Upside Down Cake served with custard and was followed by tea and coffee with peppermints. Both lunches were £20 a head and are very good value. We are always pleased to see newcomers, and there have been some of those recently. Anyone coming alone will be warmly welcomed and found a place to sit with friendly people.

To book a place, telephone Clare at The Lobster Pot on **07887 543464**, preferably seven days in advance. Our next lunches will be on the 9th November and the 14th December. The December lunch will be £25 as it is a special lunch.

Janet Guilbride



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On the Doorstep – Poppies

I usually like to choose a flower that you will be able to see around the time that you are reading this article, but in this issue I have decided to look at the common poppy which, I think, because of its association with Remembrance Sunday in November, you will agree is appropriate.

The common poppy is a native of the UK and one of the most familiar wildflowers. Its scientific name is Papaver rhoeas. Papaver is the ancient classical Latin word for poppy and is believed to have derived from the word pappa, meaning milk or thick milk, possibly a reference to the sap that comes from the stem when cut. Rhoeas is the Greek word for pomegranate, possibly in reference to the red coloured juice of the pomegranate and the red petals of the poppy. Common names for the poppy are Corn Poppy, Flanders Poppy and Field Poppy.

The poppy is a stunning flower with its delicate vibrant red petals, although white ones can occasionally be found. The plant blooms between June to August, but can sometimes be seen as early as May and as late as October. It enjoys a habitat of grassland and farmland like corn fields – hence a few of the common names, roadside verges, scrub and waste land.

The poppy grows to around 80cm, the stems are long and slender and covered in coarse hairs that stick out. The leaves are feathery and also covered with fine bristly hairs. Each stem only produces one flower, the bud forms and then droops over before the flower opens. The flower has 4 bright red petals that are approximately 5cm across and overlap slightly. They have a slightly crumpled look to them, are very delicate and easily damaged when touched. The base of the petals at the centre of the flower and the stamen are black, giving it its striking look. One plant, if the conditions are right, can produce as many as 400 flowers. However, the flowers are short lived and are replaced with a large attractive seed pod that when shaken gives a satisfying rattle of all the seeds inside it. Indeed this is how the seeds are dispersed by the pods being knocked and the seeds falling out of the holes that are at the top of the pod. The seeds can then lay dormant for up to 80 years, only germinating once the soil has been disturbed.

The seeds of the plant have been used in cooking for centuries and are still used today, being added to bread and pastries to give a nutty flavour. The petals have been used medicinally by drying them and using them as a mild sedative or for mild pain relief.

The Egyptians, Romans and Greeks all used poppies as offerings and to celebrate their Gods, the Egyptians and Romans making garlands to ensure the fertility of their crops and the Greeks offering seeds to their goddess Ceres to ensure a bountiful corn harvest. The poppy has also been associated with the god Hypnos, the god of sleep.

In the Victorian language of flowers, the poppy symbolised sleep, agriculture, sacrifice, remembrance and consolation.

The poppy has been an inspiration to artists and poets alike. Claude Monet featured poppies in several of his paintings, the most famous being *'The Poppies'* painted in 1873. The flowers were also popular with the Art Nouveau artists, who enjoyed their colour, sinuous curving stems and structured seed pods.

Of course, we cannot think of the poppy without remembering its significance and the symbolic meaning that it has on Remembrance Day. The poppy with its delicate petals grew and covered the churned-up battlefields in Flanders during the First World War. It is a symbol of the fragility of life, but also of resilience, strength and the hope of new life after war-torn destruction and the many lives lost.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
By John McCrae

With our poppies, we will remember them.

Bridget Hersant



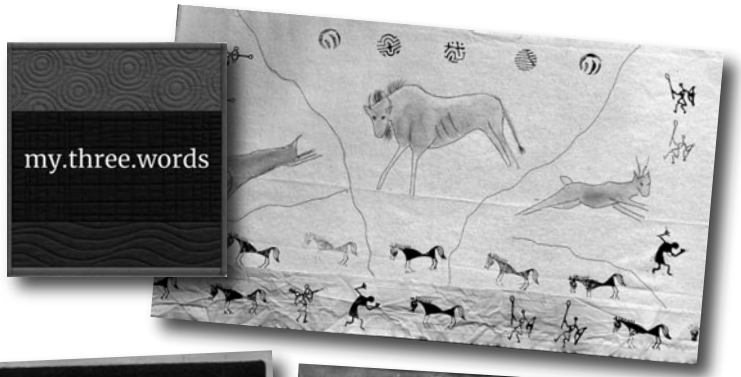
The festive season at Courtyard Arts: A season of creativity, craft and community

As Hertford heads into the festive season, Courtyard Arts is once again transforming into a hub of colour, music and creativity with workshops, exhibitions, carols and community celebrations running throughout November and December. The centre's 2026 Christmas programme offers something for everyone – from families and young makers to seasoned artists and lovers of local culture.

Exhibitions

In the Main Gallery, the Eastern Region Textile Forum presents *MY.THREE.WORDS – Voyages of the Imagination* (20th October to 14th November). Artists embark on a creative journey inspired by the global location system What3Words, which divides the planet into tiny 3m x 3m squares. The exhibition showcases 35 artists with an extraordinary range of textile practice. Enjoy the journey.

Over in the Stables Gallery, Anastasia Olarou exhibits from 27th October to 21st November, bringing a fresh and expressive close to the Autumn season.





Key Dates for Members

November is an important month for our Courtyard community. Members are invited to the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 11th November at 7pm, a chance to reflect on the past year and hear plans for the future.

The Members' Show returns with artwork handing in on Sunday 15th November (10.30am–3.30pm), followed by the Members' Show Party on Friday 20th November (6.30–8.30pm) – a warm celebration of our members' creativity.

A Sparkling Start: The 2026 Christmas Bauble Competition



The festivities begin with the launch of the Christmas Bauble Competition on Tuesday 29 September. This is a much loved Courtyard tradition that invites artists of all ages to design their own festive decoration. This year's template is a star-shaped bauble, ready to be transformed with paint, collage, digital art or mixed media.

Templates cost just £2, and all proceeds support Courtyard's community arts programme – part of our ongoing mission to make creativity accessible to everyone.

Key dates for the competition include:

- **Final hand-in day:** Saturday 14th November
- **Exhibition:** Throughout December 2026
- **Bauble Collection:** 22nd–23rd December or from 5th January

All completed baubles will be exhibited in the gallery throughout December. Prizes will be awarded across three age categories: 8 and under, 9–15, and 16+ including adults.

Festive Fused Glass Workshops: Creativity in full colour



Courtyard Arts is offering a brand new programme of Festive Fused Glass Workshops, running in November. Led by experienced tutor Jane Ducarreaux, these sessions

provide a relaxed, welcoming environment where participants can design and create their own contemporary Christmas decorations.

Workshops include:

- **Fused Glass Christmas Lantern**
  Sunday 1st November, 10am–4pm
  A full day workshop guiding participants through the creation of a beautiful, illuminated lantern – perfect for adding warmth to winter evenings.
- **Fused Glass Seasonal Wreath**
  Sunday 8th November, 10am–4pm
  A contemporary twist on a festive classic, this workshop invites makers to design a striking fused glass wreath.
- **Fused Glass Christmas Decorations**
  Sunday 15th November,
  10am–12pm or 12.45–2.45pm
  A chance to create colourful glass decorations ideal for gifting or adding a personal touch to your home.

All materials are provided, and no previous experience is required – just enthusiasm and a willingness to experiment. Places are limited, and early booking is recommended.



Carols at Courtyard: A Hertford Favourite

The festive season reaches its musical highlight on Sunday 6th December, when the much-loved Carols at Courtyard event returns. Featuring a performance from the acclaimed Courtyard Quartet, this uplifting afternoon of Christmas music has become a cherished annual tradition.

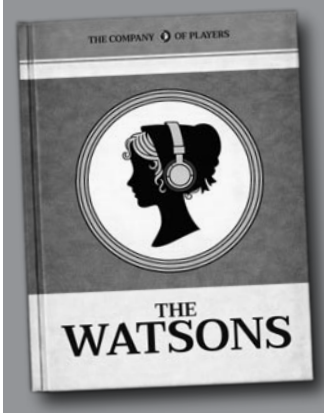
Doors open at 2.30pm, with singing beginning at 3pm. Visitors can enjoy:

- A seasonal programme of carols
- The chance to join in with favourite Christmas songs
- Homemade mince pies and mulled wine
- Unique jewellery, artwork, gifts and cards from local makers

Entry is free, though booking is essential to help the team manage numbers.

The Company of Players

The Little Theatre, Balfour Street, Hertford
presents



The Watsons

By Laura Wade
Directed by Mel Powell

Friday 20th to Saturday 28th November at 7.45pm (except Sunday) with matinee on 21st November.

'What happens when the writer loses the plot?'

Emma Watson is 19 and new in town. She's been cut off by her rich aunt and dumped back in the family home. Emma and her sisters must marry, fast. If not, they face poverty, spinsterhood, or worse: an eternity with their boorish brother and his awful wife. Luckily there are plenty of potential suitors to dance with, from flirtatious Tom Musgrave to castle-owning Lord Osborne, who's as awkward as he is rich. So far so familiar.

But there's a problem: Jane Austen didn't finish the story. Who will write Emma's happy ending now? Based on her incomplete novel, this sparklingly witty play looks under the bonnet of Jane Austen and asks: What can characters do when their author abandons them?

Celebrating 30 years of Creativity

This year, Courtyard Arts celebrated 30 years of creating art in the community. With two galleries, a shop, and fully equipped teaching studios – including pottery wheels and kilns – the centre has long been a meeting place for creative minds. Our programmes support people of all ages and abilities, including young carers, dementia sufferers, recovering addicts, the elderly and local schools.

The 2026 festive programme reflects everything Courtyard Arts stands for: creativity, community, accessibility and joy.

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Over half a century playing the organ

By Andrew Sentance



Andrew training up a new organist.

After eight years playing the organ and leading the church music in the Parish of Bengeo, I will be retiring from my musical duties at the end of this year. Due to failing eyesight and other health issues, I have decided to call it a day after about 55 years of playing the organ.

I started learning the organ as a teenager in the early 1970s. After university, in the early 1980s, I started playing regularly at All Saints Church, Shooters Hill, in South-East London, the church where I had grown up and attended with my family from the age of 5.

It was my father's idea for me to play the organ and I was happy to try it out. Though we were a musical family, none of my siblings played the organ, so it seemed an interesting new venture. I became even more enthusiastic when I discovered the timing of my school organ lessons enabled me to skip the rigours of playing rugby on cold, wet and muddy playing fields!

At All Saints, I contributed to church music as a guitarist as well as playing the organ. I also met my wife Anne there, and we were married in 1985, moving into our first home together in Essex. We identified a local parish with two churches, which appeared very welcoming – St Mary's and St Cedd's in the Parish of Stifford near Grays Thurrock. The congregation had been praying for a new organist to arrive to replace the previous music leader who was heading off to university. We turned up just in time – attending just one service (Harvest Festival) before I took over playing the organ and Anne became the choir leader!

Anne and I continued our musical ministry in Stifford for about 25 years, and we established a worship band there, Revelation, which also performed at local fetes and fayres, In 2010 we started worshipping at our local church in the village of Horndon-on-the-Hill and I joined the organ rota there, as well as playing at other local churches.

After moving to Hertfordshire, we heard of another church needing a replacement organist – Holy Trinity, Bengeo – and I became organist and music director in late 2018. As at Stifford in the 1980s, Anne has supported with leading the choir and other musical activities. We have also been greatly helped by Will Sarjeant who has shared the organ stool with me, and by other musicians and singers who have contributed to the Bengeo Worship Band and our informal singing group. Both Will and Anne will continue to lead the church music in the Parish of Bengeo in the New Year.

I am very grateful for the appreciation given by the Holy Trinity congregation for the music at our services over the past eight years – including their favourable reception to my improvised organ voluntaries based on themes from popular music like *"Whiter Shade of Pale"*!

Over the past 55 years, at Bengeo and the other parishes where I have been a regular organist, I estimate I have played the organ at around 2,500 services! All good things eventually come to an end, though, and it is now time for me to pass on organ-playing in our Parish to others.

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Amwell View All Stars Youth Club

Upcycling Furniture

Some of the pupils based at the Amwell View Tonwell Satellite School have been busy upcycling furniture as part of their After School Youth Club activities. They are developing their practical skills, creativity and teamwork while giving old furniture a new lease of life.

Sam Wood, Class Teacher said "Amwell View All Stars Youth Club have visited the Ware Re-use shop to choose and purchase old furniture that the pupils liked the look of, with the view of upcycling it into a statement furniture piece. The pupils have planned and decorated these pieces of furniture themselves.

The pupils chose a small, old Mud Kitchen to rejuvenate for our school playground, and a chest of drawers unit that they wanted to upcycle and for us to donate as a raffle prize at our Christmas celebration later on this year.

The pupils really enjoyed choosing each piece, sanding them down and communicating what colours and materials they would like to use to create their own upcycled pieces. They have been developing a range of designing, construction and decorating skills, and are able to use tools safely and appropriately".

The pupils will continue to work on practical projects like this to develop important life skills as they move towards adulthood.



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Duncombe School

Duncombe pupils buy lunch in French and crack codes in new Year 6 enrichment programme

Year 6 pupils at Duncombe School bought their own lunch at a French market with five euros and no English, as part of a new programme preparing them for life beyond primary school.

The independent day school and pre-school in Bengeo which teaches children aged two to 11 and is part of Blenheim Schools, has launched 'D6 Enrich: Dare, Discover, Do', enhancing its Year 6 enrichment around the skills needed for secondary school and beyond, with every pupil taking part.

Every trip, workshop and masterclass is now linked to one of four areas: character, citizenship, critical thinking, and culture and creativity. It is designed to give pupils what the school calls 'secondary school muscles', from managing themselves in unfamiliar places to talking with adults and trying things they are not immediately good at.

One highlight was a five-day residential in Normandy, where pupils milked cows, visited a cider orchard, tried snails and explored the Baie de Somme, renowned for its seal colonies. Away from home, they had to manage for themselves, building resilience and independence.

At the seaside town market in Criel-sur-Mer, small groups were given five euros each to buy ingredients for a picnic lunch, speaking only French, testing their budgeting, language skills and confidence.

Closer to home, a codebreaking day at Bletchley Park showed pupils how history, maths and logic combine to solve real problems, while robotics workshops at Legoland put physics into practice.

A mock magistrates' trial asked them to put forward arguments and weigh up evidence, and first aid training gave them skills they may one day need for real.

Pupils also ran their own lemonade business, learning to plan, market and sell, heard from local police about positive choices they can make during their adventures, met birds of prey on a falconry visit and visited the Frameless art exhibition in London.

Lydia Cartwright, Deputy Head Pastoral and Head of Upper School at Duncombe School, said: "Enrichment shouldn't simply enrich the school week; it should enrich the child. We didn't want to give children more to do, but instead make what they did more purposeful, so every experience has a reason behind it.

"Some of the most valuable moments came when they felt slightly out of their depth, and quieter children often shone once the usual classroom structure was taken away. You can't teach resilience without giving children something difficult to overcome.

"Our ambition was to create a programme with real purpose, so our children step beyond the Duncombe gates ready to embrace their next chapter."

The first year of the new programme ended with a performance of Oliver with a Twist at BEAM in Hertford, giving pupils a shared goal to work towards and a chance to shine beyond the classroom.

Every child in the year group went on to receive an offer from their first-choice senior school, with 15 scholarships awarded across academic study, sport, music and drama.









A Word from The Rectory

Where Bayeux and Bengeo meet

From The Vicar, The Revd Robert Thompson



Should you wish to see the Bayeux tapestry at the British Museum this year – good luck – there's a very long queue. I for one was rather surprised by all the recent fuss about it. It's not from Bayeux. It's not a tapestry. It recounts the defeat of the English in unremitting, gruesome detail. Yet this great, nearly 70-metre-long embroidery, seems to exercise an irresistible fascination, and all the more so for its recent arrival in this country.

Here in Bengeo, home of the 12th century Church of St Leonard, no bit of Norman memorabilia is ever overlooked. The Bayeux Tapestry, however, languished in the cathedral at Bayeux, largely unvisited for centuries. It wasn't until the nineteenth century, in fact, that it got much attention outside Normandy.

One spur was the Emperor Napoleon's decision to exhibit it in Paris in 1803 as he drummed up enthusiasm for what turned out to be an abortive invasion of England. And then those English antiquarians came along, increasingly obsessed by the medieval past, proclaiming this remarkable relic to be a uniquely precious historical source – one so splendid that it could never really be trusted to the French.

They commissioned drawings and prints of it – and eventually, photographs. In the 1880s, a group of women in Staffordshire set out to recreate the Tapestry 'so that England should have a copy of its own'. They embroidered a complete copy from photographs that had been doctored to preserve the Victorian ladies from exposure to any indecency. As a result, several naked Normans are displayed sporting rather natty gold underpants. You can still visit 'Britain's Bayeux Tapestry' in Reading where it is on permanent display in the town's Museum.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Reading was just one of a range of places where the public could encounter this important work of art. 'Never, perhaps, was so important a document written in worsted', observed one contemporary. It inspired paintings, poetry, and parody, featuring in Punch cartoons and prompting Tennyson's epic drama of 1876, Harold. It was also the subject of fierce debate between historians. Was it created by the English or the French? Was it Norman propaganda or did it convey a subversive Anglo-Saxon subtext?

It was its mystery that gave the subject such a fascination. Everyone had a view and almost anyone could find a connection with the subject-matter. It has the kind of mystique that seems to enrapture many of the people that visit us in Bengeo to see St Leonard's.

Today, the English are a people searching for an identity, asking questions about where they've come from. St Leonard's Church is witness to a period of momentous change. For some it represents a national disaster, killing off a tradition of Anglo-Saxon freedom. For others, it embodies the foundation of the modern world, as England was drawn into the development of western Christendom and the feudal state. St Leonard's and the Bayeux Tapestry both point to a pivotal moment in England's history.



Like the Bayeux Tapestry, St Leonard's was also the subject of a Victorian awakening. Casual observers of the building have sometimes remarked that the most readily observable date is 1885, marked in

Victorian brickwork on the church exterior, leaving some visitors to wonder whether this is not a nineteenth-century re-creation.

There was a time when I'd look at that date and groan that the Victorians should ever think to frank and date this building with their brand of unshakeable self-confidence, but deeper appreciation has taught me that the Victorians, like us, were profoundly anxious about their world. Social and political change, massive technological disruption and new, global challenges left them unmoored and insecure.

The poet Matthew Arnold wrote of 'This strange disease of modern life, With its sick hurry, its divided aims'. Many in the nineteenth century sought in the past some hope for the future. The medieval world, in particular, seemed to offer an encouraging model of faith, and in the story of St Leonard a model community and the freedom of peasant life. That brave badge of 1885 was a Victorian attempt to co-opt and celebrate this church in that context.

So we should learn a little sympathy for our Victorian forebears. Indeed, we are not that far away from them at all. With our own anxiety and our current search for a national story that will unite us all, there's little wonder we're still obsessed with things that mattered to them too.

We are also searching amongst our medieval roots hoping to recover our sense of self. And if you can't find that looking at the Bayeux Tapestry in London any time soon, then you can always get your medieval mojo on here in Bengeo. We've got St Leonard's right on our doorstep – and there's no ticket required.

With my prayers,

Robert Thompson

St Leonard's Day is 6th November

Grandparents' Sunday at Holy Trinity

Grandparents' Day falls on the first Sunday of October and has been celebrated in this country since 1990, when first introduced by Age UK.

On Sunday 4th October, Holy Trinity celebrated Grandparents' Sunday for the very first time, by thanking all our grandparents for everything they do for their children and grandchildren – and for our church!



We thought about the many names that grandparents are called, and by unscrambling a series of jumbled words, uncovered a hidden message: A HELPING HAND (vertically from the 'A' in GRAN).

The helping hands of grandparents are much appreciated by their families, and they are certainly indispensable within our church! It is estimated that around a quarter of all church goers are grandparents, and on an average Sunday about 850,000 of those in church will be grandparents, or of grandparent age. They have all kinds of gifts, do all kinds of work, and have all kinds of experience that they put to good use inside our churches.

Perhaps we don't always recognise or appreciate grandparents as much as we should, so on the 4th October we put that right and made a point of showing that appreciation. Their helping hands really do transform our families and keep the Church of England ticking over.

We have so many reasons to celebrate grandparents and those of grandparent age, but if there's one thing people will thank them and God for, time and time again, it's the helping hand they offer in so many ways.

Parish Calendar NOVEMBER 2026

Sunday 1st November	**All Saints' Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	All Age Communion
Tuesday 3rd November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 4th November	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Café, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 5th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 8th November	**Third Sunday before Advent (Remembrance Sunday)**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion – commemorating the Fallen at Bengeo War Memorials
Tuesday 10th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 11th November	
10am	Craft Club, Duncombe Hall – all home crafts welcome
Thursday 12th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 15th November	**Second Sunday before Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion and Safeguarding Sunday
Tuesday 17th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 19th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30–8pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Café, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Sunday 22nd November	**Christ The King**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Tuesday 24th November	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 26th November	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 29th November	**Advent Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
4pm	Christingle Service. Supporting the work of The Children's Society

Parish Calendar DECEMBER 2026

Tuesday 1st December	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 2nd December	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Café, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 3rd December	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 6th December	**Second Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
3.30pm	Annual Christmas Service of Remembrance and Lighting of Evergreen Tree Remembering Loved Ones, at Holy Trinity Churchyard
Tuesday 8th December	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 9th December	
10am	Craft Club, Duncombe Hall – all home crafts welcome
Thursday 10th December	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 13th December	**Third Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
4pm	'Sing Noel' Carol Service with guest musical items
Tuesday 15th December	
8pm	Advent Group at Holy Trinity Church: Discussion and Learning
Thursday 17th December	
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30–8pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Café, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Sunday 20th December	**Fourth Sunday of Advent**
9am	Holy Communion
10am	Parish Communion
Thursday 24th December	**Christmas Eve**
4pm	Blessing of the crib. All Age Service around the Christmas crib
7pm	Carols by Candlelight – favourite carols, poems and seasonal readings in a candlelit church
Friday 25th December	**Christmas Day**
10am	Festival All Age Communion – celebrating the birth of Jesus with carols old and new
Sunday 27th December	**The Sunday of Christmas**
10am	Parish Communion
	NB: No 9am Service

Parish Prayers

Daily Prayers for November

1. All Saints
2. Those dear to us departed
3. Hope after Harm – Victim Support Charity
4. Christians in Columbia
5. HMP Isis, West London
6. Samaritans
7. Kick it out – charity working against racism in sport
8. Remembrance Sunday
9. Temple Fields
10. Child Line – support for young people
11. All who seek peace in world conflicts
12. HMP Isle of Wight
13. Christians in Chad
14. King Charles III Birthday
15. Future Hope Hertford, working with young people and families
16. Temple Lane
17. Citizens Advice Centres around the UK
18. Christian churches in Jordan
19. HMP Kirkham, Preston
20. Hertford Churches Together
21. Mercy Ships Africa
22. Christ The King
23. Temple Court
24. The Fisherman's Mission
25. Christians in Brunei
26. HMP Kirklevington Grange, Stockton on Tees
27. Southwell Minster
28. Hertford Disability Support Group
29. Advent
30. The Avenue

Daily Prayers for December

1. The Lullaby Trust
2. Christians in North Korea
3. HMP Lancaster Farms, Lancaster
4. The Haven First, support for the homeless in Stevenage
5. Hospice UK
6. The Salvation Army Refuge Centres
7. The Dell
8. The Refugee Council UK
9. Christians in Somalia
10. HMP Leeds
11. Prison Chaplains
12. The Archbishop of Canterbury
13. Our Church Services during Advent
14. The Drive
15. The Christian Doctors Fellowship
16. Christians in Yemen
17. HMP Leicester
18. The Christian Police Association
19. The Children's Society
20. The World Wide Anglican Church
21. The Garden Cottage (The most northerly home in our Parish)
22. Young Life Hertford
23. Christians in Bethlehem
24. Armed Forces Chaplains
25. Our Friends
26. Our Families
27. Our Neighbours
28. Children Living in War Zones
29. The Orchard, Bengeo
30. Christians in Sudan
31. St Albans Cathedral

Register

7th September Burial of Ashes
Pamela Sutton

10th September Burial of Ashes
Keith Holmes

26th September Wedding
Niall Gilsenan and Sophie Blackmore

21st October Funeral
Pam Martin



Quiet Time

Quiet Time continues at Holy Trinity Church on Tuesday evenings at 8pm when there will be discussion and learning on Advent topics.

Church Contacts

Rector: 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

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Domestic Abuse

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline
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Refuge Free and Confidential Helpline 24/7
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Hertfordshire Support Fund
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For more information about the support on offer for residents both locally and national, please visit **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/costofliving**.

Money Advice Unit
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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

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Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline
0808 223 1133

Mental Health Advice and Support

NHS Mental Health Services in Herts
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E: **hpft.spa@nhs.net**

Herts Mind Network
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On the Doorstep – Poppies



See Bridget Hersant's article on page 11.











Christmas

in the Parish of Bengeo

Annual Christmas Service of Remembrance & Lighting of Evergreen Tree
Remembering Loved Ones, in Holy Trinity Churchyard & Memorial Garden
Sunday 6th December, 3.30pm

'Sing Noel!' Christmas Carol Service
Sunday 13th December, 4pm
Carol Concert with guest musical items

Christmas Eve at Holy Trinity Church, Bengeo
Blessing of the crib, 4pm
All Age Service around the Christmas crib
Carols by Candlelight, 7pm
Favourite Carols, poems and seasonal readings in a candlelit church

Christmas Day at Holy Trinity Church, Bengeo
Festival All Age Communion, 10am
Celebrating the birth of Jesus with carols old and new



Holy Trinity Church, New Rd,
St. Leonard's Church, St. Leonard's Road
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