SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER 2026

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Bengeo Parish Magazine and Community News



We are featuring pre-history, history and the environment in this issue of the magazine as well as our usual contributions.

Dinosaurs have been roaming around Hertford during August having escaped from their territory in Parliament Square. They were busy raising funds for Hertford Disability Support Group (HDSG) aided by the Secret Society of Hertford Crafters (Yarnbombers).

Ralph Abel Smith tells of changes in agriculture since WW2, including emphasis on maintaining and conserving the environment. There is more to find out at the Environment Day at All Saint's Church on the 12th September. In Bengeo we are making the most of the environment with a Community Garden and new Bengeo trails.

In the countryside, Bridget Hersant encourages us to see the positive aspects of Ragwort, a much-maligned plant.

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: **Autumn flowers in a Bengeo garden.**

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SCAN ME

HERTFORD SHOWROOM

Our Annual Pet Service







Photo credits: ADAM FOX

We held the Pet Blessing Service on Sunday 5 July at St Leonard's Church. It was a very hot day but about 60 people and twenty or more dogs of all shapes and sizes came. This year we also had a beautifully fluffy cat and a rabbit.

Thanks go to Bob Kelly who led the lively Service with musical accompaniment to our songs provided by Will Sarjeant on the organ.

Our speaker Denise Newman gave an interesting talk about Hearing Dogs. We also had a visit from Debbie and her Ambassador Hearing dog who travel to various locations to raise awareness of the Charity.

Afterwards we were able to enjoy refreshments and a chat, thank you to Sue Patterson and Mary Crane who helped and to those who had provided the delicious cakes. The pets were not forgotten as they all had a treat as well.

We are very pleased to say that together with some money from the Coffee Pot we were able to give Denise £250 for the Hearing Dogs Charity

Thank you to everyone who came and supported us.

Libby Shillito

Hertford Adult Learning Group Spring 2027 Courses

These are held on Tuesday mornings at the Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo SG14 3DA.

Recent (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! There are no spare places as you read this, but rest assured that everyone on the database receives information about upcoming courses at the same time, and places are allocated on a first come, first served (paid) basis.

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.

***'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. There are 5 sessions of 2 hours each 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 very popular courses will know. There are 5 sessions of 2 hours each from 23rd February to 23rd March.**

Everyone on the mailing list will be notified in the Autumn with course details including the fee. 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
for HALG Committee

Bengeo Afternoon WI

In August the Bengeo Afternoon WI went to visit The Quaker Meeting House in Hertford which is the oldest purpose-built Meeting House still in use in the world. We had a very informative talk from Ruth and enjoyed tea and cakes too.

Bengeo Afternoon WI meet on the first Wednesday of the month in the **Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo, SG14 3DA** at 2pm.

Our next meeting on Wednesday 2nd September we will welcome, providing it isn't too hot for them, some owls and their handler and on Wednesday 7th October, we are having a Craft Afternoon.

We are a small group of ladies who provide a warm welcome and we hope to see you at one of our meetings in the near future. Further information from Janet Butler Secretary **07961 906860** or email **janetbutler18@hotmail.com**.

Public Consultation on the New Local Plan

Love Bengeo Facebook Group

You can contact us by emailing **info@lovebengeo.org.uk**.

www.lovebengeo.org.uk

In June, the Love Bengeo Community Group responded to the first stage of the consultation on the new Local Plan. The East Herts District Council website says that the new Local Plan will 'shape the future of East Herts – guiding how we plan for homes, jobs, infrastructure and the environment'. This early stage consultation asked for feedback on what the new Local Plan should contain, and how East Herts should engage with stakeholders and the community during future stages of the consultation.

The Love Bengeo Community Group's consultation response said that the policies in the new Local Plan should robustly defend the District's Green Belt, as well as the policies in the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan (BNAP) involving the Green Belt and land designated as Local Green Space. The response also said that the new Local Plan should support communities by facilitating the extension of foot and cycle paths and bus routes to improve their connectivity with employment opportunities and community facilities.

The full response is available on **www.lovebengeo.org.uk/blog** and future updates on the new Local Plan consultation, and on Love Bengeo Community Group responses to significant planning applications, will be posted there, as well as on the Love Bengeo Facebook Group.

More information on the new Local Plan is available on **www.eastherts.gov.uk/new-local-plan**. The expected date of the adoption of the new Local Plan is April 2029.

Bengeo Trails

Posters promoting the walking trails produced by the Love Bengeo Community Group are now on display in the Hertford Town and Tourist Information Centre, Hertford Library, Sainsbury's, and on local information boards.

Printed copies of Trail 15, which focuses on the connection between Hartham Common and naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, are available in the Town and Tourist Information Centre. The 'Evolution' sculpture on Hartham Lane was inspired by Wallace and is the starting point for the trail.

The Love Bengeo Community Group are exploring the feasibility of a permissive path from Ware Park Road to the many facilities at Westmill Farm, on the north eastern boundary of the Bengeo Neighbourhood Plan Area, though achieving this would be subject to landowner agreement.



'Evolution' sculpture on Hartham Lane.

All the Bengeo Trails are available on **www.lovebengeo.org.uk/bengeo-trails** and on the Bengeo Trails Facebook Group.

Bengeo Community Garden and Bengeo's Front Gardens and Wildlife Corridors

Science tells us that having plants and gardens in a locality helps to bring down the overall temperature so, as well as looking attractive, our garden is truly helping the community. The hosepipe restrictions, combined with the hot weather we've been experiencing, could have been a disaster. Fortunately, the garden has benefitted from donated water butts and local volunteers who, on top of the monthly gardening sessions, have come several times a week to water – our garden has continued to flower all summer. Our thanks are also due to the Church Hall for offering us access to water.

Keeping with a watery theme, if you look closely at the small pond our local Brownies helped to create, you should see our frogs. We've counted up to five at any one







time. They seem very happy there despite a neighbour spotting a grass snake nearby!

Looking ahead, we will hold our second community event in the afternoon of Sunday 11th October. Expect a seed, bulb and plant swap, refreshments from The Coffee Pot, craft and wildlife related activities and entertainment from Just Love to Sing. Do come along to bring, buy and swap. You'll also be able to pick up printed copies of the Bengeo's Front Gardens and Wildlife Corridors walking trail. This trail, like its namesake Facebook Group, celebrates Bengeo's gardens and diversity starting at Holy Trinity Church and ending at our garden.

Later in the year we will be fund raising to fill planting gaps and to buy more mulch to help retain moisture, so look out for notice of our Wreath Making for Christmas Workshop plus Bingo and Quiz evenings.



Bengeo Mosaic Project Continues to Grow

We're delighted to announce that the Bengeo Mosaic Community Project has received further funding from Hertfordshire County Council towards maintaining and developing our community project.

The funding will help us care for the mosaic and add some lovely new features to the surrounding area. We're looking forward to the installation of a community bench, as well as creating colourful "flower bombs" of bulbs and poppies, adding even more colour and interest for local residents and visitors to enjoy.

The mosaic has already brought members of our community together to create something colourful and lasting for Bengeo, and it's wonderful to see the project continuing to develop. We're very grateful to everyone who has supported the mosaic and helped make this community project possible. We can't wait to see the next stage come to life!

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Friends of St Leonard's

Visit the Church

St Leonard's will be open every Sunday afternoon in September from 2.30pm to 5pm. Tea and cakes are available for a very reasonable sum or you can just take a look!

It's Heritage Open Weekend during the month and the Church is open to visitors on Saturday 12th September from 9am until 5pm and also on Sunday 13th September from 11am to 5pm. Why not take this opportunity to see inside the oldest building in Hertford. You can do a self-guided tour to see our medieval wall paintings, our monuments and graffiti. Children are very welcome – we have a treasure hunt or colouring for them. Well-behaved dogs are also welcome!

It is also the Herts and Beds Historic Church Trust "Bike 'n Hike" on 12th September. We are looking forward to seeing the intrepid travellers who visit as many churches as they can in one go. It's all in aid of a charity that supports fragile church buildings like St Leonard's with grants for repairs and restoration.

We are also delighted to welcome the Historic Towns Trust to St Leonard's on Sunday 13th September. They will share their plans for a new layered historic map of Hertford and Ware and will give you an opportunity to comment and give your feedback on its content.





Services

The Church will host the Harvest service on 27th September at 4.30pm. This will be preceded by the Friends of St Leonard's AGM at 4pm.

Joining the Friends

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**.

You can also follow what's going on via our Facebook page – Friends of St Leonard's Bengeo.

Helen Fleming
Secretaryfriendsofstleonards@gmail.com



Mapping Hertford and Ware Through Time

Hertford and Ware are set to be explored in an entirely new way as the Historic Towns Trust begins work on detailed historical maps, showing their evolution through the ages.

These beautifully designed maps will bring together archaeological discoveries, historic maps and archival research to show how each town has developed from its earliest origins through to the 20th century. From lost buildings and changing street patterns to the industries and communities that shaped them, the maps will reveal layers of the past that are often hidden or overlooked in the modern landscape.

The projects are being developed in collaboration with local partners including the University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire's Historic Environment Record and East Herts Archaeological Society. Indeed, relatively recent archaeological discoveries in both towns have added fascinating new insights into their Iron Age and Roman past. Alongside the maps, the Trust will deliver its Key Stage 2 Education Programme, Place Detectives, providing local primary schools with curriculum-linked resources to help pupils learn history and geography rooted in their own town. A series of public talks, guided walks and community events will also invite all residents to engage with the unique stories of their local heritage.

Funding is currently being raised to support both projects, with contributions already secured from Hertford and Ware Town Councils. Businesses and organisations interested in supporting the maps are warmly invited to get in touch by emailing **comms@historictownstrust.uk**. Residents who would like to learn more can visit us at the following upcoming Heritage Open Days:

- Place House Hall, Ware – 12th September
- St Leonard's Church, Bengeo – 13th September
- Hertford Castle – 20th September



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On The Doorstep – Ragwort

Common ragwort is a rather controversial plant. The reason for this is because it is rather toxic and in recent years has acquired a reputation for its poisonous effect on livestock. However, I think it is a rather interesting plant with amazing vivid yellow flowers.

Ragwort is a native plant to the UK. It flowers between June and November and is widespread. It favours dry, nutrient-poor soil, although seems to grow pretty much anywhere: grassland, woodland, rocky land and wasteland. It can be found growing in cities and towns, by the roadside and through cracks in the pavement, so a tough little plant. It is part of the daisy family (Asteraceae).

Jacobaea Vulgaris is the scientific name for common ragwort. Jacobaea comes from the Latin word for St James, presumably called this as St James' Day is in late July when the flower is abundant. Vulgaris is the Latin word for common or ordinary. There are of course other common names for the plant: St James'-wort, benweed, stinking willie, stinking nanny and mare's fart. I believe the last three names are most likely due to the unpleasant smell that the plant leaves have, especially when they are crushed.

The plant is usually biennial, in the first year it starts to grow forming a rosette of leaves close to the ground which can be 30cm across. In the second year it grows the flowering stem, the rosette at the base then withers and the upper leaves grow partially wrapping around the stem. The leaves of the plant are dark green, with a slightly glossy appearance. They are deeply divided and lobed and have a wrinkled look to them appearing feathery. They also have hairs on the underside of the leaves. The plant can grow to over a metre tall. It has thick roots and the stem, which is hairless and tough and woody, grows up and then produces stems which produce clusters of bright yellow flowers. Like the daisy, the flower head is actually made up of dozens of tiny flowers or florets and the petals, usually 12 to 15 of them, form a ray around the centre florets. As the plant ages the florets turn brown. The plant can produce as many as 200,000 seeds and has two ways of dispersing them: some are heavy and hairless and fall to the ground where they can lay dormant for 20 years; other seeds are lighter with hairs and are dispersed on the wind.

The plant is very important for pollinators and wildlife. It is known that over 30 insects and 14 fungi species depend on ragwort, some of which are rare and on the red list in the UK. The cinnabar moth caterpillar is one that likes ragwort. The distinct black and yellow striped caterpillars devour all parts of the plant, stripping it bare before turning into the rather beautiful black and red cinnabar moth, (unfortunately I have no picture of the moth, only the caterpillars).

Ragwort has in the past been mixed with pig fat and used as an ointment for hip, arm and leg pain as well as sciatica and arthritis. It has also been used as a gargle, not really advisable considering the plant is toxic, and as a throat poultice. Although considered toxic to livestock, most animals will avoid it as it has a bitter taste and it is only a problem for them if it is in the dried form where it loses its bitter taste and they will eat it. Sheep, however, seem to be able to eat it. The plant has also been used for dye, the leaves for green dye and the flowers yellow.

The plant in folklore, especially in Manx folklore, has been associated with fairies. It was believed that the fairies used the plant to fly. Ragwort under its Gaelic name cushag, is the national flower of the Isle of Man. Ragwort symbolises resilience and fierce endurance, probably because of its ability to grow in some of the most unlikely places.

Ragwort can indeed have a bit of a ragged look due to its feathery leaves and the flower centres turning brown, but when it's at its best it is, I think, a stunner with its vivid yellow flowers standing out in its habitat and considering its ecological value, one to appreciate, despite the bad press.

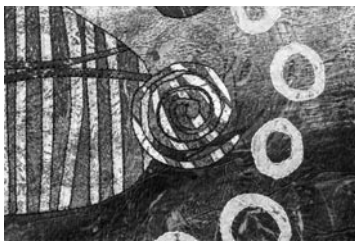
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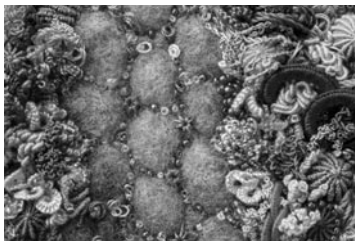
Creative journeys and community celebrations at Courtyard Arts

Late summer was an exciting time for Courtyard Arts as we celebrated our 30th birthday. The autumn continues to be busy for Hertford's leading arts venue, as we welcome two new exhibitions.

Urban Textiles: Creative Journeys – 25th August to 19th September



Urban Textiles.



Creative Journeys.

Courtyard Arts' late-summer exhibition, Urban Textiles: Creative Journeys, brings together the work of six talented textile artists – Pat Dennis, Ann Hankins, Annie Rogers, Jenny Sandler, Moira Smith and Catriona Warburton. Their collective display showcases an exciting mix of collage, embroidery, collagraphy, printing, quilting, weaving and mixed-media textile art, offering visitors a rich and varied visual experience.

The group formed around 20 years ago after completing a City & Guilds course with tutor Barbara Weekes. What began as a shared desire to continue learning and experimenting has grown into a long-standing collaboration rooted in friendship, creativity and mutual support. Based across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, the artists meet regularly to exchange ideas, critique work and explore new techniques – a spirit that shines through in the diversity and depth of the pieces on display.

Each artist brings a distinctive voice, from Pat's expressive mono-printing and collagraphy, to Ann's atmospheric explorations of ancient landscapes, Annie's nature-inspired layering techniques, Jenny's colour-driven embroidery and patchwork, Moira's geometric and Japanese-influenced designs, and Catriona's earthy multimedia weaving. Together, their work forms a thoughtful and uplifting exhibition that reflects both individual journeys and the collective strength of creative collaboration.

Courtyard Arts turns 30



The Urban Textiles exhibition follows our 30th anniversary celebrations, which ran from late July to August and brought hundreds of people through the doors. The programme included:

- An Artist in Residence exhibition featuring Courtyard's founders
- A town-wide 30 Pieces of Art treasure hunt
- Fused-glass workshops open to the public, led by tutor Jane Ducarreaux
- A lively Members' Celebration Party.

The treasure hunt proved popular – families and local residents enjoyed searching for miniature artworks hidden across Hertford, with many claiming their free coffee and cake at the gallery. The founders reflected warmly on the milestone, noting how heartening it is to see Courtyard Arts thriving three decades after opening in 1996, still retaining its inclusive and friendly ethos. Director Laura Burns described the anniversary as both a celebration of the past and a commitment to the next 30 years of creativity, community and culture.

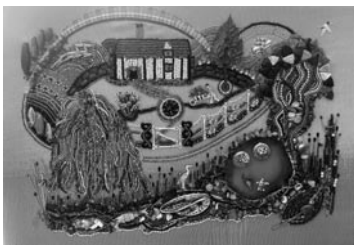
Jenny Junior – Vintage Jewel Art, 1st to 26th September

Looking ahead, Courtyard Arts will soon welcome a dazzling new exhibition by interior designer and commercial artist Jenny Junior, whose jewel-encrusted silk artworks promise to bring a touch of magic to the autumn programme.



Bulgari Boat.

With a passion for vintage jewellery, Jenny creates dream-like images inspired by nature, oceans, landscapes and mythology. Every bead, stone and thread – including real pearls, abalone shell, malachite, blue quartz, agate, amethyst, onyx and gold or silver needlework – is hand-stitched onto silk over hundreds of hours. The result is a collection of shimmering, reflective works that glisten beautifully in the light.



Jewel Art Willow Cottage.

Alongside her own pieces, Jenny also takes commissions, offering a unique way for people to preserve cherished vintage or costume jewellery within bespoke artworks for their homes.

Visit Courtyard Arts

Whether you joined the anniversary festivities or are discovering Courtyard Arts for the first time, the autumn months offer a wonderful opportunity to take a look at the range of classes that we offer for people of all ages.

Venue: **Courtyard Arts, Port Vale, Hertford, SG14 3AA**
Website: **courtyardarts.org.uk**
Instagram: **@courtyard_herts**
Facebook: **Courtyard Arts**

The Great Dinosaur Escape!

Yarnbombers celebrate the age of dinosaurs

The Secret Society of Hertford Crafters (Yarnbombers) has celebrated the age of the dinosaurs with a modern twist – their own dinosaur park called the Hertford Society for the Protection of Crafted Dinosaurs - in Parliament Square during August. The trouble is 60 dinos escaped into Hertford and Ware!

Dinosaurs the hatchery, complete with incubators, vets, eggs, new babies and hospital to look after poorly dinos were seen on entering the gates of the Hertford Society for the Protection of Crafted Dinosaurs. Rainforests and volcanoes made the dinosaurs feel at home. Woolly mammoths roamed, pterodactyls flew through the air and plesiosauruses swam the seas. There was a triceratops scaling a volcano and a diplodocus munching lunch in the rainforest. There were giant insects too and even paleontological digs! It didn't end here though…

Some adventurous dinosaurs also escaped! Sixty dinosaurs fled, exploring shop windows throughout Hertford and Ware. Everyone was invited to help find them! There were posters of the 10 most wanted dinos in Hertford and 5 in Ware that needed sightings. If you managed to spot them, snapped a photo to show there whereabouts on social media, tagged SSOHC on Facebook (**@secretsocietyofhertfordcrafters**), Instagram (**@bomberyarn**) or X (**@YarnBomber100**) then you were entered to win a woolly prize!

SSOHC is proudly supporting Hertford Disability Support Group as their chosen charity.

Hertford Disability Support Group (HDSG) was founded over 20 years ago. It is run by volunteer trustees and helpers for disabled people in Hertford and surrounding villages. They provide monthly socials with a variety of entertainments and refreshments and arrange outings with transport, such as a visit to the seaside at Felixstowe, canal boat trips on a specially adapted boat, afternoon tea and a visit to the local pantomime.

The group can refer people to organisations who are able to help with problems associated with disability. A message from one of our members, "I have been disabled since 1996-to be part of HDSG, a caring supporting group that meets regularly has been a lifeline for me".

HDSG.contact@gmail.com



The Company of Players

The Little Theatre, Balfour Street, Hertford
presents

1984



By George Orwell
Adapted by Nick Hern
Directed by Jonathon Wallis

Friday 11th to Saturday 19th September, nightly (except Sunday) with matinee on 12th September.

'Brave, brutal, and absolutely relevant'. Winston Smith is in prison, found guilty of Thought crimes against Big Brother. As part of his reconstruction, he must re-enact key moments from his past life, with the help of other thought criminals, so that everyone can learn from his mistakes. Including his biggest mistake of all: falling in love with Julia.

George Orwell's classic dystopia is a still-resonant vision of the tolls of living under totalitarianism. Constructed almost entirely from dialogue taken from the original novel, Nick Hern's bold and powerful dramatisation brings Orwell's chilling vision to the stage.

Tickets and info at www.cops.org.uk.



Theatre Open Day with the Company of Players

Saturday 26th September, 10am to 2pm

Take a tour of the cosy Little Theatre, learn about the history of the Company of Players and its building, and chat to volunteers about the different ways you could get involved. Have a go at some backstage tasks and get a closer look at a range of costume and props. (Children are welcome but must be supervised and may not be able to take part in all activities.) No need to book, just pop in!

A Brief History of Agriculture





It is hard to know at what point to start, so let us begin at the time of World War II.

Imported food was becoming less and less certain due to the U-boat activities in the Atlantic. Food rationing was introduced in 1940 and there was encouragement by the Government to provide as much home-grown food as possible. Gardens, allotments, parks and open spaces were ploughed up and used for food production (*'Dig for Victory'* was the slogan). Farmers reacted by growing wall-to-wall crops, aided by Land Girls to replace agricultural workers who had gone off to war. The country became largely self-sufficient with temperate foodstuffs.

Tractors and other rudimentary machinery had been invented but otherwise very little technical progress had been made pre-1939. In the late 1940s there were some 750,000 men engaged in agriculture and some 750,000 horses. However, the Government introduced capital grants for investment in new equipment and buildings, founded Agricultural Colleges and Research Stations and introduced other initiatives to increase the production of food, but rationing continued to 1954. During that time the wall-to- wall growing of crops continued. The introduction of insecticides, herbicides and pesticides were used to improve crop yields but an unintended consequence was the killing off of insects and other bird feed, as a result of which the bird life and the environment and biodiversity suffered.

The average farm size was 200 acres* with each farm having its attendant farmhouse, cottages for workers and buildings. Mixed farming was the norm – that is a blend of arable cropping (wheat, barley and oats) and grass for livestock (dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep); hay was made for winter feed. Included were pigs and chickens fed on the home-produced crops, so the main source of income was through the sale of livestock. The average yield of wheat was 1.5 tons per acre.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s horse power rapidly gave way to tractor power with its attendant machinery; simultaneously the control of diseases in livestock and crops increased productivity. The larger and better machinery replaced many farm labourers and the average farm size increased through mergers.

However, little or no attention was paid to preserving the environment and biodiversity and the countryside inevitably suffered. Whereas up to that point the land had a sole use of agricultural production, gradually there was the realisation that the land had a dual purpose – that food production and the protection of the countryside had to go hand in hand which required hedges, woodlands and trees as habitats for birds and mammals.

As machinery became bigger and bigger, the old-style farm buildings became unusable for their traditional purpose. Thus there has been a movement to find new uses for them by converting them for light industry and storage with associated offices. This provides a dual benefit as it not only brings employment back into the rural areas, but also the best way of preserving such old buildings is to put them to economic uses. We here have three such as this and there are plans for more in the future.

To promote environmental and biodiversity, not only hedges have been replanted but also areas of the least

**An acre is 4,840 square yards, slightly smaller than a football pitch, and came in to being circa 1,000 AD being an area of land that could be ploughed by a yoke of 8 oxen in one day.*

agricultural productivity (ie field corners and areas overshadowed by trees) have been taken out of active farming and replaced with wild bird mixtures and tree planting; also much has been done to rehabilitate the ponds.

Whereas farms were traditionally mixed, since the 1970s there has been a trend away from mixed farming. As Hertfordshire is predominately an arable growing area, less livestock can now be seen, with greater specialisation on arable cropping being the order of the day.

The predominant crop is wheat used for bread and biscuit making, with barley for malting and distilling and animal feed, oilseed rape for vegetable oils, animal feed and biodiesel, and oats for porridge and animal feed. As continuous mono cropping can give rise to disease which is costly to control, these crops are grown in rotation to 'break' the disease cycle.

When cut by the combine harvester, the corn is transported into buildings by tractor and trailer for storage pending sale. It can only be stored safely if the moisture is less than 15% so if it comes in above that level, it has to be dried and all farms will now have drying facilities.

Today is a very different story from yesteryear. The average farm will now be in the 1,000s of acres, necessary to gain an economy of scale. 50 acres can be ploughed in one day, the average yield of wheat is 3.5 tons per acre and a modern combine harvester can cut 125 acres in a day. There are now about 75,000 people directly working on the land, all College or University trained to meet the technical requirements of today, both in business and husbandry. Our land is now expected to produce not only food, but fibre (trees), wildlife habitats, pleasant landscapes and recreation. So nowadays farmers are not so much the producers of food, but countryside managers reconciling all these different facets.

It must be added that agriculture differs from other industries in that it is weather dependent. The best laid plans can be severely compromised by excessive rain or drought.

It seems appropriate to add a paragraph about forestry which, for most estates, is as important as agriculture. The forests were badly depleted as part of the War Effort and were in a poor state. The normal practice in the 1940s was to populate them with softwoods (larch, Scots pine, spruce and fir) being fast growers. They, with their needle like leaves, do not, with one exception, shed their leaves in the autumn so are known as non-deciduous and are regarded as non-native in Hertfordshire. When they gain maturity after about 70 years they are felled and replaced by hardwood species (oak, ash, beech, horse chestnuts, sweet chestnut and hornbeam) which are native to Hertfordshire and do shed their leaves in the autumn so are known as deciduous. They are mature for felling for commercial purposes at about 125 years but those planted for ornamental purposes are left until they die back naturally. Well managed woodlands can provide habitats for many birds and deer and in which fauna and flora can flourish.

Many challenges lie ahead but it is important to look positively to the future. As the most basic human requirement is food, the primary purpose of farming is to produce that food as efficiently and economically as possible, notwithstanding the other calls on land use.

Ralph Abel Smith

Environment Day with a difference!

All Saint's Church, Queens Road, Hertford, 12th September 10am to 4pm.

This year, the All Saint's Environment Day takes on a slightly different format. There will still be stalls from various groups and charities representing the wonderful work to protect and share our precious environment, but in addition we will be showing two films – *'Six Inches of Soil'* and *'Wilding'*.

The first film shown at 10.30am relates how food can be produced – to heal the soil, benefit our health and provide for local communities. The film will be followed by a panel discussion at 12 noon featuring John Cherry, the regenerative farming expert responsible for the annual Groundswell Festival, David White, a Cambridgeshire regenerative farmer and Andrei Lussmann from Hertford's Lussmann's sustainable food restaurant. *'Wilding'* at 2pm is the story of how the Knepp Estates was transformed into a haven of wildlife through a bold and highly successful rewilding experiment.

Refreshments and light lunches will be available. Visitors are welcome to come and go throughout the day and are invited to visit the stalls and chat to the stall holders to find out more about their work which brings hope to us all.

Entry is free – all are welcome!

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Amwell View School – Tonwell Satellite

'Sports for All'

Amwell View School sites continually evolve in how they approach both new and traditional events such as Sports Day. This year, they celebrated with 'Sports for All' events with a range of activities which were held across three different locations: Wodson Park Sports and Leisure Centre in Ware, their main school site based in Stanstead Abbotts and their satellite school in Tonwell.

The younger pupils took part in a 'Stay and Play' PE Lesson. The middle school pupils attended a 'Sports for All' Festival at the Tonwell satellite school and some of the older pupils participated in a 'Sports for All' morning at Wodson Park in Ware or enjoyed sporting activities alongside their peers. Parents and carers were invited to attend the events celebrating their children's achievements and cheering them along.

Head of PE, Lucy McFayden said, "The aim was to ensure that every pupil, parent and member of staff could celebrate sporting achievement in an environment that was inclusive, supportive and suited to individual needs. The 'Sport for All' celebrations were a great success. The pupils were fantastic and really enjoyed themselves. The holistic approach to this event enabled the sporting activities to be appropriate to each individual so that they could all participate, have fun and be active."



Duncombe School

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1st October 2026

9:30am - 11:00am

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w: duncombe-school.co.uk

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Duncombe School

Duncombe School Commended in the Independent School of the Year 2026 Awards!

Duncombe school has been named a Commended School in the Independent School of the Year 2026 Awards. The school received the recognition in the Independent Small School of the Year Category, which celebrates the achievements of schools with no more than 275 pupils.

This is the third consecutive year that Duncombe has been recognised in the national awards. Last year, the school was shortlisted in the Education Technology category. The latest commendation considers the school as a whole and the benefits pupils receive from being part of a smaller community.

At Duncombe, teachers know their pupils well and can respond quickly when a child needs extra help, encouragement or a new challenge. This individual approach supports children academically and pastorally, while giving them the confidence to take part in the wider life of the school.

The past year has brought several notable achievements. Every year 6 pupil secured a place at their first-choice senior school, and pupils were awarded 15 scholarships across academic subjects, music, sport and drama. These results reflect the range of interests and abilities encouraged throughout the school.

The award entry also included examples of pupils making important personal progress. One younger child who had experienced separation anxiety gradually became confident enough to read aloud in class and attend residential trips. Another pupil, diagnosed with autism during Upper School, responded well to tailored support and later secured an Academic Aptitude place at Bishop's Stortford High School.

A new Year 6 enrichment programme has added further opportunities this year. D6 Enrich: Dare. Discover. Do. Introduces pupils to entrepreneurship, first aid, and financial capability. With a small cohort, every child is able to participate fully and develop practical skills before moving on to senior school.

Learning outside of the classroom remains an important part of school life at Duncombe. Pupils use The Dell for



Forest School and outdoor activities, take part in music, drama and sport, and support local causes through fundraising and visits to care homes. Older pupils are also encouraged to support younger children and take on responsibilities around the school.

Duncombe benefits from a highly experienced staff team, with several senior members of staff having served the school for more than 20 years. This provides continuity for pupils and families, while the school continues to develop its teaching through the Microsoft Showcase School programme, staff training in artificial intelligence and investment in new learning spaces.

The commendation is a proud achievement for pupils, staff and parents as it recognises Duncombe's strong results, individual care and broad range of opportunities, as well as the contribution made by the whole school community during the past year. The news gives the school a welcome opportunity to celebrate the progress made this year and to look ahead with confidence as the next chapter begins for everyone involved.

To find out more about joining Duncombe, contact the Admissions Team to find out more about or to arrange a private visit **01992 414109** or email **admissions@duncombe-school.co.uk**.

A Word from The Rectory

Peace through prayer

From The Vicar, The Revd Robert Thompson



My little black notebook has weighed heavy in my pocket in recent weeks. It's a small book I keep handy to make a note of the names of people I've promised to pray for – couples I'm marrying, babies I've baptised, families for whom I'm conducting a funeral.

But the list of personal names there has suddenly developed into a whole litany of tragedy: violence between Israel and Hamas with hundreds of innocent deaths, the increasing threat of Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorism in this country; antisemitic attacks just down the road in Golders Green. Of all the needs I should be praying about it is extremist ideology that worries me most. With that terrible cause so ascendant it has risen to the top of my prayer list.

Do people really want the prayers of religious people at times like these? Perhaps you've had quite enough of religion, thank you very much. Let's be rid of all this mumbo jumbo that stirs men to their prayer books and their violence and their graves. If it's lists you want then consider the catalogue of crimes driven by religious people in human history: the Crusades, the so-called Wars of Religion, the Inquisition, the Irish question, Islamic jihadists and more.

Christians, for their part, must hold their hands up. Our religion has suffered forms of violent extremism too. The First Crusade was called by Pope Urban II in 1095, followed by further Crusades in 1147, 1189, 1202, 1217, 1248 and 1269, preached as a religious duty by the leading churchmen of the day. When you hear current news stories of radicalised zealots embroiled in violent acts of hatred and intolerance remember that Christians have done that too. The scrap yard of the human heart gives birth to terrible passions as we make our journeys to Damascus.

The answer to this darkness is not to try to get rid of it, but to pour in more light. The world desperately needs an energetic renewal of intelligent moderation in politics and in religion. Extremism is not new. A generation ago, H Richard Niebuhr wrote, 'Religion makes good people better and bad people worse'. That's exactly what's happening when Islamic militants threaten to kill Christians, Israeli extremists call for "Death to Arabs," and Hamas extremists celebrate the kidnapping and murder of Jews. It's not the case that extremists have prayed too much, it's that they've not prayed at all. They've not come anywhere close to the God of peace, life and freedom. Religion has a very bright centre – and a very dark fringe.

It's time to pray then – to draw back into the light of God's presence and reflect his values in the world. This is a time when religious people with gentle voices need to be confident in their faith as a force for good, through tolerance, through moderation, through thoughtful listening and wise discernment. We need not less religion but more prayer, more people ready to pursue God's will for all people to live in faith, with prayer, peaceably.

Dear Lord, may we do so soon.

With my prayers,

Robert Thompson

Why did Jo Brave the Shave?

On Wednesday 12th August, Headlines hairdressers, The Avenue, Bengeo, hosted a very special event. Local resident and member of Holy Trinity church choir, Jo Hunter bid farewell to every hair on her head to take part in Macmillan Cancer Support's national Brave the Shave fundraising campaign.

To date, she has raised over £840 in memory of her brave mum. "As a family," said Jo, "we had unparalleled assistance from Macmillan which gave us extra precious time together." Her aim has been to "raise much needed valuable funds for others who need Macmillan's amazing care and support."



Left: Jo before… Jo after. Above: Penny, Jo and Pam at Headlines.

In 2009 Jo's mum was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a total mastectomy. The next three years were filled with doctor and hospital appointments, chemotherapy and radiotherapy sessions with Jo at her side. Wonderfully, the treatment was successful, and she was pronounced clear of cancer, but it tragically reappeared three years later in her spine and liver. By now it was stage 4 cancer, and they were told she had about three weeks to live.

This was when Macmillan's stepped forward to not only fund further chemo and radiotherapy, but also to provide counselling for Jo to maintain her mental well-being as her mum's carer. Amazingly, with this hospital treatment and Jo's counselling support, her mum lived for another three years!

Sylvia died on 19th December 2012, and Jo reflects "It's taken me until now to even face doing any kind of fundraising, but I always knew I would".

She sincerely hopes that the money raised will "enable others to feel being held by this amazing charity". She looks forward to her lack of hair prompting people to ask if she's ill. "I want it to start conversations and make people think".

Jo would like to thank Headlines hairdressers for their enthusiastic support on the day – for their party atmosphere complete with prosecco, and for welcoming supporting church choir members Pam, Penny and Anne. A further £100 was collected in the salon.

Special thanks go to Penny for her scones and expertise with the clippers, and to Mel for wielding the ultimate razor!

Donations (currently at £1,180) remain open on Jo's online fundraising page for anyone who wishes to contribute **https://share.google/YzdlS3ulkYKEgPPSv**.

Monday Lunches

These are held on the second Monday of the month at the Church Hall, Duncombe Road, Bengeo. The weather was very hot on 13th July, but the Church Hall was relatively cool. The tables were laid with white cloths and nicely laid places as usual, with a vase of flowers on each one. There were bottles of water and carafes of red and white wine on each table.

We thought we might be treated to a French lunch, as it was so near to the anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille, but instead we had a very nice English lunch.

We started off with a delicious tart of asparagus and smoked salmon, very easy to eat on a hot day. This was followed by Coronation chicken with a slice of ham, served with potato salad and coleslaw. Again, very suitable for people trying to keep cool. For a pudding we received scones with a very generous amount of cream and strawberry jam. The water and wine were served with plenty of enthusiasm. Those who wanted it were served with tea or coffee and a supply of mints.

The service always remains the same with friendly cheerful waitresses, and it is a happy occasion when one can enjoy food and talk to your friends in a pleasant atmosphere.

10th August was again a hot day, but some of us (not me!) are getting used to the over-warm weather. The hall remains relatively cool, and the high ceiling helps.

For the first course we had a tart of tomato, mozzarella cheese and basil, which was well received. The main course was sweet and sour chicken served with rice, very nice flavour, and the pudding was a most delicious cheesecake with fresh fruit on the top. Most people exclaimed about how good it was! There were tea and coffee and Maltesers to finish with.

There were several new people, for which we were very pleased. We hope they will come again, because although the numbers have increased, we would like a few more. If anyone comes on their own, we would be very welcoming.

Anyone wishing to come should ring Claire at the Lobster Pot on 07887 543464 to make a booking, preferably seven days in advance. Our next lunches will be on 14th September and 12th October.

Janet Guilbride

Parish Calendar SEPTEMBER 2026

Wednesday 2nd September	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Cafe, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 3rd September	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 6th September	**Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
2.30–5pm	St Leonard's Church: Tea and Tour
Tuesday 8th September	
8pm	Quiet Time at St Leonard's Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 10th September	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Saturday 12th September	
9am–5pm	Heritage Open Day at St Leonard's Church | Herts & Beds Historic Churches Trust 'Bike 'n Hike'
Sunday 13th September	**Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
11am–5pm	Heritage Open Day at St Leonard's Church
2.30–5pm	St Leonard's Church: Tea and Tour
Monday 14th September	
12 noon	Parish Lunch, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Tuesday 15th September	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 17th September	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30–8pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Cafe, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Sunday 20th September	**Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
2.30–5pm	St Leonard's Church: Tea and Tour
Tuesday 22nd September	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 24th September	
10am	Holy Communion,
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 27th September	**Harvest Festival**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	All Age Communion at Holy Trinity Church
4pm	Harvest Festival Songs of Praise Service at St Leonard's Church with Friends' of St Leonard's AGM
Tuesday 29th September	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation

Parish Calendar OCTOBER 2026

Thursday 1st October	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 4th October	**Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	All Age Worship at Holy Trinity Church – Grandparents' Sunday
Tuesday 6th October	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 7th October	
2pm	Bengeo Afternoon WI, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
2.30–4pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Cafe, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Thursday 8th October	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 11th October	**Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
Monday 12th October	
12 noon	Parish Lunch, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Tuesday 13th October	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Wednesday 14th October	
10am	Craft Club. Duncombe Hall – all home crafts welcome
Thursday 15th October	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
6.30–8pm	Bereavement Café at Nourish Cafe, 43 Cowbridge Hertford
Sunday 18th October	**St Luke the Evangelist**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
Tuesday 20th October	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 22nd October	
10am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road
Sunday 25th October	**Bible Sunday**
9am	Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church
10am	Parish Communion at Holy Trinity Church
Tuesday 27th October	
8pm	Quiet Time at Holy Trinity Church: Prayer and Meditation
Thursday 29th October	
10.30am	Coffee Pot Charity Café, Church Hall, Duncombe Road

Parish Prayers

Daily Prayers for September

1. All who are preparing for a new school or job
2. Christians in Oman
3. HMP Hatfield
4. Our local NHS Services
5. The Hertford and Ware Food Bank
6. St Leonard's afternoon teas
7. Rib Vale
8. The Royal Family
9. Christians in Mozambique
10. HMP Haverigg
11. Prison Chaplains
12. Herts & Beds Bike 'n Hike
13. Our Church Singing Group
14. River Court
15. Quiet Time at Holy Trinity
16. Christians in Kyrgyzstan
17. HMP Hewell
18. Local pubs and clubs
19. Local sports teams
20. Our choir
21. Russell Street
22. Local bus routes
23. Christians in Turkey
24. HMP Highdown
25. The Church Army
26. Sheffield Cathedral
27. Our Church Intercessions
28. Sacombe Road
29. Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Charity SARSANS
30. Christians in Egypt

Daily Prayers for October

1. HMP Highpoint
2. Amwell View Satellite Provision Tonwell
3. Staff at Amwell View Satellite Provision Tonwell
4. Pupils and Parents at Amwell View Satellite Provision Tonwell
5. Shepherds Court
6. William Tyndale Bible Translator
7. Christians in Comoros Islands
8. HMP Holme House
9. Governors Amwell View School with Headteacher Mr Neil Ward
10. Bengeo Primary School
11. Governors Bengeo Primary School with Headteacher Mrs Justine Page
12. Sidings Court
13. Bengeo Primary School Staff
14. Christians in Qatar
15. HMP Hull
16. Bengeo Primary School pupils and parents
17. Duncombe School
18. Duncombe School Staff
19. Sturla Close
20. Duncombe School Directors with Headteacher Mr Jeremy Phelan
21. Christians in Kazakhstan
22. HMP Humber
23. Mill Mead Primary School
24. Mill Mead School Governors with Headteacher Mrs Walsh
25. Mill Mead School Staff
26. St Leonard's Road
27. Mill Mead School pupils and parents
28. Christians in Nepal
29. HMP Huntercombe
30. Southwark Cathedral
31. Our Outreach into Schools

Register

9th August – Burial of Ashes
Alan Brown

22 August – Wedding
Lee Connolly and Kellianne Shanks



Quiet Time

Quiet Time is back at Holy Trinty Church at 8pm on Tuesdays for the months of September and October. Please note that there will not be a session on Tuesday 1st September.

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

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
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On The Doorstep – Ragwort

See Bridget Hersant's article on page 11.
















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DINO
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