

# THE BRIDGE December/January 2025/26

Church and Village magazine for Sweffling

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We have been fortunate to enjoy a very mild autumn and the autumn colours have been magnificent this year. However, as the magazine is being prepared the weather forecast is becoming more wintry. It is hard to believe that Christmas is almost upon us. Sweffling is planning for the festive season with the Christmas Brunch and Market on November 29<sup>th</sup>, the Christmas Brass Concert on December 10<sup>th</sup>, the Carol Service on December 21<sup>st</sup> and Christmas Eve Midnight Holy

Communion. More details of each of these can be found later in The Bridge. We hope you will come along and enjoy all of these activities.

**A very happy and blessed Christmas and New Year to everyone.**

## From the Rev. Claire Kiddy:

What a quick year 2025 has been, and already it is difficult to avoid the Christmas adverts! Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year, and it is easy to let all the Christmas planning activities overshadow the season of Advent. This year Advent begins on November 30<sup>th</sup> and as it is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday we have a Benefice Communion at Badingham, 10am. It would be lovely if a representative from each village could bring one candle from their Advent ring, so we could light candles from all 6 parishes and begin our Advent journey together.

The Advent candles represent the four themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love:

Hope - looks forward to both the celebration of Christ's birth and his eventual return.

Peace – embraces the peace that Christ brings into the world and seeking peace within our hearts and relationships.

Joy - reflects the excitement and gratitude for the coming of Jesus, who brings salvation to the world.

Love – remembers God's love for humanity in sending his Son and reflecting that love to others.

Every year we balance the waiting and expectation of Advent with the busyness of Christmas fundraising events, carol services, shopping and a myriad of other tasks. It is a wonderful time of year, and it is right we approach it joyfully, but I urge you not to be too eager to unwrap Christmas early. Instead take time to enjoy the discipline of waiting in hope and expectation during Advent and then the Christmas celebrations will be even more joyful. *Revd Claire*

FOR DETAILS OF CHRISTMAS SERVICES SEE PAGES 7 & 8



## Harvest Thanksgiving and Lunch

The church was beautifully decorated with flowers and berries for the Harvest Thanksgiving Service on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Special thanks to Rose and Annie Loveridge, who collected nature's harvest and beautifully arranged them in the church porch. (For photographs, see the centrefold of The Bridge.)

The generosity of the village was again demonstrated by the number of donations of tinned and packaged food, toiletries etc, which were subsequently donated to the Social Supermarket in Saxmundham, from whom we received grateful thanks. The service was well attended, familiar harvest hymns were sung and thanks were given to God for his bounty throughout the year.

The Harvest Lunch followed in Sweffling Hut and everyone enjoyed a delicious meal of cottage pie and vegetables, followed by apple desserts. Together with the proceeds of the raffle, we were able to send £425 to Tear Fund for famine relief. Thanks to everyone who contributed harvest gifts and raffle prizes and to those who helped prepare and serve the food for the lunch. It was a most enjoyable and successful time.

## Taize service

The second of our Taize services was held on Sunday October 12<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 p.m..

Approximately 30 people took part in this quiet meditative service led by the Rev.

Claire. Music was provided by Suzanne Stevens (flute), Mike Smithson (Guitar) and

Sheila Tesh (keyboard), and a choir organised by Caroline Weatherby led the singing. The

church was beautifully decorated in Taize colours by Amanda Daniel. It was found to be a wonderful time of reflection and quietness at the end of the day.

The next service will be held in Spring 2026, when the days begin to lengthen again.

Look out for the date nearer the time, everyone is very welcome.

## Sweffling Hut Curry and Quiz Night 25 October 2025

This year's Curry and quiz night was another success thanks to the tireless efforts of the

usual cooks, Paul and Ruth, (Jalfrezi) John and Kirsten (Korma), Glen (Thai) and Tony

(Onion Bhajis) Including ice cream, generously in part, donated by Suffolk Meadow, a

three-course banquet was downed, before a tricky quiz, with a cash prize. The chicken

jalfrezi was once again the favourite but, all of the food was superb. The attendance was 30

persons, slightly down on last year but still enough when including the raffle and other

donations to generate a net profit of over £225.00.

Thanks to all cooks and other volunteers, without whom the evening could not have been a great success.

*Mike Smithson, Chairperson*

## An Evening with Jane Austen

On Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, Sweffling Hut was filled to capacity, everyone there keen to

learn more about the life and times of Jane Austen, who was born 250 years ago this year.

We were not disappointed! After an enjoyable supper of sausage and mash, followed by

coffee and cake, we were treated to a fascinating talk by Helen Blackwell, who currently is

the president of the London Branch of the Jane Austen Society. Helen began by describing

Jane's background. Jane was not born into a highly privileged family, her father was a

clergyman at Steventon in Hampshire and he also ran a school for boys to supplement his income. Jane was fortunate that from an early age she had access to her father's extensive library. On her father's retirement, the family moved to Bath but, after his death, Jane, her mother and sister had to move to inferior accommodation due to financial constraints. During this time, Jane found herself unable to write and it wasn't until they moved back to the countryside to a house provided by one of her brothers that Jane was able to revise for publication her first three novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*, and to write *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*.

Jane sadly died at the young age of 41 years.

Jane's novels all reflect the social customs of the time but they do much more than that. Her background, choice of language and sentence construction gives us a real insight into life in the Regency period. Helen clearly demonstrated this with dramatic readings of extracts from the books.

Helen then read to us the first pages of three of Jane's novels and the detailed analysis that she talked through with us was so interesting and insightful.

It was the most enjoyable evening and we are so grateful to Helen for sharing her expertise with us. Were that all our English teachers at school had been like Helen!

Thanks to Helen, the evening raised £390 for church funds.

### Stir-Up Sunday service, November 16<sup>th</sup> 2025

Sweffling celebrated "Stir-Up Sunday" a week early as, we did not have a service on the Sunday before Advent. This Sunday is so named, based on the first line of the prayer for the day in the Prayer Book which begins "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people ...". It is traditionally the day on which the Victorians made their Christmas puddings, so that they could mature before Christmas.

The service was led by one of our Elders, Anne Fitzgerald, who made a Christmas pudding during the service. As is also tradition, each member of the congregation helped stir the pudding and make a wish. Whilst it was cooking in the microwave, Anne explained how the members of the church might be compared with the ingredients in the pudding. Each ingredient on its own is not a pudding but when they come together they make an excellent dish. So it is with the church, although we all have our own talents, on our own we are just one voice. However, when we come together together as a church we can become a positive influence for Christ in the world.

After the service we all enjoyed eating the pudding and sharing fellowship over a cup of tea or coffee. We did not wait until Christmas for the pudding to mature but, even so, it was excellent!

### Sweffling Parish Council News

The draft minutes of the meeting held on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2025 have been posted on the village notice board at the end of Holden's Lane. The County Councillor, Stephen Burroughes, attended by zoom, which worked well and it is anticipated that this might become a regular feature of future meetings. The District Councillor, Vince Langdon Morris, was present at the meeting and he confirmed that funding is available for a new picnic table for the Jubilee field.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> 2026, at 7.30 p.m. in Sweffling Hut. All village members are invited to attend this meeting. The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the village notice board ahead of the meeting.

### Macmillan Coffee Morning

Grateful thanks to everyone who helped in any way towards the MacMillan Coffee morning, the total amount raised was £950.00. We also have some matched funding which will take the final total to £1,700.00.

Many thanks to you all for a fantastic result. *Lynda Newson*

### Tennis Club

Sweffling Tennis Club wishes all members and residents of the villages a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2026.

It has been suggested that tennis is one of the best forms of exercise for both physical and mental health. So with this and New Year's Resolutions in mind, we look forward to seeing you all on the court over the coming months, and to welcoming any new members to this active and friendly club.

For any information, please contact **Sue Rusack 07904 088794**.

### Harvest Photographs 2025



### Nature Notes December/January 2025/26

Well, we are still here, thanks to our buyers' solicitors. Jill will not let me say more, but you may hear the shouts of rage and see the blue air over most of the Village.

I have included a better picture of the Little Owl that sometimes appears on our roof. Once you know the call – a short, sharp yapping noise, quite different from the Tawny Owl's hoot – you may hear Little Owls anywhere around the village, often even in daytime. This one seems to use our solar panels as a shelter. Owls are sometimes used as a symbol of wisdom. The goddess Athene is portrayed with a Little Owl (whose scientific name is actually *Athene*). So if our owl knew that his home, a solar system that produces hot water only, has held up our house sale for three months with the enquiry 'what is your feed-in tariff?' he would raise at least one of those wonderful eyebrows!

The assemblage of ladybirds is back in its winter roost site in the church window stonework. They are the Harlequin Ladybird, a newly colonising species, large and very



variable, that we have discussed before. Two people have told me about other such roosts in the village, and there was a day you may remember, a warm day in late Autumn, when



these insects were flying around in such numbers (yes, ladybirds can fly. They can bite too, whatever people might say), that they actually made the news. I have been intrigued as to how these ladybirds find the same site each winter. They are not the same individuals as last year – those will probably not have survived. As it happens, I have just read that American entomologists have discovered that some of

their ladybirds, which they call ladybugs, as my wretched Spellchecker is always trying to insist, produce a tiny drop of a sticky scent. This lasts long enough to guide their successors, which may well include their own offspring, to the same site the next winter. Do check them out when the church is open – Wednesday and Sunday – top right-hand corner of the South West window. There are even more than last year.



We have had a wonderfully colourful Autumn to remember Sweffling by. The Field Maples, which make up such a big part of the hedges here, have been their usual glorious gold. Even the Oak trees, which can sometimes seem a relatively drab brown at leaf fall, have been a



brilliant ginger. Berries are thick on the Hawthorns, making parts of the hedgerows a dark red. This bodes well for the winter thrushes when they arrive. Small groups of Redwings are already here, and there should be Fieldfares about by the time you read this. *Geoffrey Abbott*

### Can you help keep our village defibrillator “live” on the Ambulance network?

We’re looking for another friendly volunteer to join our small team of *defib guardians* in Sweffling. The defibrillator at the Village Hall (IP17 2BN) needs a quick check every 90 days - just a few simple steps, then pop the result onto [www.thecircuit.co.uk](http://www.thecircuit.co.uk) using your phone or laptop (there is WiFi at the hall you can use). It takes about 10 minutes to complete and log the check.

Full training will be given, and the role is shared between a few people, so it’s light work - but it really matters. If you are interested, please contact Amanda Daniel on 07860 589792

### Defibrillator training

St. John’s Ambulance have kindly agreed to provide defibrillator training in Sweffling. The suggested dates are Saturday January 17<sup>th</sup> and/or February 7<sup>th</sup> at 11.00 a.m. at the Hut. If you would like to volunteer for this essential and potentially life-saving training, please contact Amanda on 07860 589792 or John Tesh on 01728 663518, stating which date is more convenient for you. You never know when you might be called upon in an emergency, so the more people who understand how to use this equipment the better!

### What’s on at the Hut November/December 2025?

**Wednesday 26th November:** Rural Coffee Caravan: free refreshments & advice 10 -12

**Saturday 29th November: Christmas Brunch and Market 10.00 a.m. -12noon - see back page of The Bridge for more details.**

#### December

**Monday December 1<sup>st</sup> 10 – 12.00 noon Chat, Cake Coffee and Craft.** We will be finishing our pleated pictures, but just come along for the chat and cake if you would like.

**Wednesday December 3<sup>rd</sup> Soup Lunch followed by social time for jigsaws, games etc.**

**Wednesday December 17<sup>th</sup>: Christmas Lunch with all the trimmings. - see back page of The Bridge for more details.**

#### January

**Monday January 5<sup>th</sup>. Chat and craft. 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon**

**The Hut is in need of more villagers to help run it or to become trustees.**

**If you would like to help in any way please contact Mike or one of the committee <[swefflinghut@gmail.com](mailto:swefflinghut@gmail.com)>.** You will have skills that we need to keep the Hut running, so get in touch and there will be ways that you can help. The Hut is a great asset for the village, so if you can help to ensure its future, please volunteer.

### Village Wildlife Projects

A new volunteer group is starting to work on enhancing wildlife habitats in green spaces used by the community in Sweffling. Would you like to be involved?

We are starting with a churchyard project to manage our old churchyard for wildlife and visitors. There are over 16,000 churchyards in Britain and they are one of the most underrepresented habitats in the UK. St. Mary’s old churchyard is mown annually to support the perennial wild flowers of pignut and lady’s bedstraw which carpet the slopes in Spring and early Summer. With the help of grants there is so much more we could do, as a community, to make the old churchyard a pleasant reflective place to visit and a sanctuary for wildlife set in a historical context of enclosed genetic diversity. We can use our deadwood to create habitat piles in shady areas for fungi, woodlice, snails and wood mice, in sunny areas for bees and beetles. Our grass mound for slow worms and other reptiles. The local swifts would love some swift boxes on the church and visitors a bench sheltered by the church and looking out over the village rooftops and fields in the distance. Bird, butterfly, lichen and other surveys could take place helping our families to connect with nature and be involved in making a difference to the survival of many species. Creating bird boxes, solitary bee habitats and hedgehog houses in school holidays and monitoring with cameras will be rewarding and educational. Weatherproof notices explaining the species of flora and fauna we are supporting will be created for the village and visitors. The project can be expanded to include the Jubilee field and the Townland meadow. We have received a grant from the Fete proceeds to help fund some of the work. Above all, helping to manage our green spaces can be interesting, good exercise and fun!

It is planned involve the churchyard in the RSPB Great Garden Bird Watch, which will take place over the weekend of January 24-25<sup>th</sup> January 2026. If you would like to help, please contact Amanda. There will be cake involved! More details after Christmas.

You may have more ideas to put forward so please contact [Swefflingamanda@gmail.com](mailto:Swefflingamanda@gmail.com) if you or your family would like to be involved in shaping the future of this part of Sweffling.

**Rendham Christmas Market, Saturday, December 6th, Village Hall, 10.00 a.m**  
Gifts, cakes, books and raffle tickets. Also lots to eat and drink including Bacon butties. Even Father Christmas and Mrs Claus will be there. *Proceeds in aid of St. Michael's Church.*

**SUNDAY and CHRISTMAS SERVICES: December/January 2025/26**

December 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
<b>December 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Rendham</b>	<b>11.00 a.m.</b>	<b>Carol Service</b>
<b>December 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Sweffling</b>	<b>5.00 p.m.</b>	<b>Carols by Candlelight followed by mince pies and tea/coffee</b>
<b>December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve</b>	<b>Sweffling</b>	<b>11.30 p.m.</b>	<b>Benefice Midnight Holy Communion</b>
<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>Dennington</b>	<b>10.00 a.m.</b>	<b>Benefice Holy Communion</b>
December 28 <sup>th</sup>	Rendham	10.00 a.m.	Benefice Holy Communion
January 4 <sup>th</sup>	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
January 11 <sup>th</sup>	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
<b>January 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Sweffling</b>	<b>9.30 a.m.</b>	<b>Epiphany Carol Service</b>
January 25 <sup>th</sup>	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
February 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion

**There are Crib services in the Benefice again this year but please note the different venues and days and times from previous years:**

**SATURDAY December 20<sup>th</sup>: Bruiyard 5.00 p.m.**

**CHRISTMAS EVE: Cransford 2.30 p.m. in the Church not the Chapel Badingham 4.00 p.m.**

**During Advent, there will be midweek services of Holy Communion as follows:**

3<sup>rd</sup> December 11.30am @ The Lady Chapel, St Mary's Dennington

10<sup>th</sup> December 11am @ St Peter's Bruiyard

17<sup>th</sup> December 11am @ St Michael's Rendham

We will be reflecting on the 'O Antiphons' – the ancient texts which the hymn O Come, O Come Emmanuel is based.

**ADVANCE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Spring Flower Show – end of March/beginning of April 2026**

Plant your bulbs now so that they will be in flower in time for the show

**BLUES NIGHT**

The Blyth Valley Blues Band have agreed to play again at the Hut on Saturday 6th June 2026. It is such an enjoyable evening. **BOOK THE DATE**

**CHRISTMAS BRUNCH AND MARKET, SWEFFLING HUT**

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 29<sup>th</sup> 10.00 A.M. – 12 NOON**



**Bacon and egg rolls, Freshly brewed coffee/tea**  
**Christmas-themed stalls: Cakes, Preserves, Pickles, Mystery parcels, Winter Plants etc. Raffle – donations of prizes welcome. Proceeds in aid of St. Mary's Church**

**“CHRISTMAS BRASS” CONCERT in SWEFFLING CHURCH**

**FRIDAY DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>, 7.30 P.M.**

Leiston Royal British Legion Brass Band will play a concert of popular and Christmas music, with Sing-along Christmas Carols. **The perfect start to Christmas in Sweffling!**

Tickets: Adults £8.00, Children £4.00 to include interval

Refreshments. Book with Diana (663578) or Sheila (663578) or pay at door. Proceeds in aid of St Mary's Church



**CHRISTMAS LUNCH IN THE HUT**

**Would you like to enjoy a roast turkey dinner with all the trimmings in the company of friends?**



If so, can you let Jill Abbott (663518) know as soon as possible if you would like to be included in the Christmas lunch on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December. The total number will be limited to 24. Please

include details of any dietary requirements. Donations of £10 per person will be appreciated. Please tell your friends and neighbours.



**St. Mary's, Sweffling, Sunday December 21<sup>st</sup> 5.00 p.m., Carols by Candlelight** followed by mince pies and coffee/tea. All welcome. Christmas readings and Traditional Carols. Everyone welcome.

**Christmas Eve, Midnight Holy Communion, Sweffling, Start 11.30 p.m.**

A quiet time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas before the frenzy of Christmas Day

**Epiphany Carol Service, Sweffling, January 18<sup>th</sup> 9.30 a.m.**

A service of lessons and familiar carols reflecting the later events of the nativity story.



**Please e-mail any news items, events or short literary items for consideration for inclusion in the February/March edition to [john.tesh@talk21.com](mailto:john.tesh@talk21.com) before January 15<sup>th</sup> 2026**

The editors welcome contributions for The Bridge but reserve the right to edit. Accuracy of the content is the responsibility of the submitter. We are limited to 8 pages and so may not be able to publish everything we receive. Dated items of village interest will be given priority. Please include your name and contact details in case we need to get in touch. **The Bridge is sponsored by St. Mary's Church and is delivered free to all houses in the village**