December 2025







Wishing all our readers a happy Christmas and a healthy and peaceful 2026.

We are fortunate to live in a small and quiet community which looks out for neighbours and strives to live in harmony.

This has obviously been recognised by a good number of people who have moved to Hankerton in the past year.

We hope you have settled in, got to know your neighbours and enjoy living in a rural village.

Whilst celebrating our good fortune it is timely to reflect on the trials and tribulations in many parts of the world. World peace seems an aim that is not realisable at the moment. Let us all think of those less fortunate here and in the wider world and do what we can to help. Enjoy the season celebrating with your family and friends.

Deadline for news for the February Grapevine: January 10th 2026

The size and content of The Grapevine depends on the amount of copy we receive from individuals and groups, so please keep the news and events coming in!

All articles, adverts to be sent to: grapevinesn16@aol.com

Or to 21 Follyfield, Hankerton. SN16 9LA

The opinions expressed are the responsibility of the authors.

We reserve the right to edit material.

Nature Diary - December 2025



This month's subject is perhaps the most identifiable and well known of all our mammal species – the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). The older amongst us will remember being introduced to the fox through stories such as Aesop's fables, Br'er Fox, Mr. Tod in Beatrix Potter's tale of the same name and Foulfellow Fox in Disney's Pinocchio. Later on, the fox had starring roles in Fantastic Mr Fox by Roald Dahl, as Robin Hood in Disney's Robin Hood, and on BBC TV as Basil Brush. Younger members of our village (and their parents/grandparents!) more recently have met Freddy Fox in Peppa Pig.

Often the fox is portrayed as being cunning, sly and a bit of a trickster, regularly getting the better of others. Whatever the personality traits of the fox (as it is usually referred to in the UK because it is the only fox species here) they have enabled it to be a very successful species. Its geographical distribution covers most of the northern hemisphere (America, Europe and Asia) and Africa (north of the Sahara). Sadly, it was introduced into Australia where it has had a significant detrimental effect on the indigenous wildlife.

In the UK there is a long history of hunting the fox, usually on horseback riding to a pack of hounds. Paradoxically it is thought that this fact has prevented the fox suffering the same fate as the wolf in this country, i.e. extinction. The most obvious feature when one sees a fox is that orange/red coat flowing out into an exuberant tail, referred to as its brush, finishing in a white tip. There is black on the back of its ears and lower legs and white on the face, neck and belly. On a bright winter's day its coat will almost glow in the sunshine, and even more so, if it is standing on snow covered ground. However, any sighting is likely to be fleeting if the fox is aware of your presence, but that vision will remain in your memory.



They are perhaps not as large as you would expect. Perhaps it is the thick coat giving an impression of a larger animal. The males are larger than the females but body length of both sexes doesn't exceed 70cm, with tails adding another 40cm. Males weigh about 6 - 7 kgs and females 5 - 6 kgs., which is a bit more than a domestic cat (3.6 - 4.5 kgs) but a lot less than a Cocker Spaniel (13 - 15 kgs), which is perhaps a domestic dog breed that may look relatable in size.

The diet of the fox is varied, comprising small mammals especially voles and rabbits, carrion, fruit, earthworms and beetles. They will predate small, weakly lambs and chickens left out at night are considered "fair game", which doesn't endear it to livestock keepers, especially as in a hen house they do tend to kill more than they need. Is this it trying to quell the din or is there an element of enjoying the killing, as suggested by some? In urban areas they also take advantage of all the food waste that we humans leave around, in bins or dropped on the floor.

Towards the end of the calendar year is when foxes think about breeding, and if you are out and about late in the evening you may hear their courtship. The male will utter a sharp triple bark, to which an interested female will respond with a very eerie and shrieking scream. This can be unsettling, to say the least, if you hear it and are not aware of what animal is uttering it.



The cubs are born around March in a den, often an excavated rabbit burrow, or in built up areas, underneath a wooden shed, which is considered very desirable by a fox. The male (dog or tod) and the female (vixen) both bring up the youngsters. Usually that is as large as a family group of foxes get, but in urban areas where

food is more readily available, younger sub-adult foxes may not leave the family group as early as in the countryside, where they get driven off by the parents to fend for themselves.

Good senses are essential for a predator and one that does have enemies as well. Their sight is good but mainly responds to movement, their hearing is excellent and smell is good but not as good as specialised dogs. So, if you are lucky enough to come across a fox keep still and quiet, and hopefully you will enjoy more than just a fleeting glance. If you don't see a fox, you may still become aware of one's presence because of the very strong scent that they leave behind them. This comes from glands under its tail where aerobic and anaerobic bacteria ferment sebum into odorous compounds, which the fox uses to mark its territory, but if it has crossed your path a few minutes before, you too will be able to smell it. Strong but not unpleasant – but I suppose that might be a debatable opinion!

Steve Davies

Carols around the Village

This year Hankerton Carollers will be calling on you on **Thursday 11**th **December** raising money for the Malmesbury Food Bank.

Please listen out for us and have donations ready.



Carollers, please meet at the end of **Follyfield** at **6.00pm** (Good chance of mulled wine, sausage rolls and mince pies provided along the way!)



Preparing for Winter - Roz Savage MP, South Cotswolds



Photo courtesy of Scarlet Page

Here in the South Cotswolds, we are usually reminded of our relationship with nature most vividly in the warmer months, when we spend more time outdoors and the landscape feels alive with energy and growth. As autumn turns to winter and the leaves begin to fall, that connection can seem to fade. The fields appear quieter, the skies greyer. But of course, there is no "off switch" for nature - it is simply entering another phase of its cycle, resting and renewing for the year ahead.

We too have to adapt. Winter brings its own challenges, not least the risk of flooding, which affects so many towns and villages across our constituency. From Purton to Poulton to Parliament, I have been working hard to ensure our communities are better protected and prepared.

Earlier this month, I convened a Flooding Summit in Cirencester, bringing together local councillors, parish representatives, and community flood groups to share progress and plan practical steps for the months ahead. The discussions were constructive and grounded in real experience - a reminder that while national policy and investment are vital, the most effective solutions often come from those who know their local landscapes best.

In Parliament, I will continue to raise this issue through debates, legislative work, and direct engagement with ministers. But what inspires me most is what I see here at home: neighbours supporting one another, community groups taking the initiative, and volunteers stepping forward to protect their towns and villages from future flooding. The South Cotswolds spirit of collaboration and care is one of our greatest strengths.

That same spirit is at the heart of the Cotswold Volunteer Flood Warden Scheme, run by the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council in partnership with Cotswold District Council. Flood Wardens act as the eyes and ears of their communities - keeping an eye on local watercourses, helping share information, and providing vital updates during a flood event. They receive full training and ongoing support, and their efforts are making a real difference across the district.

If you'd like to get involved, I encourage you to find out more at www.cotswold.gov.uk/floodwardens or contact Rachel Seymour at rachels@grcc.org.uk. Even if you're not able to volunteer, there are many ways to help - from checking on vulnerable neighbours to reporting blocked drains or keeping watercourses clear. Small, local actions can add up to real resilience.

As we look ahead to the colder months, I know many people are concerned - about energy bills, weather extremes, or simply the shorter, darker days. But winter also brings an opportunity to reconnect in a different way: through community warmth, shared effort, and kindness. Whether it's lending a hand, joining a local initiative, or just sharing a cup of tea with a neighbour, these small gestures help us all feel stronger and more connected.

Let's face the winter together - with care for one another, for our homes, and for the beautiful landscape we all call home.

Warm wishes,

Roz

roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk

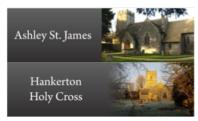
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Christmas



Services across the Braydon Brook Benefice







Date		Services in C	Church		Additional information	
Sunday 7 th December		0.20am Hel	9.30am, Holy Communion @ Hankerton		All Day Tree Faction @ Minety	
			-	All Day Tree Festival @ Minety		
			ds & Family Nativity Pla	-		
			ity Service @ Oaksey	-		
		6 pm Evening Prayer @ Ashley				
Sunday 14th D	ecember	10am Rene	efice Service @ Hankert	ton		
Juliuay 17th December		5 pm, Carol Service @ Minety			1	
Sunday 21 st December		11am, Holy C	ommunion @ Minety			
		5pm, Carol S	ervice @ Hankerton	1		
		6pm, Carol Service @ Charlton				
Wednesday 24 th December Christmas Eve		3pm, Children	r Friendly Service @ Mi	nety	4pm Carols @ The Potting Shed,	
		6nm Carol Se	ervice @ Ashley	Crudwell		
			Inight Holy Communion	-		
		22.000				
Thursday 25 th	December	9.30am, Shortened Communion Service @				
Christmas Day		Charlton				
		9.30am, Shortened Communion Service @				
		Hankerton 11am, Service of the Word @ Crudwell			_	
		11am, Service of the Word @ Minety				
		11am, Shortened Communion Service @ Oaksey				
Sunday 28 th D	December	10am Benefice Service @ Minety				
Tuesday	Weekly		9.00am	Morning D	 rayer via Zoom	
Wednesday	10 th December (2 nd Wed)	10.30am		hat @ Crudwell	
vicunesuay	Weekly		2.00pm			
			2.000	1 Days Court, Crudwell		
	Weekly		7.00pm	-	Men's Bible Study	
				1 Days Court, Crudwell		
Thursday	11 th December (2 nd Thu)		9.45am	BCP Communion Service @ Minety		
Friday	Weekly		9.00am	Morning P	Morning Prayer via Zoom	
Saturday	6 th December (1 st Sat)		11am - 12.30pm	Café Churc	Café Church @ Hankerton	
Saturday	6 th December		11am- 4.00pm	Christmas	Christmas Fair@ Crudwell Village Hall	
Saturday	20 th December		5.00pm		Carol Service @ Oaksey	







Services across the Braydon Brook Benefice

All are welcome to attend any of the services taking place across the Benefice

Ashley St. James



Charlton St. John the Baptist



All Saints Crudwell



Hankerton Holy Cross



Minety St. Leonard



Oaksey All Saints



Date	Services in Church	Additional information
Sunday 4 th January	9.30am, Holy Communion @ Hankerton	
	10am, Friends & Family @ Crudwell	
	11am, Holy Communion @ Oaksey	
	6pm, Evening Service @ Ashley	
Sunday 11 th January		
Sunday 18 th January	9.30am, Holy Communion @ Charlton	
	11am, Morning Praise @ Crudwell	
	11am, Holy Communion @ Minety	
	11am, Matins @ Oaksey	
	4.30pm Prayer, Praise & Story @ Hankerton	
Sunday 25 th September	9.30am, Holy Communion @ Ashley	
	9.30am, Morning Praise @ Charlton	
	11am, Holy Communion @ Crudwell	
	11am, Morning Praise @ Minety	
	10.00 Kids Club and 11am, Family Service @	
	Oaksey	

Mid-Week Services and Events

Weekly	9.00am	Morning Prayer via Zoom			
14 th January (2 nd Wed)	10.30am	Coffee & Chat @ Crudwell			
Weekly	2pm	Women's Discussion Group 1 Days Court, Crudwell			
Weekly	7.00pm	Men's Bible Study			
		1 Days Court, Crudwell			
8th January (2 nd Thu)	9.45am	BCP Communion Service @ Minety			
Weekly	9.00am	Morning Prayer via Zoom			
3 rd January (1 st Sat)	11am - 12.30pm	Café Church @ Hankerton			
	14 th January (2 nd Wed) Weekly Weekly 8th January (2 nd Thu) Weekly	14 th January (2 nd Wed) Weekly Property 2pm Weekly 7.00pm 8th January (2 nd Thu) Weekly 9.45am Weekly 9.00am			

Please visit our website www.braydonbrook.co.uk and Braydon Brook Churches Facebook Page to find out more.



Get ready for a wonderful

Café Church with Advent Sale

Raffle, Bring & Buy, Cake Stall
All donations welcome

Saturday 6th December 10.30am- 12.30pm HOLY CROSS CHURCH, HANKERTON



Mincemeat flan with almond pastry

A recipe I found in the book I started when we were first married – in 1970!

Almond pastry

150 g plain flour

100 g unsalted butter

40 g ground almonds

40 gr caster sugar

one egg yolk plus approximately 1x 15 ml spoon of cold water

Filling

2 medium sized cooking apples, peeled ,cored and roughly chopped. Squeeze of lemon juice 450 g mincemeat plus 1x15 ml spoon Brandy (optional)

Glaze

1 egg white lightly whisked. Caster sugar

Method

To make pastry put flour and fat in a bowl rub in lightly until mixture resembles bread crumbs. Stir in ground almonds and sugar. Add egg yolk and enough cold water to make a firm paste. Cover and chill.

Place apples and lemon juice in a pan bring to the boil and simmer for one minute. Drain and cool.

Mix apples mincemeat and Brandy lightly together.

Reserve a small piece of pastry for lattice. Roll out remaining pastry to around about 24 centimetres in diameter. Place a 19 centimetre flan case with loose bottom on a baking sheet . Place a piece of greaseproof paper in the bottom. Grease the ring and paper in the centre. Lift the pastry into the flan ring pressing against the base and sides trim the pastry, prick the base lightly, cover with greaseproof paper and bake blind for 15 minutes at 190° C gas mark 5. Remove paper . Meanwhile roll out reserved pastry and cut into strips. Add filling and place strips to form a lattice. Brush strips with egg white and sprinkle with caster sugar. Return to oven at 200° C gas mark 6 for a further 10 to 15 minutes until golden brown. Serve hot or cold with whipped cream.

Susan



MURCOTT FARM SHOP

Welcome to our family farm shop in Crudwell, Wiltshire set in the beautiful Cotswolds, just moments from the historic town of Malmesbury. We have amazing 'Allpress' coffee, fresh produce, local meat and cheese, delicious honey and freshly baked bread and pastries. Everything you need for a delightful shopping experience awaits you here!



Find Us:

Murcott Farm Shop, Unit 1, Crudwell Garage, Crudwell, nr. Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 9EU

Contact

Please contact us at: hello@murcottfarmshop.co.uk

Opening Hours

Mon - Sat 8:00 am - 6:00 pm Sunday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm



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Malmesbury Garden Centre is a locally run business supplying all your garden requirements. We are still open and have some gorgeous flowers and vegetable plants in, lots of seeds and gardening tools. The staff are very friendly and willing to help you with all your needs. The Cafe food is scrumptious too!

We are open: Monday to Saturday: 9:00am – 5:00pm Sunday: 10.00am – 4.00pm





Welcome Welcome!

Welcome to Khia and Greig, their two lovely boys, Charlie and Oliver and not forgetting April the dog! They have just moved into Follyfield so we look forward to getting to know them at future events in our lovely little village.



Our joint event with Athelstan 1100 and Wessex Week, with the support of Princeton University Press.

Athelstan & the Birth of a Kingdom

David Woodman

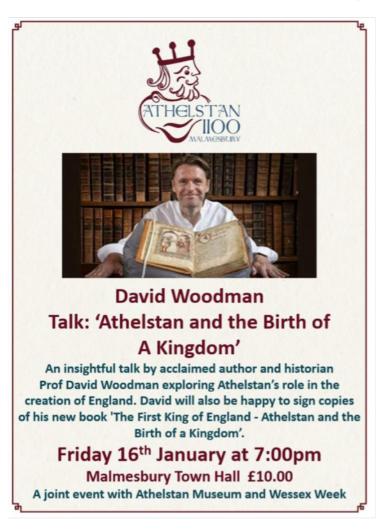
Professor of History at Robinson College, Cambridge Friday 16 January - 7.00pm - <u>TOWN HALL</u>

David's new book about Athelstan - titled 'The First King of England' was published to great acclaim on September 2nd. We are very pleased to announce that David will be sharing his insights into Athelstan and his remarkable reign at a special talk on Friday 16th January 2026 at 7:00pm in Malmesbury Town Hall.

Please see our website for tickets and full details:

https://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/events/

Tickets also available in the Museum Shop.



Message from the Ministry



The other night on my way to a meeting in Minety, I had what can only be described as a scary driving experience.

Without warning, my car lights suddenly went off!

There were no streetlights in the village I was driving through, and it was too early for the Badger Moon to help me. I gingerly pulled over to the side of the road and hit the hazard warning lights!

No light. No journey. I was stuck in the dark.

Thankfully, the light switch eventually responded to my urgent prayer and prodding.

My journey could continue.

By the time you get this, we shall be in Advent, the season of light, in which we reflect, with eager anticipation, on the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, the true 'Light of the World.' The candles on the Advent wreath will be lit. Our churches and schools will be retelling the story of Jesus, and His remarkable birth into this chaotic and dark world.

During Advent, I encourage you to listen to the words of the carols, so often played to us while we're shopping. I encourage you to read and reflect on the familiar nativity story in Luke 1&2, or in Matthew 1&2; or in John's prologue 1:1-14. As you read the instantly recognisable story or hear, 'While

shepherds watched their flocks by night,' for the umpteenth time, try to put yourself into the story..



What do you see? How are people responding? Which of the characters do you most identify with? What do you smell? What do you hear? How are you responding?

As we do this, we can get a fresh insight into the story of 'The Light of the World' (John 8 vs 12) who stepped down into darkness, to be our light and Saviour.

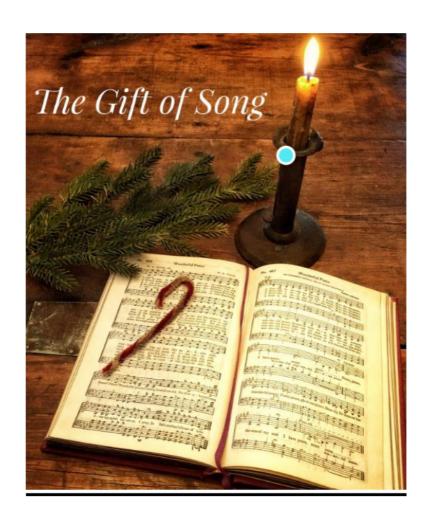
Praying a blessing over you and yours for this Advent & Christmas season.

Rev'd Bob

P.S. A warm welcome awaits you at each of our Benefice Churches, not only at Christmas.

An Additional Message from the Ministry

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the passing of Reverend Richard Maslen. His memorial service will take place in Sherston Holy Cross after a private cremation at Westerleigh. The memorial service is at 2pm on Wednesday 3rd December, followed by the Rattlebone Public House. Our thoughts remain with Margaret and all the family.



MY GIFTS TO YOU

I asked God for the gift of song - He looked and pondered not too long

"No, I have just the gift for you - And this is what I'll let you do

You'll sing but, in another key - Bring smiles to others and to Me.

You want to sing but now hereafter - My gifts to you are Prayer Rhymes and Laughter!"

28.01.97.

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manety shop

Minety Village Hall Minety SN16 9QH Tel: 01666 860013 www.minetyshop.co.uk Weekdays: 8am - 6pm Weekends: 9am - 1pm

New Into Your Shop:

Fresh Meat from Hiscocks our local butcher with special orders on request

Fresh Hobbs-House Bakery bread, pastries & cakes orders taken

Freshly made Bean-to-Cup Coffee and other hot drinks

Local Tracklements Condiments ideal for that special occasion

Local Beers & Mates Cider

Plus all of our usual products:

Off Licence Convenience Goods Confectionery
Fresh Produces & Frozen Produces
including a range of local & Minety Made products
Newspapers & Magazines to order

Support your local shop: Did you know if every household spent just £5.00 per week in the shop the future of the shop would be guaranteed. The Minety Shop is a "not for profit" organisation but needs to cover its running costs.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help in the shop or on the committee.

For more information call Steve: 07802 3538325 or Catherine: 07786522455 or email: minetyshop@gmail.com



Remembrance Sunday - Toby Williamson



Remembrance Sunday 'We will remember them' is not a trite claim, it's an imperative. On average, Britain has been in major war at least two times each and every century. We – the lucky ones - merely happen to be in a long peace. The names of our fallen came from a generation of men, aged between just 18 and 29, whose young lives in rural Hankerton were fated to coincide with global conflict. They were like us: they sang in the church, they went to the school, they worked the farms, and I'm sure they enjoyed an ale at the Horse & Groom, or perhaps The Plough at Crudwell. They were fathers, sons, and brothers and had mothers, daughters and sisters. So, for just a few minutes, let's bring them back to life.

In 1914, Albert Painter was a 19-year-old farmworker who lived at Cherrybrook Cottage, in Oxlease Lane. A fellow farmworker was Fred Law, who lived in Dolmans Cottage. That year, they never made the harvest, but joined the Wiltshire Regt on the same day, they have consecutive service numbers. How fitting that the regimental quick march was called The Farmer's Boy. As best friends, they died together in Gallipoli on 15th Aug 1915 and are commemorated on the tip of the peninsula overlooking the Dardanelles, with 21,000 others.

Fred's younger brother was Edgar Law. Exactly a year later, he too was killed in action, in the second month of the Battle of the Somme. With no known grave, he is commemorated at the biggest memorial of them all at Thiepval, with 72,000 others.

Alfred Hayes lived at Hankerton Field Farm. He enlisted into the 1st Battalion of the Wiltshires, who landed in France in Aug 14, just 10 days after Britain had declared war on Germany. He fought at Mons, he fought at Ypres, he was promoted to LCpl, but at Loos it is thought he was blown to smithereens and is now commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Thomas Smith also lived at Hankerton Field Farm, where he was the cowman. He enlisted at Tetbury with the Worcestershire Regt. At 3.15am, he went over the top on what was the third day of the Somme offensive, was wounded and then shipped back to Blighty and died in a military hospital. He is the only Serviceman to have made it back here to be buried in the village. The inscription on his grave in front of us has the words of his parents William and Elizabeth, "if only we could have clasped his hand and just have said goodbye".

Reginald Loder lived at Murcott. He survived Gallipoli, but the 5th Battalion of the Wiltshires was sent on to fight the Turks in Mesopotamia where, in Jan 1917, he was wounded and died 3 days later. His grave is at the Amara war cemetery overlooking the River Tigris in modern day Iraq.

As an aside, I wonder whether any of our farm boys knew the local landlord from Charlton, the 19th Earl of Suffolk. He was in the same Mesopotamia campaign just downriver, commanding the Wiltshire battery, 3rd Wessex Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. Major Henry Howard was killed by shrapnel through the heart and is buried in Basra War Cemetery. At the age of 11, his son became the 20th Earl. He became known as 'mad' Jack Howard and would go in 1941, defusing bombs in the East End.

The fourth Hankerton man in the eastern campaign was Arthur Woodward. He survived it all, including Gallipoli, the fall of Bagdad,

and when Turkey signed an Armistice on 31st Oct 1918, there must have been hope. He died of an illness the following month and never came home. We can only imagine the scene in the Post Office when the telegram came through. His mother Fanny was the post mistress.

Frank Gardner lived at Church Farm and worked for the Great Western Railway at Swindon as an engine cleaner and fireman. Whilst all the farm labourers were drafted to the Infantry, Frank's skills saw him drafted to the Artillery. He was killed in Flanders in June 1917.

At 29, George Pennell was the oldest of our lads, his parents lived in Rossley Cottage in Chapel Lane. Married with two children, a tall lad, he joined the Grenadier Guards. As a LCpl, he went at Cambrai on 27 Nov 17, a day when British Army deaths numbered 1,147.

Do you remember the first name I mentioned, Albert Painter? Well, Albert had a younger sister called Rosa, who married locally and lived in a cottage at Elm Farm. They had children, the youngest of whom was called Arthur John Tugwell, or Jack to his friends. Like his uncle, Jack joined up at the age of 19, only it was now the Second World War. He was posted to Singapore, which fell to the Japanese in Feb 1942. Postcards home confirm that Jack worked on the infamous Burma railway. At dawn on 12th Sep 1944, he was one of 1300 prisoners of war onboard a ship bound for Japan when it was sunk. Jack's grave is the sea just south of Taiwan.

This year, let us remember Bunny Lees-Smith who in 1945 was 13, a childhood shaped by war. On reaching 18, in 1950, he joined the RAF as a flight engineer and found himself serving with 24 Squadron, participating in casualty evacuations from the Korean War. Bunny though was a survivor, and in later years a much-cherished resident of this village, passing only this summer, aged 93.

For every person killed in the world wars, three more were injured physically and many more mentally. Hankerton did its duty. They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, not the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning...we will remember them.

Moulders Mutts



I am pleased to announce ** that I have completed the Emmi-Pet training course and am able to offer professional ultrasonic teeth cleaning for your dogs ** \bigcirc**

- Gentle, silent, non invasive and vibration free
- Prevents plaque, tartar, gum disease, bacteria and bad breath
- Pain and stress free
- Helps reduce costly vet bills and anaesthesia

I am so excited to be able to help dogs with their dental health and give them a sparkly healthy smile *

If you are interested and want further info, please get in touch – Jane Moulder 07796 273743 or mouldermutts@gmail.com



Luxury Biscuits for our canine buddies!

Some of you may have already sampled the gorgeous hand-made dog biscuits that Jane Moulder has been making for the last year. She will be making some more as Xmas pressies for our doggie pals so if you are interested in grabbing a bag or two

then just give her a call on 07796 273743. There may also be an opportunity to grab a bag or two at the Advent Sale on Dec 6th.

Don't miss out – our dog LOVES them!





Poppy Appeal

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the village collection for this year's Poppy appeal.

We raised £356.79, not including QR code donations.

I'm sure that the Royal
British Legion will put it to
very good use in helping



veterans and their families, as they will continue to do for many years to come.

I am very grateful that most of you were expecting me to call and had cash at the ready. See you again next year.

Claudine Pynn

That's it for 2025 folks – all that remains to say is Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Mary and Susan (Eds)

