

PARISH NEWSLETTER

February 2025



**St Winifred's Church,
Branscombe
Holyford Mission Community
www.holyford.org**



ST WINIFRED'S CHURCH, BRANSCOMBE

FEBRUARY SERVICES

2 nd	11.15am	Holy Communion
9 th	11.15am	Morning Prayer
16 th	11.15am	Holy Communion
23 rd	11.15am	Family Holy Communion



There is no longer Evening Prayer on a Thursday in St Winifred's

For any questions regarding St Winifred's, please contact the
Churchwarden: Ross Willmington 680264

For the latest information across the Mission Community,
consult the website www.holyford.org if possible, or see the relevant
Church Noticeboards

HOLYFORD MISSION COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Holy Communion	Every Wednesday 10am St Andrew's ,Colyton
Morning Prayer	Weekdays Monday - Friday 8.30am St Andrew's Colyton
Transport to/From Church:	Please contact a churchwarden
Baptisms, Marriages & Funerals:	Call Administrator 01297 552307 or email office@holyford.org
Holy Communion at Home:	Please call a Minister, Reader or Churchwarden



FROM THE MISSION COMMUNITY

Visits

The Christmas season is a time to visit or to receive visitors for many. Although a visit is accepted gracefully, despite enforced changes of routine, it is also an opportunity to catch up and share news; so that departure can be bring both relief and sadness. Visits can also be a time for reflection for both host and visitor.

The Christmas story includes accounts of visits to the Holy family and, although historical details have been embellished by tradition and scripture is rather vague about the timescale, it includes a reason for their presence with the Christ Child. Scripture tells us that Mary 'treasured these things in her heart'. This is also true of later occasions as when 40 days after the birth of Christ Mary and Joseph visit the temple with Jesus and encounter Anna and Simeon which we particularly remember in the Church as Candlemas on 2 nd February.

.Although we are told that these visits had a profound effect on Mary, I do wonder what did the Shepherds and the Wise Men took away with them from that wonderful encounter and did it make a difference to the rest of their lives? Were they ever aware of the world changing consequences of Jesus earthly life and the mystery of God's reconciling love? I also wonder about Joesph who seems to disappear as a 'player' very early in the Gospel accounts. Luke's Gospel records that Jesus grew 'in divine and human favour' (Luke 2:52,my emphasis) so even in Jesus' youth and early manhood his earthly presence was affecting those with whom he lived and worked.

There is a broad theme running through all the above and this is hospitality. Although this might have different implications it broadly means the acceptance, welcome and meeting the needs of others and so is relevant in a global sense as well as a domestic one. As we show hospitality to others we relive the Christmas story at any time of year. The images of the infant Christ child may be at the heart of the Gospel to many, but hospitality is also as it gives us a taste of the kingdom of heaven and an insight into the boundless hospitality of our Father God, ultimately revealed in the Cross and Resurrection and into which all are invited. As we remember Emmanuel (God is with us) it is important to know that he still 'visits' us today, not through the presence of an infant in a manger but through the comfort and strength that the Holy Spirit can bring into each one of our lives.

Charles Hill

Thank you!

Thank you to all who support the life, fabric and witness of St Winifred's Parish Church in so many different ways. Our Churchwarden, Ross, members of the Parochial Church Council, sidespeople, bell ringers, musicians, readers, servers and those who help to provide pastoral care. Thank you to all who decorated the church so beautifully for Christmas and to our flower arrangers who keep the church looking bright and colourful throughout the year. Thank you to all those who help with our social events;

We are so fortunate to have a beautiful church and churchyard. Thank you to all those who help clean and maintain it and keep it safe. We have undertaken a significant programme of fabric repairs this year, overseen by Paul Newman and funded by grants and the Friends of St Winifred's. A big thank you to our Friends group for their support, and to all those who have made a commitment to support the mission and outreach of the church financially—your contributions are hugely valued.

The doors of the church are always open. Thank you to all who unlock and lock each day. Each time I pop into the church I seem to bump into a grateful visitor, happy to find the door open and to be in such a well-loved church whose walls are steeped in the prayers of generations. There were many highlights during 2024, not least the visit of the Chapel Choir from St John's College, Oxford, and the fantastic Walking Nativity and Christingle with Branscombe Church of England Primary School.

I thank God that we have people who make this possible. Long may it continue...and if you are not involved already, you are definitely missing out. Come and join us: all are welcome.

God bless you and may 2025 bring you peace and joy.

Fr Steven

rector@holyford.org 01297 553180

The Reverend Dr Steven Martin



Church Floodlighting

If you would like to sponsor the lights, perhaps in memory of someone or to mark a special occasion, please contact Pat Ayles (680328). The suggested donation to church funds for a week of floodlighting is £15.00

22nd to 28th December Remembering David - from the Yeabsley and Brock families.

*2nd - 9th February In memory of Ron and Dinah Denning
From Richard, Rachel, Lucy and Ellie.*



Thank you

I would like to thank everyone for their cards and kind messages of condolence on the passing of Chris

Annie



DONATIONS NEEDED

The Food Bank needs non perishable food, toiletries, washing powder or liquid etc. They particularly need: cold meat (eg ham/corned beef/Spam) *tinned/ jars of hot dogs* chilli con carne*long-life whole milk*baby wipes* toilet rolls*toiletries.

We are still happy to pick up any items from your house if that is easier. For financial gifts the bank details are available on the Mission Community website

Thanks again!!

Jill & Tony Johnson

Please support this worthwhile cause.

CAN YOU HELP ?

**Would you like to try your hand at flower arranging
We need people with a love of flowers to join our teams
to decorate St Winifred's. You do not need to be
experienced as help will always be at hand**

**At present our rota consists of four teams of two. It
would be great to expand to teams of three so that we
can cover holidays etc.**

**If interested please contact Sallie Herniman tel. 01297
553482.**



Branscombe C of E Primary School



Thank you to everyone who came to our Special Nativity Service, it was a really special evening and the children, as always, did us proud.

The group gathered outside of the village hall, dressed in costume with lanterns at the ready, to retell the special story that took place many, many years ago.



The children led their 'flock' (including real sheep) through the village in torchlight to the church- telling the story, singing hymns and knocking on doors to see if there was "any room at the inn" before settling in the church for the remainder of the service.

In the church, the children of the school shared the Christingles they had made and sang more hymns in the light of their Christingle candles. It was a very special evening: spreading the important messages of that event, scattering joy across the village and bringing smiles to everyone's faces.



The children have started the new year with excitement and enthusiasm. They are studying different animals through their non-fiction writing in English and looking at their life cycles in science.

We have lots of exciting things coming up this half term including our Wassailing Event which was held on the 15th January, **Pancake Races on the 4th March** as well as our new Baby and Toddler Group, which is being held every other Thursday now starting on the 23rd January. The 9th January was cancelled due to bad weather

Best wishes and God bless.

Mrs Tubbs

Academy Headteacher

FREE

**BRANSCOMBE'S
BRAND NEW**

**Baby &
Toddler Group**

**9:30AM
- 11AM**

**STARTING
ON**

**THURSDAY
9TH
JANUARY**

**MEET AT BRANSCOMBE
VILLAGE HALL, THEN
WALK TOGETHER TO
THE SCHOOL.**

**DON'T MISS OUT
FIRST SESSION.....**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO BABY AND CHILD
MASSAGE AND AROMATHERAPY**

**GROUP WILL BE HELD EVERY 2 WEEKS. UPCOMING
EVENTS ON FIRST AID AS WELL AS MUSIC SESSIONS.**

Naked Larder

Love food but hate plastic waste??

Naked Larder Sidmouth, based in Weston, is a unique plastic and packaging-free grocery service offering re-fillable dry food goods, eco-friendly cleaning & personal care products ethically, and sustainably sourced at affordable prices. Simple to use - order online & collect using your own containers once per month.

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Cyber Skills Workshop
Friday 24th January 2025
2pm and 7pm

Please come and join us at Branoc Hall for a workshop led by James Fielden-Pickard who has kindly given up his time to show us all how to stay safe online.

Each session will take approx. 90 mins plus time for any questions at the end (these are identical sessions: you don't need to attend both) and are free of charge.

Tea/coffee will be served at the afternoon session and the bar will be open in the evening.



Fundamental Online Safety & Basic Cyber Security

RAISING DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Giving you the knowledge you need to stay safe online

A woman with curly hair wearing an orange turtleneck sweater is smiling and looking at a laptop. The background is green with yellow and purple circles.



Passwords - Your First Line of Defence
e-Mail Security - How to avoid Scams
Social Media - The Dangers of Sharing information

The Power of Information - What happens to your information
Social Engineering - What is it and how does it work

Public Wifi - Do's and Dont's
Updates to Technology - Why should we do it
Safe Browsing - What to look out for

BIT TRAINING

The banner features a green background with yellow and purple circles, a white Wi-Fi icon, a white smartphone icon, and a white padlock icon.

RACE THE SUN JURASSIC COAST OFF ROAD EVENT FOR ACTION MEDICAL RESEARCH

Over recent months you may have seen us out and about looking rather red in the face and slightly out of breath scrambling over the cliffs in the wind, rain, snow and occasionally sun as part of our attempt to get fit. Why are we doing this? Well it's part of our attempt to get fit as we prepare for our 'triathlon' in June when we will be setting off at sunrise to bike, hike and paddle around a challenging course in a race against the sun all in aid of a charity close to our hearts ❤️❤️ ACTION MEDICAL RESEARCH.

Over the last 70 years this fantastic charity has improved the lives of millions of people around the world. They are the leading UK-wide charity dedicated to finding vital research to help sick and disabled babies, children and young people and their families. The charity was founded in 1952 by Duncan Guthrie as he sought to find a cure and vaccine for polio. Since then the charity has funded research into a number of life threatening and debilitating conditions including premature birth, brain cancers, heart conditions, epilepsy, asthma, cerebral palsy to name just a few. In addition, their groundbreaking work has improved ultrasound scanning as well as helped to reduce the risk of still births. To find out more about their vital work please visit <https://action.org.uk/about-us>

We are determined to raise at least £1000 before our race in June. If you would like to sponsor us please visit our Just Giving Page via this link or QR code.

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/davidmiller2024?utm_medium=proxy_fundraising&utm_content=davidmiller2024&utm_source=copyLink&utm_campaign=pfp-share



David
Miller's
JustGiving
Page





CAKE AND CHAT

**Wednesday 19th February 2025,
2pm-4pm in Branoc Hall.**

Open to all, come along for a slice of cake and a cuppa.

Have a chat with friends, and neighbours, old and new.

We look forward to you being there.



HOME HELP AVAILABLE

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Camps International Cambodia 2026

As part of my fundraising, I will be continuing to make Fudge
Below are this month's flavours.

After Eight Mint Fudge £3.50

Terry's Chocolate Orange Fudge £3.50

Mini Egg Fudge £3.50

Rum & Raisin Fudge £3.50

Available for delivery

E-Mail: gracecamps2026@gmail.com

Tel: 01297 680447

Thank you for your support & watch this space for further events

GoFundMe

Grace Bass

Easy Fundraising





Branscombe Parish Council

For further information please visit:

<http://www.branscombe-pc.org.uk/>

Clerk to the council: Nicky Ingarfield

clerk@branscombe-pc.gov.uk Tel: 07814 521538

Next Meeting: Thurs 6th February – Branoc Hall Social Room

A Happy New Year to everyone.

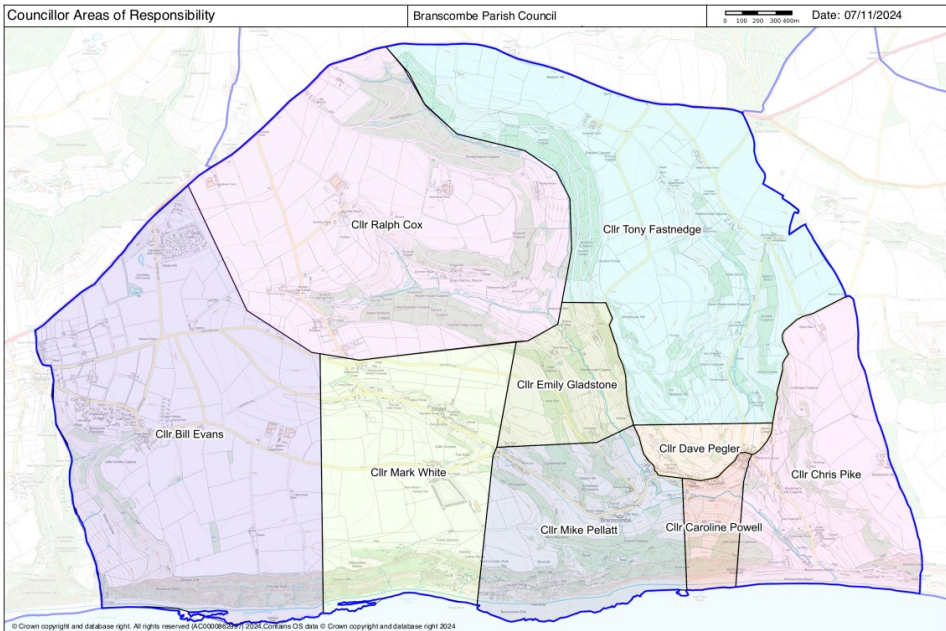
I was hoping to have an update on the BPC Council Tax precept following our decisions at the January meeting, but its postponement due to icy conditions means we've missed the February newsletter deadline. Full update next month.

We have some update on high-speed broadband. The Government's Project Gigabit has awarded a contract to BT Openreach for the upgrade of 37,000 properties in the SouthWest including some in our area. We're trying to find out which properties these are, and timescales. Perversely, though, those properties that were due to be upgraded by Airband are not included and the ones included are likely only to be ones already served by part-fibre, with speeds up to 80Mbps already. We'll continue pressing CDS and the Government via our MP to expedite things. We've been promised too much for too long that's not been delivered.

The steps at Coronation Gardens need some maintenance—thanks to Richard Emmott who's offered to look out for materials to complete the work.

Finally, the map of Councillor Areas of Responsibility has been updated on the website, and is reproduced below.

Mike Pellatt
Chair, BPC



Planned Road Closures/Delays

27 Feb—3 Mar 2025 Road from The Square to Great Seaside Farm nr Glebe Cottage—closure, South West Water. Note this is duration of permit, road will reopen as soon as works are completed.

PLANNING

One new planning application and two updates to previous applications since the last newsletter. All other applications listed previously are still awaiting decision

Date	App ref	Description	BPC Response	EDDC Decision
13/9/24	24/1912/FUL	Maycoes Branscombe EX12 3DNErection of Replacement Gabion Retaining Structure	Objection maintained after new submissions dated 28/11/24	Awaiting decision
04/11/24	24/2147/FUL	Annexe Higher House Farm Branscombe EX12 3BH Replacement conservatory	Support	Awaiting decision
15/11/24	24/2403/FUL	Willow Barn Church Row Branscombe EX12 3AU Retrospective planning application for new storage outbuilding	No objection	Awaiting decision



This year is one of those strange ones when the 11th of November was at the end of the Remembrance period.

The Remembrance Service took place on Sunday the 10th and was well attended by many people who give this special day for our past Ex service, Serving and their families to ensure they are not forgotten,.

Our two minute silence was held at 11am on Monday the 11th at the War memorial and Field of Remembrance with the School who placed a Poppy Cross for each of the Branscombe men who did not make it back to their Village and led by our Branch Chaplin Revd Nigel Freathy.

We put out 8 Static Poppy Trays across the Village and after they were collected in and counted the amount was £1,570:73 so far plus the QR code and Gift Aid to be add early in the New Year.

The National total for the past year was over £50 million again and Devon County was just under £1 million and we hope to exceed that figure this year as we have done a few times in the past.

Ralph Cox
Branch President
Branscombe Branch, Royal British Legion.



BRANOC HALL – BOOKINGS OFFICER VACANCY



After 4 years as the Branoc Hall Bookings Officer, Catherine Newman has decided it is time to give someone else the opportunity.

Catherine has done an absolutely superb job, as so many of our customers over the period will testify. She will be sorely missed by both our hirers and the Committee. We are therefore eager to find someone who can take on this interesting and important role.

It is a voluntary position which requires the ability to get on with people, both hirers and other committee members. It requires access to a computer, email and phone and requires a reasonable level of IT skills. The amount of time it takes up obviously varies from week to week depending on the number of bookings but is normally a maximum of just a few hours over the week. It is a matter of taking initial enquiries, confirming bookings, keeping an accurate diary, and producing an invoice to the customer. It is also necessary to liaise with both the bar management and cleaners.

Full information, help and advice, and a thorough and complete handover process will be provided, and Catherine will be on hand for further guidance should it be required at any time.

Branoc Hall remains a fundamental part of life in Branscombe and taking on this role, and joining the Management Committee, will enable you to be involved in ensuring that remains in place going forward.

If you think this position would be of interest to either yourself or a friend or acquaintance, please give me a ring and I would be delighted to meet up and discuss what is involved in more detail.

David Lamb. Chairman. 01297 680777 - chairbranochoall@gmail.com

Date		Branoc Hall bookings – FEBRUARY 2025
S	1 st	Six Nation rugby – Ireland v England – social room from 4pm (ko @ 16.45) All welcome. Bar open.
Su	2 nd	
M	3 rd	Private hire – main hall - afternoon
Tu	4 th	
W	5 th	Post Office – foyer – 2pm-3pm Private hire – snooker room - evening
Th	6 th	Branscombe Parish Council—social room—7pm
F	7 th	
S	8 th	Six Nation rugby – England v France – social room from 4pm (ko @ 16.45) All welcome. Bar open.
Su	9 th	
M	10 th	Private hire – main hall - afternoon
Tu	11 th	
W	12 th	Post Office – foyer – 2pm-3pm Private hire – snooker room - evening
T	13 th	Private hire – main hall – afternoon
F	14 th	Private hire – main hall – afternoon
S	15 th	Private hire – main hall – all day
Su	16 th	Private hire – main hall – all day
M	17 th	Private hire – main hall – all day
Tu	18 th	
W	19 th	Post Office – foyer – 2pm-3pm Cake and chat – main hall & kitchen – 2pm – 4pm Private hire – snooker room - evening
Th	20 th	
F	21 st	
S	22 nd	Six Nation rugby – England v Scotland – social room from 4pm (ko @ 16.45) All welcome. Bar open.
Su	23 rd	
M	24 th	Private hire – main hall – morning Private hire – main hall - afternoon
Tu	25 th	Private hire – main hall - afternoon
W	26 th	Post Office – foyer – 2pm-3pm Private hire – snooker room - evening
Th	27 th	
F	28 th	

To book the hall please contact Catherine Newman 01395 579317

BRANSCOMBE PROJECT WINTER TALKS

Monday - January 27 - 7:30

Vindolanda

Andrew Birley

Extraordinary finds from the peatlands alongside Hadrian's Wall
Roman letters written on birch bark
and much more, under threat as the peatlands dry out.

Monday – February 24 - 7:30

Dr Rowe & Branscombe's Bastard Fauna

Stratigraphy, paleoecology

& field study of local Cretaceous chalk

Rob Beard

Fossil hunting in the Branscombe area is not nearly as well regarded as in the famous Jurassic exposures of West Dorset.

Fossils are fewer in East Devon and harder to find.

When good specimens are recovered, they are often beautifully preserved and find rates are sufficient to support a small group of collectors from the local Cretaceous strata.

This talk will look at the unique lithology and beautiful fossils of the Cretaceous Chalk between Branscombe West Cliff and Salcombe Regis.

We will revisit the work of Edwardian geologist Arthur Rowe whose field study provides the only reference for the fossil assemblage highly anomalous lower Turonian chalk deposits area that he termed "the bastard fauna of Branscombe". These unique marine fossil communities have received scant academic attention ever since.

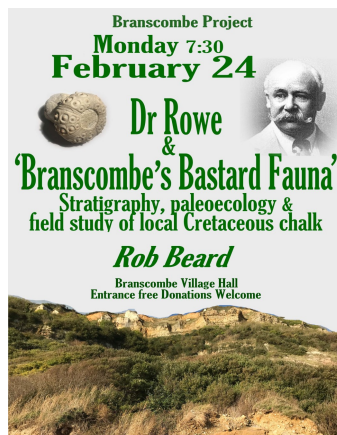
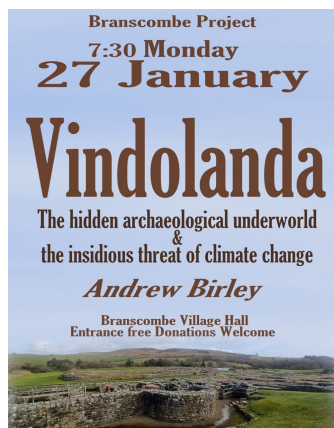
Monday – March 24 - 7:30

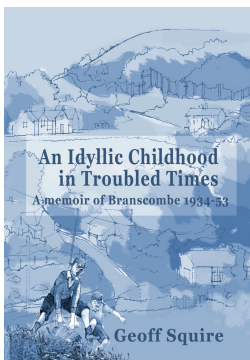
Bog Burials

Face to Face with the Past

Mel Giles

New work from the author of 'Bog Bodies: Face to Face with the Past'





LAUNCH OF GEOFF SQUIRE'S *AN IDYLLIC CHILDHOOD IN TROUBLED TIMES*

Barbara Farquharson: Some of you will have read the lovely pieces that Geoff Squire wrote about his wartime childhood in the Parish Magazine. We thought that to celebrate Geoff's ninetieth birthday, we would bring them together, somewhat edited and enlarged, and with wonderful pictures by Maisie Rowe.

Geoff's father was the village school master and, in the war, was fully occupied with looking after not only the village school children but fifty bewildered evacuees who had arrived from London ... Geoff, aged five when the war broke out, and a little later his brother Kingsley, had the freedom to roam the countryside. At first they stayed close to the school house, then, as they grew older, explored further and further afield. Geoff has a remarkable ability to remember not just where they went and what they did, but what it *felt* like. He also remembers the vague anxiety that hung over the adults, and his own acute anxiety when, clutching a few pennies and farthings, he was sent to fetch bread from Mr Collier at the Old Bakery. He remembers some of the old villagers – Harry Layzell the blacksmith, Charlie Taylor the cobbler, Freddy Dowell who, after his own fashion, cut peoples' hair ...

We can see that in writing these pieces Geoff was recognizing the way his feeling for the landscape fed his passion for geography and laid the foundation for his later career as lecturer at Reading University.

The book ends with him writing a letter to his grand-daughter in which, as an adult, he revisits the wartime years, and with a short tribute to his younger brother Kingsley who, as a reporter on the Sidmouth Herald, reported the stories told him by the villagers. Stories that would otherwise have been lost.

The book, at its launch price of £4.50, can be obtained from:

- Project Talks
- Andrea Bass (abass291@googlemail.com)
- Barbara Farquharson (b.bender@zen.co.uk)
- Later in the spring it will be available, along with all the other Project books, at the Paragon bookshop, the Sea Shanty and Beer Quarry caves.



THE SEA SHANTY BEACH CAFÉ

Café is open 9.00am to 3.30pm Thursday to Sunday
Breakfast menu served from 09:00am Last Order - 11:30am

Sunday Last order 11.15am

Lunch menu served from 12:00pm– 2.30pm

Breakfasts, lunches, and **daily specials**.

Pasties, sausage rolls, and homemade cakes.

Senior Specials

Cod, Chips & Peas, with a pot of tea or small coffee £13.50

Scampi, Chips & Peas with a pot of tea or small coffee £12.50.



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At a Glance Dates for your Diary

January

Friday 24th	2.00pm & 7.00pm	Cyber Skills Workshop Branoc Hall
Monday 27th	7.30pm	Branscombe Project-Branoc Hall

February

Saturday 1st	4.00pm	Six Nation rugby – Ireland v England – social room (ko @ 16.45) All welcome. Bar open.
Thursday 6th	7.00pm	Parish Council—social rom
Saturday 8th	4.00pm	Six Nation rugby – England v France – social room
Wednesday 19th	2.00pm-4.00pm	Cake and Chat Branoc Hall
Saturday 22nd	4.00pm	Six Nation rugby – England v Scotland – social
Monday 24th	7.30pm	Branscombe Project-Branoc Hall

ADVERTISEMENTS

If you would like to advertise in the
Parish Newsletter please email:
parishnewslettereditors@gmail.com

**Charges for a year (11 editions) are
as follows:**

Full page £180.00

Half page £100.00

Quarter page £50.00

Any others at the discretion of the
PCC



BRANSCOMBE / WESTON DEFIBRILLATORS

Defibrillators are now kept at the following
locations:

Branoc Hall – Branscombe

The Fountain Head - Branscombe

The Masons Arms – Branscombe

The Sea Shanty – Branscombe

Oakdown Caravan Park – Weston

These defibrillators are available for use at the above sites
and within the villages of Branscombe and Weston



We hope that you have all had a great Christmas and wish you all well for 2025. It is nice to know that we have passed the shortest day and that the days are now drawing out.

We had a busy Christmas period as Worzel received a date for his hip operation at the beginning of December. So, he is now the grateful owner of not just one, but two, new hips. His recovery has been steady, and he has progressed from two crutches to one and is back driving. He is able to walk quite a distance, but he is taking it slowly getting back to work, as walking across “lumpy-bumpy” fields, across wet and muddy yards and climbing into a tractor, all present quite big risks. We are super-grateful to everyone who has asked after him and those who are helping us, especially Will, Ben and Adam.

We have taken some steps towards thinking about our future without Manor Mill and Seaside. We have sold some store calves, that ordinarily we would have kept until they were fat. The main objective of this was to start reducing the stock numbers towards the level that Ian will be able to have at Southcombe and Combe Wood. A clear TB test was much appreciated and allowed us to sell these calves. A clear TB test also put us back to six-monthly testing which is a relief.

We didn't put the rams in with the ewes, so we won't be lambing in 2025. We are hoping to sell our current lambs, ewes and rams soon. Again, the objective of this is that we will be reducing stock. That will give us more time to do some of the jobs that we need to do to be ready to hand Manor Mill and Seaside back to the National Trust in March 2026.

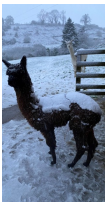
Our bird surveyors have been out and about on all the farms doing the first of the over-wintering bird surveys and the second survey is scheduled for late January. Hopefully we will have some results by the time of writing the next article, so I will update you then. We hope that the National Trust will continue the relationship that we have built with this great team of volunteers, so that we can all benefit from knowing what birds we have across the farms and how any management decisions impact the bird populations.

Over the coming month, we hope Worzel's recovery continues in “leaps and bounds”, we look forward to the results from the bird survey and to taking the next steps to managing our exit from Manor Mill and Seaside. With less to write about in these articles as we reduce the stock, please do let me know if there is anything that you would like me to write about.



THE PACHA POSSE

It's been quite an exciting time in the very small mind of an alpaca. Snow was the first excitement, although I must admit I did feel a bit guilty one morning, but I blame the BBC and in fact the alpacas themselves for my mistake. I watch the weather forecast everyday and base the open/shut stable option on this. The reason the alpacas are to blame is that the girls are extremely lazy, and if it is unpromising outside (or they just can't be bothered) they tend to use a corner of the stable as a toilet, which means I need to conduct a clean-up operation the following morning, a task I am happy to avoid if at all possible. As such I tend to leave the alpacas outside with the stable door shut except in terrible weather, after all they are creatures designed to live outside. For some odd reason this is just the girls, the boys seem to like a nice clean bed & always make the effort to go outside even in the worst weather so they are free to come & go at will.



Anyway BBC promised no rain until late morning, as such the door was firmly shut overnight – unfortunately I woke up to about 5cm of snow covering the garden, paddock & indeed the alpacas. To be fair little Inti was looking very unconcerned, he had a perfect layer of snow on his back – which just goes to show how perfectly insulating his floof is.

Polly on the other hand, my poor old girl, didn't have much of a covering of snow at all and was looking decidedly miserable tucked up as close to the stable as she could get. So the stable was opened up & in shot Polly to get the prime spot right at the back underneath the hay net. Breakfast in bed – heaven.

The second exciting thing that happened was the arrival of several Christmas trees in the paddock – the all-time favourite treat for alpacas. So, I would like to say thank you to those who supplied and delivered your trees, they really are much appreciated. I'm not sure how much enrichment alpacas actually need but they certainly get a lot out of a Christmas tree, not only do the needles appear to be very tasty, the smell also seems to send them a little loopy as they either try and face plant the tree or try and get their whole bodies into the middle of the tree and finally they also act as a great scratching post once dried and denuded of needles. This all seems very odd to me for descendants of creatures from the desert like alto plano!



And finally little Inti is now microchipped and in the process of being registered, I think he has also weaned himself which is great news. He is growing fast and his being weaned gives Coca time to regain her top condition as I am hoping to show her along with Inti later this year, although I had been giving her extras since Inti came along so she is not too bad and should be on top form by Spring.

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National Trust Countryside Update



This month, we're all about what's underfoot, plus what's overhead. So, eyes down (and up) and let's get out there.

Stepping it up...

National Trust

Steps. They have their fans. But there are limits to what people want. 5,6,7,8? Fine. But many more and it's often the case that the whole thing is Better Best Forgotten. However, that would be a Tragedy, as West Cliff illustrates.

If you've ever ventured up the footpath that scales the heights of West Cliff, you'll know that it's a steep old trek and no mistake. Fabulous views, mind you, and a truly lovely location for wildlife spotting too, but it's a pretty severe slope that the plucky path navigates. In the course of its journey uphill, it takes in a series of steps that can test the most enthusiastic ascender.

One stretch in particular has been the subject of some sterling work by our Rangers and volunteers lately. Of the 88 steps that climb this section, 56 have been replaced. Why was this work necessary? Because of the extensive wear in evidence, which is testament to how popular this route is. Incidentally, such wear and tear is something that Rangers will monitor as part of their regular sweeps of NT property. However, they can always use help in this regard, so if you'd like to find out more about the Trust Eyes and Ears programme, do get in touch (see overleaf).

Anyway, in the course of doing this replacement work, we were able to swap out the treated softwood that was in place, in favour of untreated sustainable oak.

This is a win for the environment as treated (or tanalised) wood is often difficult to dispose of, requiring very high temperature incineration. The untreated hardwood we have used, in contrast, will last up to 15 years or so and, when it comes time to dispose of it, can be safely placed in woodland to act as some pretty swish insect accommodation.

All this talk about steps leads me nicely to the guided walks we're launching this year. If you're keen on getting out and about and want to learn a little bit more about local history and natural treasures, you might want to join us from May when we start our Branscombe Heritage Walks. In fact, if you're the kind of person who loves to bring local stories to life, then you might like to volunteer to assist with running the walks. We're very keen on benefitting from as much home-grown knowledge as possible, so if you'd like to learn more, email us at the contact details overleaf.



NEWS FROM EAST DEVON NATIONAL TRUST continued

...Up, up and away

Lots of you will associate this time of year with the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, which is a good excuse to look at the beaked bunch that are currently out and about in the Branscombe region. You might be thinking that all you're likely to see around here in January is pretty much robins, blackbirds, pigeons and gulls. Well, yes, there are certainly a good number of these handsome individuals around at the moment, but you might also spot some of the following:

Long-tailed tits – downright gorgeous little individual that likes to use hedgerows and trees as the location for its rather plush domed nest (incorporating up to 1500 feathers in its construction!). Look out for them in the bushes off to the left of the Valley Path as you head towards the sea from Manor Mill.

Buzzards – Branscombe is blessed with several pairs of buzzards, which you can see circling the village most days. They're making something of a comeback, thanks in no small part to the kind of land management that tenants like the Westlakes practise, which results in better insect and small bird populations. Spotting-wise, if what you're seeing has very broad wings and a short tail, you're probably looking at a buzzard. If, on the other hand, you've got something with a length of string attached, that's likely to be a kite.

Cormorants – If you're on Branscombe beach, you may catch sight one of these prehistoric-looking specimens making its languid way across the middle distance, or you may be lucky enough to see a group of them sitting on rocks just off the western end of the beach. Look out especially for their characteristic wing-drying stance, whereby they stand with wings outstretched in the sun. Should there be any.

Meadow Pipit – this diminutive yellow-brown pale-legged bird likes to spend winter in low-lying farmland and marshland, so do look out for it in the boggy areas between the Valley Path and Little Seaside. Cuckoos are particular fans of the poor meadow pipit, with these hapless chaps being the most common victims of the cuckoo's scandalous egg-foisting scheme. Shame on them.

For more information about any of the above, or if you'd like to volunteer to assist with any of our work, contact branscombe@nationaltrust.org.uk or call 01297 680507.

Martin Jennings-Wright

Volunteering and Community Officer, NT Branscombe

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	Revd Canon Karen Curnock	07460 244475
Churchwarden	Ross Willmington	680264
Readers	Dr Charles Hill	07709 980640
	Emma Laughton	551400
	Sue McCoulough	552446
Youth and Family Worker		youth@holyford.org
Organist	Dr Geoff Butler	21375
Church Secretary	Sue Hawkins	680466
Church Treasurer	Pat Ayles	680328
Friends of St Winifred's	Emma Cox, Chairman	680392
Bells	John Bass	680432
Mission Community Office	Caz Jefferies Admin Tues, Thurs & Friday 9.30 – 1.30pm	552307 office@holyford.org
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