

Westcott Village

Magazine

December 2025

Merry Christmas
One and All!



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Westcott has a population of over 2,000 and this is the only magazine written specifically for the Westcott area by the people of Westcott. It is hand delivered, free of charge, to every household and further copies are available at the church, local shops, pub and doctor's surgery.



If you have any articles, photos, letters, etc that you think we may like to feature in the next issue, please email the Editor on:

editor@westcottmag.com

But please note, publication will always be subject to space and at the discretion of the Editor.

Copy deadline for

January issue:

8th December 2025

This magazine, published by the Church in Westcott, is printed on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited paper from a sustainable source. The views expressed are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Church, Editor or Westcott residents.

FROM THE EDITOR



This month is a busy one, with Christmas things galore to keep you entertained. The Village Tree is going up on 6th December and some

young energetic helpers would be appreciated to help put it up and decorate it for a couple of hours at 10am, see page 41 for details.

There are carols round said tree on the Green on the 19th at 6pm, see page 43 if you fancy a singsong with friends in the open air. There are also lots of concerts on this month if you prefer to go and watch others putting the effort in, (details throughout the

magazine) so I'm sure you can find one that suits.

On page 37 you can see a selection of the programme covers designed for Westfestivity, have a look and see if you can spot yours.

However you're spending the festive season, I hope you have a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Peaceful New Year to you all!

Cath
editor@westcottmag.com



WESTCOTT VILLAGE COFFEE MORNING

There has been a Coffee Morning held in the Village Hall on the first Wednesday of every month (except January). It has remained an unbroken tradition since 1964, apart from the Covid lockdown.

If anyone would like to join our teams of volunteers it would be lovely to hear from you. This would involve helping once a year, possibly twice, depending on the number of volunteers. A team of two people would need to make and serve the coffee and biscuits for a couple of hours and leave the kitchen tidy.

We also would like volunteers who would be willing to help set up the tables and chairs beforehand, and to put them away again afterwards.

*Thank you to our loyal supporters and wishing you all a
Happy Christmas!*

Jean Mickle
Telephone: 01306 881208 Email: familymickle@gmail.com

...FROM THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT



IF YOU CAN WAIT AND NOT BE TIRED BY WAITING.....

Well a Happy New Year to you all. No, I haven't lost the plot (well not entirely anyway). November 30th is the first day of Advent which in the beginning of the Christian Liturgical Year. The Christian calendar doesn't begin with the excitement of the baby in a manger, nor the contemplation of Lent, nor indeed the shocking drama of Easter. It begins with a season of waiting.

Advent comes, apparently, from the Latin *adventus* which means 'arrival' or 'coming'. It focuses on a people desperately waiting for salvation to break through their despair. On a world longing for light to shine in the darkness. On a seemingly uncertain hope which people can cling onto when everything around them seems to be falling apart.

Now I appreciate this may not sound particularly festive – but that is sort of the point. It is not the happily ever after that makes the Rom-Com, nor the final victory of the hero against the odds which makes the

Action-Movie, it is the journey of the characters along the way which give meaning to the conclusion.

It would be easy to take a cheap shot here about mince pies appearing in the supermarket in September, but Christmas is a shared celebration in our culture for people of all walks of life, and I don't think it is the role of Christians like me to police how and what people celebrate. Also, we hosted Westfestivity at the Church in mid-November and it was a wonderful and joyous thing – so I could rightly be accused of hypocrisy. However, I do want to stake a claim, or perhaps make a plea, that amidst a culture of instant gratification and easily achieved dopamine hits we strive not to lose the art of waiting and anticipation.



...FROM THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT

I love Christmas – both the general festivities with all the trimmings and the Christian celebration of the outrageous claim that the creator of the world loves you and I enough to enter into the mess, pain, grief and shame of humanity to walk in our shoes. That you and I are worth enough for him to want to save us by stepping into the despair and darkness of the world to offer a glimmer of light. A flicker of flame.

As I anticipate the Christmas celebration in a world which is still waiting for salvation in the face of war, disaster, broken relationships, and countless ills, you will find me waiting on that seemingly uncertain hope that this brokenness isn't the inevitable conclusion of the human story.



Why?

One word.

(It's a Hebrew one so I'll offer a translation).

Emmanuel.

It means God with us. It was one of the names given to a baby born into a world of uncertainty, very much like the one we walk through today. For me, and countless others, that baby changed everything.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas – and a blessed Advent as well.

Tim



DECEMBER SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY



8.30am Book of Common Prayer Communion, A warm welcome in our beautiful, traditional service.

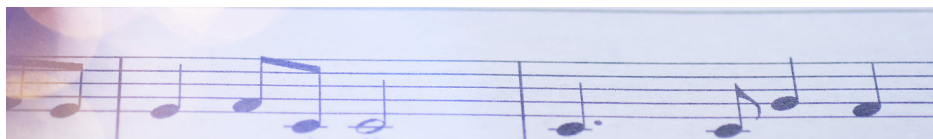
10.15am Friendly, relaxed service, using Common Worship and a range of music styles. This service is also livestreamed on Zoom.



For 10:15am Zoom service connection, please scan this QR code, or visit the Online Services page of thechurchinwestcott.org.uk and follow the link.

The church is open every day, 9am-4pm for private prayer & reflection

DATE	THEME	8:30AM	10:15AM	EVENING
7th Dec	Advent 2	Book of Common Prayer Communion	Christingle	
14th Dec	Advent 3	Book of Common Prayer Communion	No Service	Carol Service at 5pm
21st Dec	Advent 4	Book of Common Prayer Communion	Communion with Sunday Club	
24th Dec (Wed)	Christmas Eve			Crib service at 4pm Midnight communion at 11:30pm
25th Dec (Thurs)	Christmas Day	Please join us at 10.15am for Christmas Morning Worship.		
28th Dec	Joint Service	Please join us at 9.30am for a joint service		



MIDWEEK PRAYER & WORSHIP

Wednesdays	10am	Communion at St John's
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Service of Remembering

It was good to see so many at the Service of Remembering on November 2nd, and we hope it was a helpful and peaceful time for everyone who came along. After the service, the white roses we placed in vases in memory of our loved ones, and the names written on leaves and read out, were put on the altar, to be held in prayer across the week. Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas – and a blessed Advent as well.

Revd Hannah

Carol Service

Sunday 14th December, 5:00pm
Join us for traditional Christmas readings and carols, old and new

***No 10:30am service on this day - just one service at 8:30am**

THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT

Crib Service

Tuesday 24th December, 4pm
Holy Trinity Church, Westcott



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£2 voluntary donation



THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT

The Church in Westcott is part of the Westcott Good Neighbour Scheme and we are always here for a chat, prayer, pastoral need.

Debt advice: Paul Stacey (paulstacey88@gmail.com)

Holy Trinity Pastoral Assistants: Mark Shakespeare (01306 888010), Ali Mabley (alimabley.htw@gmail.com)

For help, or more information, please contact
Tim Armstrong, Vicar: vicar@holytrinitywestcott.org.uk
or visit thechurchinwestcott.org.uk

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

Death:

19th September 2022
9th May 2025

Timothy Martyn Hughes (58)
Jacqueline Hughes (57)

FLOODLIGHTING

Many thanks to the Hodges family, who've sponsored the church floodlighting for December: In Loving Memory of Ben Hodges, from Nick and all in family.

If you'd like to sponsor the church floodlighting, please contact Sarah Massey at admin@holytrinitywestcott.org.uk. (Suggested donation of £75 to Westcott Church Funds.)



MARKING LIFE EVENTS

All who live in Westcott or have a connection here are very welcome to have christenings, funerals, weddings in Holy Trinity. Contact vicar@holytrinitywestcott.org.uk for more information.

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SURREY HILLS ALL SAINTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

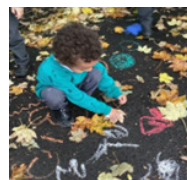
We are very impressed at how well our new children have settled into school life at Surrey Hills, both in Reception and in Year 3. Thank you for your support this term both in school, through volunteering, attending year group information sessions and attending our Celebration assemblies as well as at home by supporting with reading and homework.

We have been working very hard to put together a series of additional exciting learning experiences which add to the amazing learning that takes place in class every day. Forest School sessions have taken place, we have worn yellow to support Mental Health day, Hedgehogs and Otters visited Nower Wood to launch their involvement in the Wilder Schools project with Surrey Wildlife Trust and Hedgehogs also had a visit from a variety of Owls to launch their English unit. Many more events and experiences are planned for the term ahead. Year 6 have put themselves forward for a number of key pupil leadership roles in school including prefects, faith ambassadors, librarians and School Ambassadors.

Thank you to you all for ensuring that your child is in school on time, every day. Even though there seems to have been a huge number of coughs and colds doing the rounds our overall attendance is currently at 96.8% which is slightly above the national figure.

Bees

Welcome to our new children in Reception Bees, here is a snapshot of some of the fun and learning they have been enjoying during their first term at school.



Butterflies

Year 1 and 2 Butterflies have been working hard learning all about our local area.



We looked at aerial maps of the school and mapped out our playground and routes to school. We thought about things we like in the playground and what we thought could be improved. We made messy maps using objects around the classroom and tried to make them as creative as possible!





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Hedgehogs



To introduce our new English topic of 'the Owl who was Afraid of the Dark', Hedgehogs were

lucky enough to have some special fluffy friends come into visit us. We got to have four different types of owls fly above our heads and learn all about their adaptations, habitats and special features. We got to feel the feathers of different birds and watch each of the owls find new interesting places to perch in our school hall. Hedgehogs had the best morning learning all about these beautiful creatures and it has inspired some wonderful writing too!



Hedgehogs have also enjoyed their forest school sessions this half term. They have developed some excellent team work skills through building dens, clearing the vegetable patch and even making jam on the fire!



Otters Visit from Surrey Wildlife Trust

Otters class have been looking around the

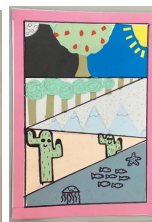


school grounds and collecting data about the wildlife on our site. We explored under logs, inside bushes and within our extensive bamboo forest to try and find as many minibeasts as we could. As we progress through the year, we will be working with Surrey Wildlife Trust to create more nature spaces within the school and increase biodiversity.

Year 4 and 5 Religious Education: Creation of the World



We have been looking into the Christian Creation Story and comparing that to the Big Bang. We



had some very interesting discussions in which we shared our views on how the world was created and why we thought that. We also looked at the





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SURREY HILLS ALL SAINTS SCHOOL (cont.)

work of Jacqui Parkinson who creates beautiful textile artworks of different biblical events. We then made our own collage version of the Creation Story.



Owls

Year 6 Owls class had John and Tony come in from the Cranleigh Lions



to officially launch the ROAR project with our Year 6 class. The ROAR project, also known as

Lions Roar, is a UK-wide competition for

primary schools that encourages children to develop an idea that will change the world. It is a partnership between Lions Clubs and 8billionideas, an award-winning education company. The program aims to inspire children to think big and positively change the world by developing their creativity, communication, and teamwork skills. We have already started working on our design prototypes and can't wait to see them develop!



Kathryn Saunderson
Acting Headteacher

WESTCOTT VILLAGE COFFEE MORNING



Wednesday 3rd December

The Village Hall

10.30 am - 12.00 midday



We are delighted once again to welcome the

Surrey Hills School Choir

A very warm welcome to all, especially parents & grandparents

Tea or Cafetiere Coffee and Mince Pie £1.50

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Please note that there will be No Coffee Morning in January



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Brockham Choral

Brockham Choral's Christmas concert is on the 6th December at 7.30pm in St. Martin's Church, Dorking RH4 1UX.

With the Martineau Brass Quintet and organ, featuring guest soloist Alex Wright from Trinity Boys Choir, including 'Christus Natus est' by Cecelia McDowall, Handel, Rutter and Leroy Anderson.

Tickets: <https://ticketsource.co.uk/brockham-choral>

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The Westcott Fellowship Cottage Trust is a charity established about 100 years ago using an initial endowment of £1000 from a Westcott resident called Mrs Alice Brooke. The purpose of the Trust was to provide an improved standard of housing for those in need - and this is still at the core of the Trust's objectives today. Currently the Trust owns sixteen properties in Westcott which are let to Beneficiaries with strong Westcott connections.

One of the sixteen, a three bedroom house on Parsonage Lane, will be vacant from the end of November. The property is in excellent condition and the Trust hope to make it available to occupy by a new Beneficiary quickly. Please note that Trust properties are offered with a 'Licence to Occupy' on terms set by the Trust. It is not a lease. The house comprises a living room, separate kitchen, three bedrooms and a bathroom, together with generous storage space and a front and rear garden. Given its size, the house is most suited to family occupation. It does not have step free access.

The Trust is now open for applications from prospective Beneficiaries of this house. Application forms can be requested in writing from the Trustees either by email to applications@westcottfellowship.org.uk or in writing to the Westcott Fellowship Cottage Trust, c/o St. Johns Free Church, Furlong Road, Westcott, RH4 3PP. Please include your full name/s, contact address and telephone number with your enquiry. Instructions for completing and returning the application form will be provided to Applicants by return, with more detail on the property – such as room dimensions - if required. All requests for an application form will remain confidential between Trustees and the Applicant.

Please note that the following criteria will be among those used by Trustees in assessing all applications:

- that an Applicant will have a strong association with Westcott and are preferably already living in the village
- the comfort and suitability of the Applicant's present accommodation
- the Applicant's current financial situation
- that the best use is made of the accommodation being offered by the Trust

There is no 'waiting list preference' and all applications received by the deadline will be assessed. Applicants then shortlisted will be interviewed by the Trustees - preferably at their current accommodation. The deadline for submitting a completed written application form is strictly 12 noon on 17th December 2025. If you wish to be considered as a potential Beneficiary, please contact the Trust without delay.

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Under the Mistletoe

Mistletoe – it's a semi-parasitic plant, meaning it grows on a host tree and feasts on its water and nutrients. Not so romantic, eh? While it's visible all year round, it gets its berries through October to May. Look up through the winter when the host trees have lost their leaves and you're most likely to see it in orchards, parks and gardens.



Mistletoe: Image courtesy RSPB images

Good places to see Mistletoe include Wales, the West Midlands and the South of England. It is much rarer in eastern and northern England, and Scotland. While being poisonous to humans Mistletoe berries are an important food source for the birds below.

Mistle thrush: This bird is so named because of its strong preference for mistletoe berries. It helps spread the seeds by eating the berries and the seed often sticks to its beak or passes through its gut.

Blackcap: These birds, including migratory ones that now overwinter in the UK, are very effective at spreading mistletoe seeds. They eat the fleshy part of the berry and then wipe the sticky seed onto a branch, making it very efficient at germination.

Fieldfare and Redwing: These winter visitors are also thrush species that eat mistletoe berries, arriving in the UK from October.

See more on our activities and photos or if you're interested in joining below
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Website: <https://group.rspb.org.uk/dorkinganddistrict/>

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Dorking Local History Group

The DLHG continues its popular programme of both live and Zoom talks on a fascinating range of topics. These are free to members, but non-members are welcome. Upcoming dates include:

- **The Real Dad's Army:** Live talk by Steven Bird who can give us some idea what the Home Guard was really like, as he has researched original documents for a single Home Guard battalion in Kent, the only one for which complete records remain. Monday 1st December at Crossways Community Baptist Church, Junction Road, Dorking RH4 3HB, 7.15 for 7.30pm, £2 at the door for non-members.
- **Salt of the Earth: the salt industry of the Adur valley:** DLHG has no Zoom talk in December, but the Surrey Industrial History Group is welcoming members to a talk by Janet Pennington on the lost medieval salt industry of Sussex. Monday, 15th December. Please email chairman@sihg.org.uk for the Zoom registration link.

For further details of talks and other activities – or to join DLHG – go to <https://dlhg.org.uk>.



Tuesday 9th December 2025

Pantomime When Fairy's Over Fifty! - Tyler Butterworth

In this amusing lecture Tyler will talk about the seemingly happy world of professional, family pantomime - and what it's really like. He will recount the bouquets and the brickbats and look at the famous names, the greatest dames and the old routines that we all remember. Why is it that this most precious of British traditions will always endure, and why, surprisingly, every actor wants to do it. This is a revealing look at professional panto from someone who was born into it.

The lecture will be held at 10.30 in Martineau Hall. Coffee is available from 9:30am. Visitors are welcome for a fee of £10.00 but contact Linda Packham on 07960 995707 (email - ljpackman@gmail.com) to book. For more information and details of the forthcoming programme, visit www.theartsocietydorking.org.uk



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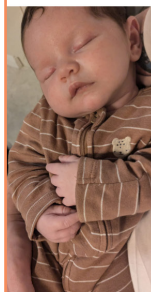
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The Ladybirds Choir Christmas Concert directed by Helena Twentyman

Saturday 6th December at 3:30pm
United Reformed Church Hall, West Street, Dorking RH4 1BS

At our summer concert we raised £660 for Dorking Beatitudes, and we are delighted to be supporting their work again at our Christmas concert.

The choir will present a variety of carols and songs ranging from John Rutter's *Star Carol* and the popular Ukrainian *Carol of the bells*, to *A winter's tale* and *Jingle bell rock*.

We are thrilled that we will be joined by singer Maëla Maitland-Gabellec, who recently gave a highly acclaimed performance at the Mole Valley Arts Alive launch event in Dorking.

Tea and mince pies will be served after the concert.
 Tickets are priced at £8 and are available on the door
 or in advance from Sue Scarrott on 01372 878321.

WESTCOTT HISTORY GROUP

The Great Chestnut Gathering

The enormous quantity of acorns and chestnuts that have fallen this year is due to a natural phenomenon called a "mast year," where the trees produce a huge number of fruits in a cycle that occurs every four to ten years. This year's bumper crop is likely the result of ideal weather conditions, leading to a massive yield. The previous mast year was 2020.



It has been the practice until recent years for school children to collect conkers, the beautiful nuts which fall in large numbers from horse-chestnut trees every autumn. When threaded on to a string they provided the means to do battle to a similarly threaded conker of another child. But what possible use could conkers have been to the Ministry of Munitions during WW1? An announcement in *The Times* of 26th July 1917 provided a clue, but no solution; *'Chestnut seeds, not the green husks, are required by the Government for the Ministry of Munitions. The nuts will replace cereals which have been necessary for the production of an article of great importance in the prosecution of the*

War.' In the light of some scepticism on the part of the children's parents greater justification for the conker gathering exercise was provided by the further statement that; *'For every ton of chestnuts, half a ton of grain can be released for human consumption.'*

This was helpful but still did not explain exactly why the horse chestnuts were required. The Government was understandably reluctant to reveal the motive behind its scheme and so when a question was asked in the House of Commons the unhelpful answer given was simply that they were required for *'certain purposes'*. It was not until over seventy years later that further references in *The Times* clarified what those certain purposes were. Dorking resident Edwin Sykes wrote to the Letters page noting that he had found a reference to the harvesting of chestnuts in the Log Book of Powell Corderoy School in Dorking but unfortunately nobody ever seems to have explained how, if at all, these potential munitions were used.

This resulted in many more examples of the widespread collection of chestnuts and several explanations for their intended use; the chestnuts were to be treated in some way to make a high-energy food for the poor horses which pulled the guns in all the mud, or they were to be calcined for use in the respirators issued to high-ranking officers. In fact, the real answer proved



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to be that the Director of Propellant Supplies hoped to use the chestnuts to produce acetone, a key ingredient in the manufacture of cordite, the superior smokeless powder that provided a much more effective means to propel bullets and shells than traditional gunpowder.

Over 250 million shells were used by the British Army and the Royal Navy during the First World War. In 1914 the acetone needed to make the cordite with which they would be propelled was produced almost entirely by the distillation of wood, and the British demand was mainly met by imports from the United States. British manufacturing capacity was limited to small and antiquated plants and although a modern factory had opened in the Forest of Dean in 1913 its capacity was limited. At the outbreak of war the stock of acetone available for military use stood at only 3,200 tons, and it was evident that planned production could not meet the rapidly growing demand. A potential disaster was averted only when Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish professor working at Manchester University discovered how acetone could be extracted from maize. Later, when the German submarine offensive in the Atlantic was threatening to cut off supplies of North American maize, he perfected a method whereby chestnuts could be substituted for maize as an acceptable alternative source.

Following successful factory experiments

at the Synthetic Products Company's plant at King's Lynn, the Ministry of Munitions commenced the task of organizing the collection and transport of the 1917 horse chestnut 'harvest'. In practice the supply far exceeded the capacity of the Norfolk factory and although 3,000 tons of chestnuts arrived, contemporary reports refer to piles of rotting horse chestnuts being abandoned at railway stations across the country. The Dorking Advertiser encouraged the local conker collection by offering a £5 prize for the school or other organisation (such as the boy scouts) amassing the greatest amount. It was initially reported that Westcott and the Dorking British School were running neck and neck but when the final tallies were reported Mickleham carried the day with the with 2 tons 12 cwt, comfortably exceeding Westcott's not inconsiderable total of 1 ton 5 cwt. By the following autumn the end of the war was in sight, shipping in the Atlantic was no longer at risk and the chestnut gathering exercise was not repeated.

The horse chestnut mystery is now solved but there is a fascinating rider to the story. In November 1917 Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary in Lloyd George's wartime government published the Balfour Declaration promising Zionists a national home in Palestine. *'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate*



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the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.' These laudable objectives have proved to be disastrously incompatible with one another, but the declaration was a major step towards the objectives towards which prominent Zionists were working at that time.

One of those Zionists was Prof. Weizmann, Professor of Chemistry at Manchester University and Edwin Sykes notes that following correspondence in The Times he received a letter from a lady who wrote; *'My late husband told me that in 1917 Britain became short of TNT and Lloyd George sent for C P Scott, the Editor of the Manchester Guardian to seek advice about means of manufacturing such an important chemical. He knew we had no hope of winning the war, lacking TNT. Scott*

approached my husband's cousin who was working as a research student and, together with the professor, found that TNT could be obtained from chestnuts. That year there was a large crop, and your schoolboys were therefore part of the saving force of Britain in the Great War. Weizmann was offered any title he fancied but refused, saying all he wanted was Israel for the Jews.'

Thirty-one years later, after the end of another World War, the British administration of Palestine came to an end; the new state of Israel was proclaimed, and on 10th February 1949 its citizens elected as their first President Chaim Weizmann, the man who had prompted the great chestnut gathering in the autumn of 1917.

Westcott Local History Group (WLHG) has a website full of interesting local information and you and your household can become Members for only £6 p.a.

www.westcotthistory.org.uk

WLHG Scribe

Sat Nav - A Tale of Caution!

Whilst walking my two Sheepdogs towards The Sandrock, I noticed what looked like a scene from the film *Close Encounters!* Through the trees, in the gathering darkness, I saw flashing blue, white and amber lights. As I got closer, it was revealed



to be a breakdown recovery lorry. An Amazon delivery van had apparently attempted to follow his driver's Sat-Nav instructions to join the A25 by driving DOWN the Sandrock footpath towards Rookery Drive! Needless to say, it didn't end well! The photo shows the van being winched back up the steep footpath attached to a steel cable.

Jeff Davies

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For upcoming events and activities visit the website, opening hours change during school holidays.

ADVENT & CH

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SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER

Christingle Service ✱

Holy Trinity Church & Zoom 10:15am

Gather with us for a lovely, family-friendly service as we celebrate Advent and receive a Christingle to take home

SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER

Carol Service

Holy Trinity Church & Zoom 5pm

Traditional Christmas readings, and carols old and new

* No 10:30am service on this day - just one service at 8:30am

FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Carols on the Green ✱

Westcott Green 6pm

Gather around the village Christmas tree on the Green, and spread some Christmas cheer with friends, neighbours and The Westcott Village Association



For Zoom service connection, please scan the QR code or go to the online services page on our website
thechurchinwestcott.org.uk

CHRISTMAS 2025

The Church in Westcott

WEDNESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

Crib Service ✨

Holy Trinity Church 4pm

Join in the story of the first Nativity (and come dressed in character if you wish!)

Midnight Communion

Holy Trinity Church 11:30pm

Gather on this holy night, to celebrate the hope at the heart of Christmas

THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER

Christmas Morning Worship

Holy Trinity Church & Zoom 10:15am

Join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus together!

SUNDAY 28TH DECEMBER

Joint Morning Worship

Holy Trinity Church & Zoom 9:30am

Join us in this service of hope and joyful revelation

* No 8:30 or 10:30am service on this day

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Wow, how on earth is it December already? The Autumn term has flown by with an enormous amount of fun to be grateful

too. Thanks Dave! Creepiness continued as we took a trip to the imaginary forest to search for Barry the Bat – who



for. The leaves are rustling outside and carpeting our nursery garden with gorgeous golden tones. Who needs toys when you have nature providing you with all the fun? We certainly love whipping up 'spaghetti and meatballs' (think conkers and twigs) in our mud kitchen – washed down with a vat of cold muddy tea and coffee! Delicious!

Unfortunately didn't put in an appearance but we were instead greeted along the way by fuzzy hedgehogs, sly foxes and bulky badgers. Then with a flick of the wrist and some special spells we were all turned into witches and flew around on our broomsticks!

Both Diwali and Halloween fell into this half term – two very different things entirely! But with much for us to learn! We got gloriously colourful as we crafted busily away making beautiful Diya lamps out of paper plates and as many sparkles as we possibly could! Next on our list of all things creative were Rangoli patterns using stunning stencils and lashings of paint. They turned out rather well!

We are really looking forward to all the festivities that come at this wonderful time of the year and can't wait to share our stories with you come January. We are of course all on the nice list and hope you are too! Have a Very Happy Christmas!

Spooky season started with Dave the Skeleton who taught us the correct names for the many different bones in our bodies – he even went so far as to explain some of the internal organs

If you have a child looking to start nursery please don't hesitate to get in touch as there are still spaces for January. Please call 07842 978823 or email abingercommonnursery@gmail.com. We can't wait to meet you!

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Name: Jesse Age: 11



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Sophie Thelton Age: 11



Name: Sophie Thelton Age: 11

Here are some of the Westfestivity Programme Cover Design Competition entries, full update next month



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10



Name: Roshelle Age: 10





Odette Forbes

You might have seen the Big Yellow Dog Bus around Westcott. That's driven by our castaway's husband, Tony. Odette's part of the business is dog grooming. Christmas in the Forbes household, like many of us, has its family traditions. Starting with the purchase of a real tree which occupies a corner in the dining room, Odette carefully unwraps her precious Christmas decorations inherited from her parents and grandparents, which includes the same fairy who has presided over festivities for more than sixty years. She is a bit battered says Odette, but Christmas would not be the same without her. Another joy is sharing a much loved video of Bill, Odette's son, who as a baby featured in the Salzburg Coca-Cola Christmas truck parade. The video with the soundtrack of *A Beautiful Time* by Tamee Harrison shows Bill dressed as a miniature Santa being held by a very authentic looking Santa Claus in the city's main square.

The first real Christmas Odette can remember was at the age of four and being mesmerized by the figures in the crib associating this with *Away in a Manger*. At school there were nativity plays and Odette, desperate to be Mary, was always destined to be an onlooking angel. She recalls being thrilled when in her final year of primary school she was chosen to do the opening reading for the carol service and recalls *In dulci*

jubilo (*Good Christian Men Rejoice*) and *Adeste Fidelis* (*O Come All Ye Faithful*) being belted out by herself and the rest of the school. Odette also remembers watching TV Christmas shows with her parents and seeing Bing Crosby in an amazing and unlikely duet with David Bowie. Bing sings *Little Drummer Boy* and David counterpoints with *Peace on Earth*. Its worth a listen.

Odette's career path followed first in the footsteps of her mum and then her dad. Having decided university was not for her she signed up for nurse training at The Middlesex Hospital in central London, thinking to assuage maternal disappointment after dropping out of her English degree course. Wearing the old fashioned nurses' pin striped uniform and starched apron, but not the frilly cap, she recalls her first Christmas Day working with the senior consultant carving turkey and a nurse choir singing *Silent Night*. It was very moving to be able to give the patients some Christmas magic.

Having decided nursing was not for her she went back to her original plan of following in her father's footsteps in journalism with plans to progress into PR. She enrolled at the Pitman college in London to get her 100 word per minute shorthand and 120 words per minute typing and then took up a place at journalism college in St Leonards, East Sussex to gain her National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND DISCS (cont.)



professional qualifications. Working for a local newspaper in Watford she covered the usual stories of 100th birthdays and Golden Wedding Anniversaries as well as court cases and local angles of national stories at the time such as the tragic Hillsborough Football disaster and the sinking of the *Marchioness* in the Thames.

She met Tony, her husband, in 2007, and their house in West Kensington became known as the home for waifs and strays as Christmases were more likely to rock to *Waltzing Matilda* as they took in the young Aussies and Kiwis working in the local pub to join their Christmas lunch. Having moved into PR Odette worked for several big High Street names including Safeway, Mothercare, Brook Street and Burger King with her last job as Head of Media Relations Nestle. Then came a big change. After the death of her father and hitting a birthday milestone she quit her job, thinking there's more to life than demanding PR schedules, constant travel and a difficult boss.

What to do? Whilst at Nestle she had led an initiative for workplaces to allow employees to bring their dog to work and had herself experienced great difficulty in finding a groomer to prep the dogs for their photo shoot for the launch. Abandoning the very short lived idea of managing a pet cemetery, she decided she would rather work with living dogs and enrolled at Merrist Wood College to obtain City and Guilds

Qualifications. She is now a dog groomer extraordinaire. The French connection is apt because she was named after Odette Sansom, the Resistance heroine, after her parents had seen a film about her starring Anna Neagle. Like her namesake, our Odette has resilience, stamina, is patient, flexible, and creative, able to deal with all the different canine personalities in a calm unflustered manner. And she loves it, having seen many dogs from their beginnings as puppies to making their endings as comfortable as possible. Often she and the dogs sing along together as they go through their 90 minute routine of wash, dry, cut and trim finishing with a photo of a beautifully coiffured dog sporting a ribbon tucked through their collar.

So as Christmas season approaches, the family will settle down to watching a favourite film, *White Christmas* and of course *The Holiday* and listening to *A Fairy Tale of New York* and *Last Christmas*, munching their advent calendar treats, cheese for her, chocolate for Bill and pork scratchings for Tony! There'll be a Christmas Day drink with neighbours in the pub and an afternoon walk for their dogs, Timber and Ronnie. Very traditionally Christmas ends on 12th Night, Epiphany, when the tree comes down and the fairy is carefully packed away.

Je vous souhaite un joyeux Noël et une bonne année.

Jennifer Brown



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These depend on when you hire, and discounts are given to regular users. Rates start at £8 per hour (minimum 4 hours' booking), please contact our Booking Secretary Deborah on info@westcottvillagehall.com to discuss.

The current village hall is likely to be redeveloped within the next 1-2 years, replacing it with a modern, flexible, sustainable community facility. We will give our users at least 6 months' notice of the anticipated closure date so that everyone will have enough time to secure a replacement venue during the building period.

Mobile: 07967 286636 Email: info@westcottvillagehall.com
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Christmas Trees and Christmas Carols

The Village Christmas Tree is once again being organised by the WVA and jointly funded by the WVA, the Westcott Gardeners Club and the Westcott 100 Club. The tree is being installed at 10am on Saturday 6th December, if anyone would like to join us for an hour or two to help decorate it, we would be very pleased to see you. Please email James Leaver to let him know you're coming jamesandfrancesca@hotmail.co.uk or you can just turn up on the day. Special thanks in advance to Hugh Broom for bringing his machinery to lift the tree in to position.

As in previous years the tree is being provided by Peter Read, our local Christmas Tree grower. Peter is also offering to provide freshly cut trees to order for your own home. They will be netted and can be collected from the village green between 10am and 11am on Saturday 6 December when he delivers the big village tree, cash on collection. To order simply send a text message to Peter Reed on 07802 332843 before the evening of Wednesday 4th December with 'Westcott, your name and the type and size of tree you wish to order' from the list below.

Norway (drop)

5-6ft £22.50, 6-7ft £27.50, 7-8ft £32.50, 8-9ft £42.50, 10ft £65, 12ft £85

Nordmann Fir (non-drop)

5-6ft £40, 6-7ft £45, 7-8ft £55, 8-9ft £75, 10ft £95, 12ft £110, 14ft £150, 16ft £185

Noble Fir (non-drop bushy)

Table top coppiced in a log £7.50, 2ft coppiced in a log £10, 3ft coppiced in a log £12.50, 4ft coppiced in a log £16, 10ft £95, 12ft £115, 14ft £150, 16ft £185, 18ft £225

A date for your diary – come and join your friends and neighbours and sing some Christmas Carols around the village Christmas Tree on the Green on *Friday 19th December 6pm*. Free to attend, family friendly, everyone is welcome. Jointly organised by the WVA and Holy Trinity. Hot chocolate and mulled wine available with all proceeds going to the charity Crisis at Christmas.

Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP) – thank you to everyone who responded to recent public consultation of the draft updated Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan which closed after a six-week period on the 24 November. The feedback is now being reviewed and the draft plan amended accordingly.

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There is still a lot of work to do, including a review by a government appointed planning inspector, before the plan is finalised and then put to another public consultation this time run by Mole Valley District Council. Ultimately the final document is put to a public referendum where all those on the electoral role in the Neighbourhood Area (the village and the immediate surrounds) will be given an opportunity to formally vote on whether they wish the plan to be adopted. The target for holding the referendum is May 2026, to coincide with the Polling Stations being open for the local government elections.

A copy of the current draft and the full results of the Community Survey conducted in the summer are available to view on the village website <https://westcottvillage.com/westcott-neighbourhood-development-plan/>

Westcott Village Association Committee

Jo Astor, Jane Betterton, James Croft, Paul Goddard, Nick Lund, Magesh Ramakrishnan



Westcott Christmas Carols
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DORKING MUSEUM

The team at Dorking Museum offers warmest seasonal greetings to all readers and to the supporters and friends of the Museum. If you are in the town, why not drop into our shop for some Dorking themed cards, books or gifts? Or simply to take a leisurely browse around the Museum. Please note that the Museum will be closed over the main Christmas/New Year period (check website for dates).

To the Last Man – the Dorking Home Guard:

The Museum's autumn exhibition tells the story of the men of Dorking and the villages who responded to the call by Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, to enlist in the 'People's Army' – later, the Home Guard – in 1940 to defend the nation. Five hundred men living in the town and immediate neighbourhood offered their services – many without any military experience, often in full-time work, and many volunteering for other home front organisations.

The 7th (Dorking) Battalion, Surrey Home Guard, commanded by Major



Headquarters at the Old Fire Station

Geoffrey Lane, a veteran of the Boer War and First World War, was initially headquartered at the Old Fire Station on West Street (later at the Drill Hall). A defensive line of concrete pill boxes and anti-tank obstacles stretched across the south, especially in the Dorking area, protecting the Mole Gap route towards London and the operational headquarters of the Southern Railway, responsible for transport of troops and supplies across the south of England. The Home Guard was called upon to establish strongholds, secure sites to ensure public safety and guard aircraft crash sites.

They faced what looked like a hopeless situation, at the time, poorly armed and equipped, often having worked a full day, then staying alert, facing a very real threat and expected to hold invaders at bay for a short time. Local units were trained for hand-to-hand fighting and told to take no prisoners.



In December 1940, Brockham village featured in War Office propaganda photos designed to reassure the public that the defence of the nation

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DORKING MUSEUM (cont.)

was in the hands of well-equipped men. They went from a poorly armed and equipped group of part-time volunteers to a trained fighting force protecting the local community and freeing up regular troops for front-line duty.



The feared invasion never came, so their skills were never fully tested. The Dorking Battalion gave a public demonstration of weapons and defensive techniques on the Nower before being stood down at the end of 1944, having proved its value throughout the war. The exhibition display includes uniforms, weaponry, medals, incident reports, photographs and other items of the period.

Dorking's Dinosaurs: After a very successful and well-received dinosaur-themed family event in autumn, our first new exhibition of 2026 will explore Dorking's dinosaur connections in greater detail, with further models on loan from the University of Southampton. Look out for further details and opening date.

Museum Family Activities at Dorking

Library: The Museum is pleased to continue its collaboration with Dorking Library in a series of monthly events linked to library themes. The last event of 2025 is *Merry Christmas Crafts: Come and make a Christmas card or join in other craft activities:* Saturday 13th December, 10am-noon. All free events, materials provided and children must be accompanied.

Get involved: The Museum depends on its enthusiastic team of volunteers to maintain this valuable community resource. Maybe you could spare a few hours a month, with opportunities in an interesting range of key roles with flexible working in the Museum, in the community or from home. Perhaps you could help maintain our collections, recruit and train volunteers, maintain our website, train as a guide on our walking tours, organise events, welcome visitors, help with maintenance or be a trustee. See dorkingmuseum.org.uk/about/volunteer-opportunities for further details.

Dorking Museum, The Old Foundry, 62 West Street, Dorking RH4 1BS. Thursdays 1pm-4pm, Fridays and Saturdays 10am-4pm, free entry. www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk. Visit dorkingmuseum.org.uk/digital-guide/. 01306 876591.

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MUSIC IN DORKING



1st at 8.00, Step into Christmas at Dorking Halls, £33, 01306 881717
6th at 3.30, Ladybirds Choir at United Reformed Church Hall, £8, 01372 878321
6th at 7.30, Brockham Choral Society at St Martin's church, £15
7th at 3.00, Grimethorpe Colliery Band at Dorking Halls, £20-30, 01306 740619
9th at 7.30, A West End Christmas at Dorking Halls, £25.50, 01306 881717
10th at 7.15, Nutcracker ballet screening at Dorking Halls, £19.50, 01306 881717
11th at 7.30, Andre Rieu concert screening at Dorking Halls, £19.50, 01306 881717
13th at 1.30, Andre Rieu concert screening at Dorking Halls, £19.50, 01306 881717
14th at 2.00, Nutcracker ballet screening at Dorking Halls, £19.50, 01306 881717
17th at 6.30(?), Dorking Choral Society at St Joseph's church

With Christmas approaching, our local choirs are offering their Christmas concerts, complete with carols and other festive music. The Dorking Choral Society, conducted by Daniel Mahoney, has a concert of Christmas carols, including some favourites for the audience to join in. Brockham Choral Society's Christmas concert includes music by Handel, John Rutter, Cecilia McDowall and Leroy Anderson, along with some carols. The choir will be joined by the Martineau Brass Quintet and by guest soloist Alex Wright from Trinity Boys Choir, who recently appeared at Glyndebourne.

The Ladybirds choir, directed by Helena Twentyman, presents its Christmas concert, raising funds for the Dorking Beatitudes, a local charity. There will be a mixture of carols and Christmas songs, including *All I want for Christmas* and *White Christmas*, with some numbers to celebrate the birthdays this year of composers John Rutter and Bob Chilcott. There will be tea and mince pies after the concert!

The Dorking Halls has a number of Christmas shows and screenings, including *Step into Christmas*, a spectacular Christmas concert to start the festive season, *A West End Christmas* presented by the Show Choir and guest soloists, two screenings of Tchaikovsky's Christmas ballet *The Nutcracker* from the Royal Opera House, and two screenings of Andre Rieu's Christmas concert, with his brilliant Johann Strauss orchestra playing waltzes and carols.

With so much Christmas music on offer, there should be something for everybody. Happy Christmas!

Ian Codd



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November has been an incredibly busy month at QRMW. We have been blessed with two Volunteer groups from Guildford coming to the woodland and helping with essential maintenance. We loved having them with us and look forward to them coming again sometime.

We also were approached by a Company called ISW Water Integration Company based in Crayford who were looking to do some voluntary work for QRMW.



Arrangements were made and on the day they arrived we were amazed at the number of their company vans that turned into our car park early in the morning despite a frustrating journey for them all on the M25! They climbed out of their vans with an array of gardening tools and set to work. They worked like trojans as the



guys from Guildford did, clearing the ditch of leaves, clearing the

pathways of leaves and twigs and doing some planting of new saplings. Clearing the leaves this time of year is a thankless task - as soon as the paths

look lovely and clear then they are covered with



leaves again. But it's a necessary job to keep the woodland safe for visitors.

I will report on our Remembrance Service (as we haven't yet had it as I write this) plus our Christmas at the Woodland family event on 6th December in next month's magazine.

In the meantime remember everyone is always welcome to visit our woodland to walk, sit, reflect and talk. I look forward to seeing you.

Paul Cooling
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WESTCOTT VILLAGE HALL UPDATE



You may well have heard this already, but on behalf of the Trustees of Westcott Village Hall we are very pleased to report that at a meeting held on 5th November 2025, MVDC's Development Management Committee passed a 'Resolution to Grant' planning permission for the demolition of the Hut (to be replaced with 9 small houses) and for the rebuilding of Westcott Village Hall. So we are almost there, but not quite.

The decision, as is normal, is subject to conditions, one of which is an agreement being reached between MVDC and Westcott Village Hall Trust CIO, ensuring that the proceeds of sale of the Hut site can only be applied in rebuilding the hall at Institute Road. This reflects the permission granted by the Charity Commission back in 2022, when the two former separate charities were merged. Our immediate goal is to get this agreement formally documented.

The Trustees want to acknowledge and express thanks to MVDC's Planning Officers, who recommended approval of the application to the Development Management Committee. We are also grateful to the many residents of the village who wrote to the planners expressing support for the application and for the presentation made at the meeting by Nick Lund on behalf of Westcott Village Association, outlining the benefits which the redevelopment of both sites will deliver to the entire village.

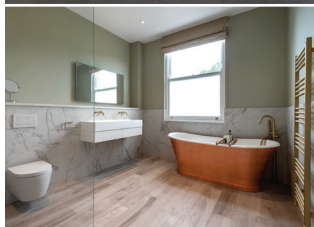
Just in time for Christmas, we are a very important step closer to two significant improvements to the centre of our village and we look forward to pushing this project onto the next stage in the New Year. We will continue to provide project updates to the community in the village magazine and on our website.

The Trustees of Westcott Village Hall Trust CIO





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GREEN WESTCOTT

Oh Christmas Tree

For centuries people around the world have been decorating homes and temples with boughs and branches from evergreen trees as a symbol of endurance and ongoing life. At a time of year when winter has stripped many branches bare, bringing evergreens inside reminds us of the hope of the spring to come, when greenery will return to the outside world. As Christmas approaches many of us will be hanging up wreaths and bringing in trees as a key part of the festivities.



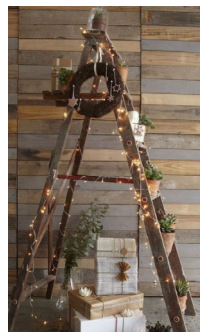
It is estimated that around 6-8 million real Christmas trees are bought in the UK each year. It takes around 10-12 years for a Christmas Tree to grow 6ft and during that time it will have been absorbing carbon and providing a home to wildlife – albeit this depends upon growing conditions and pesticide use. The Soil Association recommends looking for trees that are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified, ideally organic and locally grown. Choosing a potted tree with roots means that there will be less dropping of needles and, if looked after carefully outside during the

summer, it can be brought in year after year.

Bringing a Christmas tree into your home has many positive wellbeing and health benefits. It is a focal point for festivities and gathering round. Decorating the tree with others is a tradition that strengthens connection and creates lasting memories, boosting emotional wellbeing. A real Christmas tree provokes the beauty and tranquillity of nature, its presence can bring a sense of calm, amid what can often be a busy time of year, with its gentle aroma acting as a natural stress reliever.



Fresh trees also release phytoncides – compounds which possess antibacterial and antifungal properties. These protect trees from harmful microbes and pests and have



benefits for human health too. If you are unable to, or prefer not to, have a real Christmas tree, there are plenty of creative alternatives using greenery and natural or

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GREEN WESTCOTT (cont.)



everyday objects, to add a festive touch to your home.

At a time of year when much time is spent indoors, due to cold weather and dark evenings, elements of

indoor greenery can help maintain a connection to nature that is good for mental and physical wellbeing. When Christmas is over, the beauty of natural decorations is that they can be recycled or repurposed easily. If possible, cut up your tree and other natural



decorations to add to a compost heap or use as a mulch to suppress weeds. Fir tree needles make a great mulch for acid-loving plants such as blueberries. Alternatively, you can recycle your tree at Dorking Community Recycling Centres.

Here are some startling Christmas statistics for festive trivia:

Only 1% of all the purchases made for Christmas will remain in use six months afterwards. It is estimated that Brits waste £700 million on unwanted gifts. Choose wisely!

An estimated 6 million rolls of Sellotape are purchased each December – this causes a problem with recycling as it is non-recyclable. Opt for brown paper tape instead which is recyclable and can be torn by hand – available from Westcott Village Hub.

Around 40 million Christmas crackers are pulled and discarded on Christmas Day and 99% of people throw their cracker gifts in the bin at the end of the day. Simple home made crackers made with old wrapping paper or scrap paper with an edible treat inside are a great alternative.

Brits consume around 370 million mince pies over the Christmas period – please remember to recycle the aluminium cases they come in, in your green bin.

Approximately 42 million dishes worth of Christmas food are thrown away in the UK each year, including 2 million kg of cheese. Use your food caddy to discard any inedible leftovers and vegetable peelings (unless you compost them at home). One caddy of food waste can produce enough electricity to power a fridge for eight hours, or a television for two hours.

From all of us at Green Westcott, we wish you a very merry Christmas!

Jakki Phillips



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Buy a Christmas Tree and Save a Child's Life

Dorking resident Jill Attfield is again spreading Christmas joy by giving back to those in need. This Christmas, Jill will donate 10% of the proceeds from her Christmas tree sales to Kids for Kids, the Dorking-based charity that has been transforming the lives of children in Darfur, Sudan, for nearly 25 years.

Shoppers can choose from a beautiful range of Nordman Christmas trees in all shapes and sizes, from petite 2-foot pot-grown trees to grand 12-foot statement trees, perfect for any home or space. Trees will be available at Chart House, Chart Lane, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2BU from 24th November. Funds raised will provide emergency food for malnourished children, seeds, blankets, mosquito nets, and essential medicines to children living in remote villages in Darfur. A Kids Kitchen Kit

(£25) helps feed a family with children under five, while a Sack of Seeds (£15) gives food now and hope for the next harvest. With millions of children facing severe hunger in what the UN has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis, every purchase will make a vital difference. Kids for Kids remains the only charity helping children in remote Darfur villages. Thanks to Jill's continuing generosity, mothers struggling to feed their families will receive much-needed support.

Patricia Parker OBE, founder of Kids for Kids, said: *"We are deeply grateful to Jill for her continued support. By buying your Christmas tree from Jill, you'll not only bring festive cheer to your home but also change a child's life this Christmas."* Visit early to select your perfect tree and share the true spirit of Christmas with families in need.



MyAdvent

Advent Blessings from Holy Trinity 2025
by The Church in Walscott

The Holy Trinity online Advent calendar is back for its 6th year. Follow us every day in December for a mix of traditional and modern, with a few surprises thrown in. Happy Christmas!

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