

CLYST VALLEY NEWS



January 2026



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Hello and a warm welcome to this first edition of the Clyst Valley News of 2026! This past year seems to have shot past so quickly, doesn't it? Or is it just me?

Faute de mieux, I've cheekily posted a photo of mine on this month's front cover. It's of the Clyst St Mary 'lake' shimmering in the crispy early morning sunshine, taken a couple of days ago. It's really very beautiful – but of course, as the flood plain, plays a vital role in protecting village properties from the threat of flooding.

I think the start of a new year is the right time for me to express once again my immense gratitude to all the volunteers who provide me with content or help in other ways with the production and distribution of the CVN, every month, come rain or shine. Thank you all for all your fantastic support over the past year. A shout out too to our brilliant printers, Brightsea. And of course a big thank you to our sponsor, Potburys, and advertisers for your continuing involvement with our magazine. The CVN has been an independent, not for profit, community endeavour for well over a year now and we're always looking to try new approaches to developing our services for you, our readers. All ideas for new content are very welcome – along with your feedback, critical or positive. That is how we can improve and more effectively reflect your interests and needs.

I end with a random quirky thought: Are there any better sensations than a) a heated car seat on a chilly winter's morning; and b) switching into the pedal boost function on an e-bike at the start of a tricky hill?

Happy New Year, everyone. May our resolutions last beyond the end of January! Best wishes. Peter Skelton

YOUR PHOTOS ALWAYS NEEDED FOR THE COVER OF THE CVN!



Photographers: Why not share your photos with our readers? Most months we aim to put one nice pic on the magazine cover and we need yours! So please do send in your efforts to the editor, Peter Skelton, who'll choose one most months. Just email them to clystvalleynews@gmail.com and we'll do the rest. Simples!

WHY NOT ADVERTISE IN THE CLYST VALLEY NEWS IN THIS NEW YEAR?

Advertising your business or organisation in the Clyst Valley News makes a lot of sense. Have you thought about giving your business a boost in the New Year by joining our loyal band of advertisers? We print and deliver the magazine to around 1300 households and businesses in our villages and towns; and, in parallel, we upload an online, full colour version on various Facebook village and town pages and parish council websites each month. We have also built up a sizable mailing list for direct emailing of the CVN to subscribers - all for free, of course!

To find out more, please get in touch – with no obligation. Our rates are very competitive. Please contact the Editor, Peter Skelton, for more information at clystvalleynews@gmail.com.



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Contributions, photos and letters to the editor for the February 2026 issue of the Clyst Valley News should be sent by email to the editor, Peter Skelton, at clystvalleynews@gmail.com by Thursday 15th January 2026 at the latest, please. Please note that contributions may be edited. If you experience any difficulty in receiving your copy of the CVN, please contact your local distributor, as follows:

CSG & Ebford	Isobel Stubbs	07826 806919
CSM	Ivor Spriggs	01392 874382
WS	Debbie Jung	01395 232328
Sowton village	Mike Galloway	07764 582023

CLYST ST MARY



Church News

Services. The Family Service will be held on 4th January, starting at 9.30 am. This is a very informal gathering for parents and children. There will be a Family Communion Service on 18th January, at 9.30 am as usual.



Tea and coffee are served after both services, and we encourage people to stay and enjoy some fellowship. We welcome new families who would like to bring their children to join us in these services.

Supporting the Church. Very many thanks to everyone who continues to support us as we endeavour to maintain and keep our beautiful old church open. If you would like to become a regular giver or make a one-off donation please contact our Treasurer, Nicky Blacker, on 07501 223654 or nicky.blacker@gmail.com. Any other questions about St.Mary's Church, then please contact the Churchwarden Pat Cusa on 01392 877907. Thank you.

Clyst St Mary Primary School



Welcome back to all our families: We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and may we all have a happy and peaceful 2026!

The last few weeks of the term are always packed full of seasonal events for the children to enjoy so we hope all our families managed some respite over the holidays, to return afresh for the new term.

The Nativity performance – *Bethlehem Star* – which all KS1 children took part in, was delightful. Weeks of rehearsals certainly paid off as their three performances – two in the Village Hall and one at the church – went off without a hitch.

KS2 children came together for their 'Christingle' event - another wonderful Christmas tradition which brings four classes together singing the Journey of the Magi, reading a segment of the Christmas Story and culminating in the lighting of the Christingles (or glow sticks in our case!). Enjoyed by children and parents alike.

Christmas Lunch and Jumper Day were, unusually, held on separate days this year. Children in Classes R through 4 were all served their lunch in specially decorated classrooms, with Christmas music and roaring fires playing on their whiteboards, while Classes 5 and 6 were seated along two long tables in the hall, listening to Christmas carols. They all had crackers to pull (donated by the PTFA) and soaked up the jolly atmosphere! On the last day of term, children donned Christmas jumpers (with donations to Save the Children) and had such fun playing the traditional Christmas Quiz against our federated school, Stoke Canon.

Towards the end of January, the school has been invited to a performance of *Beauty & the Beast Jnr* at the Barnfield Theatre. The production will be put on by Clyst Vale Community College for all its

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feeder primary schools; a chance for our Year 6 children in particular to see first hand the type of production they could be involved in in the very near future!

Children return to school on Tuesday 6th January, 2026, when we look forward to hearing all about their festive fun! In the first week, music lessons, held by RockSteady Music and West Country School Music, will resume, and from Monday 12th our very popular lunchtime Spanish Club, which is run by the wonderful Carmen Sanchez, will also start up again.

Bishops Clyst Parish Council

 *Bishops Clyst Parish Council Has a Facebook Page.* Bishops Clyst Parish Council has a NEW Facebook page so that we can communicate with you, our community, to update you with the works of the Parish Council which includes meetings, events important notices and issues raised. Please follow our page.

Dog Fouling on the Playing Field. The Parish Council are continuing to receive reports on dog fouling on the playing field behind the Village Hall, where children play. Please could we remind residents and visitors that dogs are not permitted on the Village Hall site which includes the playing field and play park unless it is an assistance dog.

Allotment Plot Waiting List. Allotments are known for their physical and mental health benefits, from exercise to stress reduction and access to fresh food. They also provide a way to connect with others who share similar interests. We currently have a very short waiting list for allotment plots in Clyst St Mary. Priority is given to residents within Bishops Clyst. If this is of interest, or you would just like to find out more, please contact the Clerk (details below).

Bishops Clyst Parish Council Vacancy. We still have one vacancy for a councillor we would like to fill as soon as possible. If this is of interest, do come along to a Parish Council meeting to see what we do and, if you would like to be involved, you can be co-opted on to the Council. Email a brief résumé to the Clerk (clerk@bishopsclyst.org.uk) or drop a letter in to Clyst St Mary Village Hall.

Parish Council Meetings. Council meetings take place on the second Monday of the month and dates, agendas and minutes are posted on our website (www.bishopsclyst.org.uk/parish-council-agendas and <http://www.bishopsclyst.org.uk/parish-council-minutes>) and on noticeboards in Clyst St Mary, Cat and Fiddle Park and Sowton Village.

Contact the Parish Council. Katie Webb, PC Clerk, working from the PC office in Clyst St Mary Village Hall on Monday to Wednesday, 9 am to 12.30 pm. Call 01392 874405 or email clerk@bishopsclyst.org.uk. *You are very welcome to drop in, but we recommend making an appointment to ensure someone is available to see you.*

Clyst Valley Preschool

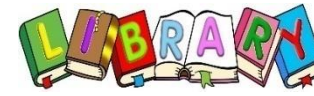


We would like to wish all Clyst Valley News readers and our Preschool families a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Our Christmas Market in December was once again a happy, festive and successful event; we thank all who came and supported us. We also had our Preschool Nativity and Children's Christmas Party at the end of term, which all of our children enjoyed, especially the visit from Santa!!

The Bishops Clyst Parish Council meeting on 8th December 2025 approved previous minutes, reviewed planning and Neighbourhood Plan matters, and progressed parish projects including the Greenspire footpath. Councillors set the 2026–27 budget with a 10% precept increase and awarded maintenance contracts. The Council strengthened governance by bringing the Flood and Community Engagement Groups under its delegation scheme; and addressed flooding, traffic, and community issues.

We start 2026 by warmly greeting our eleven new starters and their families. This term, all our children will be enjoying our rhymes. We will be learning ourselves in fairy tales, with play, art and crafts and



Clyst Valley Preschool offers a nurturing, fun Preschool experience for children from 2 years 8 months, in an Ofsted rated 'Good' Early Years setting led by dedicated, enthusiastic, experienced and highly qualified staff. Interested? Then please check out our Instagram account, and visit our website www.clystvalleypreschool.org – you can enquire through there.

We do have some spaces available, so if you are considering Preschool for your child, starting any time in the next academic year (spaces fill fast so if you are even considering a September or January 2027 start, please get in touch). Email us at admin@clystvalleypreschool.org or call 01392 876615 for more information.



Walking Group



The walking group in Clyst St Mary meets once a month. Generally, this takes the form of a morning walk of varying difficulty followed by a pub or café lunch. Occasionally a picnic will be taken with some walking in the afternoon. We are a friendly group and all are welcome; indeed we would benefit from some fresh faces. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month (20th January this month) at 10 am in the Village Hall car park. So please come along and enjoy some exercise, fresh air and good company. We are an informal group and walk at our own risk.

Village Hall



Committee Meeting. The Village Hall Committee Meeting will be held on Monday 19th January at 7.30 pm in the Parish Council office at the Hall. Village Hall meetings are now open to everyone, If you have ideas about events, clubs or activities or just want to know what groups you can join, you are welcome to come along. There will be an open session for any points people would like to raise. Recruiting new Trustees is essential if the Hall is to continue as a community facility. If you would like to help with the management of the Hall and think this is a role you could fill, please speak to our Chairman on 01392 874305 or come along to the meeting.

Hiring the Hall. Our website <https://www.clyststmaryvillagehall.co.uk/> gives details of hiring availability and prices but if there's anything else you'd like to know, please drop Ali West an email on: bookings@clyststmaryvillagehall.co.uk. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Anyone for Tennis?



Some of us play tennis in Clyst St Mary on Friday mornings. Why not join us for some fresh air, exercise and good fun? Call Janice on 01392 876858

Table Tennis Club



Please come and join us! New members always welcome. We play at the Village Hall every Thursday, 4 - 6 pm. The minimal fee of £20 for a 10-week session includes use of all equipment and refreshments. Alternatively, fees may be paid on a weekly basis if preferred. For further details please contact Pam Gardner on 07714 097220 or by email to pamelamgardner9@gmail.com.



Badminton Club
Clyst St Mary Village Hall



The club plays on Tuesday evenings at 8 pm in the Village Hall
ALL are welcome (young and not so young!!) so come and join us. It is good exercise and a sociable evening.
For more information please contact either:
Hilary 01392 874722 or Anne (annecurryer@gmail.com)
Thank you.

CLYST ST GEORGE AND EBFORD



Church News

Cards for Sale in the Church. Recycled cards are available in the church. They can be used for any occasion, eg notelets, birthday, get well, sympathy, anniversary, new home, new baby, etc. You are welcome to visit



the church at any time and spend time looking through the boxes of cards. The church is open every day between 9 am and dusk. I'd also welcome any cards you may wish to recycle, except for Christmas cards. These can be left in the church for collection. Many thanks. Linda Wilkerson (01392 873699) *Nature Garden.* Clyst St George has a delightful nature garden by the side of the parish church. The aim of the garden is to grow local Devon indigenous plants and trees and to encourage a Devon meadow with local wild flowers. Should you wish to help develop this 'green' facility, you can come along on the first Saturday of every month from 9.30 to 11 am.

Clyst St George Parish Hall



Big Breakfast Alert! Join us on Sunday 25th January 2026! Doors open at 9.30 am, and last orders are at 11 am – come hungry and ready to feast! Missed out? Don't worry – the next one is on



Sunday 22nd March 2026. This will be the last Big Breakfast until autumn – you won't want to miss it!

Coffee Morning – Cake, Chat and Community! Kick off your Thursday with a cuppa, cake, and plenty of giggles! Join us on 8th January, 10 am – 12 noon for a morning of friendly faces, tasty treats, and feel-good chatter. Bring a friend or just bring yourself – everyone's welcome and it's going to be a delight!



Brains and Bravado: The Traitors Take the Quiz Crown! Our Quiz Night took place on Saturday 22nd November, and everyone had a fantastic time! Our quizmaster, Claire, put the villagers' brains to the test with a variety of rounds – from picture quizzes and celebrity spotting to 1% club-style brain teasers and identifying the Royal residences.

The quiz came down to an exciting tiebreak between the Traitors and Let's Get Quizzical, who had to answer: 'How many balls are used at Wimbledon each year?' Both teams had very different estimates, but the winners, with an impressive score of 96, were the Traitors – well done!

Thanks to everyone who came along and joined in the fun. The quiz raised £250, which will help replenish funds after the recent culvert repair.

Prosecco Party. The annual Prosecco Party went ahead without a hitch. Bubbles flowed and the sound of laughter, happiness and Christmas cheer filled the Hall. A big thank you must be said to Claire and Donna, who cooked up a wonderful range of canapés to soak up the fizz; to our fantastic food servers, Alan and Anna; to our excellent hosts, John and Paul; and, of course, to the all-important drinks servers, Kate and Lil!



Something Special is Coming to Clyst St George... Get ready for an unforgettable evening – because, for the very first time ever, theatre is coming to our village! On Saturday 28th February 2026, the curtain will rise right here in Clyst St George for a truly special performance that promises drama, surprises, and plenty of wow-factor.

What's the play? Well... that's still a closely guarded secret! But one thing's certain – you won't want to miss it. So mark your calendars, gather your friends, and get ready for a night of live entertainment like no other. More details coming soon – watch this space!

Join Our Team of Trustees. We're always on the lookout for new trustees to join our friendly team.



Being a trustee is a brilliant way to support your community, have your say in how the Hall is run, and get involved in organising the fun events that bring everyone together. No special experience is needed – just enthusiasm and a willingness to help. If you'd like to

help shape the future of our Parish Hall and bring even more great events to our community, we'd love to hear from you! Clyststgeorgeandebfordvhall@outlook.com

Looking for the Perfect Venue? Our bright, welcoming Parish Hall is ideal for every occasion – from parties, weddings, and meetings to fitness classes and community events. With flexible hire options (hourly or daily) and competitive rates, it's the perfect place to bring people together and create lasting memories. For bookings or further information, call 07834 234546.

Ladies Craft Group



Long-established (20 years) friendly group of like-minded ladies meets twice a month on Fridays at Clyst St George Parish Hall, 10 am to 2 pm. It costs £6 per session. You will be made very welcome. Come and join us and make new friends. Contact Marion Jones (Secretary) on 01392 874368.

Lady Seaward's C of E Primary School



Lady Seaward's returns from a restful and joyful Christmas break in which valuable time was spent with our families and friends. We trust that you have enjoyed the same. We start another busy term of learning and look forward to warmer weather ahead.

The application closing date of 15th January 2026 for Reception places in September 2026 draws closer. If you have yet to apply and would like to consider our school, please contact the school office to arrange a visit and use the following link to the Devon CC Admissions team:

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiOrviGvrCRAXUqToEAHUhjLDgQFnoECCMQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.devon.gov.uk%2Fchildren-families-education%2Feducation%2Fschool-admissions%2Fapply-for-a-primary-school-place%2F%23%3A~%3Atext%3DThe%2520Admissions%2520Team%2520can%2520be%2C%2540devon.gov.uk.%26text%3DThe%2520application%2520system%2520to%2520apply%2Cdate%2520is%252015%2520January%25202026.&usg=AOvVaw3paHDgFqJ01trfloxuWCS&opi=89978449>

Lady Seaward's School Association – PTA are very close to meeting their target to replace the equipment in our playground and we hope to see works start later this month. If you would like to support this project please do so on the following link: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/ladysewardsplayground>.

If you have any queries or would like to consider our nursery and/or school for your child(ren), please contact us as follows: School office tel: 01392 873629, email: office@clyst-st-george.devon.sch.uk. Nursery email: nursery@clyst-st-george.devon.sch.uk.

Norman's Weather Report for November



The month was very autumnal with rain, wind and some quite white frosts; and in terms of rainfall this was second only to January. Here at Ebford we received 119 mm or 4.7 inches of rain, mostly during the first two weeks.

The average over the previous five years 2020 to 2024 was 104 mm (4.1 inches). This year as a whole will still be a quite dry one, as here at Ebford only 2.1 inches of rain have fallen so far! Norman Cann

WOODBURY SALTERTON



Church News

Coffee Mornings. We have now returned to the winter pattern of our Saturday coffee mornings from 9.30 to 10.30 am. Bacon butties on the first Saturday each month; and coffee and cakes on the third Saturday.



Quiz. The church quiz 'Sports, Games and Pastimes' is now on sale – £2 a copy. There is a £10 prize. Entries do not have to be in until 11th January 2026 so there's still time! It is pleasing that this has become a fixture on the annual calendar and many families have a go around the table at Christmas. If you have not got your copy, please phone Katharine on 01395 232009.



Film Night



The first of the popular children's film nights was held in church on Friday 28th November. Excited children came carrying duvets and pillows and enjoyed a Paddington film while consuming lots of popcorn, crisps, bottles of pop and sweets. Thanks to Debbie Jung for again organising it and running the evening with help from Emma White and Katharine Wheeler. The evening raised £140 for church funds.

Woodbury Salterton Village Hall



Curry Night. There was a full house for the Curry Night held in the Village Hall last November. Many thanks for the help on the night and special thanks to Louise for putting the menu together and



creating really lovely curries. The donations for the raffle and puddings were also appreciated. An impressive £770 was raised for Hall funds.

Painting the Hall. The lobby, toilets and what was affectionally known as the 'Green Room' have all been painted – Magnolia. Thanks to George for fitting the painting in between bookings.

Bangers and Mash. The next food event will be Bangers and Mash on Saturday 28th February 2026. Booking recommended. Pat Bricknell 07929 134325 woodsaltvillagehall@outlook.com.



Village Hall Community Events. Coffee/tea and biscuits, every Monday 11 am – 12 noon, £2; Craft with cake, the last Wednesday in every month 12 noon – 3 pm, £3, or just pop in for a chat with cake. All proceeds from these events donated to Woodbury Salterton Village Hall.

Woodbury Salterton C of E Primary School



Whole School Gymnastics Trip. The whole school had an exciting visit to Exeter Gymnastics Club, where the children had the chance to try out all their fantastic facilities. They absolutely loved exploring the different equipment, learning new skills, and challenging themselves in a fun and supportive environment. We hope the experience has inspired some of our children to become the next generation of gymnasts! A big thank you to Mrs Bamber, our PE teacher, for organising such a brilliant trip and giving the children an opportunity they'll be talking about for weeks.



Acorns Class. Acorns Class have been excitedly taking part in all sorts of busy learning—both in the classroom, in our outdoor provision, and during their daily visits to our fantastic



at work improving their create the

Forest School. As part of their Marvellous Machines learning, they've been exploring old and new machines and thinking about how they might have worked. The children were fascinated to discover that electricity hasn't always been around! They've also been hard designing and building bridges. Through testing and designs, they've learnt that working together is the best way to strongest bridge. Great teamwork, Acorns!

Rock Steady. We formed two bands in September 2025 through the fantastic *Rock Steady* programme. The children have the opportunity to sing and play guitar, drums, and keyboard, all while working together as a band. This culminated in a wonderful performance at our local church, where full audience participation was encouraged! We're already looking forward to the next concert!



Admissions for September. The admission window for September starts closes on 15th January. Woodbury Salterton is a lovely, small school with a warm, caring feel, and we're committed to doing our very best for every child in our close-knit community. Have a look at our website and Facebook page to find out more, and feel free to come in for a tour – we'd love to show you around – [Woodbury Salterton Church of England Primary School - Home Facebook](https://www.woodburysaltertonchurch.org.uk).

Foundation Governor. We are looking to our parish to find a Foundation Governor to support our church school. This is an opportunity to be part of the work of the School Ethos Group, which follows a cycle of monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, collective worship, justice and responsibility, RE, and wellbeing – all underpinned by the school's vision and values. The group meets twice a term, and the Foundation Governor shares the minutes of these meetings through feedback given at the half-termly Local Advisory Committee. This ensures that all stakeholders in the Link Academy Trust, to which the school belongs, are aware of the Christian distinctiveness of our lovely church school and how this is enabling all to flourish.

Please contact us by either calling 01395 232649 or emailing adminwoodburysalterton@thelink.academy if you are interested in learning more about this exciting role.

SOWTON VILLAGE

Sowton Christmas Meal 2025



The Hall was decked, the mince pies made and the village came together for another great Christmas Supper in the Village Hall on Saturday, 6th December. Wonderful food prepared by Sue Sturdy and fun games – though we never did establish which side won! Thank you to all who made the evening such a success!

Rain, Rain and More Rain



We all know how wet the start of December was. The entrance to Sowton Village got very muddy and we were a bit nervous about the road flooding. Not everyone was so negative about the rain though – some local residents clearly enjoyed it very much!

WHITE CROSS MISSION COMMUNITY



From the Vicar's Desk...

Happy New Year! As we step into 2026, the old calendar and diaries have been placed into the recycling and the new ones are up on the wall, or in the bag, awaiting new memories and important dates. They, like the year ahead, are awaiting being filled and enjoyed. There is much promise and anticipation.



Yet, after the excitement and bustle of Christmas, this time of year can sometimes feel a bit empty. The presents have been enjoyed, the exchanged gifts tucked away, and, the tree and decorations, by now, may be packed up for another year. What was once festive and bright now seems quiet and subdued. With the long, dark winter evenings making everything feel dormant, as the Christmas cheer fades away.

But even in these dark winter days, there is hope. This hope comes from the sound of bleating of newborn lambs, trees beginning to bud, and as witness shoots emerging from the frozen ground. This renewal unfolds slowly, often unnoticed at first. By slowing down and paying attention, we can rediscover our zest for life and appreciate the beauty that surrounds us – beauty we often overlook in our busy lives.

All this renewal, reminds me of the Biblical verse: 'Be still and know that I am God.' Whenever I pause to look at the world's beauty, whether it only be for a few moments, I'm reminded that life flourishes without my intervention – God sustains it. Creation is a gift for us to cherish and care for, enriching our lives in countless ways. From this, I am further reminded that God cares for me and only wants me to do my best, and to cherish all around me.

So, this month, I encourage you to take a few moments to notice where new life is beginning to emerge. To delight in these small signs of renewal and remember that even in the dark and gloomy weather, all is not lost. God is with us, taking care of Creation and longing for beauty to shine forth in the world. It was only a few days ago we rejoiced at the coming of Jesus as a wee baby boy, and the beauty of his birth.

Happy New Year once again. Your friend and Vicar, Lewis

POETRY CORNER

Questions of Provenance
By John Smith of Clyst St Mary

They sit in the auction room
Like a worshipping congregation
Reverencing the star attraction,
The painting that they yearn to own.
'Who'll start me off on four?'
'Thank you then, three and a half'
(That's hundreds of thousands clearly,
The guide price said as much.)

And so the numbers climb
Like a child's recitation by rote
To show the skill with numbers,
Apart from disposable wealth.

Is the rich man a greater art lover?
Or just needing reflected glory,
Can Art really ever be owned
No matter what was paid?
Or does it belong forever
To the soul of the creator.
©John Smith



Nuts
By John Flitney of Clyst St George



Me? I was a happy Hazel-Nut lying on the ground,
Until I heard nearby, a really frightening sound
I'm sure it was a Squirrel. They're so very scary,
All smelly and twitchy and so... dreadfully hairy!
They have nasty sharp teeth and dirty feet,
And stupidly think I would be delicious to eat.

Al, Al Mondo, the Almond! that's who I be,
A name that I got, well, from this 'ere tree!
It wants me to leave but I'm in no haste,
I'll only be collected and ground into paste
Be put on a cake or shaped like a sweet,
Then have to wait until someone buys me to eat.
© John A Flitney

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HOGMANAY HOWLERS

What's the worst part of jogging on New Year's Eve? The ice falling out of your drink!

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

A New Year Prayer for the Elderly
God, grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway; the good fortune to run into the ones that I do; and the eyesight to tell the difference.



On New Year's Eve, Daniel was in no shape to drive, so he sensibly left his van in the car park and walked home. As he was wobbling along, he was stopped by a policeman. 'What are you doing out here at four o'clock in the morning?' asked the police officer. 'I'm on my way to a lecture,' answered Roger. 'And who on earth, in their right mind, is going to give a lecture at this time on New Year's Eve?' enquired the constable sarcastically. 'My wife,' slurred Daniel grimly.

New Year's resolutions are just a to-do list for the first week of January.

FEATURES IN FOCUS

The Sky Tonight: January



Look out on the 3rd and you will see the New Year welcomed in with the last Supermoon of the present sequence. You may be wondering why Supermoons go in runs of three or four. They happen when the Moon's elliptical orbit brings it closest to the Earth (called perigee) at the same time that it appears full. We get them only in groups because, as the Moon orbits the Earth, the Earth also moves along its own orbit and so

the Moon requires an extra two days to get back to the correct alignment with the Sun needed for full moon. During this time it is moving along its orbit away from perigee position. This repeats until, after a few orbits, it no longer appears large in the sky – until it cycles back to near to perigee and another series begins. *Staying with the Moon for the moment, look to the East on the 4th/5th and you will see it pass just over the top of the star cluster Praespa in the constellation of Cancer. On the 27th look South at 9.15 pm to watch the Moon as it passes through the top of the Pleiades star cluster, hiding a couple of the Seven Sisters on its way.*

The nights of 3rd and 4th mark the maximum of the Quadrantid meteor shower, named after a constellation, Quadrans Muralis, which is no longer extant. *These shooting stars appear to originate close to the tail of the Great Bear so keep a look out to the North about halfway up the sky and you should see them go over at the rate of better than one a minute.* They are caused by dust particles left in the wake of asteroid 2003 EH₁ (associated with comet C/1490 Y1 which was observed by eastern astronomers some 500 years ago).

On 3rd January at 5.15 pm the Earth is at perihelion, its closest point to the Sun. You may find it strange that the Earth is closest to the Sun in winter but the seasons are determined by the direction of the Earth's tilted axis with respect to the Sun, not distance from it – except the south polar cap is larger than that at the north because that axis points away from the Sun when the Earth is at its most distant.

The planets Mercury, Venus and Mars are too close to the Sun to be visible this month but the others are visible. *Saturn is low down in the western sky with the Moon just below to the right on the 22nd and just above on the 23rd. Neptune can be found directly above it, but is only visible as a tiny blue disc in steady binoculars. Uranus is just visible with the naked eye as a greenish disc immediately below the Pleiades.* This leaves Jupiter which is putting on its most magnificent display of the year, being closest to the Earth on the 9th (but still 633 million km away!). *Look for it in the south-east (the Moon passes over on the nights of the 30th and 31st).* In 1610 Galileo, using his newly constructed telescope, was the first person to see the moons of Jupiter. *Look with binoculars, steadied against a wall or better still clamped on to a tripod, on the 15th around 6 pm. or the 29th at 9 pm. and you will see the moons he saw, appearing as tiny points of light, arranged to the right of the planet's disc in order: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto.*

I wish you clear skies so you may experience the wonder that he experienced. Clyde Bish

How You Can Help to De-Stress Your Pet's Visit to the Vets



A commonly voiced reason for pet owner hesitancy on seeking veterinary care is our perceived negative emotional impact for nervous pets. We hope that the following list of suggestions may bring about a welcome change for those who struggle in silence:

Your emotions are felt! Centuries of domestication have led our pets to become incredibly perceptive. Your tone of voice, body language and calmness of movement have been linked to significantly better compliance of animals receiving treatment. Please do your best to stay calm for them.

Pro-actively desensitise your pets to the veterinary clinic environment. Whenever possible, we encourage owners with nervous pets to make social visits to 'normalise' the clinic environment

through praise and reward. Does your pet still linger nervously outside? Base a walk around the practice site, encourage staff to offer a treat and praise and build up gradually from there. For cat owners, leave the carrier out for days prior to their appointment, even dual-purposing it to create a bedding/feeding space. This can prevent last-minute recognition and attempts to flee from our feline friends!

Involve a behaviourist where issues extend beyond the veterinary clinic. Nerves on visiting vets often represent the tip of the iceberg to much more systemic behavioural problems. Please involve your vet, as they will be well-connected and able to advise on where to seek local high quality behaviourist help, focusing on non-aversive methods.

Please be open and honest; vets do not judge. We understand that sometimes owners of reactive pets struggle to know how to warn us about their tendencies in advance. Rather than being met with scorn, veterinary professionals will be actively appreciative of being warned about the potential of a hiss/bite/swipe/growl. We are sure we speak on behalf of all practices in saying that staff will be well versed in fear-free handling techniques which avoid risk to staff and your pets and achieve optimal results in minimal times. Where necessary, we can advise on reward-based muzzle training which, when done correctly, actively helps pets to relax into a visit.

Seek the home-visit option. While we cannot speak for all vet practices, many will offer the service of a home visit, especially where there is obvious emotional welfare benefit to the patient and/or owner. *Seek advice on medical help to reduce stress.* Medical help for reducing anxiety and reactivity is increasingly versatile and sophisticated. Varying from appeasement pheromones and herbal remedies to more acute-acting anxiolytic medications, your veterinary practice will be well-equipped to help advise you on dampening your pet's inherent anxiety.

Animals' stress is not just a behavioural response but is a biological one too. Stress responses can be measured through a host of bodily changes which have the potential to adversely affect all manner of disease/treatment outcomes, such as perception of pain, immune-mediated disease and even resilience against infection. The more we can consciously do to reduce stress can have far-reaching benefits. Rob Somerwill MRCVS CertAVP(SAS). Veterinary Surgeon. Estuary Vets

Burns Night



Robert Burns Night is celebrated on 25th January every year and it recognises the successful life and work of Scottish poet, lyricist and national hero: Robert Burns. Leading a life of struggle and passion, his work gained immense success through its focus on Scottish culture, landscape and people. Robert Burns is also famous for *Auld Lang Syne*, which has typically been sung (and danced) while ringing in the new year.

The celebration is seen to strengthen Scottish identity and spirit worldwide while maintaining Scottish tradition, history and the Scots language, which Burns helped to preserve and popularise. In Scotland, the day is so important that it is sometimes referred to as Scotland's 'other national day' alongside St Andrew's Day which is celebrated in November.

As much as Burns Night is a popular celebration in this part of the UK, traditions take place across the length and breadth of the nation. While in Scotland celebrations usually involve a Burns supper with bagpipes, poetry reciting, and haggis with 'neeps and tatties', in Devon it takes on a more cross-cultural twist. Many people in Devon enjoy Scottish culture and traditions and Burns Night is seen as a fun reason to gather, enjoy good food and music while spending time with loved ones.

There are many venues around Devon that host Burns Night dinners. For instance, in the North of Devon at a hotel in Ilfracombe, a six-course Scottish supper is offered with traditional dishes such as Cullen skink, salmon and Scottish desserts.

Near Axminster, the High Grange have teamed up with the iconic Marine Theatre in Lyme Regis to host their traditional Burns Supper. This year, they're opening it up to a 400-person Ceilidh which

will follow a feast. You can expect home-made haggis, kilts, whisky and the Gay Gordons. Tickets start from £16.

If you are Scottish living in Devon or simply admire Robert Burns, there are many ways you can pay your respects to him at home. Most events appear to include the most well-known Scottish stereotypes as a way to honour Robert Burns while also having lots of fun. Wearing kilts, playing the bagpipes and drinking whisky are the perfect ways to add a Scottish flair to your celebrations.

Burns's work often focused on themes of social justice, equality and the lives of ordinary people, making him a great inspiration to a large number of people that had access to his work. It is important to continue amplifying these voices as a mark of solidarity with those less fortunate around us. Gracie Moore

Ash's Albums: This Month: Jazzmatazz Volume 1 by Guru



Jazzmatazz Volume 1 by Guru is a feat in genre-defining albums, uniting living jazz with intellectual hip-hop. Legendary rapper and producer, Keith Elam, best known by his alias 'Guru', released *Jazzmatazz Volume 1* in 1993, and was one of the first musicians to



authenticate jazz-rap as an esteemed sub-genre, rather than just an experimental novelty. The excellence behind the album is its unique fusion of live jazz with hip-hop, which was highly unconventional at the time (and in the present day). Typically, jazz-rap instrumentals are produced through sample-chops of older jazz records, but Guru brought in many legendary and contemporary jazz musicians, such as Roy Ayers on *Take a Look (At Yourself)* and Donald Byrd on *Loungin'*.

The album listens as a celebration of Black culture and history; Guru handles jazz as a spiritual ancestor of hip-hop, and hip-hop as a descendant of jazz. *Jazzmatazz Volume 1* is almost a living timeline of Black music – sonically and verbally, each song radiates pride, whilst acknowledging the roots of struggle and creativity from both genres.

The album challenges demonisations or prejudices towards hip-hop as a 'lower art' and jazz as a more 'intellectual art'. By utilising each genre on equal-footing, it demonstrates the sophistication and musical depth of hip-hop, honouring elder generations whilst speaking to the youth.

Through, long and welcoming bass notes, light and brushed drums, smooth guitars, and classic-jazz trumpets and saxophones, with Guru's consistently cool, calm, steady, and conversational-rhythmed vocals, the album takes you to a late-night smoky lounge, in the company of people you might never see again, but you don't mind and can't help but dance.

One of the first tracks, *Loungin'*, exemplifies the album's effortless genre-fusion the best. It's stylish but not too flashy, and sets up the album sublimely. Guru raps over the jazz instrumentation and drum loop almost resembling how a jazz soloist would play; carefully timing each word, focusing on his verbal spacing and conscious tonalities.

Comparatively, *No Time to Play* is much more intentional and mission-driven. Guru expresses his integrity for the culture, and respect for originality. If *Loungin'* is the mood-setter, *No Time to Play* is the message. Hip-hop is art, jazz is chronicled, and this is the new culture.

Favourite songs: *Loungin'*, *When You're Near*, *No Time to Play*, *Down the Backstreets*, *Take a Look (At Yourself)*, *Le Bien*, *Le Mal*. Least Favourite Song: *Sights in the City*. Overall rating: 9/10.

Ashik Skelton

AND FINALLY...

Clyst Valley Choral Society Is Looking for New Members



New Year's resolution to join a choir? Clyst Valley Choral Society is looking for new members. We are a small and friendly choir, and our spring rehearsals start on Thursday 5th February, 7.30 – 9.15 pm at Clyst St Mary Church, Church Lane, EX5 1AB (plenty of free parking next door in Winslade Manor car park). We will be learning pieces for our concerts in May. No

auditions and no experience necessary. Just come along on the 5th! Further details on our website <https://www.clystvalleychoral.info/>.

The Exeter Forum Talks Programme: January 2026



The Wednesday weekly talks take place at the Mint Methodist Church in Fore Street, Exeter, EX4 3AT. Coffee and socialising from 10.15 am; the talk starts usually at around 10.45 am. All welcome to attend these meetings. There is a small admission charge for non-members. More information at www.exeterforum.org/talks.

Date	Speaker	Title
7 th January	Dr Todd Gray	<i>Devon's Home Front Diaries, 1937 to 1945</i> We welcome back Todd Gray who will talk about the experiences of people during their everyday lives in Devon in the build-up of the Second World War and through the war itself as shown through their diaries.
14 th January	Dr David Jenner	<i>Antarctic Landscapes and Wildlife</i> David Jenner makes a welcome return to the Exeter Forum for another of his talks featuring his wonderful photography. David has recently visited Antarctica, and he will show aspects of the fantastic wildlife in this talk.
21 st January	Stuart Raine	<i>The Sinking of the Lusitania and its Aftermath</i> Stuart will look at the tragedy of the Lusitania and the controversy surrounding its loss in World War 1. He will also reveal the links between this event and changing attitudes towards the war in Europe in the United States.
28 th January	New Year's Lunch	<i>New Year's Lunch – no speaker. Please see separate details for this event.</i>

Love Topsham Wishes Everyone a Prosperous 2026



This magazine is not big enough to individually thank the over 200 volunteers and participants in this year's Christmas festivities in Topsham. So if you were in any of these teams, a huge Thank You to you all.

Our thanks to: All the businesses and residents who subscribe or donate to Love Topsham as it is this funding that makes all this possible. Thanks also to the businesses and residents who provide the location and power for the street displays, including Olive & Lily, Topsham Co-op, Topsham Conservative Club, The Globe Topsham, Cooks Aweigh, East and West of Exe, Topsham Community Association - Matthews Hall, and the residents of High Street, Fore Street and Ferry Road.

Our thanks go to all the teams of volunteers, entertainers and participants: The Christmas Elves | The shops and residents who added their lights to make the town sparkle | The Late Night opening shops | The Late Night shopping organisers | The Events Team | The Switch-on Team | The FORCE Marshals | The Love Topsham Marshals | The Road Closure Marshals | Otter Morris Dancers | Ozzy D | The Exeter Railway Band | The Christmas Market Volunteers | St Margaret's Church Choir | Topsham Wine | The generous donations to the Raffle | The Children's Christmas Trail traders | The Children's Christmas Organisers | Topsham Museum | Greg Towning Photography



Photo: Greg Towning

Finally, Topsham Museum and all the shops that participated in the children's Christmas Trail: Pawsome | Butt Estates | Wilkinson Grant | Rodney Spiller | Seam Haberdashery | Karen Leverton Hair Design | CASA | Coraline | Topsham Bookshop | Hospiscare | The Butchers@Topsham | Clark & Co | RGF Greengrocers | Topsham Jewellers | Hays Travel | Country Cheeses | Sara's Petite Cuisine | Vintage Devon Air | Ambulance Trust | Peter Tosh Opticians |

Topsham Treats | East of Exe | Topsham Cakes | Pointers Financial | Squid and the Kid | Route 2 | Salt.

Many thanks to Taylor Wimpey for their generous donation of £500 towards the new small shopfront trees and the large tree on the Quay.

[In the interests of balance, we are publishing the following article from the Clyst Action Group in response to the article in the December CVN from Devcomms titled 'Land Between Clyst St Mary and Clyst St George – Public Consultation'. Ed]

Stop the Destruction of our Communities and Countryside



A push is underway for 1,750 new homes termed as 'Land Between Clyst St Mary and Clyst St George'. If allowed to go ahead, this would not be a modest village expansion. It would be a new settlement, swallowing up our countryside and rural identity forever.

Say Goodbye to the Green Gateway to East Devon. The countryside between our villages is not 'spare land'. It's the last green gap keeping two historic communities separate. Its loss would erase the distinction between them, a loss no future generations could reverse.

Our Roads Can't Take Any More! More Traffic Nightmares Incoming.... Our narrow lanes, rural junctions and the A376/A3052 network are already overburdened with daily commuting traffic from Woodbury, Lympstone, Exmouth and beyond. Adding 1,750 homes would mean thousands more cars, gridlocked roads, longer commutes, more accidents, more dangerous driving conditions on the M5 and misery for all within the Clyst Valley and beyond.

Healthcare, Ambulance and Emergency Services are Collapsing Already! The local RD&E reports that over 90% of beds are full on any given day. Ambulance handovers and A&E wait times remain far below acceptable levels. Services are stretched to breaking point. How could they possibly cope with a sudden influx of thousands of new residents? Lives, health and wellbeing are at real risk.

Sewage Overflows, Afterthoughts but a Public Health Timebomb. We all already know too well that our wastewater and drainage system is failing. Approving this development without a guaranteed, independently verified upgrade to sewage treatment and water capacity would be a betrayal of our rivers, our seas, our beaches, and all of our health.

Wildlife, Flooding and Nature All Under Threat. Greenfields, wildlife corridors and flood-risk zones don't belong in a developer's ambition. Concreting over such land destroys habitats, increases flooding, and banishes the rural tranquility we all value. Losing more valuable arable land will be a devastating consequence on our children's future.

We've Already Had Enough! Cumulative Impact Is Not a 'Maybe', It's a Certainty. With the proposed West End expansion and other recent largescale housing projects across the West End, our roads, infrastructure and services are already breaking. Add another massive development on top, and the consequences will be catastrophic.

There Are Better Ways! Without Sacrificing Our Communities and Future! Brownfield sites, derelict commercial land, smart infill, community-led and affordable housing that complement the small villages in the area – these are real, sustainable solutions to housing needs. They don't destroy large areas of green fields or wipe out communities.

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'A Time of Mindful' - Singing the Wills of England.
A master songwriter... Chris has crafted a unique evening with classical and folk melodies, retelling in song the moving, joyful and absorbing stories of local and national wills - this is very special!

Clyst Action Group www.clystaction.com. Disclaimer: The group is not opposed to small-scale responsible and sustainable development that complements the surrounding communities, but is strongly opposed to any new settlement of disproportionate size and scale.

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Kids' Corner

What's happening this month?

Wassail – Twelfth night (5th January)

In Devon, we have a very old and very noisy tradition that happens in the middle of winter called Wassailing. Wassailing happens when the weather is cold and the apple trees are sleeping. It's a special ceremony where people visit an apple orchard to sing, shout and make a huge racket. Wassailing has one main goal: to wake up the trees and scare away any spirits that might be hiding in the branches! The farmers and villagers believe that if they make the trees happy, they will grow tasty apples.



First, you gather around the oldest apple tree. Sometimes, people hang pieces of toast soaked in apple juice on the branches. This is a special treat for the tree and the friendly robin redbreasts. You sing a special Wassail Song—the word "Wassail!" actually means "Be well!" or "Be healthy!" People bang pots and pans, clash wooden spoons and shout loudly. It's all about making enough noise to wake up the tree spirits and frighten away the bad luck.

It's a fun, joyful way to celebrate our beautiful Devon orchards and look forward to a fantastic harvest next year!

Get involved...

Have a go at solving the riddle below. Answers to clystvalleynews@gmail.com

Riddle: I have a long, strong tail and huge, powerful feet. I travel by hopping, but my pouch is my seat. What am I?

We would love to have some children writing for the Clyst Valley News. If you would like to get involved, please email clystvalleynews@gmail.com

Last month's answer: I'm jolly and round and made of snow, I wear a hat and scarf wherever I go. I melt when the sun comes out to play— What am I? A snowman.

Robert Williams

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Aylesbeare

4 th January	11-15	Holy Communion	Rev'd Scrivener
18 th January	09-30	Breakfast Family Service	Rev'd StirlingTroy

Clyst St George

11 th January	09-30	Family Breakfast Service	Rev'd Watson
25 th January	09-30	Holy Communion	Rev'd Eden

Clyst St Mary

4 th January	09-30	Breakfast Family Service	Rev'd Eden
18 th January	09-30	Holy Communion	Rev'd Raven

Exton

7 th January	10-30	Midweek for Mission Community HC	Rev'd Scrivener
14 th January	10-30	Midweek for Mission Community HC	Rev'd Eden
27 th January	10-30	Midweek for Mission Community HC	Rev'd StirlingTroy
28 th January	10-30	Midweek for Mission Community HC	Rev'd Eden

Farringdon

11 th January	11-15	Holy Communion	Rev'd StirlingTroy
25 th January	09-30	Morning Worship	C Grist

Woodbury

4 th January	10-30	Family Service	Lay led
11 th January	11-15	Holy Communion	Rev'd Scrivener
18 th January	18-00	Evensong	C Grist
25 th January	11-15	Holy Communion	Rev'd Eden

Woodbury Salterton

4 th January	09-30	Holy Communion	Rev'd StirlingTroy
18 th January	09-30	Breakfast Family Service	Rev'd Eden

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