

PRAYING FOR A DROP OF RAIN IN THE CURRENT HEATWAVE!

You can find contact details/information on our website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/34-370BX/>. We also circulate the Courier digitally; if you would like a digital copy, please contact the Editor. Since January 1st, we have returned to the common cup during parish communion. We will continue to offer opportunities to join services via livestream (for the vulnerable) for the foreseeable future.

A WARM WELCOME – Following on from the welcoming column last month, it transpired that I forgot to mention another person who has also joined our church family. Please join us in welcoming Malcolm Smith – who has recently joined the PCC for St. Andrew's Church, Rockbourne.

WANTED! – KITCHEN STAFF FOR SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN AUGUST FOR CREAM TEAS - St George's Church holds Cream Teas by the River[1] on every Sunday afternoon in August from 2.00p.m. to 4.30p.m. This event is a very important fundraiser for the Church and also a popular social event.

The dates for each cream tea event are the 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and the 31st of August.

Our willing band of volunteers are again a year older and fewer this year. We would appreciate some extra help. If anybody can help on the 3rd, 17th and the 31st of August events it would be greatly appreciated. Your help for just one afternoon will go a long way for the survival of this popular event. Please call John Godber (01425) 650044 or email catherine.godber50@gmail.com for how you can help. *[1] Due to the drought, the river bed is currently dry. We are praying for rain to help restore the stream!*

HOME GROUP NEWS– Our home groups are currently studying the Lord's Prayer and in September will be looking at St Paul's letter to the church in Rome — a letter that changed the beliefs of Martin Luther, John Wesley and countless others.

If you'd like more details of home groups - please contact Michael and Isabel King (519383), Rory Smith (518215) or Nigel Cumming (518248).

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism

St Andrew's, Rockbourne	22 nd June	Felix Pinkham
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Marriages and Services of Dedication

St Andrew's, Rockbourne	7 th June	James & Jenna Westwood-Beare
All Saints, Martin	28 th June	India Debenham & Justin Vallis

Funerals

All Saints, Martin	5 th June	Jenny Bellwood
All Saints, Martin	16 th June	Sheila Elliott
St George's, Damerham	14 th July	Keith Hicks (Service of Thanksgiving)
St Andrew's, Rockbourne	20 th June	Michael Meredith (Service of Thanksgiving)

NB. For all pastoral enquiries including baptisms, marriages, funerals and other related matters, please contact the Rector, Rev'd Les Player, The Rectory, Mill End, Damerham, SP6 3HU (01725) 518642.

For matters regarding benefice administration support, please contact the Western Downland Team Administrator (Bernice Churchill) on infowdchurches@gmail.com or (01725) 518816.

For information concerning individual parishes including matters of a general nature, please contact the Churchwarden: -

Damerham	John Godber (01425) 650044
Martin	Alistair Groom (01725) 519204 and Lizzie Fernie (01725) 519542
Rockbourne	Patrick Thompson (01725) 518246 and Rory Smith (01725) 518215
Whitsbury	Chris Harper (01725) 518324 and Chris Cobb-Smith (01725) 518313

Please send contributions for the next Courier to the Editor Arron Shutt (arron@ashutt.myzen.co.uk). The deadline is 31st August 2025.

News and Views from the Church of England
in Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury

THE COURIER

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2025

A Newsletter for the Communities of the Western Downland

A Word from the Rector

VJ 80, the surrender of Japan in 1945 is commemorated on 15th August. At this moment in history when so many of us feel adrift in a sea of confusion, it's good to recognise historical markers which illustrate our shared story. At the same time it's worth noting that history is rarely clean cut.

In 1066 the Battle of Hastings didn't result in an outright victory for William of Normandy. Instead, he had to fight several more battles around London before the Saxons abandoned their preferred candidate for the throne. Six years after Hastings, William was still trying to subdue England. This conquest of England and the successor conquests in Wales, Ireland and elsewhere has left a deep scar in UK history. Take the current issues with immigration. The reality is our DNA reflects a range of ethnicities across Europe and elsewhere arising from historical conflict and invasion. A curious fact when public opinion rails against immigration to the UK in recent months. Moving back to VJ day, the surrender of Japan on the 15th of August followed the dropping of two atomic bombs, and instead of peace - one instead found chaos. The Soviets invaded Manchuria, North Korea and the Sakhalin and Kuril islands in Japan. Japan didn't surrender in Singapore until September, and Taiwan/Borneo in October. Repatriation of allied POWs took months (including my mentor, a priest who as a young British soldier was captured and held in appalling conditions). Elsewhere many of the international bodies with which we're familiar today were founded, including the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, UNESCO and the World Bank. Many Nazis were prosecuted for war crimes. Yet at the same time the US and the Soviet Union, (and to a lesser extent France and Britain) smuggled thousands of German scientists and engineers into their countries to develop rocket programmes. And unfounded rumours led to Jews and suspected Jews being attacked in parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia. We must deal with history as it is, warts and all. It's right to mark VJ Day. But in commemorating it, we do well to tell the story true; to remember the complex narrative out of which our own story emerges.

Each year the Transfiguration of our Lord is commemorated on the 6th of August. It's the story of Jesus' climb up a mountain where - before disbelieving eyes - he is transfigured from 'one of us' to something 'other'. His face shone like the sun, his clothes became dazzling white (this isn't a Persil advert!), Moses and Elijah appeared beside him, a cloud enveloped them and a voice from heaven said: 'This is my Son, the Beloved... Listen to him!', after which the scene returned abruptly to the everyday. It's as if, for a moment, we're lifted above the intractable complexities of our world to glimpse the unfathomable mysteries of heaven so that, returning to our human dilemmas we may, like Jesus see the world differently. The Transfiguration didn't change the variability of the disciples. And it didn't alter Jesus' direction of travel toward the Cross. But it provided a vital marker along the way, reminding the disciples (and us) that in a world teetering on the brink and lost in its own confusion, divine purpose is at work. Reminding us also that we can choose good over evil, truth over lies, liberty over enslavement. As imperfect human beings there will be much we get wrong, but with honesty, humility and good intent, holding firm to vital markers along the way it's just possible that we may choose the better way.

Rev'd Les Player

<p>CHALKE CUEIBET PARTNERSHIP - The Chalke Cueibet Partnership has forged a close relationship between the Chalke Deanery and the Diocese of Cueibet since 2013. For the Western Downland benefice, All Saints Church Martin has helped to be the focus in our local fundraising efforts. During the last ten years, the partnership has helped in the Cueibet community in many ways such as promoting agricultural training to improve crop generation, helping women's programmes for self-reliance, providing training for the local clergy, providing bikes, building and furnishing a primary school with desks, supplies and paid teachers and finally a diocesan Guesthouse for visitors. In the last year, the Chalke Cueibet Partnership has built a stronger brick-built school building and we are proposing to build facilities to house the women's support groups that are such an important part of the Cueibet community. All this has been achieved through the generosity of the congregations of our churches across the Deanery. You can find out more on https://chalkevalleychurches.org/cueibet Please contact Geoff Taylor and Rory Smith about other ways in which you can be involved. If you are interested in improving the lives of families in a war-torn and deprived country, then you can donate through several methods described below.</p> <p>You can support the Chalke-Cueibet Link financially by using the Chalke-Cueibet Charity gift aid envelopes in All Saints Church. One can also donate via the link https://givealittle.co/c/1Z5CZrNPxvEKYo0aoFavnu or by scanning the QR code on the right using your mobile devices.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DATES FOR THE DIARY</p> <p>Monday 13th October 6.00p.m. Combined PCC Tuesday Western Downland School, Rockbourne (Junior Site).</p> <p>11th November 6.30p.m. for 6.45p.m start. Chalke Deanery Synod, Dinton</p> <p>FUNDRAISING DRINKS PARTY TO AID ROCKBOURNE CHURCH – is being held on the 29th of August 6.00p.m. in the Walled Garden, Manor Farm, Rockbourne, SP6 3NN. The event is held in aid of St. Andrew's Church. Look forward to an evening of wine & canapes, raffle and music!</p> <p>RSVP Lucy Matthews - Tickets £15 in advance only - Lucymatthews101@btinternet.com or call (01725) 518695.</p> <p>ALL SAINTS PCC NOMINATED CHARITY 2025 All Saints Church PCC is considering the charity for 2025 that Martin Church will select to raise funds for. They are seeking further suggestions for a charitable cause that All Saints PCC will vote on. Once the charity has been decided then it will be announced at the Martin Harvest Festival service on the 28th of September. You can find out how to donate by contacting our Church Warden Alistair Groom (01725 519204) or Lizzie Fernie (01725 519542). Or you can pick up an envelope for this purpose (available in church from Harvest onwards) and return it with your gift in the collection plate in any main church in the benefice (up to 31st December).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FORTHCOMING CHURCH EVENTS</p> <p>Tuesday Reflection and Prayer - We meet each Tuesday at 9.30a.m. using a simple structure, offering a 25-minute space for reflection and prayer based around the daily scripture reading, a little liturgy and a brief thought. To join on Zoom : https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87190762729 Meeting ID: 871 9076 2729 Passcode: 325626</p> <p>Harvest Thanksgiving 2025 – With the warm weather, the harvest has already started in our fields and there are harvest thanksgiving services planned across the benefice. Damerham and Martin are having their Harvest Thanksgiving services on the 28th of September, Whitsbury on the 5th of October and Rockbourne on the 12th of October.</p> <p>Each year we accept harvest offerings of dried and tinned goods, deodorants, shampoo and other suitable items, alongside more traditional items (but with a good 'shelf life' please!) can be brought to your local Harvest Thanksgiving Service and will be distributed locally where possible amongst older members of our communities or donated to the Ringwood & Fordingbridge Food Bank. The Ringwood Foodbank website has a list of essential items they need if you are keen to donate which will have the most benefit to the poor and hungry. The list of essentials changes, so check often. https://ringwood.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/</p> <p>Current essentials are: ⊕Tinned veg, ⊕Tinned meat stews, ⊕Tinned meatballs, ⊕Tinned pasta, ⊕Macaroni Cheese etc, ⊕Packet rice, ⊕Coffee, ⊕Ready meals, ⊕Instant Noodles, ⊕UHT Milk and ⊕Jam/Preserves.</p>
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***** **SERVICES DURING AUGUST & SEPTEMBER** *****

Post COVID - We are continuing Sunday services based largely in our parish Churches. We are livestreaming some physical services on Zoom denoted by three asterisks (*) in the service listing below.**

<p>3rd August 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>10th August 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>17th August 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>24th August 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>31st August 11.00a.m.</p>	<p>7th Sunday after Trinity Martin – Parish Communion (CW1)*** Rockbourne – Morning Prayer (CW1)</p> <p>8th Sunday after Trinity Whitsbury – Holy Communion (1662) Damerham – All Age Worship***</p> <p>9th Sunday after Trinity Rockbourne – Parish Communion (CW1) Martin – Parish Worship***</p> <p>10th Sunday after Trinity Damerham – Parish Communion (CW1) Whitsbury – Parish Worship***</p> <p>11th Sunday after Trinity Damerham – Benefice Communion (CW1)</p>	<div>  <p style="text-align: center;">The Perfect Cornish Cream Tea - https://www.cornwalls.co.uk/food/cornish_cream_tea.htm</p> </div> <p>21st September 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>28th September 11.00a.m. 5.00p.m.</p> <p>5th October 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>12th October 9.30a.m. 11.00a.m.</p> <p>14th Sunday after Trinity Rockbourne – Sung Eucharist (CW1 Contemporary) Whitsbury – Parish Worship***</p> <p>15th Sunday after Trinity Damerham – Harvest Festival (Contemporary Non-Eucharistic)*** Martin - Harvest Festival</p> <p>16th Sunday after Trinity Martin - Parish Communion (CW1) Whitsbury – Harvest Thanksgiving***</p> <p>17th Sunday of Easter Damerham – Parish Communion (CW1)*** Rockbourne – Harvest Thanksgiving</p>
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