

# *across* **ROYSTON**

**March 2026**



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

You can access an on-line version of the Across Royston Magazine on our website [www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk)

### **For all those who have been affected by the death of a child- a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving**

St John the Baptist Parish Church in Royston is holding a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for those who have lost a child or who have been affected by the loss of a child of whatever age, however long ago, and no matter under what circumstances.

The service will take place on Sunday 8th March 2026 at 5.00pm and will be followed by light refreshments in the church.

One of our Lay Ministers, Canon Reg Bailey, will be leading the service having personally experienced the loss of a child in the past, and is well aware that all of us, at some point on the journey of our lives, experience being wounded by the painful loss of someone we have loved and who have loved us. The wounds in our hearts and souls take time to heal. Even then they leave a scar on our lives. There is a special poignancy over the loss of a child, and finding support is crucial to a healing process.

Coming together, in a place of peace and quiet such as the space we find in St John the Baptist Church can be especially helpful whatever our faith and whoever we are. We have found that those who experience this service where we remember the children we have lost will bear witness to how moving and healing this occasion can be for us all.

Please feel free to invite families with whom you have had contact who have experienced the death of their child to come to this service. (It does not need to be a bereavement from just this past year, but at any time.)

Call the church office for more information on 01763 243145.

## Contact Information

[www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk)

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# Minister's Musings

I am writing this on Ash Wednesday where we remember that we are dust, physical creatures, and Lent will end at Easter when we celebrate that Jesus rose from the dead in physical form. Lent is ultimately bookended with contemplating our physical nature.

Christianity teaches that the body and mind are deeply connected; we believe in the resurrection of the body rather than simply the immortality of the soul. We are formed in creation from dust, God became flesh in Jesus in a physical human form, we look for the renewal of creation in the new heaven and earth, a new physical reality, so we can proclaim in the creeds that we believe in the resurrection of the body.

We are physical people, and this includes people who have disabilities or those with different abilities. Sometimes our theology is errant with damaging effects. For example, church buildings are not just functional shelters for worship, they are expressions of theology in stone. When we see a pulpit or an altar raised, only accessible by steps, these architectural decisions say something of our view about God and his relationship with us. Except these decisions could also communicate that God only wants a limited relationship with those with physical disabilities if they cannot access the altar or pulpit as it implies, wrongly, that God could not possibly call them to be a preacher or a priest.

Disabilities or different abilities takes shape in many ways and, even if they do not present themselves physically, they are still physical in our bodies. For example, someone with a neurological condition might have been viewed as having an unclean spirit in biblical times, but we now understand that these conditions are located physically in our brains. Similarly, people who are neurodivergent, those whose brain's function differently from the majority, for example, those who are autistic or have ADHD or dyslexia, have not got a spirit that is unwelcomely superimposed upon their bodies. We cannot take Autism out of a person, for that person is someone who is autistic, neurodivergent - it is part of them, part of the person whom God has created and loved into being. To try and take this away from them would be to deny part of God's image within them.

The experience of many children with additional needs in church is that they are still expected to behave, meaning, to behave in a way that fits with the same expectations as anyone without those additional needs. If they can't, then they could be looked down on, asked to be quiet or, even worse, asked to leave.

May I encourage you to look up and watch a video of a 14-year-old Indian boy,

Aaryan Shukla, who is called a human calculator, who has smashed the Guinness World Record for making calculations, adding 100 four-digit numbers in his head in half a minute. You will see him stimming when he is calculating. Stimming is making repetitive physical movements (or vocalisations) that helps the person to concentrate or feel calmer. Someone with Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) will also often need to be doing something with their bodies in order to concentrate. Whilst, traditionally, we assume that someone needs to stop everything in order to concentrate properly, someone with ADHD might be able to maintain focus by doing the very things that a neurotypical person (someone who is not neurodivergent) would find distracting.

Jesus said that he came so that we might have life in its fulness (John 10:10) and St Irenaeus said that the glory of God is a human being fully alive. When we watch someone like Aaryan Shukla continually flapping his arms whilst making rapid calculations, we see someone who comes fully alive, enjoying life in its fulness. Just like saying to an internal combustion engine to stop its explosions and to stop repeatedly turning its crankshaft would be to deny it doing the very thing it was created to do, telling a neurodivergent person to stop doing things that don't fit with a neurotypical person, for example, to stop stimming, would be to deny what that person was created to do. Furthermore, it would stop them being fully alive, having life in its fulness. We need to ask ourselves how we welcome and include those with different needs, disabilities and abilities, for there can be no place for denying their way of expressing themselves and responding to God in Jesus' church. Church needs to be a place where people are helped to discover how to become fully alive, to have life in its fulness, and only then can a church consider itself to be a place of true welcome, a place where God's love is shared and people find salvation in Jesus.

We, at St John's, are forming a working party looking at Inclusion, so that everyone might have the best opportunities to be fully alive in Christ. To do that, we need to look at the things I've mentioned above, like any physical access, how we enable everyone to hear and see as much as possible and how we most fully include those with any additional needs. Rachel Thomas will be heading this group and if you would like to be a part of this group then please let me know by the end of March. We are blessed, especially in aspects of our church life such as Tea Time Praise, to have God bring us many people with differing needs, so may we truly live out our church motto, that we are a place where all are welcome and God's love is shared, so that they with us may become fully alive, having life in its fulness through Jesus Christ.

## Heath Watch with Holly (the little dog)

*Welcome to the Forty sixth article in a series of dog walking diaries, documenting the flora and fauna on the beautiful heath as the seasons change.*



## January and February 2026

2026 started with wintery weather and the mornings were cold damp and windy. Cold weather before Christmas day has a certain charm but after the holiday there is nothing to commend it at all, dog walkers wore overcoats and shuffled along with their heads down avoiding the wind, we must have looked like a Lowry painting! The full moon, in January, called the wolf moon, was at the start of the month, it fell on a clear night and was very bright. This bad weather proved to be the start of storm Gorriti.



I paused for a few moments and watched two rooks chasing off a Red Kite, there was a large number of Rooks, Crows and Magpies on the heath for most of January, they can be noisy when they need to be. The night skies were often clear and the early mornings frosty. However, by the middle of the month the weather had started to warm up, this, combined with the heavy rainfall caused the plant life to start growing, you could almost watch the heath growing. Trees seen from a distance gained a green colour.

Moving on to birds and other wildlife, there appeared to be more Kestrels this year, recently their numbers have been hit by modern farming methods, I hope they are making a comeback. I watched two squirrels jumping from tree to tree, I'm always surprised by how agile they are and I've seen a good number of Partridges their collective noun is a Covey; they actually live on the neighbouring farm land but are welcome visitors to the heath. There are two species of Partridge in the UK The Grey Partridge and The Red Legged Partridge, I'm not sure which I've seen, they are shy birds and fly away too quickly. Also in January, I saw Robins, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Long Tailed Tits, Wrens, Collard Doves, Wood Pigeons, Buzzards, Red Kites, various Sea Gulls and best of all, my favourite bird of the month, a Tree Creeper, a secretive bird that starts pecking for food at the base of a tree, spirals upwards pecking as it goes and flies to the base of the next tree and continues.

The Christmas season ended, Candlemas was on 1st. February and the weather started to warm but it was still very wet, there was a lot of rain and the ground

was soaked. Sometimes I see birds so regularly that I stop noticing them so I would like to start February's reminiscences by mentioning two species, firstly Magpies, although mainly black and white they have a vibrant blue wing. They are known for their interesting song and at one time were kept in cages (how cruel). The second bird that I am inclined to overlook is the Jackdaw, there has always been a lot in Royston and they are very tame. They have a reputation for collecting shiny objects.

Once we got into February I noticed that the birds were getting busier and noisier, especially the Blue, Great and Long Tailed Tits which I see most days, I believe there is a tradition that birds start nesting at St. Valentine's day but I can't remember the details. My favourite sighting of February was a close up view of a wren, I am always surprised, although I shouldn't be by now, just how tiny these birds are.



Finally, I have noticed quite a few cyclamen this year, the miniature type, not the large ones we have at Christmas, they are probably not truly wild but originate from nearby gardens, they are a lovely delicate flower and show colour when there is so little about. Now it is lent, spring is on the way.

More next time.....

*Last time I mentioned the absence of Turtle Doves. I read a newspaper article shortly after reporting that this is due to the increased number of Muntjac and other deer which eat the hedgerows that the Turtle Doves rely on, their numbers have dropped in the uk. from 250000 breeding pairs in 1960s to about 2000 today, the balance of nature is so precarious*

Anthony Pigg



## CHRISTIAN OF THE MONTH: HARRIET MONSELL

*Commemorated by the church of England on March 26th.*

Harriet Monsell was an Anglican nun and social reformer whose life bridged the worlds of Irish landed society and Victorian religious revival. Best known as the founder of the Community of St John Baptist, she devoted her later years to rescuing and rehabilitating vulnerable women in nineteenth-century England. Her work stands as a significant chapter in the history of Anglican sisterhoods and Victorian social reform.



Born Harriet O'Brien in 1811 in Ireland, she was the daughter of Sir Edward O'Brien, 4th Baronet, and grew up in a prominent Anglo-Irish family. Her upbringing was shaped by privilege, education, and exposure to public life. In 1834 she married Charles Monsell, who later became a politician and served as Postmaster General. Through her marriage, she moved within influential political circles in both Ireland and England. Tragedy marked her early adult life. After years of ill health and personal loss—including the death of her husband in 1850—Harriet experienced a profound spiritual turning point. Seeking deeper religious purpose, she came increasingly under the influence of the Oxford Movement within the Church of England, which emphasised sacramental life, community, and renewed religious devotion.

Harriet discerned a vocation to religious life—an unusual and sometimes controversial path in Victorian England, where Anglican sisterhoods had only recently begun to re-emerge after centuries of dormancy. In 1851, she founded the Community of St John Baptist in Clewer, near Windsor. The sisterhood was established under the guidance of Edward Pusey and quickly developed a clear and demanding spiritual rule grounded in prayer, discipline, and active service.



Her most enduring work centred on the Clewer House of Mercy. At a time when Victorian society harshly stigmatised “fallen women”—a term used for those involved in prostitution or deemed morally transgressive—she created a refuge that combined compassion with structure. The sisters offered shelter, education, and vocational training to women seeking to rebuild their lives. As Mother Superior, Harriet combined aristocratic poise with spiritual intensity. She insisted on high standards of obedience, prayer, and community life, shaping a disciplined religious order that endured well beyond her lifetime. By the time of her death in 1883, the Community of St John Baptist had expanded significantly and become one of the most prominent Anglican sisterhoods of the nineteenth century. At its height it had 45 houses, and had spread to the U.S.A.. Her legacy is twofold. Spiritually, she helped normalise the revival of religious communities within Anglicanism, contributing to a broader renewal of consecrated life. Socially, she advanced a more humane and restorative approach to women marginalised by Victorian moral codes.

**Royston Home-Start** is a charity which has been helping local families since 1983.



Being a parent has never been easy. It can be lonely, frustrating, heart-breaking and overwhelming. Life-changing events can happen to anyone. Royston Home-Start support families in Royston, Buntingford and surrounding villages, and the villages in South Cambridgeshire in the SG8 postcode. They support local families with children aged 9 and under who may be struggling with issues such as post-natal depression, isolation, physical and mental health problems, relationship problems, multiple-aged children, bereavement, and many others. Support includes:

- Helping parents build confidence in their parenting skills
- Providing companionship to reduce isolation
- Assisting with routines and organisation
- Offering a listening ear during difficult times
- Signposting families to specialist services where needed

The emphasis is always on empowerment rather than dependency. Volunteers work alongside parents, helping them recognise their strengths and develop coping strategies that last beyond the period of support. A volunteer-led Home Visiting Service is provided, alongside three specialised Family Support Groups in Royston, Buntingford and South Cambs..

Every Home-Start volunteer is trained to work alongside the family to overcome the challenges in family life, building up the parents' strengths and providing the support they need.

There is also a School Readiness Programme which supports families to prepare their children for school. It is possible to volunteer to work in Royston Home-Start as a Home Visiting Volunteer, a Family Support Group Volunteer, a Fund-Raising Volunteer, or a Trustee. Details can be found on their website.

To get in touch : You can ring on: 01763 262262      Email at: [admin@hrs.org.uk](mailto:admin@hrs.org.uk)

*As a church, St. John the Baptist is committed to giving 10% of our regular income to charities and missions. Royston Home-Start is one of those we regularly support. In 2026 we hope to donate over £2,000*



# Peat-Free Gardening: A Lenten Choice for God's Creation

As Lent began two short weeks ago, we entered a season of reflection, simplicity, and renewed attentiveness to God. Traditionally, Lent invites us to pause, to examine our habits, and to consider what we might lay down, not as an exercise in guilt, but as a way of making space for deeper faith and love. Lent can also offer us an opportunity to reflect on how we care for God's creation.



For many of us, the approach of spring brings thoughts of gardening: sowing seeds, refreshing pots, and preparing soil for new growth. It is a hopeful activity, full of promise and patience. One small but meaningful choice we can make at this time is to use peat-free compost.

Peatlands are extraordinary places. Though they cover a relatively small area, they store vast amounts of carbon, help regulate water levels, and provide habitats for rare plants and wildlife. When peat is extracted for compost, these fragile ecosystems are damaged, releasing carbon into the atmosphere and taking decades, sometimes centuries, to recover. Choosing peat-free compost is therefore a simple yet powerful act of care for creation.

Lent has always been about learning to live more gently and thoughtfully. By choosing peat-free compost, we practice a form of restraint that echoes Lenten values: taking only what we need, considering the wider consequences of our choices, and prioritising the common good over convenience. It is a reminder that our faith is lived out not only in prayer and worship, but also in the everyday decisions we make.

From an Eco Church perspective, caring for creation is an expression of our love for God and neighbour. Climate change and environmental damage affect the poorest communities first and hardest. When we choose more sustainable options, even in our gardens, we stand in solidarity with those whose lives and livelihoods are most vulnerable.

The encouraging news is that peat-free compost is now widely available and much improved in quality. Made from materials such as green waste, wood fibre, and coir, it works well for most gardening needs. It may require a little adjustment in how we water or feed plants, but this attentiveness can itself become part of the spiritual practice of Lent — slowing down, observing closely, and responding with care.

As a church community, Lent is a season we journey through together. We might choose to use peat-free compost in our gardens, share tips and experiences with one another, or simply encourage each other in making small, faithful changes. None of this is about perfection, but about intention.



As we journey through Lent and prepare the soil for new growth, may we also prepare our hearts, choosing practices that reflect God’s love for the whole of creation, and planting seeds of hope for the generations to come.

Revd. Jaime Roberts, Royston Parish Church Sustainable Living Committee

## Sustainable Events taking place in the Royston Community this Lent

The season of Lent season is also a wonderful opportunity to renew our care for God’s creation. While the following events taking place in Royston are not organised by the church, they align closely with our commitment to stewardship, community, and living more simply, and we encourage you to take part.

### A “Swish” – Share, Swap, Celebrate:

Royston Environmental Group are holding their first ever “Swish” on **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 10am-12 noon at The Old Bull Inn.**



A “Swish” is a joyful and practical way to refresh your wardrobe without buying anything new. Bring along good-quality clothes you no longer wear and swap them for “new-to-you” items brought by others. It’s sustainable, sociable, and a simple way to reduce textile waste.



**Litter Pick:** On **29th March, 2–4 pm**, why not join the **Royston Environmental Group** for a Community Tidy Up? The group will be meeting at the car park next to the Newmarket Road entrance to Icknield recreation ground. All equipment is provided (though you can bring your own if you prefer). A couple of hours can make a remarkable difference — and is a practical Lenten act of service.



**Plant a Tree for the Future:** you can register your interest with **Hertfordshire County Council** for a chance to receive a free native tree or hedging materials to plant in your garden through their tree giveaway scheme. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, support wildlife, reduce flooding, and bring beauty to our neighbourhoods. Planting a tree is a hopeful, long-term





## **CHEESE and WINE**

**SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 7:00PM**

**ROYSTON PARISH CHURCH**

**Tickets £12**

Tickets must be purchased in advance for catering purposes

To book tickets scan the QR code, or visit the website below

<https://tickets.myiknowchurch.co.uk/gb/NzcwMi0yNw/t>

Ticket price includes cheese, crackers and a glass of wine or sparkling elderflower.



Additional drinks available for a charge.

**PROCEEDS IN AID OF CHURCH FUNDS**

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More information and registration details can be found on the Hertfordshire County Council website (search "Hertfordshire tree giveaway") or use this QR code:



**Guided Nature Walk at Easter** Ray Munden from Royston Wildlife Group will be leading a walk **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April at 10:30am** organised by Royston Town Council's "Climate and Biodiversity Working Party" in the Green Walk Plantation area of Royston. Bring the family and find out about the birds and trees in our neighbourhood.

Don't forget the present Church cookbook has a large section of vegetarian and vegan recipes plus others throughout the book. I have tried quite a few and particularly recommend the Sweet potato, spinach and chickpea curry (page 56) and the Lentil shepherds pie (page 65).

Books are available in Church for only £2.50!

Lynda Burns

## VEGGIE RECIPE:

### TV PASTA

Around 30 years ago some of our, then, young people and I cooked this recipe in my kitchen with the TV cook, Patrick Anthony for his series in About Anglia 'Patrick's People'! It featured in our last Church cookbook!

4 tbsp olive oil	a little butter
2 cloves of garlic, crushed	2 onions, chopped
175gm mixed peppers, chopped	4 sticks celery, chopped
175gm carrots, chopped	175gm mushrooms, chopped
1 tin chopped tomatoes	a little sugar
1 tbsp tomato purée	375ml vegetable stock
1 tbsp fresh oregano, chopped or 1 tsp dried	
1 tsp grated nutmeg	salt & black pepper
1 tbsp red wine vinegar	1 tin aduki beans or any other beans, drained & rinsed.
Pasta of your choice, cooked	Parmesan cheese

Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion and cook for a few minutes until soft. Add the garlic and butter and cook for further couple of minutes. Stir in the tomatoes, tomato purée and sugar.

Add all the vegetables, followed by the stock and vinegar and season with salt, pepper, oregano and nutmeg. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add the beans and heat through thoroughly. Serve with the cooked pasta, garnished with the Parmesan and parsley if liked.

Lynda Burns.

As a church family we are concerned with looking after our world, and taking responsibility for reducing our individual impact upon it by considering carbon emissions and making less carbon-intensive choices where we can.

As a recent attendee of the Carbon Literacy course, I've undertaken to collect and send out tried and tested favourite vegetarian recipes from members of our church family.

This month's recipe is passed to me by Rosemary. It's from a BBC Good Food magazine. Thank you, Rosemary, for the recommendation!

Leek, pea and spinach orzo

Serves 4; Prep 20 mins; Cook 20mins

Ingredients:

1 tbsp olive oil, 4 large garlic cloves, finely sliced (or reduce this number!), 320g leeks, finely sliced, 250 g orzo, 320g frozen peas, 10g tarragon leaves, 320g spinach, half a lemon, zested and juiced, 2 tbsps crème fraîche

Method:

Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat and fry the garlic for 3-4 mins until soft and golden. Add the leeks and a pinch of salt. Cook for 6-8 mins until soft and wilted. Meanwhile, cook the orzo following pack instructions. Drain, reserving a little of the cooking water.

Stir the peas, tarragon and two large handfuls of the spinach into the leeks. Cook until the spinach is wilted before adding more, cooking in batches until all the spinach has been incorporated. Season well and stir in a splash of the reserved pasta cooking water. Stir in the lemon zest and juice, the orzo and crème fraîche, along with another splash of the cooking water to adjust the consistency as needed. Serve immediately.

Cath Byers

# Sunday Services for March 2026

## Services to be held in Royston Parish Church

### Sunday 1st March

09:00 - 09:45	<b>Communion Service that is quiet and reflective</b>
10:30 - 11:40	<b>Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments</b>
15:30 - 17:00	<b>Tea Time Praise</b>

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### Sunday 8th March

09:00 - 09:45	<b>Communion Service that is quiet and reflective</b>
10:30 - 11:40	<b>Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments</b>
14:30 - 16:00	<b>County Advance Bell ringing</b>
17:00 - 18:00	<b>When a child has died</b>

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### Sunday 15th March

09:00 - 09:45	<b>Mothering Sunday Communion Service that is quiet and reflective</b>
10:30 - 11:40	<b>Mothering Sunday Family Service (non-Eucharist) with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments</b>

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### Sunday 22nd March

09:00 - 09:45	<b>Communion Service in traditional language (BCP) that is quiet and reflective</b>
10:30 - 11:40	<b>Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments</b>
12:00 - 13:00	<b>Annual General Meeting and APCM</b>

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### Sunday 29th March

09:00 - 09:45	<b>BCP Communion Service that is quiet and reflective</b>
10:00 - 10:30	<b>Palm Sunday Procession from the top of the High Street before 10.30 am Communion service</b>
10:30 - 11:40	<b>Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments</b>

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