

THE BRIDGE February/March 2026

Church and Village magazine for Sweffling

Village website: sweffling@onesuffolk.net

The Rev. Claire Kiddy, revclairekiddy@gmail.com, Tel: 07469 718695



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Signs of Spring are appearing in Sweffling, despite the very cold weather we have experienced recently. As you walk around the village look out for snowdrops, daffodils already in bud and hazel catkins. The crocuses will soon follow. We are very fortunate to live in such a beautiful place! Whilst we enjoy our village, let's not forget those areas of the world that are suffering from war, deprivation, famine and persecution, and give thanks for our good fortune.

From the Rev. Claire Kiddy:

February can seem a month caught between the seasons – Christmas is packed away yet still the days are short and wintry, but if we look closely, we notice the light lingering a little bit longer each day. We see signs of hope, bulbs are beginning to push through the cold ground and snowdrops appear, almost unnoticed at first.

In the church calendar, February brings us Candlemas, the feast that marks the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. It's a moment that can easily be overlooked, but it holds something deeply precious. Simeon and Anna are two elderly figures who have waited faithfully for years and finally they see what they have long hoped for: the light of God coming into the world.

Light is a powerful image at this time of the year. We are all weary of darkness by February...dark mornings, dark evenings and sometimes dark news that weighs heavily on our hearts, yet Candlemas reminds us that God's light does not wait for perfect conditions. It shines into ordinary, imperfect, even difficult circumstances. February is also a month when we're invited to pause and reflect. Before we step into spring, Lent calls us to reflect once again on Jesus's journey to the Cross...there's time to ask ourselves simple but important questions.... Where have I noticed light recently? Who has helped me see hope when I struggled to find it myself? How might I be a small bearer of that light to others?

In our villages light often shows itself in very practical ways: neighbours check in on one another, meals are shared, lifts offered, conversation flows over a cup of tea or over the garden fence. These moments matter more than we sometimes realise. They are reflections of God's care, lived out in everyday faithfulness.

As we move through February and into March may the signs of spring fill our hearts with hope and our eyes be focussed on the light of God's love already at work in our communities.

Spring is a season which propels us forward as green shoots appear. Popular terms come to mind – 'spring forward' 'spring in my step'. Where will these new signs of life take you to this year? *Revd Claire*

REPORTS OF CHRISTMAS EVENTS IN SWEFFLING:



CHRISTMAS BRUNCH AND MARKET: On November 29th, the Village Hall was full with people enjoying delicious bacon (and egg) rolls and freshly brewed tea and coffee. Stalls were busy, and we are very grateful to all those who made, wrapped, baked, cooked and generally contributed in so many ways. We have to say a special thank you to Ladybird nurseries who generously donated pansy and wallflower plants to the plant stall. Thank you to everyone who manned stalls, spent the morning in the kitchen and to those who came and supported this very successful event, which raised £806 for church funds.

Ipswich Outreach: Lyz Frankin has sent the following report: I would like to thank the organisers of the Christmas Brunch and Market held in the Hut on 29th November, and everyone who supported my stall. A total of £70.15 was taken in sales on the day, plus a generous donation of £40. During the year a further £109.85 was raised from sales of my surplus garden produce and various donations. The total amount sent was £220. In November 2024 Ipswich Outreach was awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service which was presented to the charity on 14th June 2025.

Ipswich Outreach is a charity which helps the homeless and those in need in Ipswich by running a nightly Soup Kitchen providing food and items of clothing, bedding and toiletries. The charity has a purpose-built bus complete with serving facilities, seating, storage and two treatment rooms which are used by other agencies to provide support and advice to those in need.

CHRISTMAS BRASS CONCERT: Having to cancel the concert in 2024 due to severe weather conditions, it was great to welcome the Leiston Royal British Legion Brass Band to Sweffling Church on December 12th 2025. The theme was entirely Christmas and the audience enjoyed an eclectic programme of popular Christmas music and carols, expertly played by the band. The programme was enhanced by the narrative between the musical items, which set the pieces into context. Overheard was the comment "It was the best concert yet!" Delicious mince pies and tea/coffee were enjoyed in the interval and there was a Christmas Raffle. Many thanks to the Band, who turned out in force, to the mince-pie and tea and coffee makers, to those who donated raffle prizes, to the local businesses who advertised in the programme and to those who supported the concert. If you couldn't be there, you missed an excellent and enjoyable evening. Make sure you are there this year! Proceeds will be donated to St. Mary's Church.

BOOK THE DATE FOR 2026: FRIDAY DECEMBER 11th at 7.30 p.m.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT: The Church was beautifully decorated and the large Christmas tree looked splendid for this special Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Many thanks to all those who helped in any way. The Benefice Choir led the

singing of the well-known carols and also performed three choir items. Thank you to Charles Seely and the choir members for adding to our worship. The Christmas story was unfolded through the nine lessons – thank you to all the readers and to the Rev. Claire for leading the service. Mince pies, tea and coffee were served after the service, so thanks also to the cooks. **NEXT YEAR'S CAROL SERVICE: DECEMBER 20th.**

CHRISTMAS EVE MIDNIGHT BENEFICE HOLY COMMUNION:

The midnight service of Holy Communion was led by the Rev. Claire. it was a time of quiet reflection on the real meaning of Christmas before the bustle of Christmas day. We welcomed visitors from other churches in the Benefice, as well as friends from Sweffling.

WRITE THE SERVICE IN YOUR DIARY FOR NEXT CHRISTMAS EVE

EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE: The Epiphany Carol Service, led by John Tesh, was held on Sunday, January 18th and followed a similar pattern to the Christmas Nine Lessons and Carol service. The readings foretold the coming of the Magi to Bethlehem, the presentation of their gifts to the Christ child, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, their return to Nazareth and the revelation of Christ not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The Epiphany hymns and Christmas carols were chosen to complement the readings. It was a fitting conclusion to Christmas worship in the village.

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU

With many regrets, just before Christmas, we said goodbye to Jill and Geoffrey Abbott, who have now moved to Framlingham. Both Jill and Geoffrey have been very active and supportive members of the village and will be greatly missed. Jill has been both Parish Clerk and a Parish Councillor. She has organised and masterminded so many events in the village Hall, especially during and after lockdown, has been fete organiser and has always participated in church and village activities. Geoffrey served as church warden for many years and has been all things natural history in the village. He has agreed to continue writing Nature Notes for The Bridge (see later in this edition). We wish them every happiness in their new home but as they have not moved far away, we hope that we shall still see them frequently in church and at village events.

On January 19th, Pam Fagan left the village and moved to Beverley, Yorkshire, to be closer to members of her family. Pam and Eric moved to Sweffling in 1978 and Pam has lived here ever since, whilst Eric is at rest in the Memorial Garden. She was a great supporter of the church in Sweffling and we will really miss seeing her in the congregation.

One cannot imagine a village event without Pam being there, running a cake stall (her lemon drizzle cakes are legendary!), helping with the raffle, taking minutes at village meetings, etc., etc. All her friends are sad to see her go, but wish her every happiness in her new home.

Thank you to for all that you have contributed to village life in Sweffling and for your friendships

SWEFLING PARISH COUNCIL NEWS:

The draft minutes of the meeting held on January 13th 2026 have been posted on the village notice board at the end of Holden's Lane and also on the village website. Matters discussed included Grit bins, Neighbourhood Watch, Assets of Community Value, Jubilee Field including a new picnic bench and erection of bird and bat boxes, and Defibrillator

Training (see below). Mike Smithson gave a review of the Flooding Emergency Plan. More information on any of the items can be found in the minutes of the meeting. The next meeting of the PC is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10th 2026, in Sweffling Hut at 7.30 p.m. All members of the village are invited to attend.

DEFIBRILATOR TRAINING, THIS COULD BE LIFESAVING!

On Saturday, February 7th, in Sweffling Hut, commencing at 11.00.a.m., there will be a training session on the use of the defibrillator, which is situated outside by the steps to the Hut This will be conducted by St. John's Ambulance trainers and is free to all participants, no age limit. CPD will also be included. It is in all our interests to learn how to use this equipment. In the case of an emergency it could be life-saving. **Please ensure you attend.**



EASTER LILIES: At Easter we will again be having lilies, each one given in memory of family and friends. Their names will be written on a memorial scroll, which will be read out at the service on Easter Day, April 5th, 9.30 a.m.. If you would like to order a lily or lilies, please contact Diana Smith (663578) or Sheila Tesh (663518) by March 18th, or as soon as possible afterwards, as the lilies have to be ordered in good time in order to be open by Easter Day. Each lily will cost £5.00. Please give the names of those to be remembered together with the money for the lilies. The church will be

open for visitors on Easter Sunday and Easter Monday (10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.) to enjoy the lilies and remember our loved ones. We hope to serve refreshments to visitors.

SOUP LUNCH IN THE HUT: Jill Abbott has kindly agreed to organise a Village Soup Lunch on Wednesday February 11th in Sweffling Hut. Please note that this is the **second** Wednesday in the month **not the first** as previously. Jill writes: *Come and warm up with a soup lunch, 12.00 noon-3.00 p.m. Jigsaws and crafts to follow or just come for a chat with friends.*

LENT CHARITY SOUP LUNCH: The annual charity soup lunch for famine relief will be held in Sweffling Hut on Saturday, March 14th between 12.00 noon and 2.00 p.m. As much home-made soup and bread as you can eat. Wide variety of soups, including vegetarian and gluten free options. £6.00 for adults, £3.00 for children. Raffle. If you can't be there but would like to make a donation, or to give a raffle prize, please contact Sheila Tesh (01728 663518 or john.tesh@talk21.com).

NATURE NOTES February – March 2026:

Just before we left Sweffling I spent a short time outside the house after dark, noticing the sounds which have been such a big part of our winter environment. The Tawny Owls, as



always, were very noisy, with their familiar hooting call that we have talked about so often. One, in the large Oak tree in next door's drive, was particularly loud – we will certainly miss him! Tawny Owls are particularly strict about maintaining their territories from year to year, even in the winter. As nocturnal hunters, they need to learn



to use their woodland homes very efficiently to survive and to raise a brood. Our local Little Owl, who has become so familiar this autumn, was also very vocal with his sharp 'yapping' noise.

Across the valley, in Dodd's wood, there is every winter an enormous gathering of crows, specifically of Jackdaws and Rooks. which assemble there to roost for the night. How they get any sleep I don't know – they seem to be making a racket for much of the night, which



we could always hear when the wind was right. One winter I counted the Jackdaws as they gathered at dusk in a nearby field, and there were at least 1,500, with approximately as many Rooks! There are nowhere near that many Jackdaws in this bit of the valley, and they must gather from quite a wide area. Rooks use the roost only in mid-winter, as a superflock, after which they start using their traditional rookeries as roosts in their local groups. In fact, Rooks nest very early in the spring. In Rendham,

(and a small rookery near the bridge in Sweffling), you will see them quite soon bringing in twigs to repair their nests.

It is a bit premature to tell you about the birds in our new Framlingham town garden, but we have set up bird feeders and will send records to the RSPB bird count at the end of January. I hope that there will be House Sparrows, which I like, and Starlings which we lost in our Sweffling garden several years ago. More about these another time. But you can guess that we have a number of pigeons. Despite a complete lack of trees for shelter and nesting in this small town garden, there are a few Collared Doves, which wake us up as always with their three-note cooing. Wood Pigeons too are surprisingly tame, as they often are in towns. The earlier books I remember often referred to Wood Pigeons as 'Ring Doves' after the white markings on their necks, but this is hardly a ring, and as there is now another species called Collared Dove in our fauna, I am not sorry to see this old name go. More useful in identifying Wood Pigeons is the large white crescent on the wings. In flight, this white wing mark shows clearly from several fields away, and distinguishes the Wood Pigeon from any other bird. In particular, it helps to distinguish this pigeon from its cousin, the

Stock Dove, a farmland bird which is common enough in the Alde Valley although often overlooked, but which I do not expect to see in Framlingham. This is, I think, an attractive bird, a pretty blue-grey, with the wings in flight showing plain grey panels and with a darker border. In the Alde Valley they nest in holes in trees or in barns, as well as in owl nesting



boxes. Finally, in 'identification by numbers', all three pigeons can be distinguished by the number of 'coos' in their song. Collared Doves make three coos, Stock Doves only two, and Wood Pigeons, count them, five. *Geoffrey Abbott*

SWEFFLING CONSERVATION STEWARDS

An informal group called Sweffling Conservation Stewards was formed on 3rd January with the aims "Enhancing the value of Sweffling community spaces for wildlife and people while fostering a community spirit and co-operation with existing village organisations". The group is now listed under the Organisations tab on the village web site. Although the aims

may sound very grand, the emphasis is on "informal and friendly". Whether you have gardening skills, enjoy conservation work, or simply want to meet neighbours while doing something positive, there's a role for you. All ages welcomed including accompanied young children and older children working towards an award such as a DofE Award. Geoffrey Abbott is well known to readers through his wonderful Nature Notes in The Bridge, and, in spite of being very busy, he and Jill came to meet with us on 3rd January so that we could benefit from his wise guidance. We will work alongside existing village groups and have begun working in the old churchyard, Memorial Garden, Townland Trust Meadow and Jubilee Field and will be looking at protecting the areas of species-rich roadside verges. We have received a very generous donation of Sweffling-made bird and bat boxes and you may spot Julian up a ladder installing these at various locations including close to Sweffling Hut. Please do get in touch to receive details of working parties, survey days and other information. However able, or not, you are, please join us for working party tea and cake and chat and offer helpful comments! You can contact Amanda at 07860 589792 and choose to be contacted regularly by telephone, email or Whatsapp. *Please don't try Amanda's landline number as this is not working at the moment.* All information, sketches and photographs of local wildlife, which can be added to the web site and newsletters, will be gratefully received by email to swefflingamanda@gmail.com. Most of all, please help us care for our local environment!

REPAIRS TO THE CHURCH ROOF

There is an ongoing problem of rainwater leaking into the church, where the roof abuts onto the church tower. This is causing damage to the ceiling in the southwest corner of the body of the church. The Churchwardens and PCC have approved a major repair to the church roof/tower abutment, and the necessary List B approval has been obtained from the Diocese for the work to go ahead. This will require scaffolding to be erected and specialist roofing contractors have been appointed to carry out the necessary roof and leadwork. The proceeds donated to the church from the 2025 fete will be deployed to help offset the cost of these repairs, which could be in the region of £10,000, depending upon what the roofers uncover when they start work. When the external repair work has been completed it will be necessary to carry out internal repairs to the ceiling, yet to be approved and costed.

SWEFFLING COMMUNITY PUB UPDATE

We're very happy to say that the festive period was a success, thank you all for coming and joining us! It's been wonderful to see the pub so busy and we're grateful to have received some lovely comments and feedback via the new Suggestions box in the pub.

Main Share Offer update

We have been invited to proceed to full application for the Community Shares Standard Mark which provides a third party audit of our business plans and financial projections and may open up additional funding sources for us. Work will continue through January on this application and we expect a decision by the end of February if documentation gets to them in a timely manner. This will be the Committee's primary focus this month. We therefore expect the full share prospectus for the main pub purchase to be complete at the end of February, and our main Share Offer will likely run from the end of February until early December.

Loyalty Cards

Loyalty Cards are back! These will be available to shareholders only, and as per the previous scheme, will provide one free Pint or equivalent for 20 stamps. We have taken the old cards down to make room, if you would like yours for posterity, please ask one of the bar staff.

Volunteers

As always, the more hands to help the merrier, so if you haven't registered to volunteer yet please complete a paper form in the pub, we'd love to see you.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you. Oli Stockman chair@swefflingcommunitypub

CHURCH SERVICES: FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026 AND EASTER

Date	Venue	Time	Service
February 1st	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
February 8th	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
February 15th	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
February 18th Start of Lent	Ash Wednesday Badingham* Dennington	11.00 a.m. Also 7.00 p.m.	Holy communion with imposition of ashes
February 22nd	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
March 1st	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
March 8th	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
March 15th	Sweffling	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
March 22nd	Rendham	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
March 29th	Palm Sunday Bruisyard	10.00a.m.	Benefice Service, Holy Communion

* The Badingham service will be followed by a Lent Soup Lunch served in the Hare Chapel

Easter Services

April 3th	Good Friday Cransford	10.00.am.	Walk of Witness from St Peter's Church to the Christian Fellowship Chapel
April 5 th	Easter Sunday Dennington Sweffling Badingham Rendham	8.00 a.m. 9.30 a.m. 11.00 a.m. 5.00 p.m.	Lighting of Easter Fire and H.C. Holy Communion: Lily Festival Holy Communion Praise and Thanksgiving, Holy communion after service

There will be more details about the Easter services in the April/May edition of The Bridge, so please check at the end of March.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DEFIBRILATOR and CPD TRAINING FEBRUARY 7TH, SWEFFLING HUT, 11.00 a.m.

Training by St. John's Ambulance

All ages welcome. Free of charge. No restriction on numbers but please ring John on 663518 or Amanda 07860 589792 to let them know you plan to attend.

SOUP LUNCH IN THE HUT: WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11th

Come and warm up with a soup lunch, 12.00 noon-3.00 p.m.
Jigsaws and crafts to follow or just come for a chat with friends.



LENT SOUP LUNCH: SATURDAY MARCH 14th SWEFFLING HUT 12.00 noon – 2.00p.m.

The Annual Lent Soup Lunch, in aid of famine relief. As much home-made soup and bread as you can eat.

Adults £6.00, children £3.00

If you can help by making soup or donating a raffle prize, please contact Sheila Tesh (663618) or Anne Fitzgerald (664077).

All proceeds to Charity.



The ACC SPRING FLOWER SHOW will be held in Sweffling Hut on Saturday, April 11th. This is a show for everyone, new entrants welcome.

If you have spring bulbs That you have grown in pots or in the garden you can enter. Flower arrangement classes for children and adults. Schedules and entry forms will be available nearer the date. Please contact Lynda

Newson if you would like further details (01728 663 or

Lynda_newson@btinternet.com).

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
EVENING OF SUNDAY APRIL 12TH
(TIME TO BE CONFIRMED)
TAIZE SERVICE
JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL SERVICE OF
MUSIC, MEDITATION AND PRAYER.
ALL WELCOME**



Please e-mail any news items, events or short literary items for consideration for inclusion in the April/May edition to john.tesh@talk21.com before March 15th.

The editors welcome contributions for The Bridge but reserve the right to edit. Accuracy of the content is the responsibility of the submitter. We are limited to 8 pages and so may not be able to publish everything we receive. Dated items of village interest will be given priority. Please include your name and contact details in case we need to get in touch. **The Bridge is sponsored by St. Mary's Church and is delivered free to all houses in the Village.**