

Ruby Country Benefice

The parishes of Ashwater, Beaworthy, Black Torrington with Highampton, Clawton, Halwill, & Tetcott with Luffincott

Bulletin

December 2025 / January 2026



*Tell everyone of every nation,
"Praise the glorious power
of the LORD."*

Psalm 96:7 (CEV)

November



4 th	Funeral of Margaret BAKER (Highampton Churchyard)
7 th	Funeral of Jose TAYLOR (St. Peter ad Vincula, Ashwater)
12 th	Interment of ashes of Patrica BROWN (St. Peter ad Vincula, Ashwater)
24 th	Funeral of Freda BRANTON (St. Leonard, Clawton)
29 th	Interment of ashes of Sheila HANCOCK (Holy Cross, Tetcott)
29 th	Wedding (St Mary's, Black Torrington)

CONTACTS

Rector

Revd. Dr. Paul Fitzpatrick 01409 254 667

Contacts for Churches:

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Beaworthy	Richard Prior	07952 269 766
Black Torrington with Highampton:	Val Letheren	07484 880 770
Clawton:	Lorna Bowden	01409 271 384
Halwill:	John Lawlor	01409 221 987
		07768 818 646
	Kay Napier	07814 237 243
Tetcott:	Nikki Mitchell	01409 271 381

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Ruby Ringers Shirley Richmond 01409 231 764

Safeguarding

Ashwater	Val Letheren (interim cover)	
Beaworthy	Val Letheren (interim cover)	
Tetcott	Sharon Wonnacott	07980 989 262
Holywell Joint Council	Val Letheren	07484 880 770

DECEMBER

From the Rector's Desk

It is closing dark 4pm after two consecutive days of storm force rain. Henry and I have just returned from his walk, he is asleep and I am writing this.

Val commented that our benefice diaries are nearly full for the rest of the year back in October, and they are bulging now.

The words of Bishop Mike ring in my ears about Christ's load being light, whilst I sit contemplating what Advent will bring and what advent will mean this year.

Advent is my favourite time of the year. I love the chill, the bustle of crowds surging, empty churches where one can think, and pray, and rest. Holly, Mince pies, endless coffee, excited children, purple stoles, and a stillness... a not-quite-yet-ness.

Advent traditionally is the empty space before Christmas; fasts were common, work was hard, prayer mandatory, people grumpy and the time pretty miserable.

One of the joys of post-reformation Britain is that this changed and has become a time of retreat, a time to breathe, a time to wonder about Christ, his birth, the adventure to come; it is a time to empty ourselves and find, in silent prayer, the birthing of a fresh

relationship with Christ, and with each other.

Of course, there are the school concerts, the nativity services, carols, the mandatory visit to Waterstones (and the avoidance of the awful huts outside the cathedral), the pleas for no more silly socks or jumpers, and the longed-for day itself (and the week of rest thereafter!)

Much as I love Christmas (I do), there is always, every year, without fail, a sadness that Advent has gone again, like a welcome guest who knows when to leave, but whom, secretly, you can't wait to invite back again. A deep-seated sadness of something special passing. It is the time of the year when I most readily, and very warmly, remember the family and friends who are no longer with us.

Don't let this special time go by. Days and weeks are all too quickly lost and their meaning made absent by busyness.

Take this time and use it well. Enjoy it and share it with God. It doesn't matter what you do, or how you use it - so don't do what someone else tells you to do!

But do not let it pass. Don't lose it. It is, literally, irreplaceable.

Happy Advent and Happy Christmas. Paul.

From the Parish Registers image (pg. 2) © Parish Pump,

Cover image: GWR Puzzle from Shirley Richmond

Clawton Carol Service poster - Photo by [Aaron Burden](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Pg. 10, Advent Candles at St. Leonard, Clawton - display and photo by K. Deacon.

Thanks to Revd. Dr. Paul Fitzpatrick, Val Letheren, Lorna Bowden, Diana Cutler, John Lawlor, Diana Marriott, Nikki Mitchell and Shirley Richmond for their contributions.



**Monthly Bible Study at
St. Mary's, Black Torrington**

The 12 Minor Prophets in the Bible are a collection of twelve books from the Old Testament, often referred to as the "Minor Prophets" due to the shorter length of their writings, not because of their importance. They convey messages from God to the people of Israel and Judah. Each has to be seen in its own cultural and historical context. These are powerful messages, short and pointed and come from real issues in real communities. When we look at these in context the Old Testament opens up for us and we begin to understand it in the same way that as Jesus did.

Oct 26

Hosea: God's love for Israel despite their unfaithfulness.

Nov 23

Joel: The day of the Lord and repentance

Jan 25

Amos: Social justice and God's judgment.

Mar 22

Obadiah: Judgment against Edom

Ruby Country Benefice

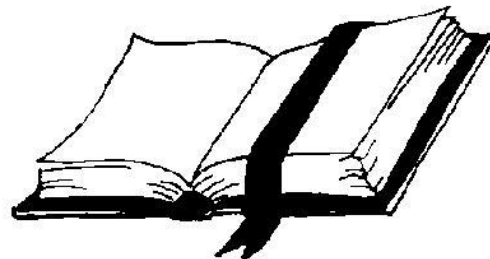
Services for December 2025

Sunday 7th 2 nd Sunday of Advent	9:30am	Ashwater	Morning Service
	11am	Black Torrington	Holy Communion
	11am	Halwill	Morning Service
	5:30pm 6pm	Tetcott	Tea and Service
Sunday 14th 3 rd Sunday of Advent	11am	Black Torrington	Café Church
	11am	Clawton	Holy Communion
	6:30pm	Beaworthy	Evening Service
Friday 14th	7pm	Black Torrington	Carol Service
Sunday 21st 4 th Sunday of Advent	11am	Halwill	Carol Service
	2pm	Clawton	Carol Service
	6pm	Ashwater	Carol Service
Tuesday 23rd	7pm	Beaworthy	Carol Service
Wednesday 24th Christmas Eve	2pm	Ashwater	Crib Service
	3pm	Black Torrington	Nativity Service
	7pm	Tetcott	Christmas Eve Crib Service
Thursday 25th Christmas Day	9am	Beaworthy	Said Christmas Day Holy Communion
	10:30am	Halwill Baptist Church	Ecumenical Service with Revd. Paul
Sunday 28th Christmas 1	11am	Beaworthy	Holy Communion

Weekly - all welcome from the benefice

Every Wednesday	10am	Black Torrington	Morning Prayer
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Lectionary Readings for December 2025



Sunday 7th 2nd Sunday of Advent Isaiah 11:1-10 Psalm 72:1-7, 18, 19 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12 Services at Ashwater, Black Torrington, Halwill, Tetcott.	Sunday 14th 3rd Sunday of Advent Isaiah 35:1-10 Psalm 146:4-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11 Services at Black Torrington, Clawton, Beaworthy.	Sunday 21st 4th Sunday of Advent Isaiah 7:10-16 Psalm 80:1-8, 18-20 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25 Services at Halwill, Clawton, Ashwater
Sunday 24th Christmas Eve Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4 John 1:1-14 Services at Ashwater, Black Torrington, Tetcott.	Sunday 25th Christmas Day Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20 Service at Beaworthy.	Sunday 28th Christmas 1 Isaiah 63:7-9 Psalm 148 Hebrews 2:10-18 Matthew 2:13-23 Service at Beaworthy.

*To help you prepare for one of our services or to
read at home-*

Ruby Country Benefice

Services for January 2026

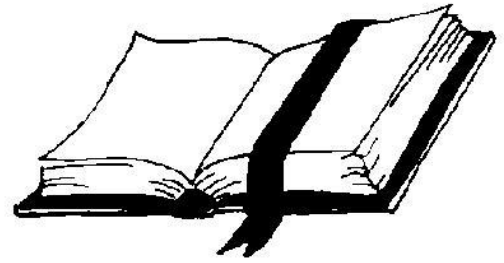
Sunday 4th Epiphany	9:30am	Ashwater	Morning Service
	11am	Black Torrington	Holy Communion
	11am	Halwill	Morning Service
	5:30pm 6pm	Luffincott	Tea and Service
Sunday 11th Baptism of Christ	11am	Black Torrington	Café Church
	11am	Clawton	Holy Communion
	6:30pm	Beaworthy	Evening Service
Sunday 18th 2 nd Sunday of Epiphany	9:30am	Ashwater	Holy Communion
	11am	Black Torrington	Morning Prayer
Sunday 25th 3 rd Sunday of Epiphany	11am	Beaworthy	Holy Communion
	11am	Clawton	United Service Café Church

Sunday 25rd January	6pm	St. Mary's Church, Black Torrington	Informal Bible Study (all welcome)
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Weekly – all welcome from the benefice

Every Wednesday	10am	Black Torrington	Morning Prayer
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Lectionary Readings for January 2026



Sunday 4th Epiphany Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12 Services at Ashwater, Black Torrington, Halwill, Luffincott.	Sunday 11th Baptism of Christ Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13 - end Services at Black Torrington, Clawton, Beaworthy	Sunday 16th 2nd Sunday of Epiphany Isaiah 49:1—7 Psalm 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42 Services at Ashwater, Black Torrington
Sunday 23rd 3rd Sunday of Epiphany Jeremiah 1:4-10 Psalm Acts 9:1-22 Matthew 19:27-end Services at Beaworthy Clawton.		

*To help you prepare for one of our services or to
read at home-*

Mission Matters

Building upon our mission theme of ‘sharing our stories’, and Kay’s wonderful narratives around memorisation this last year, this Advent I plan to mark each Sunday with a letter, from me, or, to me, instead of a sermon. I want us to think carefully about this amazing time, and to use it wisely. This is not a new idea; the concept of ‘narrative theology’, a movement that rightly seeks to adopt standards of truth and reasoning from the biblical narratives itself, whilst keeping the biblical position of revelatory truth in the Holy Spirit portrayed in the narrative form of scripture itself. This form of theology allows scripture to work in the context of its setting.

Our brains respond to story, our identity is based upon story; so, as we look to the unveiling of the birth narrative afresh this year, I want us to explore how we share Christmas with those around us.

The Advent adventure begins...



Sunday 14th December
Cafe Church

St Mary's Church

Black Torrington

11am

Val is unavailable so we have

Special Guests

Camile and Camron

helping with this service

Come and give them your support.

St Mary's Church
Black Torrington with Highampton

The Nativity

Christmas Eve at 3pm

Come and be part of this wonderful Story.

Come dressed as someone who may of been there!

Our Vicar has said he will include all that come.
Who's up for the challenge

Morning Prayer

Every Wednesday Morning, the Benefice holds a Morning Prayer service at St Mary's Church, Black Torrington.

10am

This service is Lay led and lasts for about half hour.

Everyone is welcome to attend

If the weather is bad

Please phone Val 07484880770

to check it's happening

Shirley Richmond

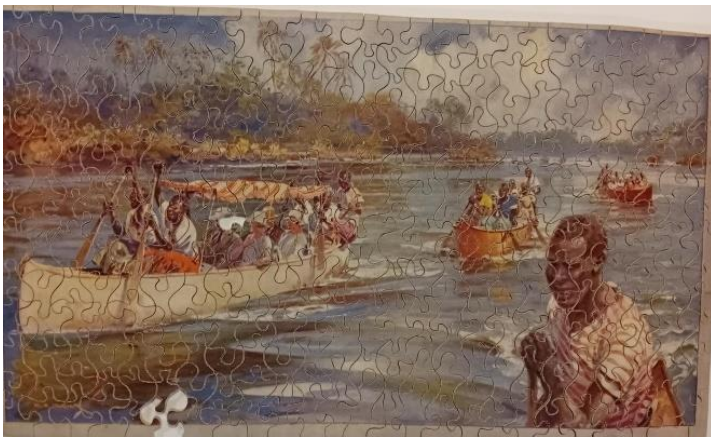
Wooden jigsaws that never made it to the Festival

Sadly there were several jigsaws that didn't get there. Each had one piece or more missing.

'Yachts' was cut by Dr Gwynne. The box was marked 'complete', so we made it up and it wasn't - but we still hope that perhaps the missing pieces will be found. Typically it was push-fit - slides everywhere or non-interlocking - and so it rests in a temporary frame. No picture was provided and it was dark and stormy and hard to do. The original was a watercolour by JW Gozzard 1861 - 1926.



'Zambezi River' dates back to the late 1920s-30s. It is one of the South Africa series cut by AVN Jones, a company whose expertise rivalled those of Chad Valley and Victory. Sadly the box was incomplete, but the puzzle has been re-homed.



There was a very happy ending to 'Model Railway'. This is a Chad Valley poster/puzzle for GWR [Great Western Railway.] Chad Valley won a prestigious contract from GWR and produced over a million promotional puzzles for them between 1924 and 1939. When we finished the puzzle there was a piece missing, so we bought the puzzle and have since had the missing piece made. Can you spot it? (picture on Bulletin cover)

**Come and join us
- open to all**



**Every 2nd Wednesday
of the month**

**Meet fellow puzzlers, puzzle,
chat, donate, loan, borrow**

Tea, coffee available.

We look forward to seeing you



12th November 2025

The First gathering of [St. Mary's Ruby Puzzlers](#) We met, we puzzled, we chatted over tea, coffee and biscuits. A successful social community time. Ann made a generous donation of a Wentworth puzzle to our collection, thank you very much



ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH, CLAWTON

United Church Carol Service

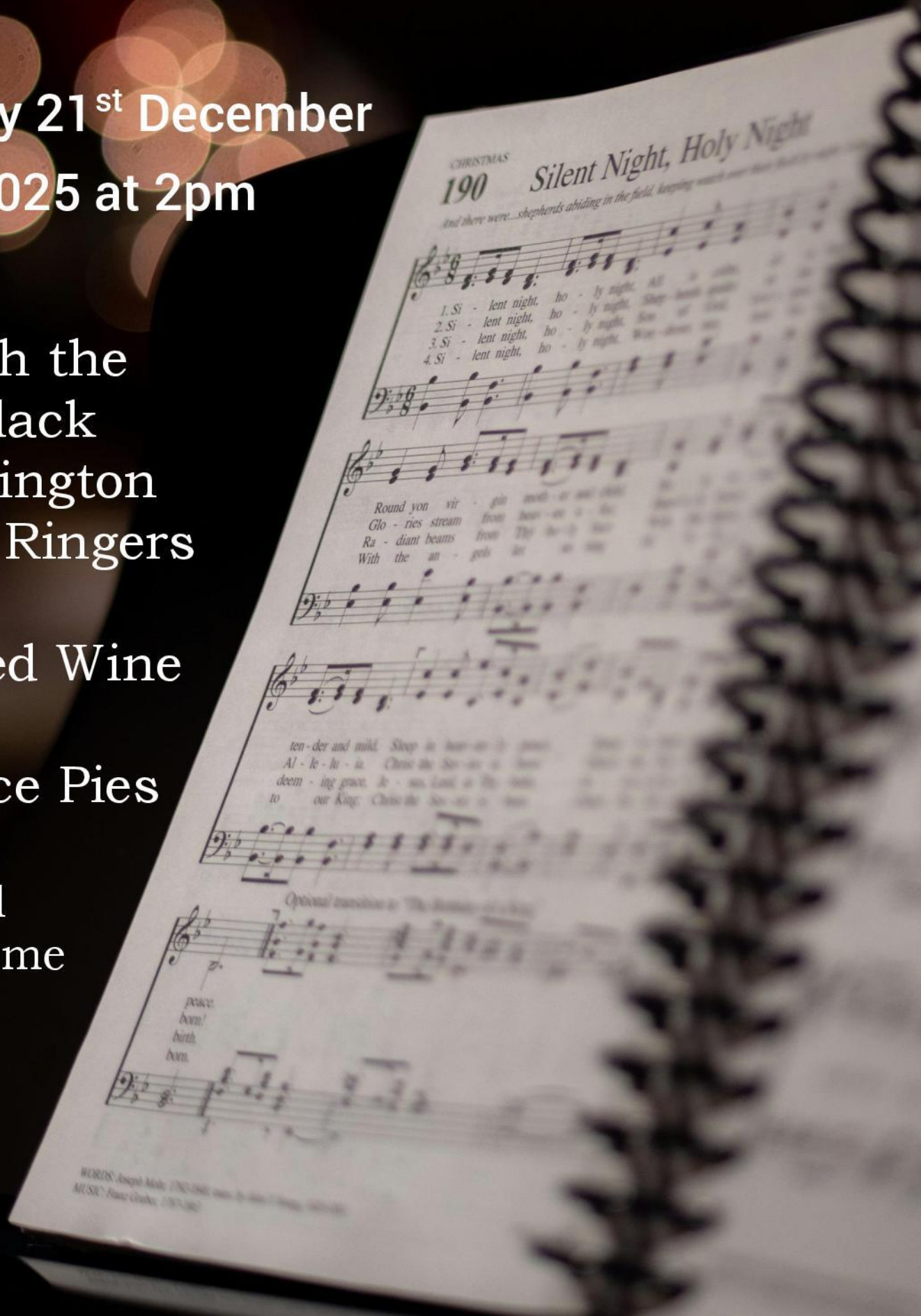
Sunday 21st December
2025 at 2pm

with the
Black
Torrington
Ruby Ringers

Mulled Wine

Mince Pies

all
welcome





Carols by Candlelight

HALWILL CHURCHES TOGETHER
invite you to join us
to celebrate Christmas
at a service of
Carols By Candlelight

YOUR FAVOURITE CAROLS

Sunday
7th December 2025
7.00pm
BAPTIST CHAPEL
Halwill Junction

WRAP UP WARM!!

***Carol Singing around the Village
Assemble outside the village shop
DECEMBER 22ND 6.00PM***

Halwill Churches Together



St. Peter & St. James

Parish Church

Traditional
Carol Service
of
Lessons & Carols

Sunday

21st December 2025

11.00am

followed by

mulled wine & mince pies

Everyone very welcome



LESSONS
and
CAROLS

Christmas Eve
service

At Tetcott church

7pm

All welcome



LUFFINCOTT CHURCH
SUNDAY 4TH
JANUARY
5.30PM MULLED WINE
6PM SERVICE

CANDLEIT SERVICE



Ashwater Church

Sunday 21st December: Nine Lessons & Carol Church Service

Wednesday 24th December – Crib Service, 2pm

Halwill Church

Halwill Churches Together - Village Candle-lit Carol Service in the Baptist Chapel on Sunday 7th December at 7.00pm
Halwill Church - Traditional Service of Carols and Lessons in Halwill Parish Church at 11.00am on Sunday 21st December followed by Minced Pies and Mulled Wine.

Halwill Churches Together - Carol Singing Around the Village - assemble at 6.00pm outside the village shop. Wrap up warm.

For January

4th January Halwill Church - Morning Worship at 11.00am

18th January - Halwill Churches Together 11.00am Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at Madworthy Chapel (no service in Halwill)

21st December 2.00pm Carol Service at Stowford Meadow Baptist Chapel lead by the Stowford Meadow Singers.

Parson Jack Russell

Art, Craft & Photography Exhibition



**June 12th -15th
2026**

**St Mary's Church,
Black Torrington**

For more details:

PJR Exhibition

Little Acorns, Burdon Lane,
Highampton, Beaworthy EX21 5LX
Phone: 07484880770

val.letheren@btinternet.com



Five Strategic Priorities



Missional Leadership



Missional DNA



Vocations



Children & Young People



Mixed Ecology

The next Bulletin will be for FEBRUARY and will arrive at the end of January 2026

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our readers.

TO THOSE WHO SUBMIT TO THE BULLETIN

Firstly, thank you for your contributions, which always shape our Bulletin.

Please make sure you send submissions to

rubbycbulletin@gmail.com

Anything not sent to the above email **will not** get into the publication.

Work begins on the bulletin on the 15th of each month, so please get submissions in BY THE FIFTEENTH.

Thank you.

Please feel free to join us!

No experience needed!



Church Tower Bell Ringing

Wednesday evenings

6:30pm – 8:30pm

1st Wednesday – Langtree

2nd Wed. – Black Torrington

3rd Wed. – Shebbear

4th Wed. – Black Torrington

5th Wed. – Roaming!



St Mary's, Black Torrington

Morning Prayer

Every Wednesday

10am

ST MARY'S RUBY RINGERS



Weekly Handbell Ringing

Tuesday afternoons at St.

Mary's, Black Torrington

2:15pm setup

2:30pm – 4:30pm

You go nowhere by accident.
Wherever you go, God is sending you there.
Wherever you are, God has put you there.
He has a purpose in your being there.
Christ, who indwells in you, has something He
wants to do through you, wherever you are.
Believe this, and go in His grace, and love and
power.

Rev. Dr. Richard C. Halverson's Benediction
U.S. Senate Chaplain from 1981 to 1994
Photo by [Francisco Delgado](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Victorian-Era Ruby Christmas Marriages

This month, I thought I would use Christmas as an inspiration, and set to looking through the burial records. On finding little inspiration – no babies born named “Holly” or “Christmas” (I have a distant cousin, born in the 1800s on December 25th who had “Christmas” as a middle name – alas, no such luck here.)

My next thought was, again, inspired by my own family tree, and I set about finding people from our parishes who were married on Christmas Day, as it was quite “popular” in the Victorian years.

I say popular, but for many workers, it was the only time that people had guaranteed off work, so an ideal day. In some churches, Christmas Day weddings and Baptisms were encouraged and done free of charge – well, if you were going to be in church anyway, why not!

Despite my ancestry – and those who inspired the Find My Past Article [“Why did so many people marry on Christmas Day”](#), it seems not to be the case at all for Ruby.

I was unable to access the marriage records for Tetcott online, but trawled through records 1837-1915 for Ashwater, Beaworthy, Black Torrington, Clawton, Highampton, Halwill and Luffincott, taking in around 800 marriages, and can confirm that between the years, there were three Christmas Eve weddings, six Christmas Day weddings and six Boxing Day weddings. I’ll pop all the info on a table on the next page, just in case you were interested.

Next in my plan was to find one of these couples buried in our churchyards. This was a complete failure. I’ve got parents and children, but not an extant gravestone for any of the couples.

Date of Marriage	Bride	Groom	Church married at
Christmas Eve 1852	Ann MARKS	Richard MASON	Clawton
Christmas Eve 1881	Harriet HILL	John WATKINS	Highampton
Christmas Eve 1910	Margaret Louise RABLEY	Archibald Edward COE	Ashwater
Christmas Day 1839	Elizabeth VENTON	Henry Perkin BLIGHT	Black Torrington
Christmas Day 1848	Anne PARSONS	Josiah BASUT	Halwill
Christmas Day 1873	Mary BALSDON	Lewis PERKIN	Black Torrington
Christmas Day 1875	Eliza Ann STEVENS	William DAWE	Ashwater
Christmas Day 1879	Mary Elizabeth BAILEY	Benjamin PHARE	Black Torrington
Christmas Day 1880	Rebecca Kate FROST	Richard HILL	Highampton
Boxing Day 1837	Joanna PRIOR	William COLLACOTT	Black Torrington
Boxing Day 1862	Fanny HEYSETT	James HARRIS	Highampton
Boxing Day 1867	Amelia HOCKIN	Albert HEARN	Black Torrington
Boxing Day 1871	Mary Ann Cutland PETHERICK	James HOLE	Highampton
Boxing Day 1898	Eliza Ann GAY	Fred NIX	Highampton
Boxing Day 1904	Eda LAMBLE	Arthur GOMER	Black Torrington

So, my last – and current - plan is to just have a look at some of these Christmas Day couples – people from our Benefice whose Christmases looked that little bit different over a hundred years

Elizabeth VENTON and Henry Perkin BLIGHT married 25th December 1839, Black Torrington.

Both Elizabeth and Henry were marrying for the second time. Henry had married Grace DAMEREL on 1st May 1820 at Bradford, and Elizabeth had married John VENTON at Black Torrington on 3rd June 1824 – definitely less romantic sounding dates!

Both their spouses were buried at Bradford, so one can assume this to be where they met. John VENTON's gravestone is still visible at Bradford Churchyard.

Elizabeth was the daughter of Joseph CHAPMAN and his wife Susanna ODAM. Their gravestone is displayed to the side of the porch at St. Mary's, Black Torrington.

At the time of their marriage in 1839, Henry was listed as a butcher, and Elizabeth a dealer in China.

We first find them in the 1841 census at Totleigh Mill, where the 40-year old Henry is the Miller. He is living with 35 year old Elizabeth and their daughter Elizabeth, aged just one year. Also with them are the children of Elizabeth's first marriage, the VENTONs: William (15), Mary (13), John (11), Elizabeth (9), Caroline (7), and Joseph (aged 4).

CHAPMAN grave at Black Torrington >



In the 1851 census, the family have moved to Upcott Mill in Sheepwash.

Henry is still a Miller, and it is revealed that he was born at Langtree in Devon. He is living with his wife Elizabeth, Elizabeth's daughter Caroline VENTON, and four children of the marriage – Elizabeth Grace (11), George Odam BLIGHT (9) – he is buried at Chilla Chapel, Hubert Blight (7) and Ann Blight (4).

The family are at North Street in Torrington by the 1861 census. Henry and Elizabeth – aged 62 and 57 – are living alongside their children, daughters Elizabeth (21) and Ann (14) their sons George (19) and Herbert (16) [sic] who followed their father into the milling profession, three servants – William VINTON [sic] who, is technically a stepson! Henry DAWN, aged 19 from Black Torrington, and 11-year-old Daniel HOWARTH from Devonport. Also living with them is 3-month-old “Visitor” Rose E HORNE from Shebbear.

Elizabeth BLIGHT, nee CHAPMAN, previously VENTON was buried in 1866 at St. Lawrence Churchyard in Sheepwash. Her husband Henry Perkin BLIGHT died and was buried there the following year.

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**Ann PARSONS and Josiah BASUT
married 25th December 1848, Halwill.**

I have been able to find very little out about this couple. Anne PARSONS was aged 27 at the time of her marriage and was the daughter of George and Phillippa PARSONS of Halwill Moor. When she married Josiah, he was listed as a minor, and son of John BASUT of East Wonford, Milton Damerel. It is possible that BASUT is an

alternative spelling of BASSETT, however I have been unable to trace either Josiah or Ann in a census. This could be because they have moved out of the county or country, died, or their names are spelled so incorrectly, it would take me a long time to figure it out.

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**Mary BALSDON and Lewis PERKIN
married 25th December 1873, Black Torrington**

Lewis PERKIN was born in around 1850 in Shebbear, the son of William and Fanny PERKIN, and by the time of the 1871 census, he was a servant to the SLADE family at Dipper Mill.

Mary was the daughter of William BALSDON of Gravesend and Susanna SQUIRES of Black Torrington. At the time of the 1851 Census, the family were living at Jennings in Black Torrington.

At the time of the 1881 census, the family are living at Braundsworthy Moor. 31-year-old Lewis and Mary are living with their three children, Bessie (6), William (5) and Rosina, born that year.

The family have moved to Gorvett, Black Torrington by 1891. Lewis and Mary are no longer declaring themselves as the same age; in the preceding decade, Lewis has only aged 8 years while 41-year-old Mary has aged as expected! They are living with their ten-year-old daughter Rosina, sons Lewis (5) and Frederick (2), and a 5-month-old "Lodger", Glidar SANDERS.

The 1901 Census shows the family still at Gorvett. Lewis is

employed as a Stone Quarry Contractor, still living with Mary and his son Frederick, but his uncle Richard PERKIN aged 86 has moved in with them, presumably for care in old age.

Lewis died in 1909. I have been unable to find the burial record but it is likely he is buried at Black Torrington.

In the 1911 Census, Mary is living alone at Gorvett. I then lose track of her.

Briefly, I picked up on the short life of their daughter Rosina. Rosina PERKIN married Thomas James CORNISH and they had seven sons and a daughter, and they lived at Derril.

Rosina lived a short life, and died on 10th April 1919, aged 38. She was buried at Pyworthy. However, at the same time as her death, she delivered her youngest son Arthur Fred CORNISH who died a year and seven months later on 1st November 1920. He is buried with his mother.

Also commemorated on their headstone is their second-born son, Harold Ernest CORNISH who was killed on 13th September 1920, shortly before the death of his baby brother.

Harold was working at the Meldon Railway Quarries near Okehampton when he was hit by a train and “cut to pieces.” He stepped out of the way of a ballast train and into the path of a faster-moving train approaching on the other road.

A third of their children, Wilfred Clarence CORNISH, a Private in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry died on 11th July 1944, and is buried at Bayeux, France and commemorated on the War Memorial outside the church at Holsworthy.

Thomas CORNISH remarried shortly after Rosina's death, and both he and his second wife Kate are buried elsewhere in the cemetery at Pyworthy.

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**Eliza Ann STEVENS and William DAWE
married 25th December 1875, Ashwater**

At the time of their marriage, both William and Eliza are servants. William is the son of John DAWE, and Eliza's parentage is unknown.

On the 1881 Census, they are at Forda Cottage in Ashwater. William is a 25-year-old farm labourer from Tetcott, his wife Elizabeth [sic] is a year younger at 24, and they have three children; Frederick (4), Sarah Ellen (3) and James (1).

I was unable to find the family in the 1891 census or 1901, but by the time of the 1911 census, they are living at 1 Ratherton Cottage, Holsworthy Hamlets.

William and Elizabeth are living with their 20-year-old daughter Emma who has married insurance agent John STONE, and they live with Margaret STONE, the DAWE's 18-month-old granddaughter.

By the 1921 Census, the family have moved south, and are in Harberton. William DAWE is a general estate worker for Sir Robert HARVEY on the Wimbridge Estate. He is living with his wife Elizabeth, daughter Emma STONE and her two children, Margaret and Bernard. I then lose track of this family.

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Mary Elizabeth BAILEY and Benjamin PHARE married 25th December 1875, Black Torrington

Benjamin was the son of John PHARE and Mary WHITE, born and baptised at Highampton. In the 1871 census, he is the Indoor Servant to the MARTIN family at East Odam, Highampton.

Mary Elizabeth was the daughter of Joseph BAILEY, tailor at Black Torrington and his wife Elizabeth KNIGHT. Mary was born around 1858, and, in the 1861 census, they are living at 2, Long Cross, Black Torrington.

In the 1881 census, Benjamin and Mary PHARE are living in Back Lane, Black Torrington. 25-year-old Benjamin is a Carpenter, and he is living with his 23-year-old wife Mary and one year old son, John.

In 1891, the family are living at Dimson, Calstock. Benjamin is a general labourer, living with his wife Mary and children John (11), Mary (9), Richard (5), Thomas (3) and Henry (1). The last three children were born in Calstock so the family would have moved down in the mid-1880s.

In the 1901 census, the family are still at Dimson, Calstock, but one can see what drew the family south. Benjamin's occupation is listed as "arsenic burner – invalided." He has moved to Calstock to work as a miner, and this shows the less romantic side of the banks of the Tamar down near Morwellham Quay. Benjamin and Mary are living with seven sons; Richard (15), Thomas (13), Henry (10), George (8), Sydney (7), Ernest (5) and Charles (2).

In the 1911 Census, the family have moved to Gunnislake. Benjamin does not have an occupation listed while they live at Chelsworthy. Mary is still living with them, as are sons Ernest (15), Charles (12) and William (8).

By this time, their son Richard has taken up work as a Coal Miner Hower – “hewing” or cutting the coal away from the face. What we think of when we think of a coal miner. He had moved to Witton Gilbert in Durham. This Colliery was open until 1960.

Around 1918, Mary and Benjamin moved up to Chester-Le-Street near their son in Durham. Mary died here in 1919, and Benjamin died in 1923.

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**Rebecca Kate FROST and Richard HILL
married 25th December 1880, Highampton**

Another family I know little about. At the time of their marriage, Richard HILL is a Butcher, son of James HILL, a shopkeeper, and Rebecca – Known as Kate – is a schoolmistress, the daughter of Thomas FROST.

Prior to their marriage, I can find them both in the 1871 censuses. Richard HILL is living with his parents James and Elizabeth HILL at Longwood, Highampton, where his father is a farmer of 50 acres. His sisters Ann (27), Elizabeth (22), Harriet (13) and Rhoda (10) are all glovers, and his younger brothers Thomas an errand boy, and William (6) a scholar. The fact that almost all the family were in employment indicates they were likely in need of money.

Rebecca is living in Macclesfield with her family, her father Thomas a builder and machine maker, employing 5 men and 2 boys.

The 1881 census is the only one I find the couple together in. They are at Bonfire Hill, Black Torrington. 26-year-old Richard is still a butcher, and 23-year-old Rebecca a Public Elementary Teacher.

So, as you eat your turkey and watch the King's speech, raise a glass to the couples that a century plus ago were celebrating their wedding day or anniversary. All would have had very Merry Christmasses, and – one day – heartbreaking ones alone.

Where there is light, there is dark, and my heart goes out to all of you experiencing a less-than-bright season. But even in the darkness there is hope, love – and light again. And that is what I wish you this Christmas. Love and hope.

Kay Napier
November 2025

Sources:

Findmypast.com

Familysearch.org

GRO Births and Deaths records

Marriage records 1838-1915 of Ashwater, Beaworthy, Black Torrington, Clawton, Halwill, Highampton, Luffincott

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/discoveries/christmas-day-weddings>

<https://www.calstockhistory.org.uk/mining-in-calstock-parish.html>

Similes

Can you complete these common phrases?

E.g. Fit as... *a fiddle*

1. Dull as...
2. Fresh as...
3. Pretty as...
4. Sharp as...
5. Hard as...
6. Dead as ...
7. Right as...
8. Guilty as...
9. American as...
10. Clean as...

12 Days of Christmas

Maths

If on the first day of Christmas, you got a partridge in a pear tree (one gift), on the second day of Christmas you got a partridge in a pear tree and two turtle doves (3 gifts today plus yesterday's one = 4) ... By the end of the 12 Days of Christmas, how many total gifts would you have?

TRICKY QUESTION: How many of them would be birds?

Nativity

Unscramble these well-known Nativity characters

1. SHOEJP
2. DEESSRHHP
3. ELRBGIA
4. UJSSE

1. How many ghosts show up in *A Christmas Carol*?

2. What colour are mistletoe berries?

3. Which King was crowned on Christmas Day?

The answers will be in the February Bulletin.

Answers to November's Quiz

1. Manchester. 2. Banoffee Pie. 3. Donated Stonehenge to the British Government. 4. Polo. 5. Guernica. 6. Bookshelf. 7. Dame Maggie Smith. 8. Runcible. 9. Clacton. 10. Robert Hooke. 11. Wells. 12. Twenty.

Senior Clergy Reflection from the Rt. Rev'd Dr. Mike Harrison,
Bishop of Exeter

The church has often used the season of Advent, the start of the Church's year in December as a run up to Christmas and all the nostalgia, sentimentalism, and bubbiness that comes with it. BUT, Advent was never meant to be just about a warm-up act before Christmas. In fact, it was meant to be serious preparation for the second coming of Jesus and his final judgement.

And as Christians we are called in Advent (and beyond) **to bear witness** to the coming of the Lord. We see signs of our Lord and His Spirit coming among us even now, for example, when a family conflict doesn't happen, when works of mercy or kindness occur, when the refugee is welcomed and the hungry shown compassion...these are anticipations, signs of the end, when complete breakthrough occurs with the Kingdom coming on earth. Advent also tells us **to wait expectantly** for the coming of the Lord – whether that is in daily moments in our mundane lives as we open the door to God's power and persuasion, or as we await the final New Age which Jesus alone will inaugurate.

The Good News of Advent is that ultimately our hope lies not in our own personal or communal efforts, initiatives or agendas, but rather the God of Advent who drew near to us in the babe of Bethlehem. He will come again to take away the darkness forever and be our eternal light. Advent is deeply counter-cultural, because it speaks not of human progress but of God's progress, about the Lord progressing towards us, which is Good News.

And there is **joy** in Advent because it centres on the One who is moving towards us, who is doing away with death, whose good judgement on evil is banishing darkness, who wildly desires us to reign with Him in the new heavens and new earth.

- *The Bishop of Exeter, the Rt. Rev'd Dr Mike Harrison*

Worried about a Child or Vulnerable Adult?

Please speak to your Parish Safeguarding Representative if you have any concerns for the wellbeing of a child or adult, or about the behaviour of someone towards a child or adult.

Your Parish Safeguarding Representative is:

ASHWATER: Not Known.

BEAWORTHY: Not Known.

TETCOTT: Sharon Wonnacott Sharonwonnacott@hotmail.co.uk 07980 989 262

HOLYWELL JOINT COUNCIL (Black Torrington with Highampton, Clawton and Halwill)

Val Letheren rubycountry.beneficeadmin@btinternet.com 07484 880 770

If you cannot reach your Parish Safeguarding Representative, please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team:

Costa Nassaris Head of Safeguarding and Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
01392 294 969 costa.nassaris@exeter.anglican.org 07809 339 501

James May Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
01392 345 910 james.may@exeter.anglican.org 07889 542 646

Rebecca Lane Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
01392 294 975 rebecca.lane@exeter.anglican.org 07889 542640

David Cross Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
david.cross@exeter.anglican.org 07572 923 242

General Enquiries: safeguarding enquiry@exeter.anglican.org
01392 294 929

IMMEDIATE RISK OF HARM

If you believe someone is at immediate risk of harm or that a crime has been committed dial **999**.

If you have serious concerns about an individual's wellbeing, you should contact the relevant agencies:

Concerns about Children	0345 155 1071	Devon Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
Concerns about Adults	0345 155 1007	Devon Care Direct
Domestic Abuse	0345 155 1074	Devon Helpline for professionals & Individuals
Rape Crisis	0808 802 9999	

Please notify your Safeguarding Representative and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team after contacting any of these agencies.

All information in this bulletin correct at time of publication

Ruby Country Benefice

RUBY PEOPLE WORSHIPPING IN GOD'S COUNTRY

St. Peter Ad Vincula, Ashwater EX21 5EY
St. Alban, Beaworthy EX21 5AB
Holy Cross, Tetcott EX22 6QZ

Ruby Holywell

St. Mary's, Black Torrington EX21 5PU
St. Leonard, Clawton EX22 6PS
St. Peter & St. James, Halwill EX21 5UH