

IWERNE MINSTER NEWSLETTER

APRIL – MAY 2026



THE ABINGDON HALL TAPESTRY UNVEILED

There are occasions when I realise that living in a village like Iwerne Minster is a great privilege. One of those times was on the morning of Saturday, March 14th, 2026 when, after four years' hard work, the Abingdon Hall Tapestry was unveiled. This work, of great artistry and consisting of eleven separate panels, was the brainchild of Maggie Hale. She had the idea of creating a tapestry similar to the one in Fontmell Magna hall and of using the sketches of Iwerne created by her friend and artist, the late David Hicks, as a basis for the work.

Maggie asked her friend, the late Sally Green, to help with the complex measuring of the panels and another friend, Judith Dutch, to help with design knowing that she had trained in textile, embroidery, and fashion design many years before at art school. Judith photographed the iconic buildings of Iwerne Minster at angles she thought would be best and drew them on lining paper. Looking out at her garden and Preston Hill, Judith decided to use the hills that surround the village as background to the tapestry. Depicting the changing seasons led to incorporating the flowers from each season too.

The next thing was to trace the designs onto tracing paper and then, with a light box borrowed from Clayesmore, to transfer the designs onto the canvas. This took about six months. Then Judith and Maggie went to Herrings in Dorchester and matched the wool to the colours in the designs, a mammoth task. They then sorted the wool into separate bags, one for each tapestry.

A call for villagers to come and help with the stitching was met with enthusiasm. Over the next three years, a group of women met every Wednesday morning to stitch, drink coffee and put the village affairs in order! At first the group - some experienced stitchers, others complete neophytes - worked at learning and practising the stitches with their exotic names: half cross, split, Gobelin, chain, brick, back, French knot. If there wasn't an appropriate stitch, they made one up.

The sewing group is rightly proud of what they have achieved and have become such a warm and welcoming community that they have decided to continue meeting each Wednesday morning. New friendships were formed and the project offered everyone a supportive space in which to learn, grow and feel valued. Another project is already in the pipeline.

In her speech at the unveiling, Maggie thanked all the people who have helped to make the project a reality: Keith Richards of the Design and Technology Department at Clayesmore School gave invaluable assistance, donations from the Parish Council, many villagers and a legacy from Sheelagh Duly helped to fund the purchase of canvas and wool, and finally to paint the interior of the hall before the tapestry was installed. The tapestry will forever remain a fitting and vivid celebration of what makes our village special.

Monique Goodliffe

IWERNE MINSTER PARISH COUNCIL

PLAYPARK PROJECT UPDATE

As you will be aware, we urgently need to update the playpark facilities in our village. The current equipment was installed many years ago and very soon the time will come when it is no longer fit for purpose. The Parish Council feel this project is vital to update, develop and maintain a much-needed outdoor community space for our current and future families.

The proposed new playpark will consist of a much wider range of modern sports and play equipment than is currently available and will create a high-quality space where children and families can come together, play, socialise and benefit from being in the outdoor environment.



As a small Parish Council we do not have the funding to renew

and replace the play park. We have been seeking external grants, unfortunately to no avail. Grants are very limited and many are currently being targeted towards projects in areas of higher deprivation. For example, the National Lottery Communities fund only funds five to seven projects across Dorset each year. It is very competitive!

The main fund providers for children's playparks are Waste Management Community Grants, but Iwerne Minster is not geographically close enough to a waste landfill site to qualify. To be eligible for some grants, including Dorset Council, we also need to fundraise as a community.

To create a playpark that Iwerne Minster can be proud of will cost in the region of £200k. It is a significant project and one that we do need community help with. Therefore we are launching a Crowdfunding Appeal with the aim of raising up to £100k. This will help a great deal towards our goal and put us in a much stronger position when applying for grant funding. All donations or sponsorship, large or small will be very much appreciated.

What can you do to help?

- ❖ **Get involved in our fundraising committee** by contacting Kerry 07974 972716 or Heather 07747 620996.

- ❖ **Organise an event for the project – every little helps!** We do have an event in mind but it will need support and planning!

❖ **Donate via the Just Giving Crowdfunding Page**

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/iwerneminsterplaypark?utm_medium=FA&utm_source=WA

The development of our play park and community space will be a significant milestone for Iwerne Minster improving access to a quality natural space and impacting positively on village life for our children. **PLEASE HELP us fundraise and do get in touch!**

Councillor Kerry O'Connor 07974 927716

Councillor Heather Overton 07747 620996

IWERNE MINSTER 100 CLUB RESULTS

January 2026

£15 Andrew Hebron (36)
£12 Jim Westwood (69)
£10 Malcolm Green (89)
£5 Amy Benfield (100)

February 2026

£15 Susan Trim (98)
£12 Wyn Meise (59)
£10 Jules Power (57)
£5 Malcolm Green (89)

March 2026

£15 Penny Marsh (48)
£12 Neil & Jane Davies (68)
£10 Richard Martin (2)
£5 Sue Le Prevost (1)

NEWS FROM THE CLUB – MARCH

Well, what a performance! The pantomime was a great success [report elsewhere]. Thanks must go to Adrian Delso and his crew for a memorable performance. This is our big money raising event of the year and £2,000 has gone into our coffers as a result. These funds go into paying the insurance and other regular outgoings. This year we plan to refurbish the kitchen as well as replacing several other things.

The pantomime was followed by a very enjoyable quiz set by Dorothy. These evenings always provide lots of fun as well as debates as to who was right or wrong. Thanks to Dorothy for the evening. Our next event is a Coffee Morning on April 11th starting at **10.15 a.m.** Then in May we have another evening of "Majority Rules".

Penny Marsh (Chairperson)

IMPHA NEWS

DAFFODILS

The IMPHA Daffodil unfortunately appears to have flowered much earlier than expected this year, according to many of our members. As a result, we have decided that our usual display and competition cannot take place outside the Chapel and shop; sadly this means that we may not be able to make our traditional donation to Marie Curie. However, if anyone does have an IMPHA daffodil in flower for Saturday 11th April, instead please bring it to the Village Club Coffee morning on the same day at 10.00am and we will have a table ready to show them and try to raise a little money via traditional public judging. The cup will be presented if we have some entries.

POTATOES AND PLANT SALE

Potatoes for the Summer Show, where they are judged for the highest yield, are now available from The Hollow; if you would like one please contact me to arrange collection.

Summer Show plug plants for IMPHA members will be available from The Hollow from 24th March. Castle Gardens will be offering an osteospermum and IMPHA will have a geranium and a begonia, again for members only. Please contact me to arrange collection.

Preparations are under way for the Summer Show and there are a couple of spaces available for stalls if anyone is interested in displaying or selling.

Also a reminder that we will be holding a plant sale on the Parish Field on Saturday May 16th where there should be plenty of bedding plants, perennials and vegetable plants. Please do support us as this sale helps toward paying for the Summer Show marquees.

Sue Le Prevost (Chairman IMPHA)

IMPHA SUMMER SHOW 2026 CHILDREN'S COMPETITION



This year children in Iwerne Minster can take part in a new growing competition for the Summer Show. Have a

go at growing a potato plant in a pot and see how many potatoes your plant will grow! Potato tubers, pots and compost all provided! The pots will be emptied and potatoes weighed at the Summer Show (or before if need be). The child with the heaviest yield will win the Isard Cup.

To take part come along to the Village Club on Saturday April 11th between 10.30 – 12.00 noon and collect your potato, pot and compost together with instructions for successful potato growing. Good Luck!

This event is kindly sponsored by Castle Gardens Gold Club.

Heather Overton

DORSET RAINFALL 2025

After two very wet years in 2023 & 2024 the rainfall total for 2025 was much closer to the 30 year average.

There was a small anomaly overall, due to wide spread heavy rains in the seven weeks leading up to Christmas. Some observers in central west Dorset measured more than 25 mm of rain on six dates during this period.

The wettest station in 2025 was Evershot with 1306.8 mm and the driest was East Stour in the north of the county with 746.7 mm. I recorded 931.6 mm. The highest daily rainfall total was 59.3 recorded at Dorchester on the 28th August. My highest daily total was 41 mm on the 26th January.

The spring period March to May was the driest for 14 years. Many places recorded no rain at all between April 23rd and May 19th. Let us hope for better weather for the rest of 2026.

Ron Benfield

IWERNE MINSTER CRICKET CLUB

When there are signs of some dry weather, it is time for us to think about cricket in our village and the need to prepare the home ground and start some net practice. The net sessions will be open to all with more details to follow soon including dates where we have fixtures arranged.

Funding will form part of the approach for 2026 to help support the need for, and use of, equipment whilst setting out how we will enter into a more formal agreement with the Iwerne Estate. The support for our venture has been solid since we first raised the subject of cricket returning to the village and our being able to play and use the facilities supported by the estate and for that generous approach we continue to record our gratitude. All new players are welcome whether seasoned pros or novices.

If you need any more information, do please let me know

Please also look for news updates via the village news boards.

Andrew Osborne - IMCC Chair - 01747 811433 e-mail - aojo1980@gmail.com

IRENE MILTON
JULY 6TH 1930 - DEC 15TH 2025



Irene was born into the poverty of a pre-war mining community in South Wales. She retained her love of Wales and the lifelong friendships she forged as a child in those communities and these humble roots would shape the rest of her life.

Early on she recognised the importance of education and worked hard to gain entry and to graduate from St Anne's College, Oxford. She continued to support the college and attend reunions for the rest of her life.

She began her career working at Hatton Gardens where she met John whom she married in 1952 and there followed periods in Harrow while John was a curate and then at Bedford School when John was appointed assistant chaplain and Cranbrook School in Kent where she threw herself into the role of boarding housemaster's wife. During this time she bore three children.

The family moved to the then newly built Oakwood Drive in 1974 when John took up a position as Chaplain at Clayesmore. This move to Iwerne also gave Irene the opportunity to resume her career and pass on her love of the French language and the importance of education to countless children at Clayesmore Prep and later, after retiring, working part time at St Mary's Shaftesbury and through private tuition.

She enjoyed hearing news of ex pupils and even in her later years had an amazing memory for people she had taught 40 years previously.

She was John's primary carer for several years prior to his death in 2017 showing a remarkable strength and stoicism and as a widow she continued to enjoy the garden she had grown from scratch and the view of Preston Hill. Family visits provided the opportunity for outings to local beauty spots and she continued to enjoy a good pub lunch or fish and chips on Poole Quay.

In her 90's she was immensely grateful for the small level of independence she could keep through the Friends of Blandford Hospital outings and fortnightly shopping bus to Blandford and for the kindness and friendship of friends and neighbours which helped to ensure she could remain living in her home.

A private family funeral was, fittingly, presided over by Richard Partridge, an ex Clayesmore and she was buried next to John with panoramic views over the beautiful Dorset countryside they both loved.

Tim Milton

BERYL SCOTT
SEPTEMBER 9TH 1940 – FEB 13TH 2026

It is with sadness that the death of long-term resident Beryl Scott has been announced by her family.

Beryl trained to be a teacher at Bedford College of Physical Education where she specialised in gymnastics and modern dance although she had training certificates for almost every aspect of women's PE that you could think of.

Beryl's roommate at college was a 'natural' tennis player and George's air force colleague was an Oxford blue so they spent most weekends in the summer playing mixed doubles.

George and Beryl were married at St Peter's Church Ashley Cross Parkstone in 1964.

After the birth of their son, Ian, and daughter, Helen, they moved to Wendover in Iwerne which became their home in the early seventies. They moved to the village because they both worked at Clayesmore.

When Beryl had to give up work due to back problems, she taught computer processing and desk top publishing from the room on the end of the bungalow. She did that for years and taught most people in the area to type including her children's school friends! Lots of people knew her.

Beryl adored her grandchildren, Thomas, Abigail and Bart. When they were younger, they always went to stay with Beryl and George who played a huge role in their upbringing.

Beryl's husband, George, is still in the village and he would like to thank all the staff at Dorchester Hospital for the kindness and consideration they showed to him, to Beryl and to the family during her final illness. In addition, he thanks all their friends and acquaintances in Iwerne, Shaftesbury and Blandford.

George Scott and Helen Scott

ROD MAJOR

March 24th 1949 – February 26th 2026

Rod was born in Leicester. He was officially named John, following the long line of John Majors but always known as Rod. He had a younger brother Malcolm and two children - Sam and Lizzi - and five grandchildren.

Rod studied Business Studies at Bradford University and qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1975, taking on a number of Financial Controller roles for organisations such as Servicemaster, WH Smith and Co-op.

Rod's biggest passion in life was probably his beloved Leicester City Football Club, which he followed religiously over the years, through all their ups and downs!

From a young age, Rod enjoyed a wide variety of sports, playing several of them at school. He loved watching all sports and certainly put his Sky Sports subscription to good use! He also spent a huge part of his life on the tennis court, both when he lived in Leicester and in Dorset and was nicknamed 'Rod the Lob'.

Rod loved reading and could get through books at incredible speed. He would always volunteer to run the book stall at village events and would have a house full of books waiting for the next event!



He also put his accounting skills to good use, volunteering in a number of Treasurer roles.

Music was a huge part of Rod's life and he had an enormous and wide-ranging music collection. Whilst at university he made some appearances as a DJ and wrote music reviews

for the university magazine, under the name of 'Hot Rod'!

He loved numbers and statistics and never forgot important dates.

Rod had a great sense of humour (for an accountant!) and loved a good pun.

After meeting Jill on a tennis holiday in 2007, Rod started making regular trips from Leicester to Dorset as they maintained a long-distance relationship. In 2010 Rod and Jill married and Rod moved down to Dorset so they could start a new life together. They shared many laughs, embarked on many travels together and undertook a huge project to convert a barn and build their own beautiful home. Tragically Jill's time there was very short and she didn't get to enjoy all of the hard work they had put in together. Rod, however, decided that Dorset was his home and stayed in their beautiful home in Iwerne, where he continued to embed himself into village life.

Rod was a lovely, popular and gentle man - always smiling and friendly and he will be greatly missed.

Lizzi and Sam Major



St John

ST JOHN NEEDS YOU!

Trevor Vaughan, the President of St John, Dorset, has sent out a letter to councils across the county asking for publicity for a volunteer recruitment drive.

St John continues to play a crucial role in delivering first aid, community support and emergency response across the county. These services depend on the commitment of volunteers from local areas, and the organisation is now seeking to expand their team across a variety of operational and community-focused roles. Should you require further information, digital or printed promotional materials, or wish to arrange a short presentation for a community group, our Recruiting Officer, **Mrs Jane Burns-Nield**, would be pleased to assist. She can be contacted on **07976 548550** or at jane.nield@sja.co.uk.

St John thanks everyone for their continued support and for helping the organisation strengthen its volunteer capacity for the benefit of communities across Dorset.

THE VIEW FROM ST MARY'S



Since the last newsletter was published, we have enjoyed a repeat of Richard McConnell's fascinating talk regarding the archaeological finds behind Church Path. This was

again very well attended and we shall look forward to hearing from Richard with updates from time to time.

Our Mothering Sunday service was led by Bishop Tim Thornton. This can be a difficult time for some people but Bishop Tim preached with his usual wit and wisdom and with great sensitivity. The traditional posies were much appreciated – thanks to Penny Marsh for arranging these.

Our vicar David John is due to start his sabbatical on 14th April. This is an opportunity for an extended break from the routine of his role, to recharge his batteries and to return spiritually refreshed.

While he is away our curate, David Sinclair, will be in charge! David was brought up in North Yorkshire. He and his wife Helen have six children and nine grandchildren. David has led services for over 30 years, latterly in Hazelbury Bryan where David and Helen have been part of the leadership team for the last eight years. David spent 30 years working as a Chartered Certified Accountant and a Chartered Financial Planner. Fifteen years ago he retrained as a psychotherapist. He was ordained priest in June 2024 and joined the Benefice as curate on July 14th, 2024. He has been a very welcome addition to the preaching team, and we wish him well as he leads us in David John's absence.

Members of the PCC are sometimes asked about the patterns of the services at St Mary's. Usually we hold services of Holy Communion at 11 am on the first and second Sundays of the month, with a Matins service led by Niels Kraunsoe at 9.30 am on the first Sunday. On the third Sunday at 8am there is a communion service from the Book of Common Prayer, whose beautiful language is much loved by many people. Then on the 4th Sunday we have Sung Holy Communion at 11 am, featuring the Iwerne Minster church choir. If there is a 5th Sunday in the month there is usually a Benefice Service at 10 am when all five parishes in the

Benefice get together to celebrate communion at one of the parish churches. For further information see the Iwerne Valley Benefice website or speak a member of the PCC.

And Easter will soon be upon us. At St Mary's, the Good Friday service of Contemplation takes place at 2pm, with Choral Evensong at 5pm. Then on Easter Day we celebrate the joy of the resurrection at a communion service at 11 am at St Mary's. We would love to see you there.

David Parkhouse

IWERNE VALLEY WALKING GROUP – FEBRUARY WALK



A small group of us (9) and two dogs met at the Barford Inn, near Salisbury. We had a lucky change in the weather - no rain!

We set off up the road, turning right along a track with fields of pigs, happily wallowing in the mud. Then we set off into Grovely Woods where we saw the Witch Trees. At this point the little dog, Oattie, took off after a rabbit or a deer. Kindly, one of our party stayed on to help look for her. The rest of us carried on along the main track before turning left through the wood, and out the other side. We then headed back to the dead-end road, and back to the pub, where we had a good lunch.

At last some news of Oattie, who after two hours had been spotted by some people in the woods, and a kind lady drove to collect her and return her to her greatly relieved owner.

Hannah Barrington

2026 PANTOMIME REVIEW



Once upon a late autumn day, from over the Dorset hills and far away, scrolls of parchment sealed with red wax crests were sent to the players and thespians of Iwerne Minster. The scrolls contained the script for a pantomime fairytale. Penned by the feather quill of master playwright himself, Adrian Delso, it was a (re) telling of Snow White, called... Mirror Mirror.

With a spattering of clever puns, and laced with many a literary reference from other Grimm tales, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and even a spot of *Macbeth* by Delso's fellow playwright Will Shakespeare, the Iwerne Minster Village Pantomime of 2026 told the story the Evil Queen's plot to kill the beautiful Snow White, all thanks to the brutal honesty of the Queen's magnificent magic Mirror: aka Simon Kidd, aka Skidd. Who played the titular role with hilarity and pizzazz. A comic highlight!



Richard Andrews cleverly designed the cardboard frame and curtain for the Mirror. And Skidd made excellent use of it.

The play opened strongly, with a side-splitting Teutonic double act by the Bavarian Brothers Grimm, played by the excellent Deborah Jones and Basil Purdue, whose plagiarizing story ideas, Deutsch accents, and lederhosen thigh schlappen schlapping had the audience laughing heartily. Monique Goodliffe, with the lace-cuffed elegance of a medieval

courtier, steered the story and kept the plot twists on track – despite interruptions from ze Germans.

The brilliant Pam Jelley was the epitome of a pantomime villainess, and played the Queen with epic majesty and evil jealousy. The repartee between Evil Queen and Magic Mirror was a delight to watch.

Another comic nugget of this year's show was the Mirror Cleaner – Mister Bit, performed by Stuart Jones and Melvyn Marsh, his (equally dodgy) assistant. Some very scrubby jokes indeed... Thanks also to Stuart and Phil Middleton for the brilliant music and sound effects of the whole show.

It is always hardest playing the 'straight' character in a pantomime, I think, but the talented Debs Kidd played Snow White to panto perfection! Debs's disingenuous innocence combined with very knowing looks, a cheeky wink and suggestive side smile at the audience, as well as floofing the reviewer's nose with a feather duster during a song – made Snow White funnier and more likeable than she's ever been played before.

A new addition to the cast this year was Snow White's nursemaid, whose red lips, massive fake knockers, candy stripe dress, and glorious platinum wig meant only one the thing: the dame had arrived. And what a dame! Played to uproarious success by none other than the playwright himself: Master Adrian Delso, who has hidden his acting talent under a bushel for too long! (May we request the Adrians Delso and Patterson as a double act of damehood for next year please?)

When the Mirror tells the Queen she is no longer the fairest of them all, she orders her verrrry sinister Huntsman to take Snow White into the forest, kill her, and bring back her heart as proof. The growling Huntsman, clad in tight leather chaps, bare arms, and wielding an axe with the expert proficiency one might expect from one of England's top farriers - arrives in the middle of the forest and tells Snow White the plan. She persuades the Huntsman (played of course by Nick Cooper) to let her run free in the forest and take back the heart of a small, cute animal instead.

Instead of being eaten by a ravenous wolf (painted into the scene of the forest, a new backdrop this year designed, as ever, by the talented Saskia Darell, ably helped by Caroline O'Brien), Snow White stumbles into a little

cottage – and after having a look around takes a nap on one of the little beds.

Of course her slumbers are disturbed by the homecoming of the dwarves – called, for reasons that will become apparent – miners in this production. All of them red-cheeked, red-nosed and full of character, they reminded me of that other playwright, Will Shakespeare's, *Mechanicals*. The 'dig dig dig dig dig' songs were among the many musical highlights of the play. As were the signs held up at the back to prompt the audience involvement. Well done the Miners: Andrew Osborne who took excellent charge as Boss, Penny Marsh as the downtrodden Lofty, Trisha Neale (whose Misery was hilarious), Mervyn Marsh (Dodgy – a pattern emerges...) and Helen Middleton as Clumsy who threw an amusing brick or two at the Fourth Wall.

Disguised as a witchy crone, the Evil Queen discovers the cottage in the forest and poisons Snow White with the apple. Disaster! But all is not lost as, onto the stage strides the be-wigged and dashing Prince. Andrew? No! **Not** Andrew. (Luckily for the minors, er... miners). Prince Charming was played magnificently by talented newcomer to the Iwerne stage, Lex McMillan, who had the audience rolling in the aisles and crying with laughter. (As well as half the cast!)



Snow White is saved, and the Prince's misunderstandings with the miners sorted (for less than £12 million I'm told), and so the show

ended triumphantly and joyously in song, music and laughter.

Well done to the stage managers Emma Lewis, ably assisted by Steve Piper: they did a top job creating seamless scene changes throughout.

And lastly a massive thanks to Jacqui Eades who took over from Emily Delso and did such a good job directing.

We are very lucky to have so many dedicated writers, actors, musicians, artists and all round helpers involved with the village panto. It is an annual village highlight ... Oh yes it is! It really truly is. A heartfelt thank you and huge congratulations to everyone. Til next year...

Georgia Darell

COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH

Since the last village newsletter, we have only managed one speed watch, that outside Orchard House on the A350 on March 18th. 285 cars were monitored in the space of one hour, average speed 28mph.

We have been waiting upon Dorset Council to perfect their 20mph signage and traffic light systems and of course a weather opportunity. The expected increase in traffic due to the C13 closure has resulted in a 20% increase from this snap shot above. It has however resulted in an increase of 5% of those exceeding the new limit. Those breaking the limit will be sent a letter and recorded.

If you have any concerns regarding the 20mph limit please contact Dorset Council, Jane Somper or our Parish Council

If you would like to help the police reduce the number of killed and injured on the roads of Dorset please come and join us; we do make a difference! We are just four volunteers now and making a watch is a struggle.

Geoff Peters CSW Coordinator for Iwerne Minster 01747811546

**Newsletter editor: Monique Goodliffe
01747 442970 monique@hairy-
barbarian.com**

Printers: Parish Magazine Printing

**Deadline for next newsletter copy: May
20th 2026**