

IWERNE MINSTER NEWSLETTER

APRIL-MAY 2025

THE TALBOT TAKEOVER

In mid-March, Kim and Richard Raymond took over the running of The Talbot. Kim and Richard have been residents of Iwerne for three years, have both worked at Clayesmore and Kim was at The Cricketers for a while. Now they are taking on the challenge of making The Talbot the thriving hub of the village. Kim put out a call to villagers to help spruce up the outside of the pub and to help clean inside and many people arrived to lend a hand with planting, weeding, window cleaning and scrubbing.

Kim and Richard's vision of the pub will build on that community spirit. Food will be back on the menu, starting simply and building on that. On Saturdays from 10am onwards, brunch will be available. Roast lunches will be served on Sundays. On sunny Sundays, we can expect a good old South African braai - maybe even with some delicious boerewors.

Quiz nights begin this month on April 1st and 15th and live music events will be advertised on the IM WhatsApp group as well as Next Door and the IM monthly diary. Kim would also like to introduce a Sip and Paint event and would welcome groups like Knit and Natter. The pub is also available for private functions like special birthdays.

Bed and breakfast carries on too. There are five bedrooms and a self-contained apartment managed by Claire Brodie who has joined Kim and Richard to help in the pub. Claire has a background in interior decoration and catering and has been living in Cape Town.

We wish them all the best in this venture and, if the buzz of the first week is anything to go by, they have every chance of success!



TURN AGAIN, WHITTINGTON!



Lights! Camera! Action! – Yes – it was panto time again in Iwerne Minster – oh yes it was!

This year Adrian Delso came up trumps again and gave us his version of Whittington; “turning” the tale on its head by almost ignoring Dick and concentrating on his sister Geraldine and her puss Tom (Tom & Gerry – get it?). As always, a tour de force, from the author/director and the marvellous cast giving their all.

The first act concentrated on Gerry (played by Debs Kidd) and Tom (played by Helen Middleton) finding their weary way to Shaftesbury. Both performed their roles to great effect. Their journey was enhanced by meeting various “unusual” characters along the way. Cameo roles included a great comic turn by Stuart Jones as Bob Bitt, a scary one from Basil Purdue as a vampire turning into a wacky rubber bat (you had to be there!) and not least a sexy but disappointed lady cat played by Inga Patterson.

Act Two started with a bang, wow! The “Management” headed by their seriously sleazy chief executive were fantastic – I’m sure that no-one would have recognised Deborah Jones in full make up and her Northern accent was a joy.

The good guys, the two dames of course were amazing, both Adrian Patterson and Richard Martin possibly enjoying their roles a little too much! As for Jackie Eades’ Peggy, landlady of the Mitre pub, I think Barbara Windsor would have been looking to her laurels if she had witnessed that performance – marvellous!

Of course, all ended well with Gerry finding her “true love,” the town pharmacist John, played, as always, manfully by Nick Cooper – be still our beating hearts...

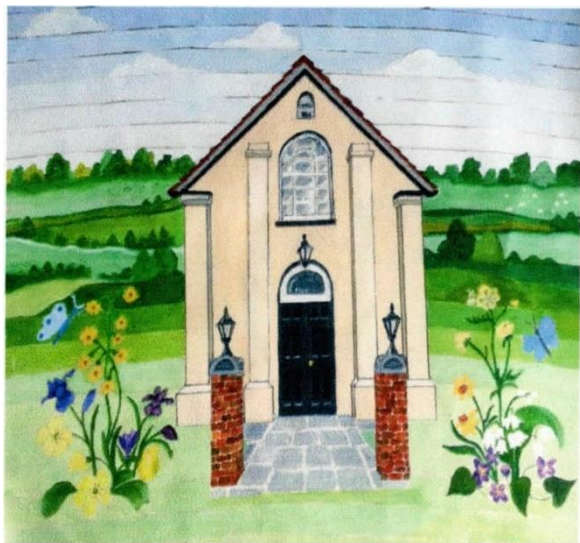
Well done to everyone including the back-room girls and guys – the props, scenery music, costumes and sound were all so professional – they gave us a great night out and hopefully raised some cash for the Village Club.

Ms Anon

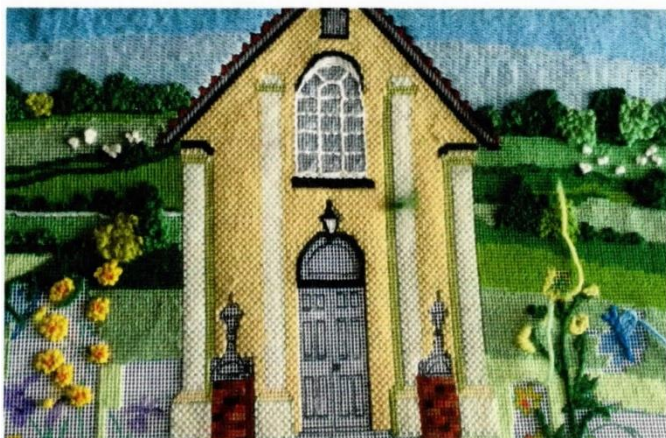
VILLAGE TAPESTRY COFFEE MORNING FUNDRAISER

We've been working hard for over three years and we are almost there. The tapestries are looking amazing!

From artwork...



into tapestry...



**Come and see for yourself on
Saturday, May 24th 2025 at 11am in the
Abingdon Hall**

Our aim is to raise £500 to cover the cost of having the tapestries professionally mounted, put up over the arch and, hopefully, to pay for spotlights to highlight all our beautiful work.

**Please come and support. Coffee, tea,
cakes and of course a raffle!**

Maggie Hale and Judith Dutch

NEWS FROM I.M.P.H.A SUMMER SHOW

The Summer Show is now in its planning stage and we are asking if anyone would like a stall, either to sell or display on the day. We also need a few more antique cars for display so please let me know if you would like to show yours. Show Day will be Sunday 17th August on the Parish Field.

IMPHA has purchased a selection of bikini vases to make displaying specimen flowers easier – they are the green ones used at the bigger shows. They will be available on a first come first serve basis and will need to be booked from Heather Overton when you hand in your entry form.

As usual we are asking for your generous sponsorship of the classes - £5 per class and we will start collecting at the Plant Sale in May, although the Treasurer will always gratefully receive any contributions.

DAFFODIL DISPLAY

Daffodils will be displayed outside the Chapel opposite the Village shop on Saturday April 12th. As in previous years, we ask the passing public to choose their favourite and to make a donation. All monies are then donated to Marie Curie Daffodil Appeal and the grower whose daffodil receives the most votes will receive the Bob and Edna Slade Cup.

PLANT SALE

The Annual Plant sale will be held on Saturday 17th May on the Parish Field at 10.00am. There will be a good assortment of bedding plants and perennials, as well as coffee and cake. We do have a card reader available if needed! Do come and enhance your garden, or simply enjoy refreshments.

**Sue Le Prevost Chairman IMPHA (Tel:
812173 or email: sue.leprevost@btinternet.com)**

NEWS FROM THE CLUB

February's Quiz Night was once again a good brain teaser and entertaining for those who came and enjoyed the evening. This was followed by the Pantomime which was very successful and played to packed houses. Our thanks go to Adrian Delso and his crew for putting on such a good show. As a result of the pantomime and an excellent raffle plus the bar £1,991 was added to the club coffers. There is a report of this elsewhere. A very entertaining new quiz game followed in March called "Majority Rules". Questions set by Steve & Marion Harrison provided us with some thought provoking answers and we thank them for their efforts. Coming up on April 5th we have our ever popular Coffee Morning. So come along and join us.

Penny Marsh

**OFFERED FOR FREE
PHILIPS HOSTESS TROLLEY
15" X 29" 27" HIGH
LITTLE USED THEREFORE IN
GOOD CONDITION
CUSTOMER TO COLLECT
CONTACT DOT ON 01747 811852**

IWERNE MINSTER CRICKET CLUB – 2025

Would you like to play cricket in our village?

Saturday 12th April - 10:30am

Spring clean at the pavilion in preparation for the new season. Come and see what is in place now and what the plans are for 2025 and beyond.

The application fee for an adult is £50 with no charge for Juniors under 18. The only other fee will be for cricket teas when they are provided for a weekend game.

If you are able to support the IMCC as a non-playing member then do please let us know. We would welcome any financial support as we seek to bring the ground back up to the best possible standard. A donation of £25 (or more) to support the club objective to bring cricket for all back to our village would be greatly appreciated.

Tuesday 22nd April - 5:30pm

Midweek practice sessions will commence weather permitting. More details will be confirmed in due course including weekend practice sessions with other dates also set depending on the availability of players and venue. Keyholders will be present.

Sunday 18th May - 2.00pm

Will see the first weekend game with others taking place on the 3rd Sunday of the month, as a minimum and running through to the **21st September**. Other fixtures are being arranged with dates to be notified.

The IMCC website is being developed at <https://iwerneminster.play-cricket.com>

The "WhatsApp" group platform is in place for anyone interested in playing or supporting the club, with further work undertaken to develop the IMCC, guided by the ECB and the Dorset Cricket Association.

If you are interested in playing cricket here please let us know. A mobile phone number means we can add you to the "WhatsApp" group, making communication easier.

If you have any questions at this stage please contact Andrew Osborne on 01747 811433 or via email to aojo1980@gmail.com
NB - The IMCC are grateful for the ongoing support for this venture provided by LEWISIA LIMITED / the Iwerne Estate.

Andrew Osborne

IWERNE MINSTER 100 CLUB RESULTS

January 2025

£15 Dougal Wilson-Croom
£12 Mervyn Marsh (35)
£10 Mary Dean (66)
£5 Anne Hibbins (16)

February 2025

£15 Christine O'Luanaigh (6)
£12 Monique Goodliffe (37)
£10 Alwin Greder (62)
£5 Neil & Jane Davies (86)

SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ELECTRICITY VULNERABLE PEOPLES' REGISTER

Vulnerability includes: disability, children under five, blindness, deafness, chronic illness, aged over 60, those using medical equipment or aids reliant on electricity. This is not a definitive list, so contact SSE and discuss your situation.

If you have vulnerable people in your house, let SSE know.

You can do this by 'phone: **0800 294 3259**

Or visit SSSE's website: [Priority Services Register - SSE](#)

Or completing their form (available from the village shop) and FREE Posting it to them.



Courtesy of Roger Saurin

REMEMBERING MARY BERRY OF BROOKSIDE FARM IWERNE MINSTER



August 30th 1943 – February 7th 2025

Mary was a kind and generous lady and her kitchen was a place of warmth and welcome to any visitors whom she was always pleased to see, visitors that always left as friends.

With young Shoshana, still a babe in arms, Mary and husband Chuck moved into Brookside Farm at the end of 1969 that at the time was a rundown derelict place that had been deserted for around ten years. They rented the cottage next door and, having set a limit of three months, work was started to make Brookside Farm habitable and cozy again. With invaluable help from local builder Alec Hall, Chuck with Mary alongside acting virtually as a builder's labourer and chief wheel barrow operator! She worked like a trouper and three months to the day they had their first meal that was cooked in the cottage next door but consumed in what is now the splendid dining room in Brookside Farm.

With Brookside run as a market garden for many years it became well known for fresh garden produce all cultivated by Mary, who also was raising Shoshana at home, showing similar skills to those she learnt as a child in the kitchens and castle grounds at Kilkae, her original Irish home.

When Shoshana started at the village school, Mary became a playground assistant and then a school dinner lady. She was known to the children as Mrs. Berry, would listen to their tales and stories, help with their reading and writing, tend to their bruises and scratches during playground times and sometimes after school making sure they returned home safely. Many ended up in the garden of Brookside Farm playing all sorts of games or being shown some flowers and plants that were growing there. Mary became the caretaker of the school right up to its closure.

She was determined to have the school rooms cozy and warm for "her children" in winter months, often starting in the early hours topping up the room heaters with oil and having them ready for school start.

Mary's love of cooking and entertaining never waned. There were many very popular dinner and garden parties, even a couple of wedding receptions held there and Mary was delighted to arrange most of the cooking and table lays to her own exacting standards. Her culinary skills and the vast collection of cooking books and recipes' were second to none. Countless little scribbled notes on certain recipes would be seen everywhere and some still are being found in corners or shelves throughout the house.

Always attending to her lovely garden, Mary could be found planting the latest acquisition from nurseries or garden centres or indeed cuttings from places that should not be mentioned! Trees and shrubs were planted regularly to mark every anniversary, birthday and some in memoriam.

Her love and devotion to her family both near and far including Shoshana and husband William together with her grandchildren Humphrey and Jemima were endless. She just loved being their 'Granny' possibly as an extension of her fondness for her own grannies and young childhood days. Certainly all the knowledge, compassion and love bestowed on her from her own family has now passed on to Mary's own family through Shoshana.

Retirement gave Chuck and Mary more time to pursue their love of caravanning and motor-homing. Mary loved all music and dancing, in particular Country and Western music and attended many music festivals, sometimes for a week or more at a time travelling all over the country, mostly in the American Airstream motor home which Mary loved and which no doubt turned quite a few heads in the motor-home world. Wherever they camped, people would come to chat and Mary always invited them in saying "You'll have a cup of tea?", as she was already automatically pouring a cup for them. Many times the caravan or motor-home was full to bursting with visiting friends and Mary was always in her element, entertaining everyone in her own inimitable fashion.

Chuck Berry



SUTTON WALDRON AND IWERNE MINSTER W.I.

FEBRUARY 2025 OUTING



After a chance meeting between our President and Erica, a coach driver from Burrows Coaches, we were very kindly offered a local trip to an unknown destination followed by a talk on the highs and lows of being a lady coach driver.

Seventeen SWIM ladies joined Erica, our tour guide, and Alison, our coach driver, at IM bus stop and set off on country roads to the Horton Inn, then towards Three Legged Cross. Alison joked, "We have tickets for Go Ape at Moors Valley Country Park". Phew! We soon pulled into Hilliers Garden Centre with an array of franchises and a cafe serving delicious scones.

Just over an hour later we were back on the coach and being entertained with anecdotes from Erica and Alison. Both enjoy their jobs, love driving large coaches and meeting people. Their male colleagues and lovely boss treat them with respect and encouragement. Unfortunately, male passengers often still feel the need to comment on lady drivers. They gave hints on how to deal with excitable senior school children on the afternoon run – Erica: "Turn off the engine and start reading a newspaper" and Alison: "When they keep ringing the bell, calmly turn the coach around and go back to school". I think we may have been quite noisy but Alison still brought us home and we certainly appreciated her reversing skills when confronted by a very large tractor with a trailer on a narrow road.

Burrows have six coaches, the largest having the bunny ear shaped mirrors. These are known as P45 mirrors by the drivers due to the expense of replacing them!

You can find Burrows Coaches "Shopper & Outings" leaflets at Blandford Tourist Office or 'phone Erica on 07841 057154.

Marilyn (Secretary)

TALK IN MARCH 2025

Alison Hughes is a world class, Gold Badge International tennis umpire. She moved to Iwerne Minster about eight years ago and very kindly agreed to talk to SWIM WI about her extensive

experience in the complex world of world class tennis competitions.

Alison began by saying that she never answers the three questions she is always asked: who is her favourite player, which player does she regard as having the worst behaviour and who does she think will win Wimbledon. During her talk we understood why this is the case; umpires are very strictly trained to be impartial and to follow a professional code. Each umpire goes through a great deal of training and professional development progressing, if they wish, from being line judges to chair umpires to being officials who run the tournaments.

Alison's love of tennis began at the very young age of three and she progressed to becoming both a junior and senior county player before injury took her out of the game and into umpiring. She conveyed her great passion for both the game and for umpiring and coaching others. Her work takes her all over the world and she spends a great deal of time flying from one tournament to the next or in airports and taxis, so it is not an easy life. Coming back to Iwerne always feels like coming home. Her list of the competitions at which she has officiated is truly impressive: six Olympic Games Gold Medal matches, six Wimbledon finals, one Roland Garros, seven Australian finals and eight US Opens. Alison has umpired an incredible number of Grand Slams Singles Finals: twenty-two!



Umpiring, Alison explained, requires poise in high pressure situations, the ability to communicate with different players and tournament

stakeholders as well as being able to score in the language of the host country. Managing spectator expectations is another part of the role – not everyone is as quiet as the people who attend Centre Court at Wimbledon. A head for heights is useful too; those umpire chairs can be very tall and sometimes they wobble alarmingly in the wind. Alison feels that it is the unwavering support of her husband as well as the camaraderie of the people she works with that helps her the most.

One of her proudest moments was when she was given the MBE for her services to tennis and from the evidence of this talk the award was clearly well deserved.

Monique Goodliffe

THE VIEW FROM ST MARY'S

We are now in the period of Lent – the 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday. It is a period of preparation for Easter when Christians remember the time that Jesus was tempted and fasted in the desert before beginning his ministry. We celebrated the beginning of Lent with a traditional Ash Wednesday service, and another in the popular series of Choral Evensong.

We have for some years now put on a series of lectures on Lenten themes. Our curate Rev David Sinclair, who is a practising psychotherapist talked about his work and the many reasons people come to psychotherapy, and about his own faith.

Rev Chris Jervis's talk was entitled "Sense, common sense, nonsense". He considered how much confidence we can have in our senses and why. Chris gave a wide-ranging and erudite talk, ranging from Socrates and Plato to Marx, John Lennon and Richard Dawkins.

Still to come we have Canon Clare Amos on the Lord's Prayer as the key to the ministry of Jesus (27th March) and Rev David John, our vicar on the problem of Evil (10th April). After each talk we provide a simple meal of soup and cheese which gives people the opportunity to chat about what they have just heard, and to get to know each other better.

And so to Easter, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. On Good Friday at 2pm Canon Alan Amos will lead "An Hour at the Cross", a quiet service of contemplation. Later that day, at 5pm, is an Easter themed Choral Evensong. Then, on Easter Day itself, Rev Garry Bennett will lead a joyous service of Holy Communion, starting at 11 am.

Then, on 1st May, we start Christianity Explored, a chance to find out more about who Jesus was and why he matters. It is a course for everyone – the curious, those who think Christians are weird, those who believe and those who don't. It comprises a simple meal followed by a talk on DVD and a discussion. The course starts on Thursday 1st May at 12.30pm at Fontmell Magna Village Hall and runs for 8 sessions. For more information contact David Sinclair or the vicar.

As always, everyone is welcome at these services and events and we wish you all a Happy Easter.

David Parkhouse

REST IN PEACE

Tom Crabbe (formerly of Iwerne Minster)
David Cranton (who has been living near Pegg's Farm but was formerly from Iwerne Minster)

IWERNE VALLEY WALKING GROUP REPORTS FEBRUARY

We met up at the View Café just outside Milton Abbas – 10 of us – and, for the first time in ages, no dogs. Jim, who was meant to be our guide, had a bad back so Cathy led off on a wing and a prayer and hoping to remember the route. We walked through the houses above the main street, ending up on a track with lovely views which led down to Steeptonbill Farmshop. Then into the woods on the right, stopping to admire the stunning view of Milton Abbey from St Catherine's Chapel. Capability Brown designed the grounds of Milton Abbey for Lord Damer. Uniquely, he designed them so that there were vistas of the Abbey from various viewpoints around the estate. Normally he designed the grounds to be viewed from the houses. The track continues past the impressive old stone lodge and gatehouse and gates, built c1775 at the old entrance to the estate.

Our walk then joined the road back towards Milton Abbas, then heading down into the woods on the left of the road. Back up to the road and along to the Café. The walk was 3 ½ miles and took about 2 hours at a leisurely pace. No stiles! There are some extra paths around Luccombe near the Café and the walk could easily be extended by an hour. The woods near Steeptonbill will be full of the usual spring flowers in a couple of months.

We were joined by three others for an enjoyable lunch served by Hayley and her team. Shame about the drizzle.

Cathy Bird



Claire Watson

MARCH

Ten people and two dogs started promptly from The Cockerel in Gussage All Saints in fine weather, along the green lane from the pub and then to the first junction. After that I was excited to see a bird which looked like a white-tailed eagle!

We went alongside a wood where a lot of work like tree felling and stacking logs was in operation. Then we got to the Roman road – another green lane which is called Ackling Dyke – and finally went back along the road through the village to the pub for a welcome lunch. **Neil Davies**

EARLY AND MIDDLE MEDIEVAL IWERNE MINSTER

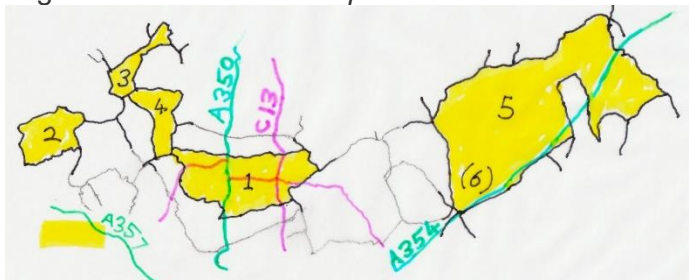
Following the preliminary archaeological excavations in the land south of Church Path, it seems timely to review what is known about Iwerne Minster (IM) in the Early and Middle Medieval periods. The excavations have revealed an extended graveyard, evidence for which was also discovered in 1994 in the garden of 1 Church Hill (see IM newsletter Aug-Sept 2023). From the pottery unearthed, and the organisation of the graves, the graveyard is Christian and dates from Saxon times and extended well outside the present churchyard boundary.

So, what do we know about IM? The first documented records are from about the **year 888** when “*the king [Alfred the Great], by his charter in honour of God the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, conferring on the nunnery [i.e. Shaftesbury], over which his daughter Elfgiva, Æthelgeofu or Algiva, presided as abbess*” 100 hides of land, of which “... 20 hides [were] at Handley and Gussage, ... [and] 15 hides [were] at Iwerne Minster”.

This suggests that Iwerne Minster was already, in the early medieval period, a significant place. This may be due to its status of having a ‘minster’ church. IM’s ‘ministration’ extended from the chapelries of Hinton St Mary in the west to Handley (Sixpenny) in the east, with the chapelries of Margret Marsh, East Orchard and Gussage St Andrew all part of its remit. See Fig. 1. (Note that this grouping does not correspond to the present day Iwerne Valley Benefice.) Such an arrangement is widely seen in Anglo-Saxon England.

Chapelries, also known as ‘chapels of ease’, did not have a resident priest but relied on priests travelling from the minster church to conduct the sacraments and effect the cure of souls. As the crow flies, the distance, east to west, is about fourteen miles. By muddy, circuitous medieval tracks, it would be longer! Handley or Hinton St Mary would each take a whole day’s journeying from ‘base’. Several priests would be needed to cover such an area.

Fig. 1. *The medieval Chapelries of Iwerne Minster*



Yellow: 1 – Iwerne Minster 2 – Hinton St Mary
3 – Margaret Marsh 4 – East Orchard 5 – Handley (6^d)
(6 – Gussage St Andrew)

In **956 King Edwy** (aka Eadwig), further bestowed on the nunnery lands in Handley (Heanlegen) and Iwerne Minster (Iwern), see S630

[http://www.anglo-](http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet/?do=get&type=charter&id=630)

[saxons.net/hwaet/?do=get&type=charter&id=630](http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet/?do=get&type=charter&id=630) .

Domesday Book 1086 (c.f.

<http://www.domesdaybook.net/home>) is the first

source which names Iwerne Minster in its own right, albeit only for tax purposes. (Plus ça change, eh?) In 1086 IM has 18 hides of land whose tax value is £14, an increase of £4 from its pre-conquest value. It is a busy, self-sufficient community, boasting 3 mills (water driven), meadow, pasture and woodland as well as arable land for 16 ploughs. DB gives the population as 50 villagers and small holders. This is most definitely an underestimate as only heads of household were counted. Nor were millers, priests and servants of the Abbey counted. If we reckon on 4.5 people per household, to include slaves, children and relatives, and the millers, priests etc, the settlement must have had a minimum population of at least 250-300. Not so small a place for 1086. The increase in tax value suggests that, unlike Dorchester and Shaftesbury, it had escaped the ravages of William I’s punitive progress to Exeter in 1068 during which both Shaftesbury and Dorchester were pillaged.

At this time IM’s own church would have been of Saxon Romanesque in style, and almost certainly made of wood. Where it stood is not known.

Iwerne Minster was an important local ecclesiastical hub throughout this period. It is interesting that Handley, although within IM’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction, had its own particular secular importance. It gives its name to a ‘hundred’, whose function was the administration of secular law and the keeping of the peace. Perhaps Handley’s proximity to the Wiltshire-Hampshire-Dorset border and the defensive Bokerley Dyke is also of ancient significance.

Although there are no records of IM during the 12th century, it was then that the present church was begun, built in the Norman Romanesque style. It may be at this time that the church precinct was reduced in size.

The 12th century was also the time of the Anarchy – the civil war between Stephen and Matilda from 1135 to 1153. Judging from contemporary accounts, it was a bloody business even by medieval standards. As one chronicler (in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, E*, the *Peterborough Manuscript* for year 1137) put it: “Christ and His saints slept”. Although this part of Dorset was nominally under Stephen’s control throughout this period, and we have no record particular of IM from

that time, it is unlikely that IM escaped the suffering.

Modifications are made to the church in about 1200 when the south arcade acquired Transitional pointed arches, and again in the 1360's when the tower and steeple are added, possibly under the direction of William of Wykeham.

So throughout the Early and Middle Medieval periods, Iwerne Minster presents as a typical feudal parish, depending on its own industry to meet its own needs, and helping to support the nunnery at Shaftesbury. It is only at the Reformation, the beginning of early modern times, when in 1547/8 the manor is granted to the Earl of Southampton by Henry VIII, that things begin to change.

John Goodliffe

THE CHURCH PATH ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG, DEC 2025

An archaeological dig recently took place in Iwerne Minster on the land south of public right of way called Church Path. Clayesmore School, who own the land, is seeking planning permission to build four two storey dwellings, as two semidetached houses. Each new dwelling would have two parking spaces, and the existing terrace of four dwellings abutting Church Path would each acquire one parking space, giving a total of 12 parking spaces. Such a development would see service trenches and building foundations dug into the ground, and a hard standing laid for the parking areas.

Having been made aware of ancient burials found in 1994 in the garden of 1 Church Hill, the school requested an exploratory dig. This was done by Peter Bellamy of Terrain Archaeology, whose final report, no. 53622/2/2, is now publicly available on Dorset Council's planning website, see under 'documents' at :

<https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=409260>

The following article draws heavily on that report.

Evidence of a Saxon cemetery dating from the 10th century was found. Few such cemeteries of this period are known, particularly in Dorset, so this find is of great significance, and warrants further excavation. For the initial exploratory dig two trial trenches were dug at right angles to each other. See diagram 1.

Six graves and possible graves were uncovered, four in trench 1 and two in trench 2. These were not fully excavated but revealed enough to show that the skeletons lay east-west with their skulls to the west, indicative of Christian burials. The burials are fairly orderly, i.e. not jumbled together or overlapping, suggesting an

organised burial regime. Grave 121 revealed an adult skeleton (122) with a neonate skeleton (123) in its abdominal area. These burials are outside the present graveyard boundary of the parish church, St Mary's, but taken with the 1 Church Hill discoveries of 1994, suggest that in the past either the graveyard was larger, or that the site of the church has moved. The present church, of local Greensand stone, dates from the 12th century.

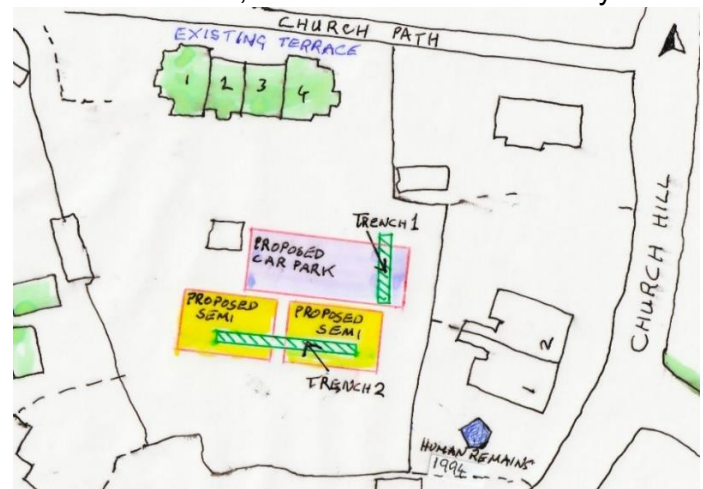


Diagram 1: Excavation sketch plan of proposed Church Path development

The graves are crossed by post holes, apparently contemporary with the graves, and by trenches of a later period. As well as the human skeletons, found items indicating human activity included pottery, building material, flint, animal bone (some burnt, two fragments with signs of butchery) and a single oyster shell. One bone spindle whorl was discovered in a ditch which cut across the line of trench 1. Dating is based on these finds.

Worked flints showed some prehistoric activity, but this is slight. Both trenches yielded early medieval pottery shards, some of which are of Saxon origin (10th–12th century?) and show similarities with those discovered at Saxon royal palaces at Cheddar. Back fill around the post holes suggest they are of a similar period to the graves, perhaps suggesting a division of the land even in Saxon times. The later ditches which cross the graves show that the site had ceased to be a cemetery, and was probably forgotten, by in the late medieval period (13th–14th century). To understand more about how the site developed, its chronology and its relationship to the existing graveyard, further excavation is needed.

Cemeteries give us a rare insight into our ancestors' past. Recent discoveries, such as Winterborne Kingston Iron Age cemetery, are greatly enriching our knowledge and understanding. This early medieval burial ground is of high significance and could add to our knowledge of the development of that period's minster church precinct. A full excavation is desirable.

John Goodliffe