

## SPRING IS FINALLY HERE...!

You can find contact details/information on our website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/benefice/34-370BX/>. We also circulate the Courier digitally; if you would like a digital copy, please contact the Editor. We will continue to offer opportunities to join services via livestream (for the vulnerable) for the foreseeable future and we are looking to expand our social media presence in the new year.

**ST GEORGE'S, DAMERHAM SNOWDROP WEEKEND** – Unfortunately the Snowdrop Weekend was cancelled at the last minute due to flooding which made the parking situation untenable for the number of visitors that we normally would get, some who come long distances. Despite the event cancellation (which was broadcast on radio, social media and posters in the local area), people still wanted to come and visit the snowdrops. A much more limited event evolved where the church was opened for visitors, and then due to popular demand - some limited refreshments were offered. Despite the cancellation of the event, we managed to raise £1500 over the weekend. Saturday was sunny, but Sunday was back to the usual inclement rain. Many thanks to everyone who attended, donated items and decorated the porch and who contributed their effort (with Cherry, Simon, Sussie and Susanna who went above and beyond to make the event a success despite what happened). Hopefully in 2027, the event will be drier so we can return to our normal weekend for the thousands of visitors that come to see the snowdrops. It is unlikely that we will reschedule this event (without snowdrops!) for later in the year as the weather dries up, but there are other means and church events (such as the Cream Teas in August) if you would like to show your support to keep St George's running as a viable local church.

**ALL SAINTS NOMINATED CHARITY 2026** - If you would like to propose a charity or charitable good cause for the All Saints Nominated Charity 2026 - please provide the organisation's name and some BRIEF information to a member of the PCC before its Annual Meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May or come in person to propose it. The PCC will consider candidates and make a final selection at its summer meeting. A local link or a connection through someone local can be valuable. In past years – the Nominated Charity assisted both local community needs and further afield.

**MARTIN PLANT SALE** – With spring blooming around us, there is a plant sale at Reads Farmhouse on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May. Proceeds are in aid of the Blandford Hall and All Saints Church. Contact Lizzie Fernie if you are interested in this event.

**A BIG THANK YOU** – to all the people who supported the Ash Wednesday Humble Lunch which raised £135 to help provide, amongst other things, educational and medical support to communities in Sudan and South Sudan. Thanks also to all those supporting our Lenten Lunches in Rockbourne, in aid of St Andrew's Church. If you would like to make a personal donation to support St Andrew's, please contact Mr Patrick Thompson (see contact details for phone number) who can provide details of how best to do so.

## FROM THE REGISTERS

### Funerals

St Andrews, Rockbourne      16<sup>th</sup> January      Susan (Sue) Sollars

**NB. For all pastoral enquiries including baptisms, marriages, funerals and other related matters, please contact the Rector, Rev'd Les Player**, The Rectory, Mill End, Damerham, SP6 3HU (01725) 518642. **For matters regarding benefice administration support, please contact the Western Downland Team Administrator (Bernice Churchill)** on [infowdchurches@gmail.com](mailto:infowdchurches@gmail.com) or (01725) 518816. **For information concerning individual parishes including matters of a general nature, please contact the Churchwardens:** -

Damerham	John Godber (01425) 650044
Martin	Alistair Groom (07932) 113584 and Lizzie Fernie (01725) 519542
Rockbourne	Patrick Thompson (01725) 518246 and Rory Smith (01725) 518215
Whitsbury	Chris Harper (01725) 518324 and Chris Cobb-Smith (01725) 518313

**Please send contributions for the next Courier to the Editor Arron Shutt** ([arron@ashutt.myzen.co.uk](mailto:arron@ashutt.myzen.co.uk)). The deadline is 31st April 2026.

News and Views from the Church of England  
in Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury

# THE COURIER


APRIL – MAY 2026

## A Newsletter for the Communities of the Western Downland

### A Word from the Rector – The things we depend on...

What do these have in common? The Chinese Paddlefish, Splendid Poison Frog, Christmas Island Blue-tailed Skink, Western Black Rhino, Yangtze River Dolphin and Golden Toad? The answer is that, like other species, they have become extinct since the year 2000. In several cases significant efforts were made to save them. Of the extinct species some were lost to disease, many to habitat change (mostly due to human activity), and some because of human predation. They are not the only things being lost. Parliament is ending the centuries old practice of hereditary Lords; From days when titled landowners held much of the practical authority and power in the UK. The general feeling is public servants should be chosen on merit. Yet there have been many Lords who have served conscientiously and well. Similarly, there have been calls for the removal of Lords Spiritual (Bishops) from the same body (the number of Lords Spiritual, like hereditary Lords, has already been significantly reduced). All institutions have a capacity for corruption. Such failures must rightly be challenged and corrected. No institution can claim the right to be shielded from the exposure of wrongs. Yet in condemning what is wrong we risk squandering what is good. Dedicated individuals and communities work for our good in all walks of life. Much of what they do is unseen, and too much unappreciated. Voluntary groups, youth organisations, and yes, churches too, are facing an existential threat. There are too few willing to play their part (as past generations did) to enable them to continue to serve their communities. The sad reality is that, like pubs and post offices, banks and high street shops, many will become extinct without your engagement. We need your help if you want the Church to be here to serve you and your children and their children. There are significantly fewer active members than when I became Rector 23 years ago. I and others within the church are no less busy and the need is no less vital, but there are fewer hands; fewer people to share the load. Please come to the annual meeting in your local parish in late April or early May. Come to Church, maybe just twice a year but on a normal Sunday, not just Christmas. And if you don't currently give or help (and some of you wonderfully do) consider helping with a fundraising event or making a regular financial contribution (perhaps the equivalent of one or two cups of latte or cappuccino a week). The congregations locally will continue to serve and support you as best as they can for as long as they can. But they are YOUR church and they need you. Their future is in your hands almost as much as they are in God's. You can choose to stand in judgement of the hierarchy of the Church and wash your hands of the whole sorry affair, or to stand by and watch congregations gradually extinguished. Or you can get involved to ensure a bright future in which the Church continues to play a full part in the life of these communities and in YOUR life. Your christenings, your weddings, your funerals, your commemorations and celebrations, your Christmas and more. Don't let these wonderful churches become empty shells or forgotten histories. They are and should be so much more. But that depends on you. If you would like to know more, do get in touch. Or join us at any of our published services, or our annual meetings.

Rev'd Les Player

<p><b>YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOU!</b> - Elections will take place in our parishes in the early spring (see Dates for the Diary) for church council posts. Check your church or village noticeboard in April for details of vacancies and dates for meetings. To find out more about how you can participate (including qualifying criteria) or if you would like to join the Church electoral roll, please speak to a member of your Church Council or the Rector. All members of the church electoral roll who meet the qualifying criteria can vote and stand for office. Vacancies exist if you wish to be involved in your local church!</p>	<p><b>DATES FOR THE DIARY</b></p>		<p><b>FORTHCOMING CHURCH EVENTS</b></p>
<p><b>TUESDAY REFLECTION AND PRAYER</b> – We meet most Tuesdays online at 9.30a.m. using a simple structure for 25-minutes to read a short Bible passage, share in a very simple liturgy and bring before God our thanksgivings and requests in prayer. To join us click here: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81111003493">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81111003493</a> or use the Meeting ID: 811 1100 3493 and Passcode: 107124</p>	<p><b>18<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> April</b></p> <p><b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 7:30p.m. (7.00p.m. for PCC members)</b>  <b>Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 6.30p.m for 6.45p.m. start</b>  <b>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 7:30p.m. (6.45p.m. for PCC members)</b>  <b>Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May, 7:30p.m. (7.00p.m. for PCC members)</b>  <b>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 7:00p.m. (6:30p.m. for PCC members)</b>  <b>Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June (Overnight)</b></p>	<p>ALABARÉ's Walk for Lent  <a href="https://alabare.co.uk/events/walk-for-lent/">https://alabare.co.uk/events/walk-for-lent/</a>  Damerham Church Annual Meeting - Damerham Village Hall  Chalke Deanery Synod (Blandford Hall, Martin)  Rockbourne Church Annual Meeting - Rockbourne Village Hall  Martin Church Annual Meeting – in All Saints Church  Whitsbury Church Annual Meeting- Whitsbury Village Hall  The BIG Sleep at St Paul's Cathedral</p>	<p><b>Ascension Day Service</b> - This year's Ascension Day Service &amp; Bacon Breakfast will be in Damerham on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May (venue to be confirmed), beginning at 9.00a.m. (outdoors weather permitting). All are welcome.  <b>Rogation and Animal Blessing Services</b> - This year we have our Rogation &amp; Animal Blessings are in Rockbourne at 11.00a.m. on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May at St Andrew's Church.  Our other Rogation service is at All Saints Church, Martin which is being held on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 11.00a.m. The Rogation in Martin involves a short pilgrimage walk from the Church to Locks' Woodland on Sillen's Lane - an opportunity to participate in the blessing of crops, and of pets and other animals and a celebration of rural life. You are very welcome to join us and to bring your well-behaved pets for a blessing (or pets can bring their well-behaved humans!).  <b>Holy Week</b> - Details of all our services from Palm Sunday to Good Friday and Easter Day are contained in our List of Services.  <b>Patronal Festival</b> - This year St George's Day falls midweek, so we will mark St. George's Church's patronal day on the following Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April.  <b>Legacy Funding</b> - Many people consider the causes and concerns which have been important to them in life and include these in a will. Please consider making a provision in your will to your local parish church and help maintain their structure for generations to come.  <b>A Reminder</b> - You can donate at St, George's, Damerham, All Saints, Martin &amp; St Andrew's, Rockbourne when the Church is open via our digital giving kiosks. Gift Aid can also be added with your donation.</p>
<p><b>DAMERHAM &amp; WESTERN DOWNLAND BRANCH – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION</b> </p> <p>Your local RBL branch is keen to attract new members from Damerham, the Western Downland area and beyond, and you are warmly invited to join us. We exist to support the RBL's invaluable work of supporting servicepersons, veterans and their families when they are in need, throughout their lives. Our branch not only fundraises but also enjoys a good social programme with monthly pub gatherings and occasional away-day visits. You don't have to be ex-Services to join us - anyone can. For more detail and to join, visit <a href="http://www.britishlegion.org.uk">www.britishlegion.org.uk</a> or email Branch Chairman Mike Richardson at: <a href="mailto:rbl damerham.chmn@btinternet.com">rbl damerham.chmn@btinternet.com</a> .</p>	<p><b>BIG CHURCH SPRING CLEAN</b> – Spring is here and at this time of year we have events to clean our churches. Many thanks to all who attended the All Saints Church, Martin spring clean event as it all looks clean and tidy for visitors and services through Spring and into Summer. St George's, Damerham spring clean event is happening on the Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March from 9.30am until 12.30pm. Please contact John Godber if you are interested in taking part.  For St. Andrew's Church in Rockbourne, their spring clean event is on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> of May from 10.00a.m onwards. At all these events, refreshments will be offered. Don't forget to bring some cleaning materials to help get our Churches looking fresh and clean for yet another year of church events and worship!</p>		
<p>***** <b>SERVICES DURING APRIL AND MAY</b> *****</p>			
<p><b>We are livestreaming some physical services on Zoom denoted by three asterisks (***) in the service listing below. Links to join the stream are in the weekly church update sent out via email each week. If you wish to take communion but have a medically diagnosed gluten intolerance, gluten free wafers are available. Please speak with the minister before the beginning of a service.</b></p>			
<p><b>Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April - Maundy Thursday</b>  11.00a.m. Salisbury Cathedral – Maundy Thursday Communion &amp; Blessing of Oils  7.00p.m. Whitsbury – A Sharing in the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday  <b>Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April Good Friday</b>  10.30a.m. Rockbourne - The Way of the Cross; Music, Readings &amp; Prayers for Good Friday  2.00p.m.-3.00p.m. Martin – An Hour at the Cross  <b>5<sup>th</sup> April Easter Day. Alleluia! Christ is Risen!</b>  9.15a.m. Martin – Family Communion  10.00a.m. Damerham – Family Communion***  11.00a.m. Whitsbury – Family Communion  11.00a.m. Rockbourne – Holy Worship for Easter (with a short Communion service)</p>	<p><b>12<sup>th</sup> April</b>  11.00a.m.  <b>19<sup>th</sup> April</b>  9.30a.m.  11.00a.m.  <b>26<sup>th</sup> April</b>  9.30a.m.  11.00a.m.  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> May</b>  9.30a.m.  11.00a.m.  <b>10<sup>th</sup> May</b>  9.30a.m.  11.00a.m.</p>	<p><b>Low Sunday (2nd Sunday of Easter)</b>  Martin – Parish Worship***  <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter</b>  Rockbourne - Sung Eucharist  Whitsbury – Parish Worship***  <b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter</b>  Whitsbury – Holy Communion (1662)  Patronal Festival of St George (transferred)***  <b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter</b>  Martin – Parish Communion***  Rockbourne - Rogation Service &amp; Animal Blessing (with shortened Communion)  <b>6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter</b>  Whitsbury – Holy Communion (1662)  Damerham – Parish Worship***</p>	<p><b>Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May - Ascension Day</b>  9.00a.m. Ascension Communion &amp; Bacon Breakfast  <b>17<sup>th</sup> May 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (Sunday after Ascension Day)</b>  9.30a.m. Rockbourne - Sung Eucharist  11.00a.m. Martin; All Saints to Sillens – Rogation Service &amp; Animal Blessing***  <b>24<sup>th</sup> May Day of Pentecost (Whitsunday): Come Holy Spirit</b>  9.30a.m. Damerham – Parish Communion***  11.00a.m. Whitsbury – A Celebration of Pentecost  <b>31<sup>st</sup> May Trinity Sunday</b>  11.00a.m. Rockbourne - Celtic Style Parish Communion***  <b>7<sup>th</sup> June 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity</b>  9.30a.m. Martin – Parish Communion***  11.00a.m. Rockbourne – Choral Matins</p>