



BERWICK SELMESTON ALCISTON
VILLAGE NEWS
JANUARY 2026

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Financial donations to support the printing and
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2 Railway Cottages, Station Road, Berwick,
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Thank you!

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Email: peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk

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The Vicarage, Wilmington, Polegate, BN26 5SL
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Alciston - Michèle Boys Tel: 01323 870623
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**THE BERWICK 100 CLUB HAS
DONATED **£1,257** TO THE
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SUBSCRIPTION YEAR**

*Thank you to everyone for your
generous support.*

November's total draw was: £278

1st prize: Simon Clark
2nd prize: Lindsey Parris
3rd prize: Shirley Low

**Guaranteed minimum draw total
for January 2026: £278**

The Berwick 100 Club is a Small Society Lottery under the Small Society Lottery Gambling Act 2005 and is registered as such with Rother District Council, Registration Number 30266. Berwick Village Hall Trust is a registered charity with the Charity Commission under number 1031341

Plough Sunday

*11.00 am at Wilmington church
and 1.00 pm at Arlington church
on Sunday 11th January*

The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but behind it there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas, hence 'Plough Monday' in some places.

In medieval times some ploughs were kept in the parish church, and some churches kept a 'plough-light'. In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come.

Arlington and Wilmington communities have reintroduced it as a focus for asking a blessing on human labour near the start of the calendar year. God speed the plough!

Cuckmere Pilgrim Path - Poetry Writing and Appreciation Workshop

*7.00 to 9.00 pm on Monday
12th January at Berwick Church*

As part of her role as Poet-in-Residence for the Cuckmere Pilgrim Path, Judith Shaw is continuing her writing workshops.

These stand-alone writing workshops are free and open to anyone over 18 years of age. Beginners welcome. No experience needed. It would be useful to bring

writing materials, but spare paper and pens will be available.

Diana White

Benefice Administrator

Arlington's Village Market and Coffee Morning + Pop-Up Museum

*10.00 am - Noon,
Tuesday 13th January at Arlington
Village Hall [BN26 6SE]*

There is always something for everyone at the market with a good variety of sales tables. Some of the regular stalls are Anne's traditional fresh bread with other naughty goodies and fresh eggs; Lynne's popular home-made cakes and savouries; Jean's 'all sorts of everything' supporting local charities, a second-hand book stall with books about the local area, and other sundries, jewellery, cards, crafts and more.

Arlington's Pop-Up Museum will not have an exhibit at the January Market but will return in February. The Christmas market was very busy; it was lovely to see so many visitors taking an interest in the Museum's 'Infant King' exhibit.

Again, thank you to the many local people and those from further afield, who have continued to support our monthly community event. Please bring your friends and if you have not been before you will be very welcome. It is a very sociable morning and there is always tea, coffee and cake.



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For further market information please contact

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07760 424169, Email

anntonyhope@gmail.com.

For further museum information please contact Wendy Holmes:

Tel. 07889 689844,

Email talkingteapot@yahoo.co.uk.

Pauline Jackson

Firle and Beddingham Women's Institute

*7.30 pm Wednesday 14th January
at Firle Village Hall*

On 10th December eleven members gathered for a lovely candlelit supper - everyone brought delicious food and we had mulled wine. Each person also brought a 'Secret Santa', and we had a very well-stocked raffle too. The proceeds from the raffle will go to St Wilfrid's Hospice.

Our January meeting will be to discuss five Resolutions - we shall vote for the one we want to go forward for discussion at the 2026 WI AGM. This will be followed by a cheese and wine evening.

We look forward to having some new members next year. Do join us, we will be very pleased to see you. Please give me a call if you would like further information.

Rosy Norris

President

Tel: 07784 707016

The Alciston & Selmeston Village Hall Hub

11.00 am to 12.30 pm

on Monday 19th January

at A&S Village Hall

The Hub welcomes you all to enjoy refreshments, tea and coffee as well as delicious homemade cake in a convivial, warm environment.

Please contact any of the committee below if you have any questions or need help with transport to and from the hall.

Janie 07785 940915

Thea 07772 155772

Helen 07969 732109

Mairi 07582 938185

Rachel Lewis

A&S Village Hall 100 Club

The Alciston & Selmeston Village Hall Committee are fundraising for a new heating system. Installing a modern, energy-efficient system will reduce our carbon footprint, lower our energy bills, and make our hall a warmer, more welcoming space for everyone. Our brand-new fundraiser - the A&S 100 Club - is well under way. Winners are drawn at the monthly Hub.

November's winners are:

1st Prize - Megan Smith

2nd Prize - Neil Creaton

3rd Prize - Ian Lock

For more information and to register:

www.southdownsvillagehall.org/100club or

email alcistonselmeston100@gmail.com

Rachel Lewis



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January Gardener's Diary

If you're thinking of growing vegetables this year for your dinner table (and of course the local village show!) here are things you can do in the garden this January, weather permitting. Start by digging over the area you want to use, so the frosts and rain can break it down ready for spring planting. If you have a compost bin or heap, before digging, spread that over part of the area where Potatoes, Onions, Beans and Brassicas will be.

Plan what seeds you need and write a list, so you know when the best time is to sow and harvest them. Keep them in an airtight container so they stay fresh. Potatoes need to be ordered early so they can be put in trays about 6 weeks before planting for chitting. They do say that Shallots should be planted on the shortest day of the year and harvested on the longest day of the year, so give it a go if the weather is okay.

If it's not too wet, try putting Broad Beans in now for an early crop, or put them in pots to plant out later.

Lisa Collington

Recipe of the Month: Frittata with Sautéed Leeks and Brie

Serves 6

Ingredients

4 tbsp olive oil

6 medium sized leeks, trimmed, washed and thinly sliced

A grating of nutmeg

1 tsp salt

A good grinding of black pepper

10 large eggs

1 tsp Tabasco

225 g brie, sliced into 6, edge rind removed

Method

Heat 3 tbsp oil in a sauté pan and cook the sliced leeks until they are very soft.

Stir in the nutmeg and salt and pepper. Beat the eggs with the tabasco. Heat the remaining oil in an 18cm crêpe or frying pan, pour in the egg mixture - it should nearly fill the pan to the brim. Carefully fork in the leeks. Lower the temperature under the pan and let the eggs set. The mixture should not rise up the sides of the pan but if this happens, reduce the heat. When the base is firmly set, preheat the grill to medium and arrange the 6 slices of brie pointed ends towards the centre on the top of the frittata. Put the pan under the grill and leave it until the eggs have firmed up on the top. Then slip the frittata on to a serving plate and cut into wedges. Serve with salad.

Valerie Shaw

Family Support Work (FSW)

Dear Friends,

The end of the year is always a busy time for Family Support Work, and 2025 was no exception. With Christmas food and gift donations

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piling into Garton House in Brighton, we could support our families to have the best Christmas that they can have.



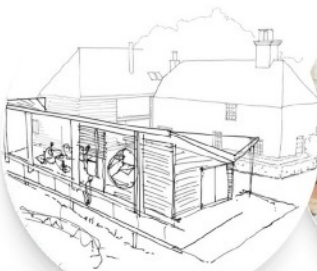
Practitioners were busy during this time with various Christmas parties, such as one in Rotherfield and a roller-skating Christmas party in Dallington Deanery and Battle for children and families.

The struggle our families go through extends beyond just Christmas; it is heightened by the winter months, causing more strain on finances and health. An estimated 65,300 households across Sussex are living in fuel poverty this year. So, we have set up a 'Share the Warmth This Winter Appeal'. For those who receive a Winter Fuel Payment and are able, please share part or all of your payment with our families by donating it to FSW.

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We are very happy with what we have achieved in 2025. Our Impact Report, released in September, reflects the work and the impact we made for countless Sussex families. From summer family events to supporter fundraising, we have had a busy year.

We now look forward to more success in 2026, with many upcoming events in the pipeline, which we will share more about soon.

There will be lots of ways for our supporters to get involved in the work we do; by attending events in support of FSW, joining in fundraising efforts, or starting your own! Thank you for all your support in 2025.

November's work in numbers

- ◆ 226 visits to families
- ◆ 867 phone calls/remote support to 303 parents and 218 children
- ◆ 54 supported meetings with other agencies
- ◆ 52 group sessions, 509 adults and 310 children supported
- ◆ 64 food deliveries made.

Prayer points

- ◆ Please pray for financial blessings for our families over the winter.

- ◆ Thank God for our impact in 2025, please pray for His guidance in 2026.

Hannah Rothwell, Digital Communications and Fundraising
hannah@familysupportwork.org.uk
Telephone: 01273 832963

The Archaeology of the Three Villages

Berwick, Alciston, and Selmeston may appear quiet and small today, but underfoot they contain chapters of very different pasts. From Mesolithic flints and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries to monastic barns and mammoth tusks, the evidence preserved in their soil links local life to national and even global narratives – of climatic change, medieval religion and human movement. Selmeston's archaeology is notable both for its long chronology and for the scale of early medieval burial remains.

Surface finds and small investigations have shown human presence here since the Mesolithic age – hunter-gatherers exploited springs and seasonal resources at least 6-8 millennia ago. More dramatically, part of an Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery lies beneath Manor Cottages: the site was first identified in 1897 and revisited in the mid-20th century, with a professional excavation in 1979 uncovering multiple graves, weapons and personal items.

Finds reported from the site include spearheads, knives, buckles and

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other grave goods; several objects from Selmeston have been deposited or displayed in Lewes' museums. The cemetery is nationally recognised and is scheduled by Historic England, underlining the importance of Selmeston for early medieval studies in the region.

The Selmeston graves are archaeologically valuable because they speak to the period of change in Britain between the 5th and 7th centuries when settlement patterns, social organisation and material culture were being transformed after the end of Roman rule. The weaponry and graves found locally helped specialists to map the spread of Anglo-Saxon groups whose rituals and practices spread

across the Weald and downland fringe.

Alciston's archaeology is intertwined with its medieval role as a grange of Battle Abbey. The village preserves major standing remains - notably the long flint and tile tithe barn and the dovecote - that are physical echoes of monastic agricultural organisation from the medieval period. Documentary sources and building archaeology show that Alciston was an important grange, and the barn itself is one of the longest in Sussex, a carved and structural witness to large-scale cereal storage and tithing systems.

Excavation and building investigation beneath the parish church have also revealed earlier

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phases of religious architecture. Beneath the east window, archaeologists recorded remains of a pre-Conquest chalk apse and other fabric, demonstrating that Alciston had an ecclesiastical presence before the Norman Conquest – probably an Anglo-Saxon church that was later replaced or rebuilt in medieval times. These stratified remains help chart how monastic landholding and parish structures grew up on older sacred places.

Berwick is best known for its medieval church, St Michael and All Angels, which stands on a site with ancient roots. The churchyard contains features interpreted as a burial mound and its fabric contains early stonework, pointing to a long continuity of worship and burial at the site. The building itself is archaeologically layered, with Saxon and medieval stonework overlain by later repairs and refurbishments.

Beyond human remains, the lowlands around Berwick – and the wider Cuckmere valley – have yielded palaeontological finds. During major earthworks to form Arlington Reservoir (constructed 1969–71 on the Cuckmere) and other deep excavations in the valley, workers and specialists recovered Pleistocene fauna: mammoth tusks, bison horn and the skull of a woolly rhinoceros have all been reported. These show that large herbivores

roamed, and were preserved, in valley sediments during glacial and interglacial cycles.

These Ice-age remains draw attention to the mixed archaeological and geological character of the Cuckmere: peat and fluvial deposits in valley bottoms can trap and preserve organic remains that long pre-date human settlement, while later agricultural use and modern construction can both expose and destroy such deposits. That sensitivity means that many civil-engineering projects in the area proceed with palaeontological and archaeological monitoring.

Brian Calcott

The 'No' Year Resolution

Happy New Year! However you choose to celebrate, I hope your festive season was full of peace, joy, and mega-loads of cheese. I always have a new year's resolution and try to make them positive. Apologise less. Dance more. Wear the shoes. Before you stop reading for fear of me going full 'live, laugh, love' don't worry, I'm heading somewhere.

2026 is going to be the year of boundaries. As well-meaning humans, and especially in the UK, we can be a little too agreeable, put up with stuff, get on with it. But as nature illustrates, it doesn't have to be this way. There are not many better boundary-setting role models than those species who

Chloe Burrell

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ward off others as standard. Camouflage antithesis, these creatures make themselves obvious to warn incomers that they're not to be messed with. It's called aposematism, a defence mechanism used by certain species across the board: invertebrates, plants, mammals, birds, fish and fungi. Told you I had a point.

There are a several types of aposematism.

Aposematic colouration

Deliberately bright colours visually to warn of a toxic taste to others (whether this is true or not). Think ladybirds, wasps and Cinnabar moth caterpillars, who are bright yellow to mirror the toxic traits taken on by their favourite food plant - Ragwort. Then there are Cuttlefish, whose colour-changing skills give them the option of disguise or bold vibrant attack.



Olfactory aposematism

Repelling predators by producing a smell or foul-smelling substance. This dirty card is played by several

species of shield bug - sometimes harshly, but accurately known as stink bugs. Many plants are notable for this feature, including the strong-smelling Wild Garlic.

Auditory aposematism

Sound as a deterrent. Many species make alarm calls to expose a nearby predator, like a Robin tick-ticking at the sight of a cat.

But auditory aposematism is making a sound to directly warn of one's own danger or distaste to others. A famous example is the Rattlesnake, which clatters its tail to give the heads up - "it's not worth it mate". Closer to home, the Garden Tiger moth rubs its wings together to make a rasping noise to the same effect.

Symbolic or tenuous, there's no doubt that these creatures have mastered the art of communicating their boundaries. In nature there's no awkwardness, no deeper meaning, no overthink - imagine!

So, in nature's honour, this year I'll be saying 'no' a lot more. Hopefully with no need for any olfactory assistance.

Kerry Williams Communications

Officer - Conservation

Cinnabar moth caterpillars © Alan Price

Harvest 2026

Psalm 65:11 reads - "You crown the year with a bountiful harvest; even the hard pathways overflow with abundance." Mentioning 'harvest' in



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January may feel out of place, yet for those whose lives depend on the land, harvest marks the turning point of the year. It is a time to look back on what has been produced and forward to what we hope will come. In the same way, the New Year is our moment to take stock.

So as we celebrate 'Plough Sunday' this January, even though most of us aren't farmers, the idea of harvest is rich and meaningful. We speak of the "harvest" of our work, our achievements, our goals.

But above all, there is one harvest that truly matters: our spiritual harvest-the fruit we bear for God.

Psalm 65:11 highlights three truths:

1. God gives harvest gladly -

He desires to bless His people and crown the year with fruitfulness.

2. God gives harvest graciously - Even "hard paths" in life can overflow with abundance through God's grace.

3. God gives harvest generously - The imagery is of overflowing, overabundant blessing, both in this life and far more in eternity.

The God who we know through Jesus Christ is someone who gives harvest gladly, graciously and generously.

So let us not grow weary - no harvest comes without seeking one.

A New Year Poem: The Start

You know the way. You know the roundabout
beside Drusilla's Park, the outside lane
that helps you overtake. You know the times
when unseen blockages, or driving rain,
slows traffic to a crawl. This is your life:
a narrow road, a mobile prison and
some electronic comfort. Take next left.
Now you're alone. On either side the land
extends its welcome. Turn the radio
off. Listen to the insects' hum,
a crow's harsh caw, the sparrows' chatter. Feel
the past steal up around you and become
a friend who takes you by the hand. Step out.
Downland rears ahead. Behind, the Weald.
Trees stretch their shadows over you like cloaks.
A door is opening. Go in. Be healed.

Antony Mair

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*minimum £60 annual subscription. A&S Village Hall 100 Club is registered under the Small Society Lottery Gambling Act 2005 with Rother District Council Registration number 33366. Registered charity number 305307. Full details and terms available on the website.

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CHURCH SERVICES AND MORNING PRAYER

Sunday 4th January

09:30 Selmeston Holy Communion
11:00 Berwick Holy Communion
11:00 Wilmington Holy Communion
(No service at Arlington)

Sunday 11th January

09:30 Alciston Holy Communion
11:00 Berwick Holy Communion
11:00 Wilmington Plough Sunday
13:00 Arlington Plough Sunday

Sunday 18th January

09:30 Selmeston Holy Communion
11:00 Berwick Holy Communion
11:00 Wilmington Holy Communion
(No service at Arlington)

Sunday 25th January

09:30 Arlington Holy Communion
09:30 Selmeston Holy Communion
11:00 Berwick Holy Communion
11:00 Wilmington Holy Communion

During January and February services at Arlington are only taking place on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month during the cold weather.

Prayer

9.30 am each Wednesday at Berwick church.
(On the first Wednesday of the month there is Holy Communion (BCP) instead.)

5.00 pm each Thursday online Zoom meeting - please contact Shirley Pearce for login code (revshirley@gmail.com).

To receive a weekly notification about services (the Sunday Link) please email the Benefice Administrator at benefice.administrator@berwickchurch.org.uk

Pastoral Prayer or Talk

Peter Blee and Shirley Pearce are available to speak to people on the phone and are also able

to pray with people on request in church at Morning Prayer and to offer help in any way possible.

Telephone: 01323 870512, 01323 318231 or Email peter.blee@berwickchurch.org.uk, or revshirley@gmail.com

Please visit the benefice websites to check on services and times:
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