Brancepeth Parish

Rewsletter



December 2025

Also online at www.stbrandon.org.uk/newsletter

Christmas Cards Sale in Church



A HUGE thank you to everyone who contributed to the Christmas card project for church - who knew what talent secretly lurked in the congregation, village and beyond!! We had an amazing response with over 150 hand made cards, and the sale last weekend was a great success.

If you missed it, there might still be a few hand made cards on sale in the church - together with a limited number of new printed cards suitable for Christmas. Come and have a look.....

A stop at Foxes Row for toasted marsh mallows on the Light Walk round the village



Parochial Church Council

Priest in Charge currently in vacancy

Associate Minister Rev'd. Alison Hobbs (0191 3789670) alison@brancepethcastle.org.uk

Church Wardens: Mike Higton (0191 5974675)

Carol Beeby (07592 975002)

Secretary Colin Waterman (07713637128) colinwaterman069@gmail.com)

Treasurer Vickie Jackson (0191 3783581) treasr@stbrandon.org.uk

Deanery Synod Jane Stout (0191 3860618)

Peter Bailey (0781772896)

Other members:-

Janette Foxe (07587 225 200) Kenneth Howe (07710098705, 0191 3840589)

Alison Moore (0191 373 5674), Catrin Morgan (0191 4476520) Hannah Pokhylko (07392958934)

Lay Reader Geoff Moore (07854 696664)

Prayer Team Alison Hobbs (01913789670), Alison Moore (0191 373 5674).

Sunday School Martin Peacock (07503242074)
Messy Church Carol Beeby (07592 975002)

Organist Peter Downey

Village Choir Martyn Jones (0191 3789297) Sacristans Carol Beeby (0191 3847431),

Valeria Dietz, Pat Sharples.

Safeguarding Officer Geoff Moore (07854 696664)

Church Hire coordinator Janette Foxe events@stbrandon.org.uk.

Electoral Roll Officer Jean Hodgson (<u>jean.hodgson33@gmail.com</u>)

Flower Guild Lynne Hastie (0191 3781871)

Churchyard Edward Staines (0191 3902304 or 07729855076)

Youth Club Geoff Moore (07854 696664) Martin Peacock (07503242074)

Worship Team Carol Beeby, Janette Foxe, Hester Higton, Rev'd Alison Hobbs, Alison

Moore, Geoff Moore, Martin Peacock.

AdminTeam Carol Beeby, Janette Foxe, Sue Morgan, Gillian Smellie.

PMC Team: Alison Hobbs (ex officio), Alison Moore, James Morgan, Sue Morgan,

Jane Stout, Colin Waterman.

Fabric: Mike Higton (chair), James Morgan, Rev'd Alison Hobbs, Tom Hobbs,

Steve Hodgson, Edward Staines, George Rae.

Website www.stbrandon.org.uk

Newsletter entries no later than December <u>15th</u> please.

Please send to Sue Morgan – <u>sueatpeppermires@gmail.com</u>
<u>This is due to holiday closure dates at the printers</u>

If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, please contact Hester Higton on hesterhigton@phonecoop.coop.

Dear Friends,

Advent! A rather short and usually all too busy season, but one that involves (or probably should involve) waiting and hoping. One of our readings for the first Sunday in Advent is from Isaiah, and it includes these words:

"[The Lord] shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Chapter 2, verse 4)

I have just finished reading Tom Holland's *In the shadow of the sword*. It traces the rise of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, but argues that we cannot understand that without understanding the history that preceded it – notably Judaism and Christianity as religions, and the Roman empire as, initially, a secular state but one that then, under emperor Constantine, became a Christian empire.

If you are familiar with Tom Holland's works, you can probably guess that it's a fascinating and rather lengthy exposition (and not entirely without its critics). From it, however, I learned a lot about the rise of Christianity in its early centuries. But what particularly struck me was the violence throughout the whole of this period of history, with Christianity no less than Islam implicated in this violence particularly through its association with Rome.

How different from Isaiah's vision that underpinned Judaism, and his prophecy of one who would be named 'Prince of Peace' (Chapter 9, verse 6). And how different from the words of the one who we believe to be the fulfilment of that prophecy, Jesus Christ: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God' (Matthew chapter 5, verse 9).

For us, in this season of Advent, however short and busy it may be, we can at least continue to lament that nations do still learn war, and are very far from beating swords into ploughshares. And we can at least wait in longing that this would not always be so. But we can also wait in hope that the visions and the prophecies will one day be fulfilled. And we can pray for the peacemakers on all sides, as well as being peacemakers in our own small ways.

With my best wishes for the season

Geoff

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Christmas Tree

The tree is scheduled for delivery in the first week of December. We plan to turn on the lights at the crossroads at 6.00pm on Friday 5th. This will be preceded by a small gathering on Edward's forecourt (thank you Dr Staines!) from 5.30 where we hope to provide hot chocolate and to be serenaded in a suitably festive manner by the village choir.

State of the village

The Beautiful Brancepeth working group presented plans for sewing grass seed on the A690 verges in the Spring, exploring funding for the replacement of the white gates on the entrances to the village, and designing the flower troughs for the same locations, along with a compost heap for the triangular garden next to the hall. Thanks to everyone for your continuing enthusiasm!

Planning

The proposed large-scale housing development at Red Barns was approved by the DCC this month. This was despite many local objections including from the PC highlighting the negative impact this would have on our parishioners for access to local amenities and traffic flows. We shall let you know when we learn more about the full implications of the building work.

Budget and precept for 2026-27

Owing to changes in the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme proposed by the DCC, plus our wish to maintain and, where possible, increase support for initiatives like Beautiful Brancepeth and the BCA/Village Hall, the decision was taken to raise the precept by about 5% for next year. You may recall that we were able to keep the rise to zero last year, so we hope that parishioners will appreciate the need for the new budget, full details of which will be finalised in January.

Parish council membership

There is still a vacancy on the PC. If you are interested in contributing to your community, please do not hesitate to contact our Clerk or have a chat with any of the current councillors or, indeed, pop down to the next PC meeting. Go on – make it one of your New Year's resolutions!

Date of next Parish Council meeting:

Due to the Christmas break, the next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Monday 19**th **January** 2026 at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall. Members of the public are very welcome to attend but it would be helpful if you could let our Clerk know in advance so we can manage seating: clerk@brancepeth-parish-council.org.uk

BRANCEPETH GARDEN CLUB WINTER SUPPER

Friday 23rd January 2026

7:00 PM at the Village Hall

Escape the winter chill and join fellow gardening enthusiasts for an evening of warmth, wit, and wonderful company! *Friends, Family and Non-members welcome!*

Featuring:

- Professionally catered seasonal delights by Boldon Farmhouse Pantry
- Lively garden-themed conversation
- A toast to the coming spring
- Traditional table quiz

Formal attire with a floral flourish encouraged

RSVP by 12th December

Contact: Helen, Martin enquiriesbgc@gmail.com

£30 per person

The Garden Club Committee

Men's Social
Village Hall
7pm
Friday 9th January 2026

Fish Supper

Pay as you eat and drink
£3 admission for hall hire.

Domino and Snooker games

Contact David Jackson

07711 648752

Book Club

Our first meeting in the New Year is 16th January. We meet at the home of Dawn & Nick Ellis, 24 Goodwell Lea at the usual time of 7.30pm. We will be choosing the book to read on November 21st.

From the Archive this month





A collapsible (Opera) top hat belonging to the 9th Viscount Boyne.

This is just one of the items which can be seen in the Archive Room in Brancepeth Castle. Open on the first Saturday in every month 9am-1pm.

PCC news

The Parochial Parish Council (PCC) met on Monday 10th November. We were pleased to welcome Jane via Zoom.

Of the many items discussed we were reminded that the closing date for a new priest-in-charge would be the 12th November. We hope that we will be successful in recruiting.

The Partnership in Missional Church (PMC), which St. Brandon's has taken part in for the last three years, is moving forward aiming to act on the information they have collected to engage with the wider community.

It was reported that Fabric and Finance Committee have been busy arranging roof repairs and getting quotes for restoring our lighting system to its original glory.

Our next PCC meeting is the 19th January 2026

Advent group 2025



Step aside to reflect during Advent

Wednesday mornings

3rd, 10th, 17th December

10 – 11.30 am

Brancepeth Castle

More information from Alison Moore

More information from Alison Moore moorealisonm21@gmail.com
07890 733757

All welcome

FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA.

Saturday 20th December 2025

Brancepeth Village Hall

3 to 5 pm

Booking Essential. Cost £12 coceeds to St Brandons Church

Please contact

diane.coles@icloud.com

07754958341







COME AND JOIN THE FUN!

ACTIVITIES AND STORIES FROM THE BIBLE.

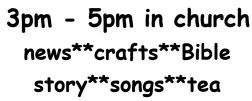
WE GET TOGETHER AFTER THE FIRST HYMN AND REJOIN THE SFRVICE FOR COMMUNION.

OUR LAST SUNDAY SCHOOL WILL BE ON SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER RETURNING ON SUNDAY 5TH JANUARY 2026.

Christingle

is on Sunday 14th December





SAVE THE NEXT DATE - Messy Church New Year Party Sunday 11TH January

Thanks to everyone who provided warm welcomes and delicious

treats as we paraded round the village on October 31st at our Light Parade



St Brandon's December 2025 – Services and readings

Sunday services are at 10:15am every week.

If you are unable to join in person, you are welcome to join online for those services which are livestreamed (shown by * below), or to view the recording later, at https://www.facebook.com/StBrandons

Sun 7 th December	2 nd Sunday of Advent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Janette Foxe	Isaiah 11:1-10
	Gospel	Kenneth Howe	Matt. 3.1-12
	Psalm		72:1-7, 18-19
Intercessions		Wilfred Foxe	
*Sun 14 th December	3 rd Sunday	Parish Eucharist	
	of Advent		
Readings	First	Carys Funnell	James 5:7-10
	Gospel	Judith Minto	Matt. 11:2-11
	Psalm		146:4-10
Intercessions		Edward Staines	
*Sun 21 st December	4 th Sunday of Advent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Timothy Elliot Romans 1:1-7	
	Gospel	Colin Waterman	Matt. 1.18-end
	Psalm		80:1-8, 18-20
Intercessions		Geoff Moore	
*Sun 21 st December, 6.30pm	Carol Service		
Wed 24 st December, 5.00pm	Christmas Eve Crib Service		
Wed 24 th December, 11.30pm	Christmas Eve Midnight Communion		
Readings	First	Tom Higton	Hebrews 1:1-12
	Gospel	Sue Morgan	John 1:1-14
	Psalm		Ps 98
Intercessions		Colin Waterman	

*Thu 25 th December	Christmas	Parish Eucharist		
	Day			
Readings	First	Steve Hodgson	Isaiah 62:6-end	
	Gospel	James Morgan	Luke 2:1-20	
	Psalm		Ps 97	
Intercessions		Hester Higton		
Sun 28 th December	The Holy	Parish Eucharist		
	Innocents			
Readings	First	Linda Waterman	Jer. 31:15-17	
	Gospel	Alison Moore	Matt. 2:13-18	
	Psalm		124	
Intercessions		Martin Peacock		
*Sun 4 th January	2 nd Sunday	Parish Eucharist		
	of Christmas			
	First	Helen Elliot	Ephesians 3:1-12	
	Gospel	Gillian Smellie	Matthew 2:1–12	
	Psalm		Psalm 72:[1–9] 10–	
			15	
Intercessions	•	James Morgan		

<u>Sidespersons</u> <u>Flowers</u>

Dec 7th Peter Bailey & Bonny Bainbridge 2nd Advent

Dec 14th Diane & Gordon Cassap 3rd Advent

Dec21st Annette Johnson & Pauline Caygill Guild

Dec 21st (Carol Service 6.30pm) Josie Armstrong & Steve Hodgson

Dec 24th Crib Service 5pm Jeanette Metcalfe

Dec 24th Midnight Communion (11.30pm) Sue Morgan

Dec 25th Vera Melenets & Hanna Pokhylko

Dec 28th Peter Bailey & Bonny Bainbridge Guild

Jan 4th Pat Sharples & Pauline Caygill Eileen Crawford

Church Cleaning

Dec – Team B

Sue Morgan, Hillary Moss, Annette Johnson, Diane Cassap

Jan – Team C

Carol Beeby, Vickie Jackson, Janette Foxe, Gillian Smellie

<u>Coffee</u> <u>Tech Team</u>

Dec 7th Annette Johnson

Dec 14th Diane Coles Geoff & Alison

Dec 21st Jeanette Metcalfe

Dec 21st Carol Service Peter

Dec 25th No coffee Mike & Hester

Dec 28th Geraldine Jennings

Jan 4th Alison Moore Mike & Hester

Village carol-singing

As usual, Brancepeth carol-singers will be going round the village on the evenings of Tuesday 23rd December (north of the main road) and Wednesday 24th (south of the main road). Anyone who would like to join in will be most welcome: we will meet at the crossroads, at <u>6 pm</u> on Tuesday 23rd, and at <u>6.30 pm</u> on Wednesday 24th. Donations this year will be split evenly between the Salvation Army in Langley Moor, and British Red Cross's Disaster Fund, which supports emergency response to crises around the world, whether natural or man-made disasters.

Many thanks

Elizabeth

Vox Populi Concert at St Brandon's

Vox Populi return to St Brandon's for a special Christmas concerts featuring songs you know and love, and some little known gems. Free, with retiring collection. Mulled Wine and Mince Pies served.

2026 NEW YEAR'S DAY CHEESE & CHAT!

Brancepeth Castle Dining Room, 12.00 midday to 2.00pm on New Year's Day to share bread and cheese, and a cup of coffee in the Castle Dining Room: great conversations by the log fire!

There will be a contributions pot for 'what you will' for The Children's Society, and Ripple.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old familiar carols play, And wild and sweet The words repeat, Of 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song,
Of 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day –
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime,
Of 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'

And in despair I bowed my head;
'There is no peace on earth', I said,
'For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead: nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1507-52

DECEMBER PRAYER SPACE

What will be gladdening your heart this season?

Give thanks for that, and pray the pressures of the season do not obstruct

And for

warmth and light as the dark nights deepen – What star shines bright?

And for

the magic for children; shoeboxes; Salvation Army gifts; the crib service ... and patience for parents.

Brancepeth Youth Club December 2025

The Youth Club is an Open Club run by the Church, and all young people in the Village (and beyond, and their friends) are warmly welcome. The age range is from 11 to 17 years inclusive.

We meet fortnightly in the Village Hall on Sundays at 6.00-7.30pm. The final date for this term is 14 December.

Leaders

Geoff Moore 07854 696664 durmoores@btinternet.com

Martin Peacock 07503 242074



Wednesday Coffee Morning

10:30-11:30am **Village Hall**

Dec 3rd Margot and Vivienne
Dec 10th Rosemary and James
Dec 17th Martyn and Christine

There will be no more until January (Please contact Martyn or Christine - 0191 378 9297 — If you need to swap your rota date. Thank you)

The Post Office Is Running a 5 Day Banking Hub in Crook

Monday.....Halifax

TuesdayNat West

Wednesday.....Lloyds Bank

Thursday.....TSB

Friday.....Barclays

9.00 am - 5.00 pm

Full banking Facilities

Situated in the previous Barclays Bank building at 8 South Street beside the Market Place close to the terminus for the X46 bus.

The Yellow Bin

We at St Brandon's support local people in crisis by providing emergency food. It is stored in the Yellow Bin at the back of the church, emptied weekly, and taken to Brandon Food Bank.

Staples such as long-life milk and juice, tinned meat and fish, tea, coffee and cereals are always needed. Treats include jam, chocolate and biscuits.

Our donations really make a difference, especially in winter, and can provide a lifeline.

Please help fill the Yellow Bin this festive season, and beyond. Thank you

A spectacular year of fund raising at the Golf Club for St Cuthbert's Hospice

On June 7th this year, our 2025 men's captain, David Morgan, and club member Tony Myers took on the ultra 37-mile Coastal Challenge to raise money for St Cuthbert's Hospice.

They raised an incredible £5,672. David said, "Huge thanks to everyone in the village. Your support was absolutely priceless."

This brings David's combined fundraising total for the year for St Cuthbert's Hospice to nearly £10,000.

Dean Maynard

Head of Marketing and Sales

Brancepeth Castle Golf Club

Sales@brancepeth-castle-golf.co.uk

0191 378 0075

<u>Monday, 8th December</u> <u>Golf Club Dining Room - 2.00 pm</u>

'The Cardiac Dodgers'

Music of the 60s/70s and Christmas of course apparently including 'Dominick the Donkey'

An invitation is extended to anyone, male or female, who would like to join the Ladies' Club for an enjoyable afternoon followed by light refreshments.
£6.50 (members £4.50)

Brancepeth Village Facebook Page

I have set up a Facebook page (Facebook Group) for residents of Brancepeth. It is an opportunity to post and share news, items of interest, promote village activities, highlight volunteering opportunities and share general information useful to the local community. The idea is to boost community engagement - creating an online space where members can connect with each other, participate in discussions, share ideas and offer support.

Whist I realise that not all residents use Facebook, it will be of benefit to those that are familiar with the platform and complements the Brancepeth Parish newsletter. Around 35 people joined the group in the first few days and I expect the number to grow as awareness of the Facebook page increases.

To join the Facebook group - go to Facebook - search for Brancepeth Village and request to join the group. If you have any queries, call me on 0191 3784408.

I look forward to welcoming you!

Sheila Chapman, 1 Goodwell Lea

Remembrance Sunday Evensong update

Our evensong on Remembrance Sunday brought the welcome return of St John's College Chapel Choir and attracted a good congregation. The students sang the service beautifully under the direction of Ben Mills making his first visit with the choir. The service leader was our own Hester Higton who excelled in the role and we hope to make St John's visits a regular part of our worship. Thanks to those who so generously provided the choir tea St Brandon's reputation for hospitality was upheld with the students commenting 'we don't usually get fed like this!'

Soup and Sandwich Lunch



Many thanks to Diane Coles and her willing helpers for providing the soup and sandwich lunch after church on November 16th. £155 was raised in aid of St Brandon's Church.

Dates for the Diary:-

Dec Mondays - Snooker, 7.30pm, Village Hall
Dec Mondays - Yoga, 7.30pm, Village Hall

Dec Monday - Knit and Natter, 10th & 24th, Village Hall, 2-4pm.

Dec Wednesdays - Art Group, 7.00 – 9.00pm, Village Hal

Dec Wednesdays - Tai Chi 9.30 -10.30, Village Hall

Dec Wednesdays - Coffee Mornings in the Village Hall, 10.30-11.30am

Dec Thursdays - Indoor Bowls, 10.00-12.00, Village Hall

Dec Thursdays - Badminton, 7.30pm, Village Hall

Dec Sundays - Capoeira Classes, 10.00 – 11.30am, Village Hall

Dec Sunday - Youth Club, 2nd & 16th, 30th, 6.00pm -8.00pm, Village Hall 1st Saturday each month - Archive Room in Castle open between 9.00am - 1.00pm

Dec	5th	Fri	Vox Populi Concert, 7.00pm, Church
Dec	6th	Sat	Christmas Show, Village Hall
Dec	15th	Mon	Ladies Group, 2.00pm, Golf Club
Dec	20th	Sat	Festive Afternoon Tea, 3.00pm -5.00pm, Village Hall
Dec	21st	Sun	Carol Service, 6.30pm, Church
Dec	23rd	Tues	Village Carol Singing, 6.00pm, Cross Roads
Dec	24th	Wed	Christmas Eve Crib Service, 5.00pm, Church
Dec	24th	Wed	Village Carol Singing, 6.30pm, Cross Roads
Jan	1st	Thurs	New Year's Day Cheese & Chat, 12.00noon-2.00pm, Castle.
Jan	9th	Fri	Men's Social, 7.00pm, Village Hall
Jan	11th	Sun	Messy Church New Year Party, 3.00pm -5.00pm, Church
Jan	16th	Fri	Book Club, 7.30pm, 24 Goodwell Lea
Jan	19th	Mon	Parish Council, 7.30pm, Village Hall
June	20th	Sat	Brancepeth Village Open Gardens Event

Photos

Front cover — ©- Armstrong, Hodgson, Brooker, Christmas flowers in church **Inside front cover** — ©- Jean Hodgson, Christmas Cards Sale in church and © Jill Dickinson, the Light Walk reaches Foxes Row to toast marshmallows

Inside back cover – ©- Vox Populi Concert, Advertisement

Back cover - © - Jo Dalton - Christmas Show Advertisement

Newsletter entries no later than <u>December 15th</u> please.

Please send to Sue Morgan at <u>sueatpeppermires@gmail.com</u>

View newsletter on line at www.stbrandon.org.uk/newsletter

You can also join us on our Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/StBrandon

Brancepeth Community Association - Management Committee

Martyn Jones Chairman Val Gibbons Subscriptions

Vice chairman Geraldine Jennings Garden Club

Jo Dalton Secretary, Website Jean Merrington

& Bookings Josie Armstrong Social Secretary

Val Gibbons Treasurer Church Representative

http://brancepethcommunityassociation.btck.co.uk/ Tel: 0191 3783952

Parish Activities

Chairman B.C.A. Martyn Jones, 32 Goodwell Lea (0191 3789297) Secretary Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626)

Treasurer Val Gibbons, <u>valmgibbons@gmail.com</u> (0191 3784200)

Social Secretary Josie Armstrong, <u>jo.arm@me.com</u> / 07882 233118

Membership Val Gibbons, 3 The Forge (0191 3784200)

Hall Bookings Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626) Archives & History Vivienne Lowe, 17 The Village (0191 3780974)

Art Group Jeanette Metcalfe, (0191 3781646)

Badminton Sue Morgan, (0191 3781172)

Brancepeth Allotment Sue Morgan, Richard Hobbs, Liz Burdess

& Leisure Gardeners' Club baacommittee3@gmail.com
Book Club Val Gibbons (0191 3784200)
Drama Martin Peacock (07503242074)
Flower Guild Jessie Brown (0191 3782748)

Garden Club Helen Todman (Chair) helentodman@googlemail.com or

Secretary, Martin Welsh m.welsh@ reflex-technical.com

Snooker Bookings Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626)

Wednesday Coffee Christine Jones (0191 3789297)
Yoga Lynne Hastie (0191 3781871)
Youth Club Geoff Moore (0191 3735674)

Parish Council

Thomas Hobbs, Chair: tom.rhobbs@hotmail.co.uk

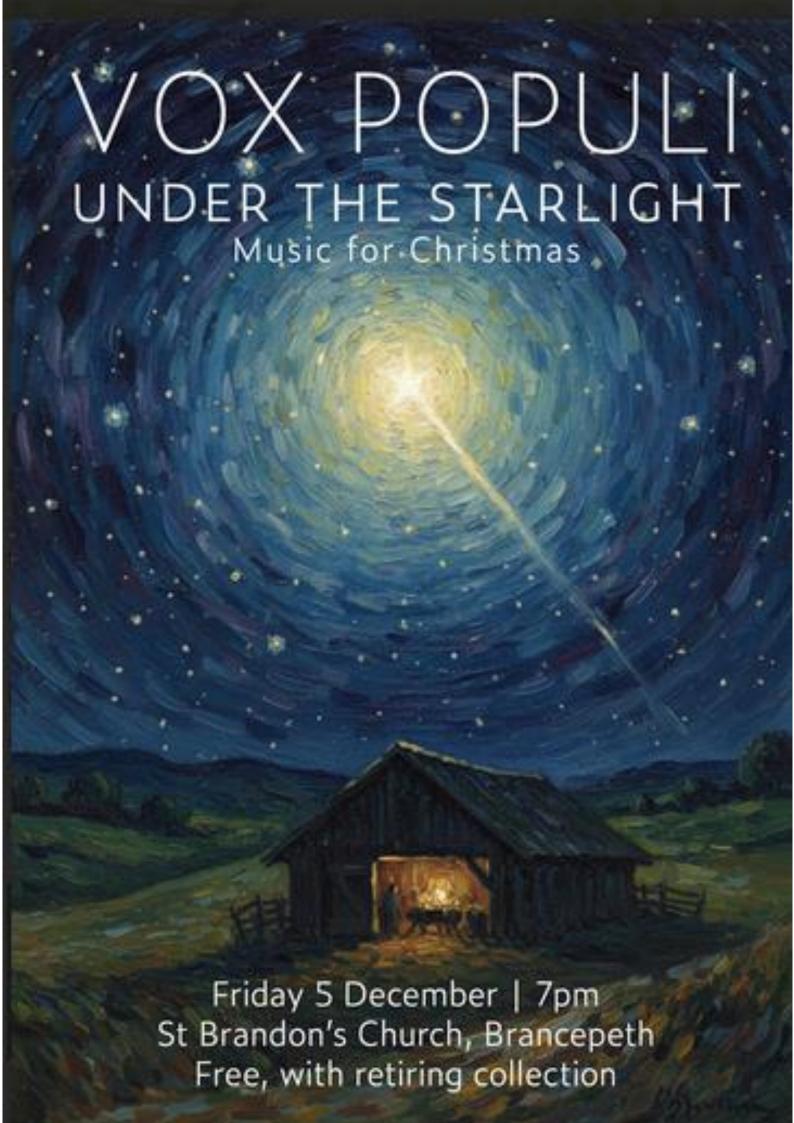
Nick Ellis - Vice chair; n.t.ellis@durham.ac.uk

Philip Davison, philipdavison000@btinternet.com

Catherine Stevenson: catherine@jamsey.net
Julie Daneshyer: jh.daneshyer@hotmail.com
Martin Welsh: m.welsh@reflex-technical.com

Parish Clerk Kirsty Charlton clerk@brancepeth-parish-council.org.uk

County Councillors: Cathy Hunt & Emma Hunt www.brancepeth-parish-counc



It's Christmas SHOW TIME X Folks ...ho ho ho

Saturday 6th December 2025 - Village Hall



Tickets: BCA members - Adult £10/Child £5 & Non-members £12/£6

Includes: entrance, a drink, interval ice-cream & buffet



Contact: Josie Armstrong - 07882 233118 jo.arm@me.com also available at Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Fantastic line-up – not to be missed!

