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PARISH MAGAZINE



September 2026



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Rector	The Rev. Canon James Campbell The Rectory, Withyham, TN7 4BA withyhamrector@gmail.com	01892 770069
Churchwarden	Mrs Gilly Halcrow	01342 826183
Churchwarden	Mrs Jane Osman	01892 515883
Sexton & Verger	Mr John Collins	01892 662389
Licensed Reader	Mr Donald Yonge	07872 529740
Organist	Mrs Sue Stone, GRSM ARCM DipEd	01892 770978
Deputy Organist	Mr Peter Ellefsen, BSc CEng MIEE	01892 653965
Bell Tower Captain	Contact Mrs Gilly Halcrow	01342 826183
Hon. Treasurer	Mrs Anne Barker	
Hon. Secretary	Mrs Alison Hunnam	01892 770347
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Mr Donald Yonge safeguarding.withyhamchurch@gmail.com	07872 529740
Blackham Church	Mrs Sue Schooling	01892 740397
Withyham Flower Guild	Mrs Jill Pardey	01892 661882
Withyham Altar Linen	Mrs Diane Pedder	01892 770240
Withyham Church Cleaning Rota	Mrs Anne Radford	01892 770021
Family Support Work	Mrs Miriam Boobier	01892 662780
Church Administrator	Mrs Bridget Clayton withyhamchurch@gmail.com	07775 864310

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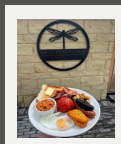


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From the Rectory

Dear Friends,

On 15th August the Catholic Church celebrated one of festivals remembering Mary, the mother of Jesus. In his address, Pope Leo said that Mary ‘teaches us that our true beauty does not lie in hiding the signs of ageing, but in revealing the signs of love that never end.’ He quoted 1 Corinthians 13 – part of that reading we often hear at weddings – that ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails’.

The Pope went on, ‘With this in mind, we are invited to re-examine many of the aesthetic standards, predominantly hedonistic and consumerist in nature, that the world imposes on us. These standards risk trapping us in burdensome expectations, causing us to waste precious energy on what does not really matter and does not last forever. In everyday life, we encounter people whose faces are marked by the years and by suffering, yet who are capable of radiating serenity, kindness and peace around them; just as we may observe others who are perhaps outwardly attractive but hard and cold at heart. It is easy to see where true beauty lies and where, on the other hand, there is still a need for conversion, forgiveness and healing.

If we truly wish to discover and nurture the divine beauty that surrounds us and for which we were made, and to share it with those around us, we must learn to see it in the wrinkles of an elderly person as in the tender face of a child as well, in the maturity of an adult as in the liveliness of a young person as well, in work clothes and tools as well as in festive decorations. We must listen to the unique love stories that each of these realities tells us, recognising in them small glimpses of heaven.

Love is humanity’s most beautiful adornment. Love transfigures, transforms, ennobles and lifts us up, making us light, free and close to God, even amid life’s ups and downs.’

As the Pope reminds us, the search for ‘true beauty’ can be found just as much in someone like my mother-in-law, who celebrates her 100th birthday this month, as in our latest grandchild, two-month-old Halleluya, even though it’s the latter who may attract more interest.

James Campbell

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Churchwardens' Notes

by Gilly Halcrow & Jane Osman

Although August was a quieter month with families away on holiday, Services continued at our two Churches. One baptism took place, plus a wedding at Blackham with another at Withyham. These are such beautiful, flower filled Churches to get married in.

All the necessary permissions have now been received for repairing the roof and gutters above the Lady Chapel, plus the redecoration of the two dormer windows. Two bat surveys have taken place during the spring and summer and, although the roofers will have to take care not to disturb any bats, we can go ahead, hopefully during October.

The framed War Memorial in Blackham Church has had a facelift and is looking smart and is back in its usual place.

To end on a sad note, many of you will be aware Sue Skinner died during August. She was a member of the choir and had a special affection for Blackham Church where she would often read a lesson. It is heartbreaking to lose a lovely friend far too early.



Church Calendar – September 2026

St. Michael and All Angels, Withyham, with All Saints, Blackham

All services at Withyham unless stated

Sunday 6th – 14th after Trinity	9.45 am	Zoom
	11.00 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong
Sunday 13th – 15th after Trinity	11.00 am	Matins
	4.00 pm	Service of Wholeness & Healing
Sunday 20th – 16th after Trinity	9.45 am	Zoom
	11.00 am	Matins
	6.30 pm	Evensong
Sunday 27th – 17th after Trinity	11.00 am	Harvest Festival, Withyham
Sunday 4th Oct – 18th after Trinity	9.45 am	Zoom
	11.00 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Harvest Festival, Blackham



Parish Registers – August 2026

Baptism

On 2nd August the christening took place at St. Michael & All Angels Church, Withyham of Robert Rafe Kei BOURNE, son of Robert and Helen.

Funeral

On 21st July the burial of ashes took place in St. Michael & All Angels Churchyard, Withyham of Barbara Joyce WELFARE who died on 18th February 2026 aged 93.



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Family Support Work August 2026 update

by Hannah Rothwell,
FSW Digital Fundraising &
Communications Executive

Dear Friends,

In the midst of a heatwave, we're going to ask you to think about the autumn! Whilst our summer activities are still in full swing, we are already planning what comes next. We hope you have all enjoyed the summer and, as we move into a new season, we look forward to continuing to work together to support families across Sussex. There is plenty to come over the next few months and, as always, we are so grateful for your continued support of FSW.

As we look ahead to autumn, we are entering another busy period at FSW. Our Annual Eucharist and AGM will take place on Wednesday 30th September at 11am at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Rustington. Following the AGM, we will be looking ahead to Harvest. We are always very grateful for Harvest donations, which help us to keep our food bank well stocked and provide much needed food for families across Sussex. After a quieter months over the summer, we will be especially grateful for your support. Every tin, packet and contribution makes a difference, helping us to support families who may be struggling to make ends meet. Thank you once again for your continued support as we head into the autumn and the final months of 2026.

Get Involved with FSW: There are many ways to support Family Support Work, from donating and volunteering to fundraising. As we prepare for Harvest, we would be very grateful for donations of food, whether given individually or collected through your church.

Why I Joined Family Support Work: "I first heard about FSW while working as a Social Worker. I referred a father and his two sons who were struggling to cope, and with the right support, the family was able to move forward. Seeing the

lasting difference FSW made to their lives inspired me to join the charity myself. Today, I'm privileged to support families facing challenges of their own, helping them build hope and a brighter future." – Richard Andrews, Family Support Practitioner for Rotherfield and Uckfield

July's work in numbers

- 18 new families began receiving support
- 169 home visits to families
- 402 phone calls or remote support to 281 adults and 421 children
- 36 supported meetings with other agencies
- 36 group sessions held supporting 484 adults and 619 children
- 89 food deliveries made
- 58 volunteers volunteering 262 hours with families across our community

Prayer point

- Please pray for the children and families we support as many prepare to start at new schools, move into new year groups and settle into a new school term

Contact me at hannah@familysupportwork.org.uk or on 01273 832963



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Notes From Withyham Parish Council

Withyham Parish Council serves residents of Blackham, New Groombridge (the East Sussex side of the River Grom), Marden's Hill (St John's, Crowborough) and Withyham.

Full action from this meeting is available at www.withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk and www.facebook.com/WithyhamParishCouncil

Minutes can also be obtained from the Clerk via the Parish Office on 01892 864557 or clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk
Our next Council meeting is on **14th September**.

Free Defibrillator And CPR Training – Would you know what to do in a medical emergency?

Withyham Parish Council and the Crowborough Community First Responders are hosting a free defibrillator and CPR training session for local residents to coincide with *Restart a Heart 2026*.

Places are limited and will be offered on a first come, first served basis. Thursday 1st October from 5.30-7pm in Groombridge Village Hall.

Scan the QR code to find out more and book your free place.



Jubilee Playground Fencing – Work to install the new fence around Jubilee Playground will begin on Monday 7th September. The playground will be closed for approximately three days while the work takes place. The new fencing follows the recent consultation with residents. Thank you for your patience while the work is carried out.



Local Business Networking – Withyham Parish Council wants to champion strengthening links between local businesses and create more opportunities in our parish to connect, share ideas and support one another.

We are exploring the possibility of setting up a local networking group.

Before we make any plans, we would like to hear from local businesses about what would be useful to you. We have created a short questionnaire to find out what you would like from a local business network, what type of events would interest you and how often you might like to meet. If you run a business in Groombridge, Withyham, Blackham or Mardens Hill, please scan the QR code and take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your views will help us shape the network around the needs and interests of local businesses.



Groombridge Wild Verge Project Update – Did

you know the verge has been split into three trial sections to monitor the impact of different approaches to growing a wild verge? One section has been left as it is, one has had yellow rattle added, and the third has been sown with locally gathered wild meadow seeds. The three sections have been developing throughout spring and summer and are monitored at monthly verge surveys. We are recording what grows in each section, as well as the wildlife and insects that are visiting the site.

The annual cut was carried out this year by Wild Groombridge and we were lucky to have a volunteer do this by hand using a scythe, minimising disturbance to the habitat. The cuttings were removed to prevent nutrients returning to the soil and encouraging aggressive grasses that can overwhelm other plants.

A big thank you to all our Wild Groombridge volunteers for caring for this valuable part of our parish.





Groombridge Film Society



AGM on Tuesday 1st September at 19:30 in the Village Hall Club Room.

- members and non-members are welcome.

This is a very straightforward sociable event: to elect the committee and its officers (Treasurer and Secretary), hear our plans for **GFS** as we celebrate our 10th year — and enjoy a free glass of bubbly!

It is also a good time to join the society or renew your membership.

We look forward to sharing details of our 2026/27 programme which runs from October to May.

Film Nights: Sundays **October 11th**, **November 8th** and **December 6th** in the New Hall.

Saturday October 17th GFS will be hosting the Community Cafe in the Village Hall.

We look forward to seeing you!

If you would like to join the committee, be a volunteer on film nights or have ideas for films you would like us to consider screening, please let us know at:

[**groombridgefilmsociety@gmail.com**](mailto:groombridgefilmsociety@gmail.com)

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Withyham Parish Council's



Community Cafe



with



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Everyone Welcome!



Saturday 19th September

10am -12pm Groombridge Village Hall

Withyham Parish Amblers

Saturday 19th September



Meeting at: Groombridge Village Hall Car Park TN3 9QX

9am Meet to walk at 9.15am

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Thank you for everyone's support but we are happy to encourage more local people to become members and help our fund raising for further maintenance and improvements to our hall. Our numbers have just dropped below 100 so new subscribers would be greatly appreciated.

Each number costs £12 per year, if you would like to join, please contact Rick Hunnam on 07851 638634 or email: chair@withyhamvillagehall.co.uk

What's on?

Forthcoming Events in the Withyham Village

FRIDAY CAFÉ: FRIDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 10:30 - 12:00

HALL LUNCH: THURSDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 12:15PM FOR A 12:30PM START

Bygone Days by Patrick Scott

Harvest: By the time you read this summer will be more or less over, unless of course we get an Indian summer, as indeed we did during the 1950s and 60s. Autumn heralded time for the annual harvest festival, and during the Church service people would bring donations of fruit and vegetables and place them near the altar. In true rural style, the altar would be dressed with two sheaves of wheat, which I believe were supplied by Buckhurst Farm, cut and tied by Dennis Vaughan or Ted Pettit. After the weekend the vegetables were given to needy causes such as Crowborough Hospital. In those days tins and packets were few and far between – these were the days when folk ate fresh food and vegetables almost all of the time. Supermarkets were just starting to appear and the first I recall was the Grosvenor Road Tesco in Tunbridge Wells.

Next on the agenda was the fete meeting, which was held at the Rectory, in the hall, which is adjacent to the porch. The previous fete was put to bed and accounts submitted, prior to suggestions for the following year being put forward. About a week later the AGM for the Parochial Church Council usually took place in the same room. The hall, for those who don't know, used to have a stone floor which made it quite a cold room at times – this was ripped up and replaced with parquet flooring in the early 1960s. There was and, I believe, still is a large open fireplace.

One year in early September the last of the Estate corn was being harvested on Hawkins, the field behind the lake and in front of the Rectory. I don't know how they managed it but in the late 1960s the Guinness advertising team got permission to place their filming equipment on top of the church tower and record the harvesters at work. Alan Wood from Forstal Farm, who was the advertising director at Guinness, probably arranged it, and the equipment in those days would have been quite cumbersome to get up the narrow steps to the roof. Hawkins (the field) was also the name given by Harry Burfoot to the house he built next to the Monks house in the old orchard.

September on the farm then was very different to today. There was about 500 acres of arable and there were always tractors going up and down the lane with dung spreaders or cultivating equipment preparing the fields for winter corn. It rather saddens me to how different things are now – it was a very busy, lively and vibrant place back then. You can contact me at Patrickscott648@gmail.com

FRIDAY CAFÉ

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2026 DATES

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11th December

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Harvest Festival by James Campbell

Sunday 27th September, Harvest Festival Service
at St. Michael's and All Angels Church, **Withyham** at 11.00am

Sunday 4th October, **Harvest Lunch** at the Kings' Hall at 12:30pm

Sunday 4th October, Harvest Festival Service
at All Saints Church, **Blackham** at 6.30pm.

As in previous years, any donations of dry and tinned food will be given to families supported by Chichester Diocese's **Family Support Work**.

They can either be brought to Withyham Church on 27th September or left on the Rectory Veranda in advance. Homegrown fruit and vegetables can also be brought to Church. They will be available to take home for a modest donation either on the day or the following Sunday.



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The Learning Curve

by Kate Phipps



The Big Barn Bash is back! : Following the huge success of last year's launch, we are delighted to be bringing "The Big Barn Bash" back to Withyham! It will take place on 26th September at a new, larger location, with all proceeds going directly to St Michael's Primary School. For those who weren't able to join us last time, it was a wonderful evening. A proper village get-together, with delicious food, drinks, music, plenty of laughter and a great opportunity to catch up with friends and neighbours.

The fantastic, foot-stomping "Strawbricks" will once again be providing the soundtrack to the evening, with live music to get everyone up on their feet. We are hoping for plenty of dancing and do-si-doing. It doesn't matter whether you are an experienced dancer or have absolutely no idea which way you're supposed to be facing; just grab a hand and join in!

It's an evening for children, parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours to come together, have fun and enjoy the occasion. But events like this are about more than simply having a great time. They also play an important part in supporting our school, helping to provide the essentials our children need while creating opportunities to enrich their learning and experiences beyond the classroom.

A village school cannot exist in isolation. It is part of its community and relies on that community in so many ways: through the generosity of parents, the support of local people, fundraising, volunteering, encouragement and, simply, by turning up.

So, as we begin another school year, with new children arriving, older children taking their next steps and classrooms once again filled with the familiar bustle, it seems a good time to remember that old saying: it takes a village to raise a child. And I think the same could be said of a village school. It takes a village to support it, celebrate it and keep it thriving.

A huge thank you to CLM and G K Denniss Farms Trust for their kind support and sponsorship. We hope lots of you will join us on the night. Tickets are available by presale only; there will be no sales on the night.

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/stmichaelsschoolpta/2320069>



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Recipe Book by Sheila Welstead

Blackham Village are planning to put together a *Village Recipe Book* to be available in early December.

Keep a look out on village social media and notice boards for further details. In the meantime, please consider what you can contribute to our collection of recipes – a unique starter, a memorable main, a scrumptious pudding, a family favourite, bakes and cakes, or anything else you think will be interesting!

THE ARTS SOCIETY ASHDOWN FOREST

Thursday 10th September at 2pm
Crowborough Community Centre

Dazzling Dufy: Invitation to a luminous feast with Raoul Dufy **Lecturer: Mary Alexander**

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Groombridge Horticultural Society by Sue Obbard



I hope you've all weathered the last two months, even if our gardens have been suffering. We are holding our Autumn Show on 12th September from 2:30pm in the main hall at Groombridge. Besides all the usual classes of flowers and vegetables (which are sure to be drought-depleted), there are lots of cookery and craft classes as well. The schedule is in the yearbook and on our website. As always, entries need to be submitted to Gwyneth Davies (01892 862430) by the evening of Thursday 10th September, with set up from 9am-12 midday on Saturday morning. Please try to enter so we can still put on a display. If you are new to this, our committee will be there to help and I will gladly offer pointers to anyone participating in flower arranging for the first time.

Our next event is on Saturday 3rd October – the Autumn Plant Sale from 9am-12 behind the hall.

www.groombridgehorticulturalsociety.co.uk



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Groombridge and Hartfield Surgery Patients Participation Group
by Tony Howell

NHS England has recently published the results of its latest patient survey of GP practices in England. But... how did we do? These are the headline results:

	Our Practice	Local Average	National Average
Felt the healthcare professional they saw had all the information they needed about them during their last appointment:	100%	93%	92%
Had confidence and trust in the healthcare professional they last saw/spoke to:	100%	94%	93%
Find the reception and administration team at this GP practice helpful:	99%	86%	85%
Say the healthcare professional they last saw or spoke to was good at listening:	99%	88%	87%
Describe their experience of contacting their GP practice as good:	96%	73%	73%
Say the healthcare professional they last saw or spoke to was good at considering their mental wellbeing:	96%	75%	75%

Many of you will have been treated by Dr. Harriet Roe over the past seven years, when she first joined the Practice as a GP trainee and then transitioned into a regular GP. Sadly she has now left our Practice to take up a new role in Salisbury, and we wish her well.

We would like to congratulate Nurse Kirsten on her recent prescribing and managing common ailments qualification. She will now be able to prescribe antibiotics for various infections and will start to see patients with new symptoms (such as coughs and sore throats) in addition to continuing with much of her nursing work.

At the time of writing the sun is still shining but just a reminder that the Practice will be running the Flu Vaccine campaign in October and the clinic dates for those eligible, will be released before the end of September.

Email the Practice at gandhppg@outlook.com

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Computer Corner

Passkeys: a double edge saviour by Roger Lyon



The end of passwords is in sight as passkeys become available. What are passkeys, and are they the solution to online security? Read on...

Passkeys are intended to replace passwords. How they work is really simple: your device creates a pair of secret numbers for each of your accounts. The account provider stores one, while the other remains a secret on your device. When you sign in, your device proves that it possesses that secret key through some complex mathematics but without revealing the key. Secure account access with nothing to remember!

At a stroke, this defeats most phishing attacks. There is no password for the attacker to steal, and the passkey is tied to the genuine website and cannot be misused by a convincing fake website. Other, more hidden threats are also reduced, such as attackers re-using old authentication data. As more websites adopt passkeys, there are fewer passwords to be stolen.

The transition to passkeys will be filled with fraudulent emails inviting you to create a passkey for your account... watch out! Fraudulent emails will attempt to give the fraudster their own passkey access into your account. To avoid this, go directly to the account website, not through a link in any email.

Passkeys put considerable reliance on the security of your device, whether phone or computer. If someone gains access to your device, they may be able to act as you even if they cannot extract the passkey itself.

Synchronising passkeys between your devices is a good idea, if only as insurance in case one device stops working. Whether Apple, Google or some other account, the synchronising account is really important and deserves robust account recovery information to protect you well.

A basic checklist to help you protect your new herd of passkeys: use a strong device PIN or password; keep operating systems updated; secure your email accounts and review recovery options to ensure they are up to date; and remove lost or obsolete device access promptly.

Enjoy the fading memory of all those wonderful passwords...

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The Final Word... on The Wheatsheaf

Earlier in this issue there were harvest memories, of halcyon days from two or more generations past – although the juxtaposition is that it was the ‘swinging sixties’ and the era of Harold Wilson’s ‘white heat of technology’. Nonetheless, warm days towards the end of summer, the sound of harvesting machinery, and ‘lashings of ginger beer’ all create nostalgic recollections of times past, when the pace of life was slower, and mobile phones were a yet to be imagined thing of the future.

The wheatsheaf was the result of the reaping process, whereby scythed cereal crops would be bound by some of their own stems, and placed in a self-supporting stook of three to eight sheaves, with the grain elevated and sky facing, drying and ready to be harvested. Mechanisation towards the end of the nineteenth century, led to sheaving machines and eventually the combine harvester.

A wheatsheaf is also a traditional decorative bread, often used as a centre piece. Although they’re a tricky bake to make, a tasty, eye-catching creation usually guarantees ‘brownie points’ for the baker.

More commonly these days ‘The Wheatsheaf’ is a popular pub name.

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Magazine Editor	Robert Veitch	withyham.mag@gmail.com
Advertising	Meg Stafford	megstafford@me.com 07972 161243
Distribution	Janet Funnell	janet.funnell@btinternet.com 01892 663512
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