



(Left) the Live Nativity at Holy Rood, Church, Stubbington; (right): the Magi figures reach Barnaby's coffee shop in Swanmore

# We shared what Christmas means

**OUR worshippers helped to remind their communities about the real meaning of Christmas.**

They told the story of the birth of Jesus in a variety of ways, involving real animals and dressing as Nativity characters. Our churches also hosted a variety of carol services which told the Christmas story through readings and music.

Three camels and two donkeys were among the stars of the **Leigh Park and Warren Park Community Nativity play**. Actors playing the three kings rode the camels through the estate before one of the performances, to the incredulity of passers-by.

The 36-strong cast – which included churchgoers and local residents – then performed their hour-long Nativity play in St Clare's Church, in Warren Park. The donkeys came inside while the camels, sheep and goats were tethered outside.

Lisa Dunning, executive headteacher of Riders Infant and Junior Schools, played the part of Balthazar, said: "I seemed to get the naughty camel, for some reason! But it was fabulous to be part of a local community project with others, many of whom are parents at the school."

And Reader Annie Martin, who played Caspar, said: "It was great. I'll do anything for God! We know the kings took three years to get there in real life, but it was an amazing way to tell the story."

The play was written by Carolyn Owens, and her husband, the Rev Jonathan Jeffery, played



Camels carrying the three kings through Warren Park ahead of the Community Nativity Play

the storyteller who presented the play to the audience.

Animals were also part of the Live Nativity at **Holy Rood Church, Stubbington**. Families packed inside the church to see worshippers dressed as angels, shepherds and kings talking about their part in the story. The angels sang, while one of the kings also performed magic.

They also got to see Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus outside in a stable with animals including a sheep, donkey and goat. The morning also included craft activities and refreshments, free of charge.

**The 25 Appeal**, which was launched by the Rev Mark James, curate at Christ Church, Portsdown, in December's *Pompey Chimes*, aimed to provide Christmas hampers for the poorest families in Portsmouth.

It raised enough money for 100 hampers to be delivered. Food and goodies were provided for 48 families in hostels, 36 victims of domestic abuse who are now in refuges, and 60 homeless people.

The **Churches Homeless Action** appeal raised more than £12,000 in gift vouchers to help those in need to buy themselves Christmas presents.

The vouchers were handed over to agencies working with the homeless, victims of domestic abuse and asylum seekers at a carol service in St Mary's, Fratton, just before Christmas.

Thousands of people flocked to **Brightstone and Mottistone** ahead of Christmas for the Brightstone Christmas tree festival. They saw decorated Christmas trees, enjoyed festive music and raised £11,205 for charity.

Worshippers at **St Barnabas**

**Church, Swanmore**, bought some new Nativity figures using donations given at the funeral of a parishioner.

They sent the figures of the magi on a journey around the village, taking photos of them in local pubs, the hairdresser, both primary and secondary schools and the bus stop – and adding them to their Facebook page.

And there was a fantastic response to the first Nativity Crib Festival at **All Saints Church, Ryde**. Visitors were able to see 51 different Nativity scenes from around the world, and members of Cantata, the parish church choir and the Rainbow Singers provided seasonal music.

Vicar Canon Graham Morris said: "This will undoubtedly become part of the calendar at All Saints given the success of this first festival."

## Minster's grants to develop outreach

WORSHIPPERS at Newport Minster are celebrating after it was awarded several grants to help develop its outreach. The Minster has received an award of £116,400 of lottery cash towards Phase 5 of its external restoration and initial work on re-ordering its interior.

The Heritage Lottery Fund grant will go towards the project to restore the east end of the church and create a welcome area inside the main west door.

The restoration work has already started, and involves conservation of the stonework, roofs and windows of the east end of the church and south east corner. This includes the large east window, which will be removed to be repaired, and the windows in the Horsey Chapel.

Inside the main west door the pews beneath the organ loft will be removed to create a welcome area, allowing better access. A new guide leaflet and information boards will be produced as well.

The vicar, the Rev Kevin Arkell, said: "We're delighted the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. This brings us closer to fulfilling our dreams of serving the island community."

The grant is nearly half the money needed for Phase 5. The rest is coming from other trusts and individual donors, raised with the support of the Friends of Newport Minster. The previous four phases have focused on restoring the outside of the north side of the church, including the roofs, and the top of the tower. This phase is the first to begin reordering inside the church.

Newport Minster has received a further £9,000 in Heritage Lottery Funding towards its plans for a royal-themed heritage trail, linking it with Osborne House, St Mildred's Church, Whippingham, and Carisbrooke Castle.

The heritage trail, which will include a display in the minster and leaflets in tourist information points around the island, received £2,500 from our diocese's Mission Opportunities Fund.

The minster was also given £5,000 from the National Churches Trust. It will help towards an application for further lottery funding for the final £2.7m phases of the renewal project.