

IN DEPTH: CHRISTMAS 2025

“It’s great that the children know the routine, and can go off and do their crafts. And there is a real community spirit around the event as well.”

The 2025 festival raised money for Second Chance, a charity working with local children who may need special help. It included live music from the Pompey Pluckers, St Aidan’s Choir, the Academy Voice Choir and more. And Santa also visited on each of the three days it took place.

The **Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival** also took place on the first weekend of December. It involved hundreds of decorated Christmas trees, concerts and activities on display in various venues across Brighstone and Mottistone. The trees had been decorated by schools, charities, firms and community groups.

The festival included decorated trees on display in St Mary’s Church, Brighstone, and Mottistone Church, as well as Morris dancing, live music, handbell ringing, and a concert by local schoolchildren. The Christmas trees and decorations remained in St Mary’s church in Brighstone until January 6th, to enjoy after the festival.

The Brighstone Community Mosaic Group were also busy with their Christmas project which was to create eight large panels on the theme of Christmas carols and songs. They were on display in the church’s porch.

Almost £6,500 was raised for around 50 different charities. The headline charity for 2025 was the Daisy Ring Bus, but others include the island’s Alzheimer Café, Foodbank and Parkinson’s UK. Since it began in 1996, the Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival has raised around £150,000 for island and national charities overall.

Dozens of decorated Christmas

Drama retold the Christmas story

OUR churches hosted ambitious drama productions to explain the meaning of Christmas.

Many churches choose to stage a version of the Nativity story during church services just ahead of Christmas Day.

The story of Jesus’s birth is often told using children themselves to play the parts of Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds and wise men.

Several churches held special ‘Live Nativity’ events, with adults taking those parts and real animals from the Nativity stable being available for children to stroke, including St Nicholas Bedhampton and St Mary’s Church, Rowner.

Other churches staged special drama events to give a fresh twist to the story.

Among them was the touring production of ‘Amos and the Grumpy Owl’, which told the Nativity story from the perspective of an owl that was present in the stable. Worshippers from Blendworth, Chalton and Idsworth booked a performance that took place at Merchistoun Hall, Horndean.

Artless Theatre Company staged the hour-long family-friendly show, which included multi-media, puppetry and shadow theatre. It was part of a national tour to fit alongside the national Church of England’s Christmas campaign this year, based on the theme of ‘Joy’.

Among the audience was Arthur Allen, aged 7, who said: “I liked it

when the man with the beard changed as it went along. He was grumpy and he became more happy. And the boy was really fun.”

Natalie White, who brought along her three-year-old granddaughter Myla, said: “We really enjoyed it. It was such fun and the fact that Myla sat there transfixed for an hour says it all.”

And Harbour Church in Portsmouth has hosted a version of its Christmas spectacular since it was first planted in 2016. This year there were two performances at St Alban’s, Copnor, of its hour-long musical production.

It told the story of a pop band that sought power, popularity and wealth from becoming famous. It ended with the disillusioned members of that band finding real purpose as they knelt beside a manger in a Nativity scene.

Among the cast was Arthur Gatrell, aged nine, who played the part of Joseph.

He said: “I liked kneeling at the manger, and I like the story of the people having dreams of being famous.”

The spectacular was written by the team vicar, the Rev Katherine



Message. Members of the audience were given free mulled wine, hot chocolate and mince pies, as well as entry being free of charge.

Audience member Alice Worrall said: “It was brilliant. I loved the Sparkle and Shine song. And it’s great for your children to be given hot chocolate and sweets for free.”

And around 400 people saw the latest pantomime staged by the Leigh Park and Warren Park Community Panto Players at St Clare’s Church, Warren Park.

Around 40 amateur actors performed Aladdin - the latest in a series of productions created by churchgoers and non-churchgoers working together to enhance community spirit.

The four performances featured the vicar, the Rev Jonathan Jeffery, as Widow Twankee, in a



Top left: Amos and the Grumpy Owl at Horndean; top: Harbour Church’s Christmas spectacular in Copnor; below: the pantomime at St Clare’s Church, Warren Park

variety of unforgettable outfits. The performances allow locals to experience their neighbours, family and friends performing panto, without a costly trip to a professional production.

One cast member, Sophie Iles, was inspired to have her seven-year-old daughter Gwen baptised in church. Both of them, as well as Gwen’s 10-year-old sister Demelza,

were taking part for the first time.

Sophie said: “Fr Jonathan invited me to be involved. I’d never done anything like this before, but the cast have been so welcoming, and it’s been great to be able to perform among friends in this way.”

“Gwen wants to go to a local church because of how friendly everyone has been, and we’ll look at getting her christened.”

trees were also on display at **St John’s Church, Locks Heath**. Hundreds of visitors enjoyed seeing the illuminations outside, the fragrance of more than 60 Christmas trees, live music and festive refreshments.

Among the attractions were 12 painted murals in the corridor between the church and hall, depicting the 12 Days of Christmas (pictured right). They were created by a local art group.



There was a celebration of Christmas trees in **All Saints Church, Freshwater**, on the Isle of Wight. Dozens of decorated Christmas trees were on display, and the event also featured an opening ceremony with children from Freshwater and Yarmouth CoFE Primary School, a concert by Sandown and Shanklin Band, and a café.

And the Alverstoke Christmas tree festival took place from December 4-7 in **St Mary’s Church, Alverstoke**, in Gosport. It featured more than 70

Christmas trees beautifully decorated by local schools, charities, community groups and businesses, and a variety of musical performances.

Visitors also enjoyed refreshments in the parish centre across the road, including hot drinks, soup, sausage rolls, snacks and homemade cakes.

To read more about what happened over Advent and Christmas across our diocese, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/christmas