



**January / February
2026**

Edition 209

TOPPESFIELD & GAINSFORD END *Parish Newsletter*

Wintery Pictures of the Allotments



USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Colchester Hospital	01206 747474
Doctors Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Hedingham Medical Centre:	01787 461465
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	07341 264219
Little Chestnuts Preschool	079018 80914
Pumphouse Brewery	07801 042545
Church Warden Brian Moody	01787 237974
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man Public House	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	07895 510767
Toppesfield Village Hall Bookings	
Frances Winter	07809 237789
Vets - Ardmore, Gt Yeldham	01787 238255
Medical Equipment	01787 238146
Vicar of St. Margaret's Church	
Rev'd Tia Stickland	07889 284711

TOPPESFIELD COMMUNITY SHOP

Church Lane, Toppesfield. Tel: 07895 510767

Fresh Fruit & Vegetables, Milk, Newspapers, Confectionery, Pet Food, Dairy Products, Meat & Poultry, Coal and Kindling, Cards, Stationery and lots more!

Monday—Friday

8.30 am— 4.00 pm

Saturday—10.00 am—12.30pm

TOPPESFIELD POST OFFICE

Church Lane, Toppesfield

Wednesday - 10.00 am—1pm

Services include: Special Delivery, Mobile Top Up, Insurance Services, Household payments, Travel Money, Moneygrams, Savings Accounts plus more!

Toppesfield Parish Council

Your Councillors are - Kitty Bourlet (Chair), Paula Edwards-Holmes (Vice Chair), Amanda Smith, Chris Neale, Frances Winter, Jeremy Graves and Jane Daines.

Parish Clerk — Kaaren Berry

Parish Council Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month in the village hall. You are welcome to attend the Open Session which starts at 7.30pm.

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter — Published by Toppesfield Parish Council

Editor: clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

Please submit your articles for the next newsletter by 15th February 2026

Please see our online resources to find out what is happening

Facebook Pages :-

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Toppesfield Village Hall

Toppesfield Village Stores

The Green Man, Toppesfield

Pumphouse Community Brewery

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Neighbourhood and Development Plan

Twitter & Instagram— Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Website—<https://e-voice.org.uk/toppesfield-parish-council/>



From the Parish Council



Welcome to the January/February edition of the Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter. As we begin a new year, this issue brings together a wide range of updates, news and contributions from across our community, reflecting the many people and groups who help make village life active, caring and connected.

A key feature in this edition is a summary of the feedback received last year as part of the Parish Council's *Vision 2035* consultation. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views. Your responses have helped the Council better understand what matters most to residents and will play an important role in shaping our priorities for the months and years ahead. The article outlines the main themes from the consultation and explains how your feedback will help guide future decisions.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find updates from recent Parish Council meetings, information on local services, community events, and news from our school, church, allotments and village organisations. Together, these articles highlight the strength and spirit of our parish and the value of staying informed and involved.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and find it useful. As always, the Parish Council welcomes your comments, ideas and involvement — whether by attending a meeting, getting in touch, or simply taking part in village life.

We wish you all a happy and healthy start to 2026.

Parish Council Information

A summary of Parish Council goings-on at the November and December meetings:

At the November meeting:

Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- An amount of money is still earmarked from the Councillors Community Grant fund for the parish councils tree project if it is still needed.
- Local Plan – sites are still being looked at by Braintree District Council (BDC).
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre – resident numbers are currently 1005. It is planned to reduce this to 800.
- During November all residents will receive a letter from BDC as to whether their property is classified as a standard or non-standard collection. This can be appealed if residents disagree how they have been categorized.
- Pot holes – the ones along Great Yeldham Road have been filled.
- Local Government Reorganisation – elections for a Mayor will take place in May 2026. There will be 2 councillors for every division and they will have more responsibilities.

Other business in the November meeting included:

- An open day will be held on 29th November 2025 – 10am – 2pm for residents to view and discuss the draft neighbourhood plan. Cllr Daines will be in attendance for the first part of the day.
- Remembrance service – 9th November 2025 – Access to the barn is being sought and Cllr Neale will try to erect the figures before Sunday. Cllr Bourlet will lay the wreath on behalf of the Parish Council.
- Christmas Event – Cllr Edwards-Holmes will take on the action to source the Christmas gifts. Cllrs Graves and Neale will MC the event. Volunteers for the day have been arranged along with Cllrs help. The date the tree is being erected is to be confirmed.
- Road speeds and 20's plenty signs. Cllr Edwards-Holmes suggested getting the school involved to design '20 is plenty' signs to put up around the village. This was discussed and it was agreed to make this into a design competition. Cllr Edwards-Holmes will speak to the school regarding this.

At the December meeting:

Cllr Richard van Dulken sent in the following report:

- Wethersfield - as of this week the number of residents was 926, down from the higher numbers of a month or two ago, and scheduled to go back down to the regular 800 number, especially as Channel crossings will inevitably reduce during winter months. I understand that the temporary buildings are being decommissioned and the migrants are being moved into barracks and apartments on the site.
- Local Plan Review - no developments affecting Toppesfield and Gosfield End since the inclusion of the small Park Lane sites, but BDC still has to allocate a number of medium sized sites for future housing, probably mainly around the A12 and major railway stations.

- LGR - as of this afternoon it appears as if the mayoral election due to take place in Essex (and a few other Counties like Kent) which was due to take place next Spring will be postponed until 2028, and after the new Councils have been established. No one is really sure why this decision has been taken by central government at this late date, though no doubt politics is an issue! At this stage it is not clear if there will be County Councillor elections next year or not.
- Community grants - I still have a portion of my grant available for a project in Topesfield during this civic year, if not trees then something else. The BDC budget proposed for the next two years, the last years of BDC, includes an increase of the Grant amount for each Councillor back to the annual £1,500 that it used to be, and for each year, subject to agreement by Council.
- Tree planting - I have been aware that the PC has been interested in bringing about a tree-planting project. The BDC Climate Emergency Plan includes an amount of funds dedicated to tree-planting in the District next season, and if someone would like to send me brief outline of what the PC had in mind (where to put the trees, how many acres and/or trees, what types etc) I can talk to the environment team at BDC.
- Waste collections - residents should all have received letters telling them if their property would, from June 2026, have Standard Collections (i.e. with the two new extra wheelie bins) or Non-Standard (with boxes). If any resident feels that their property has been incorrectly categorised there are instructions on the letter on how to appeal to change the decision. If anyone has difficulty doing this they are welcome to contact me though I imagine that there will be very few issues in your two villages which tend to have a fair bit of outside space, and access to the rear of the properties.
- The 2026-7 BDC budget is also proposing no increase in the garden waste subscription charges.
- I understand that rural parishes should continue to receive support towards street scene expenses.

Other business in the December meeting included:

- It was agreed to appoint Alan Collard as the second parish council representative to the Topesfield Charities committee.
- Christmas Event – update on progress. Updates were given and plans are all in place.
- Request received for the Braintree District Council Amenity Vehicle to attend the parish. It was agreed to place an article in the next newsletter to gauge the level of interest of this service.
- Cllr Schwier has requested a cluster of potholes, and a section of road are repaired along Stambourne Road under the Member Highways Initiative.

Full minutes of each meeting can be found on the parish website:

[Minutes - Topesfield Parish Council \(e-voice.org.uk\)](http://Minutes - Topesfield Parish Council (e-voice.org.uk))

If you have any concerns you would like to raise with the Council, ideas for projects or anything you would like to parish council to consider please do get in touch or attend the open session at a Parish Council meeting. There is a public session held at the start of every parish council meeting from 7.30pm — 7.45pm. Parish Council meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of each month but please check the website for confirmation.

Dear All,

I have been asked to introduce myself as not everyone will be aware that I am now the local vicar.



My name is Tia Stickland and I have recently been ordained priest. I thought this photo from my ordination day might help you to recognise me when I am out and about. I will always be happy to stop and have a chat, or perhaps organise a time to meet up and talk later.

I am currently a second year curate and have the privilege of serving within the Benefice of Hedinghams and Upper Colne, with a particular responsibility for the parishes of Sts. Peter and Thomas, Stambourne and St. Margaret of Antioch, Toppesfield & Gainsford End.

My husband Tim and I moved into our home in Gainsford End over 11 years ago now and we absolutely love living here. It is a real joy to be a part of these villages. We have lived the vast majority of our lives in rural areas and wouldn't have it any other way. We have a large family and thoroughly enjoy having family gatherings.

I very much look forward to offering you a warm welcome at one of our Services.

Rev'd Tia.



Toppesfield Footpaths Walking Group

The Toppesfield walks will continue every Thursday at 10 AM

Meet up at the 'Pump'

Bring Boots

It is muddy in the fields

Regards Paul Thompson



St. Margaret of Antioch Toppesfield

**Church services for January and February 2026
are detailed below.**

January 4th Holy Communion 11.00am

January 11th Holy communion 11.00am

January 18th Family Service 11.00am

January 25th No service

February 1st Candlemas service 4.00pm

February 8th Holy Communion 11.00am

February 15th Family Service 11.00am

February 22nd No service

Christmas Tree Competition -

A huge thank you to everyone who entered the competition this Christmas, it was lovely to see so many trees.

After the voting closed the coins were counted and the winners were:

1st - Elm House St Margarets School - 15 votes

2nd Little Chestnuts Pre-school - 10 votes

3rd Knit & Natter - 9 votes



Here are the rest of the entries ...





There was also a remembrance tree for people to write a message to those they have lost and miss.

This was Andrea Chinery's idea and the Parish Council agreed that there should be such a tree in the Church every year.





Toppesfield Allotments news

Happy 2026

We are currently one allotment plot free at present, so anyone still interested in taking a plot please contact me on 07824 665915

The only stipulation is that there will be preference given to Parishioners, BUT PEOPLE LIVING NEARBY WILL BE CONSIDERED.

We sadly lost Anne Syder last year she was very active member of the allotment scene for many years.

I would Like to thank my wife Clare who does all the admin and accounts for our allotment society for the admin and accounts in 2025, (it is Appreciated).

A very special thanks to Linda Pritchard for organising the end of year Christmas Raffle and to Poppy for decorating the Christmas Tree.

We are taking steps to reduce the rodent problem that was escalated when the field at the side of the allotments was planted with Maze this year.

Having an allotment is a great pastime and very rewarding when the first crop of fresh Veg and Salad is harvested.

The water chamber housing is now 12 yrs old and needs repair, I am sure that with the help of Ian Pain and a decent supply of wood, we can make a new Cabinet,

March is a good time to plant Blueberries as most will know are an expensive product to buy.

Shallots and Onions are also good to plant out as Sets and are available at Darkins in Sible Hedingham.

By now you should have your First Early New Potatoes ready for chitting and in the ground by March or in Pots ,but it not too late to get a main crop in the ground by July.

NASLAG info

Healthy activity

The physical benefits of regular spells of gardening help plot-holders to keep fit even if they have sedentary jobs, the physical exercise also contributes to their mental well-being. Gardening can also help to maintain good gait and balance in older gardeners and help with cognitive decline.

Spending as little as 15 minutes a day out in the summer sunshine can build up your levels of vitamin D, if you are fair skinned and for those whose skin is naturally darker, anywhere up to 90 minutes of sun exposures will help your vitamin levels. However, gardeners do need to be aware of skin cancer risks, Melanoma is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and on the rise. So make sure that you dress appropriately and wear sunscreen on exposed areas.

Fresh, local, seasonal produce

If managed properly, an allotment can produce enough food to supplement a family's weekly shop, with fresh fruit and vegetables over the year. Allotment gardeners can choose to garden organically and avoid ingesting chemicals that are likely to be present on shop bought fruit and vegetables.

In a survey of National Allotment Society members nearly every person said their love of allotment gardening comes from the fresh air, home grown produce, healthy lifestyle and like-minded people this activity offers.

Sense of achievement

As many new plot-holders discover, growing vegetables requires acquiring new knowledge and skills and the satisfaction gained from eating their first home grown tomato or new potato makes them taste even more delicious!

Contact with nature

Working a plot year- round means that allotment holders experience the seasons, witness the behaviour of birds, insects and other animals and gain an understanding of the eco-system. This appreciation of the natural world also has the potential to inspire more environmentally aware behaviour by themselves and their children.

In 2018 the UK Government produced a 25 Year Environment Plan, which acknowledges that connecting people to their environment will also improve their health and well-being. A study in the Netherlands showed that every 10 per cent increase in exposure to green space translated into an improvement in health equivalent to being five years younger, with similar benefits found by studies in Canada and Japan. So get out there and Dig.

The Public Footpath from the Causeway to the Allotments was laid with Granite Chippings last year, and it has made a great difference for waling down to the site it is no longer a muddy path! A great benefit to all that walk the area and to school children that walk to the school.

Please pick up after you dogs 'MOVEMENTS ' in the lotty and on the footpaths around the village.

Paul Thompson Chair

St. Margaret's C of E Primary School



The second half of the Autumn term is always a busy one as we are busy with Christmas! Seed Class presented a beautiful performance of A Miracle in Town which was enjoyed by family and friends. We were also delighted to welcome Little Chestnuts Pre-School to the dress rehearsal. This was reciprocated, and Reception and Year 1 were a wonderful audience for the dress rehearsal of Little Chestnut's nativity, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

All the classes had a lesson with Delana from Empower to explore the Christmas story. The children thoroughly enjoyed these and we are very fortunate that the charity finances and offers these experiences.

The choir did an excellent job at the Parish Lessons and Carols service, and we received a lot of very positive feedback from everyone that attended.

But there has been more than Christmas going on! Blossom class welcomed Meera Loxley JP, a magistrate, to their class to run a mock trial of Goldilocks, in which they found her guilty on three counts!

Sapling class completed a litter pick of the local area as their community project, thank you to all the parents that joined them! Meanwhile, Blossom Class ran an excellent raffle for their community.

The school council have opened a healthy tuck shop which they are running at break times. This has been a great success, and the children are learning so much as they are looking after the budget, preparing the fruit, deciding on order quantities and generally managing the whole thing. Well done to them all!

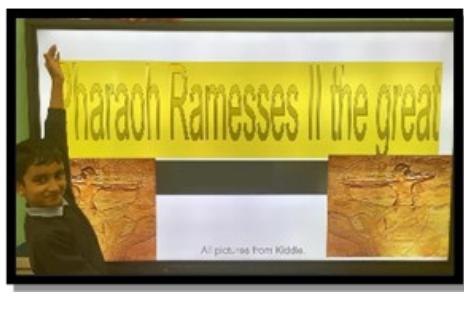
Now we are looking forward to the Spring term where we have much more planned – we look forward to keeping you updated!

Please do join us at our open coffee afternoons, which are open to anyone and everyone and are a fantastic opportunity for our young people to support the community and learn some life skills as they welcome people into our school. Please support them by coming along – everyone is welcome and the more people we have the more joyous the event! The following Fridays are the dates for this academic year with all coffee afternoons running 2 pm – 3 pm: 30th January, 27th February, 24th April and 26th June. We hope to see lots of you there.

Please do follow us on social media to keep up to date with what we are doing - we are on both Facebook (St. Margaret's CofE Primary School Toppsfield) and Instagram (@stmargaretstopp). We would love to see as many people as possible liking and sharing our posts to help show off some of the amazing things we are doing and increase our reach so that the wide community can see all the amazing things we do.

Facebook: [St. Margaret's CofE Primary School, Toppsfield](https://www.facebook.com/St.MargaretsCofE.Primary.School.Toppesfield)

Instagram: stmargaretstop





Vision 2035

Our 10 year strategy for the Toppesfield Parish Council

Thank You for Your Views – Shaping Our Parish’s Future Together

Last year, many residents took the time to respond to the Parish Council’s consultation on *Vision 2035*, our proposed 10-year strategy for the parish. We would like to begin by saying a very sincere **thank you** to everyone who shared their thoughts, ideas and concerns. Your feedback has been invaluable in helping us understand what matters most to our community.

Overall, there was strong support for the strategy, with many residents agreeing that it reflects local needs and priorities. The responses have helped us identify clear themes and will directly influence what the Parish Council focuses on in the coming months and years.

What You Told Us Matters Most

One of the clearest messages from the consultation was the importance of **looking after people**. Support for the elderly and vulnerable received the strongest backing of all the proposed goals, with overwhelming agreement that this should be a top priority. Alongside this, residents highlighted the need for a safe and caring community, with strong support for tackling speeding and improving road safety.

There was also a clear desire to see the parish remain a **welcoming and connected place**. Community engagement and local events were widely valued, reflecting how important social connections and shared activities are to village life.

Improving Facilities and Shared Spaces

Many respondents expressed support for improving and modernising **community facilities**, particularly the pavilion. Making this a more flexible and welcoming space for events, sports and social gatherings emerged as one of the highest priorities. Enhancing green spaces, improving walking routes, and making pavements safer and more accessible were also strongly supported.

Residents told us they value outdoor spaces that can be enjoyed by all ages, whether for recreation, relaxation, or simply getting around the village safely.

Caring for Our Environment

Protecting and enhancing the local environment was another strong theme. Tree planting, improving green spaces, tackling litter and encouraging responsible pet ownership all received high levels of support. These responses show a shared pride in the parish and a wish to keep it clean, attractive and sustainable.

Some environmental initiatives, such as renewable energy and electric vehicle infrastructure, were seen as important but more long-term priorities, and the Parish Council will take this into account when planning future projects.

Practical Improvements That Matter Day to Day

When it comes to infrastructure, residents were very clear about what would make a difference to everyday life. **Improved road and footpath signage**, maintaining street infrastructure, and addressing parking and speeding issues were all highlighted as important. There was also strong support for making the best use of community-owned land for public benefit.

Views were more mixed on some ideas, such as public toilets or changes to the village car park, and the Parish Council recognises that these will require careful consideration and further discussion.

What Happens Next?

The feedback you provided gives the Parish Council a clear direction. In the short to medium term, we will focus on:

- Supporting elderly and vulnerable residents
- Tackling speeding and improving safety
- Improving and modernising community facilities
- Enhancing green spaces and walking routes
- Strengthening community engagement and events

Other ideas raised in the consultation — such as road conditions, facilities for young people, and protecting the village from unsuitable development — will also inform ongoing discussions and longer-term planning.

Once again, thank you to everyone who took part. Your voices are shaping the future of our parish, and we look forward to working together to turn these priorities into action.



Would you be interested in using this service?

The parish council have previously arranged with Braintree District Council for an Amenity Vehicle to come to Toppesfield and Gainsford End for you to get rid of rubbish.

The vehicle is for general household waste, including kettles, irons, microwaves and small TVs.

Please note that it will not take asbestos, liquids, tyres and white goods and the operatives will refuse any such items.

They also cannot take POP items: Sofas. Sofa beds, Armchairs, Kitchen & dining room chairs (containing any upholstery), Stools & footstools (containing any upholstery), Home office chairs (containing any upholstery), Futons, Bean bags, floor and sofa cushions including any part made of or containing leather, synthetic leather, other fabric or foam.

This service has been fairly well used in the past but the parish council are looking to see if it is parish money well spent.

If you would be interested in using the service can you please let the clerk of the parish council know— either by email, text or in person by the end of January 2026.

Weather Words Wordsearch

A H Z D R P S A O N L U L S D R A Z Z I L B
S E A S O N S T T I N R N D T T O E S R L T
I O L E T M O R M R U Z S U S R U D D G E A
E L R U S T I C L W I M W O I C A S H W N W
P E D R M B U M L Z U A R L M O U C G T C T
I S N H G H S W U T O F S C M O L C E W E L
U I M D T R B I G A U I Y E N T R N Z S A M
U H T O R F E N S R S I Y I T O E U U F O D
E D S A S R O D E T G A C O W O N S Y U A O
L R L D S T N E M E L E E U O L R R L R Z G
E D D D E I U A T M O S P H E R E R H Z N R
R M B N O S D S N D R O U G H T C S I I U M
O H R L T A C N L S T A Z U S R I E N M U I
B R R E S C E P N G U D N U Y R N T U S G A
M E N G O Y T H N C R G L I S A H R L O O D
B D E I S R A I N I D B N M C G S A F G L E
L N O S I I M A Z A U R T I I L S R S A N H
O U R R R D I Z U D O D R L N U S E L M U E
R H N P O S L E E T E R E A L T I T U D E R
S T T O T E C S E R U T A R E P M E T L E S
M R O T S I T R U H D A R Y E O W G S O L E
A R C S S D C M N T E E U T I G S T E C I S

Altitude	Atmosphere	Blizzards	Blustery
Climate	Clouds	Cold	Drizzle
Drought	Elements	Fog	Frost
Hurricane	Ice	Lightning	Mist
Rain	Seasons	Snow	Storm
Sun	Temperatures	Thunder	Wind

VILLAGE MARKET 2026

TOPPESFIELD



VILLAGE HALL

Church Lane - Toppesfield - CO9 4DR

10.30am - 12.30pm

FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

upcoming dates 2026

7th February - 7th March - 4th April

2nd May - 4th July - 1st August

Finest Local Produce

Arts & Crafts - Home Design - Pork Butcher

Cakes & Pastries - Cards & More.....

Refreshments & Bacon Rolls

Toppesfield Community Shop



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

DOCTORS CAR SERVICE

Take local residents to their doctor's surgery for appointments and bring them home

Contact Paula to Volunteer

Paula Edwards-Holmes

07845 596092

pjedwardsholmes@gmail.com



Toppesfield Parish Council - Doctors' Car Service

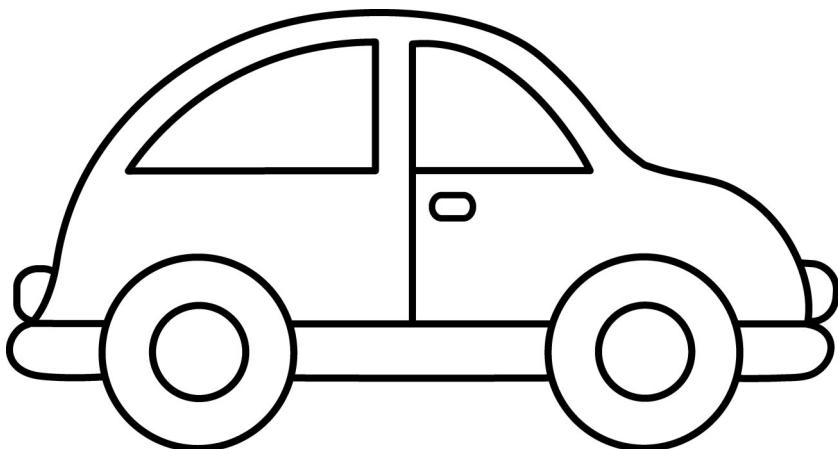
Toppesfield Parish Council operates a Doctors' Car Service to help residents who have no means of transport to attend medical appointments. The scheme is run entirely by volunteer drivers from within the parish, who kindly offer their time to ensure that everyone can access essential healthcare when needed.

Requests for transport are shared through a dedicated WhatsApp group for the volunteers. When a request is received, any driver who is available simply offers to take the journey — there is no requirement to be on standby or to alter existing plans. This flexible arrangement allows volunteers to help whenever it suits them, making the service easy to support alongside other commitments.

The Parish Council is always keen to welcome new volunteer drivers, particularly younger residents who may be able to help sustain this valued service into the future. Even offering just an occasional lift can make a real difference to someone in need.

For further information, to request transport, or to volunteer as a driver, please contact Paula Edwards-Holmes 07845 596092 (pjedwardsholmes@gmail.com).

The Parish Council would like to thank all current volunteers for their continued generosity and community spirit in supporting this important local initiative.





BAR OPENING HOURS

Monday - Closed
Tuesday - Thursday 3 - Close
Friday- Sunday 12- Close

KITCHEN OPENING HOURS

Wednesday & Thursday 5-8
Friday & Saturday 12-9
Sunday 12-4

Kevin vs. Janet: The Battle of the Dishes!

Each Friday, watch as Kevin and Janet go head-to-head in the kitchen, each whipping up a special dish to win your hearts and taste buds. Who will reign supreme? You be the judge!

~

Sundays

Sunday Roast featuring sirloin of beef and large selection of fresh vegetables

~

Monthly Pub Quiz Night!

Join us for a night of trivia and fun, all in support of Air Ambulance. Test your knowledge and help a great cause at the same time!

1st Saturday of the month from 7.30pm



TOPPESFIELD

Community Shop

*OFF LICENCE & GROCERIES

BREAD - MILK - FRUIT & VEG - FROZEN FOODS

ICE CREAMS - BEERS - WINES - SPIRITS

STATIONERY - CARDS - STAMPS

COAL - PET FOOD - PLANTS

NEWSPAPERS - MAGAZINES - CIGARETTES



Garden Cafe

*no alcohol is to be consumed on the premises

OPENING TIMES

Monday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Tuesday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Wednesday	.....	8.30am - 1.30pm
Thursday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Friday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Saturday	.....	10.00am - 12.30pm



WEDNESDAY 10am - 1pm

TOPPESFIELD WINTER Market

10.30AM - 1.30PM

Saturday 17th January

Village Hall, Church Lane, CO9 4DR

Freshly Baked Pies and Pastries by Zoe
Jams, Pickles and Chutney by Jacquie
Greeting Cards and Stationery/Jewellery
Cushions/Decoupage/Wood Turner/Honey
Local Potter/Knitted Animals/Baby Wear
and LOTS MORE....

Charity Tombola in aid of Parkinsons

Plus

Drinks and Cake - naturally!!

All Enquiries 0787 655 3332

