

# WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

SPRING  
2025



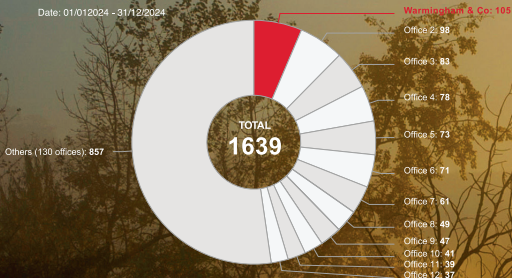
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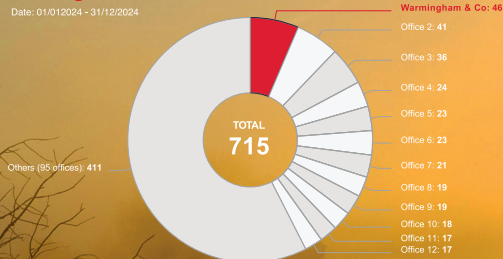
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# CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – APRIL 2025

Hello everyone! It would be remiss of me to not mention the beautiful Spring weather we have been having. The cherry blossoms and wildflowers are blooming, the Village Green has just been cut for the first time, Muddy Lane is dry and even the condition of Eastfield Lane somehow seems more bearable in this weather.

**Emergency Planning Activities** – Before we get too comfortable, I would like to remind everyone of some of the activities the village's Emergency Team has been involved in.

- A successful demonstration of an emergency power outage scenario was held at the Village Hall – more on this later in the Bulletin. Thank you to John Bradon for organising this successful demonstration with support from Charles Cotgreave and Adrian Dixon. And thanks to Neil Huntington for volunteering to be a contact for future power outage scenarios at the Village Hall. Our newest Parish Councillor Romilly Swann also participated and provided many helpful inputs.
- We are still working with OCC and SODC to get the water culvert/pipe/ watercourse cleared near Eastfield Lane. When the River Thames is very high, such as in January 2024, the culvert is unable to cope with the water entering it from above Pangbourne weir. OCC have now asked us to apply for a grant to help them fund the work and we are optimistic this will be approved, and the work will be completed soon.
- The Parish Council also approved an up to date Emergency Plan at our April meeting as we do each year to ensure we are prepared for several emergency scenarios.

**Manor Road Sinkhole** – Following the repair to the sinkhole in February, I have followed up with both Thames Water and OCC to confirm if the playground area is now safe from sewage leaks. I received the following assurances:

- The manhole was marked with PO – for 'Pump Out' meaning that it may have been used during the repair to help pump out sewage from the line.
- They confirmed there is no leakage around the manhole and it is in good condition, although now that we know that a high-pressure sewage line runs beneath it, we should be vigilant of any future leaks.
- If there was any spillage during the repair they would have used disinfectant, but any remaining bacteria are also killed by UV light within 11-18 days.
- The Parish Council is still concerned about tripping hazards on the manhole on the playground and will work with volunteers to build the soil up around this to make it safer.
- I have asked OCC Highways to inspect the Thames Water repair work, including the kerb on the east side of the road that is sunken, and to find out why there are also still some barricades left over from Thames Water. OCC Highways have assured me that they are looking into these issues and will have them rectified.

**Biffa Deep Cleaning of Pavements** – The Parish Council requested this annual deep cleaning to address all pavements in the village, including Hardwick Road and the High Street. The Biffa team have confirmed that our village's deep cleaning is scheduled for 12-14 May. I have also requested cleaning of the High Street again which appears to have been done in early April, including in the stretch by the toll bridge which was previously missed.

**Cedar Lodge** – You may have heard that there was a problem with the main Cedar Lodge contractor, J Guest. I have spoken to the Zephyr X Programme Director who confirmed that their contractor had gone into liquidation after 35 years of business due to a cash flow shortage stemming from other projects they were engaged in unrelated to Cedar Lodge. Zephyr X quickly replaced their main contractor with another contractor that they use for other care home projects. All subcontractors subsequently reported to this new contractor and work continues.

They tell me that this has delayed the expected completion of the main building work from the end of March until mid-April. There is a CQC inspection of the completed care home planned for early May and an opening event is still planned for 9th May. Residents will likely move in later in May

**Eastfield lane** – There is less mud and debris due to a number of factors, including regular street cleaning from Zephyr X and the dry weather.

- I requested that OCC Highways make further interim repairs on Eastfield Lane in March. This resulted in about nine sections of the road being improved on 11<sup>th</sup> April. These appear to be good quality patches addressing the worst sections of the road.
- The road is due for an inspection in May by which time the Cedar Lodge care home work should be complete. Further actions will be raised if necessary.
- OCC Highways position seems to have changed in that they are not holding the Cedar Lodge contractor as being responsible for 'making good' the damage to the road as it has also been used for other construction projects and OCC cannot determine which contractor caused the damage.
- Zephyr X will repair verges but say that are not allowed to repair the road, other than temporary fill with gravel and soil which they have been doing.
- The Parish Council would clearly like to see the damaged sections of the road resurfaced and are investigating the best options to achieve this.

**Village drains clearing** – Following work that was completed by OCC last November and January, the village drains seem to be in generally the best condition I have seen in years. You may also have seen that the drainage catch-pits along the steep Whitchurch hill were cleared in February. This will help to keep High Street drains clear in periods of heavy rain. A couple of drains in the village were missed in the recent clearing and I am still following this up with OCC. They have committed to prioritising this work when they can, however there are a number of changes happening now at OCC Highways including a new drainage supplier and a new programme of work for this financial year that will prioritise the larger towns initially.

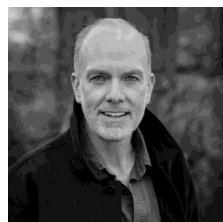
**Hardwick Road verges project** – This is progressing so please keep an eye out for changes in the next few months. It is being managed by our clerk Brian Inglis in conjunction with WoTHabs, OCC and the supplier Butler and Proctor.

**Parish Council Vacancy** – We are pleased to welcome Romilly Swann as our newest member of the Parish Council. Many of you will know that Romilly is a long-time resident of Hardwick Estate with a wealth of knowledge on subjects ranging from botany, archaeology, traditional dyeing techniques and sheep farming. She has also recently been elected as one of the first trustees of the new Hardwick Charitable Trust and will be able to provide a valuable link between Hardwick and the rest of the village.

*kind regards,*

*Jim Donahue*

*Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council*



# **WOT Annual Village Assembly**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, Village hall  
7:15pm for 7:30pm start**

*Twinned with La Bouille, France*

- Find out what is happening in the village
- Presentation of the annual Whitchurch Award
- Wine and nibbles will be served
- Everyone is welcome!

# WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

## Quarterly Planning Update - January to March 2025

Plan- ning Ref	Address and Application	Comments by Parish Council	SODC status
P24/ S2309 /FUL	<p><b>Land to north and west of Pangbourne Technology Centre, Bozewood Drive, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR.</b></p> <p>Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels and battery energy storage system to supply electrical power to Pangbourne Technology Centre; associated plant, plant enclosure and cabling; access driveway; landscaping; and ancillary works.</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to object to the application, supporting the Heritage and Landscape Officer recommendations to avoid development on AONB green land and consider car park mounted solar panels.</p> <p>Further comments made by PC objecting to amended plans. Comments available to view on SODC Planning Portal</p>	<p>Application under consideration. Target decision date (31 Dec 24) has passed. Amended plans added March 25. Target decision date 30th April 25</p>
P24/ S2959 /FUL	<p><b>The Greyhound, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EL</b></p> <p>The works are the laying of a hard non porous surface of about 104 sqm to the rear of the property. The resurfacing covers an area of grass and is designed to mitigate issues created by flash flooding which is becoming more frequent. (Retrospective)</p>	<p>The Parish Council requests that reports from SODC Drainage Team, OCC Flood Team and OCC Highways are submitted to provide sufficient expert opinion to allow councillors to make a fully informed decision. The PC realises that the impact on neighbours as a result of these works within the Conservation Area are yet to be seen, but considers that a porous material would be more appropriate in this location which lies in Flood Zone 3 and that the Flood Risk Assessment submitted by the applicant lacks detail, considering that the OCC Flood Toolkit is freely available for reference. The PC has concerns over the stated intention to deal with run-off surface water from this location via the main sewer, and requests clarification on this point.</p>	<p>Application under consideration.</p> <p>Target decision date (31 Jan 25) has passed.</p>
P24/ S2700 /S73	<p><b>Cedar Lodge Care Home, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</b></p> <p>Retrospective application to change of rooms with some impacts to roof dormers and other external impacts not in approved plans.</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to strongly object to planning application due to the increased massing of the extension and there are concerns about the implications to the tree plan which has not been provided. The proposal was implemented without approval and is considered unneighbourly due to increased over-dominance and overlooking from a gable end that has previously been objected to and rejected. The building in question is a key part of the village Conservation Area with the plans impacting neighbours on all sides.</p>	<p>Application under consideration</p> <p>Re-consultation notified 6/11/24 More comments submitted (see below)</p>

# WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

## Quarterly Planning Update - January to March 2025

P24/ S2700/ S73	<p><b>Cedar Lodge Care Home, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</b></p> <p>Variation of conditions 3 (Landscaping compliance), 11 (Windows obscure glazed and fixed shut) and 14 (Approved plans) on application P23/S4055/S73 to allow internal and external changes to the approved building and changes to landscaping. (Amended plans received 1 November 2024) (Variation of conditions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13 and 14 of planning permission P11/S0126 to allow changes to tree protection measures and landscaping details. (Partial demolition of existing care home, Eastfield House, construction of extensions and associated works and change of use of land at the rear of the home from C3 to C2 to provide additional external amenity space)</p> <p>Amendments to this application were submitted April 2025. Parish Council response to be agreed at a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April, comments submitted will be available to view on the SODC Planning Portal</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to object and submit the following comments –</p> <p>"Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council consider the contents of this application and the proposed changes to be inappropriate for a Section 73 application. The Parish Council strongly feels that the proposed changes are not of a minor nature, and that a new, part-retrospective planning application would be more appropriate in this case.</p> <p>The Parish Council continues to strongly object to this application, and fully supports the residents of Eastfield Lane who have lodged objections on the planning portal. The Parish Council considers this development to be unneighbourly, overbearing, and oppressive in its scale and bulk, out of proportion and damaging to the street scene of existing dwellings along Eastfield Lane and the Whitchurch-On-Thames Conservation Area.</p> <p>The Parish Council has concerns over the siting of the Plant Room, now proposed to be at ground level and likely to be a source of noise disturbance to neighbours. The Parish Council is concerned that there is no mention of any plans for the safe evacuation of fumes from this area, or from the kitchen area, fearing a buildup of smells and cooking aromas which would create an unpleasant environment for neighbours. Finally, the Parish Council requests that, should the Planning Officer be minded to approve this application, that it be called to panel for a final decision to be taken"</p>	<p>Application under consideration.</p> <p>Understood to be going to Planning Committee Panel for decision. P25/S0284/DIS application for discharge of condition 7 (external lighting) on 29 Jan 25 Application under consideration. Parish Council were not consulted, however further comments made by PC – can be viewed on the SODC Planning Portal.</p>
P25/ S0384 /HH	<p><b>1 Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</b></p> <p>Single-storey side extension.</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to support this application</p>	<p>Granted on 4/4/25</p>



# WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

## Quarterly Planning Update - January to March 2025

P25/ S0794/ HH	<b>Lerryn Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</b> New front dormer, replacement rear extension, new single-storey side extensions and demolition of existing front extension and garage.	The Parish Council voted to make no comment on this application	Application under consideration
P25/ S0669/ HH	<b>5 Hillside Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HL</b> Loft conversion and single-storey rear extension.	The Parish Council voted to support this application	Application under consideration
P25/ S1053/ S73	<b>Oakfield Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</b> Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) and removal of condition 14 (ecology) on planning application P24/S0988/FUL (Replacement dwelling including a swimming pool building with linking roof to the east of the replacement dwelling approved by P23/S4171/FUL, dwelling now proposed to be moved 3m to the west) - addition of home gym onto pool building.		Application under consideration

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

It is likely that South Oxfordshire District Council is going to follow Goring Rural District Council (1894–1932) and Henley Rural District Council (1894–1972) into oblivion, and we will be governed by a new unitary authority which, if the current proposals from the government come to fruition will have a minimum population of 500,000. This compares to the current population of South Oxfordshire of around 153,000.

A unitary authority covers all the activity handled both by the District as well as the functions of the County Council. The Districts Council's functions are quite well defined, principally planning and waste collection, and it can also encompass social housing, although in South Oxfordshire we hived off responsibility for that to a housing association many years ago. The County Council includes Highways and Waste disposal, plus libraries and education, and the huge responsibility of adult and children's social services. Social services take up over 50% of the Oxfordshire County Council Budget.

Over the years, the County Councils have lost various responsibilities. Most recently, schools have been able to opt out into Academies, before that, Further Education Colleges, some community health services and the Ambulance service were moved on from County Council control.

Exactly how we will fall into a unitary authority is not at all clear at the moment. Bundling South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxford City Council together in one huge mega county council is one option, which would have a population of about 730,000. This would tick the government's size box, and could be one component of the suggested strategic authority that is also proposed, a mayoral organisation on the model of Manchester or Birmingham. In such an authority we would perhaps be bundled in with Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Berkshire.

Whether larger organisations will achieve the desired objective of economic growth is difficult to judge, although all the experts seem to think it's a good thing. The same was said of the local government reorganisation of the 1970's, and was also the same message that come out repeatedly as the National Health Service was re-organised again and again from the late 1960's onwards, with for example Regional Authorities created, then abolished and then re-instated.

Of course, with ever larger organisations, the voice of residents gets progressively fainter, with elected representatives, if any, inevitably working to their own agendas or political agendas or government directives and decision making increasingly influenced by powerful lobby groups.

If we do end up with these mega authorities, I think it would be good if there was some sort of mechanism for the term of office for elected people to be ended by popular demand, as is now the case with MPs, who can be the subject of a recall petition.

*Peter Dragonetti* ([peter.dragonetti@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:peter.dragonetti@southoxon.gov.uk))  
SODC Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames

## Results of Speed Monitoring in the High Street – November 2024

**Aims:** To get some up-to-date, 24 hours-a-day data on traffic speeds and flows in both directions on the High Street and to compare these with data from 2018 and 2021. It is hoped that analysis of this data can help inform future Speedwatch sessions and additional measures which may be needed to boost speed awareness.

**Acknowledged Shortcomings:** The wires were only down for nine days. The data provided by OCC contains a lot of averages, which are rather useless on our High Street given stationary or very slow-moving traffic twice a day. However, individual speeds are also provided, so I have focused on analysing those as they are much more meaningful.

### **Q: Have the 20mph limit and Speedwatch sessions had any effect?**

A: Yes! In our sample week in November 2024 **61%** of northbound drivers (9020 of them) were doing between 15 & 25mph as were **65%** of southbound drivers (9694).

Compare that with 2018 when just **49%** of northbound drivers and **56%** of southbound drivers were doing between 15 & 25mph.

Likewise, **23%** of northbound drivers and **20%** of southbound drivers were in the next speed bracket (25–35mph) in 2024 against **39%** and **41%** in 2021 and **35%** and **31%** in 2018.

In addition, we have had confirmation from Thames Valley Police that over 1,000 letters have been sent out to people caught doing 30mph and over since the Speedwatch group started in April 2023.

### **Q: Has the percentage of drivers doing a higher speed (40–50mph) changed between 2018 and 2024?**

A: No. In percentage terms they remain the same: 0.2% northbound and 0.1% southbound. However, because the overall traffic level was higher in 2024 than 2018 the numbers of vehicles doing 40–50mph in 2024 were greater: 41 northbound and 15 southbound.

**Q: What was the highest recorded speed in the sample week in Nov 2024?**

A: 65–70mph! 2 cars, driving northbound between 10am & 11am. (There is always the possibility that these might have been emergency services).

**Q: What time of day is the worst for speeding?**

A: In terms of frequency, it was 8am – 9am (5 cars, doing between 55 & 60mph). But there were speeders recorded throughout the day (lunchtime and between 3pm and 4pm and the occasional early morning).

**Q: Which direction is worst for speeding?**

A: Northbound. Interestingly, in our sample November week there were **no** speeds recorded above 50mph going southbound.

**Volume of Traffic:****Q: Is there less traffic in the High Street in 2024 compared with 2018 and 2021?**

A: Yes and no, and not what one might assume: There appears to be a higher number of vehicles in 2024 than in 2018.

The two-way, seven-day total in 2024 was **29,357** vs 27,880 in 2018. However, when you compare 2024 with 2021, it is 2021 which sees the much higher volume of traffic with **36,165** over a seven-day period (two way).

Likewise, there appears to be no fixed pattern for the volume of traffic in November 2024 with daily totals ranging from 2533 to 5372.

**Conclusions:**

1. The 20mph speed limit has been a good thing and Speedwatch sessions have been worthwhile as speeds are demonstrably lower in 2024 than they were in either 2021 or 2018.
2. Speedwatchers cannot be out early or late for several months of the year due to lack of light. They will therefore never be able to report excessive speeds which take place at these times of day. However, there are still persistent offenders who will speed during the day.



3. Given the sheer volume of traffic going up and down the High Street with some alarmingly high speeds as well as cyclists, mobility scooter users and pedestrians, there is a strong case to be made for additional measures which are now common in surrounding villages such as speed indicator devices. The Parish Council and members of the Speedwatch group are discussing these possibilities with OCC.

**Hardwick Road:** We won't forget about Hardwick Road as we know that speeding is a problem there too. Because of the much higher volume of traffic in the High Street it probably makes sense to sort this out first, but there is nothing to stop us having a speed survey done in Hardwick Road later this year.

*Frances Parkes*

*Based on Speed Survey conducted by OCC November 2024*

# WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL

Registered Charity: 1183193

Our Spring term has been great, everyone is enjoying our new building and getting the chance to be back outside and running around. We have been making the most out of the better weather with walks around the village including visits to the Church, the alpacas and the Hardwick Estate. We have also been back digging in our dedicated allotment and enjoying forest school activities such as building a fire.

## Sporty Minis and Don Rae Academy of Movement & Arts

This term we have been trying out some new classes. We introduced Sporty Minis to our curriculum to encourage children to get active. We also had a visit from Don Rae Academy of Movement & Arts who provided a fun dance and drama workshop for us to celebrate the lunar new year. The children loved seeing the characters dressed up and getting involved in the action.

## Fundraising Events: Bingo night

This year we are raising money for our playground renovations. Our next event is a bingo night at the Greyhound on 7th May at 8pm. Tickets can be bought on our website, we hope you can join us for a fun night.



### **Spaces available and changes to government funding**

From September 2025 working parents will be entitled to 30 hours government funding for 2-year olds and upwards.

We have spaces available for new starters aged from two years in our brand-new pre-school building. So please get in touch today or secure your place for next term.

- We're open from Monday to Friday during term time from 8.45am – 3.15pm with an early drop-off option at 8.30am and late pick up to 3.30pm.
- Government funded places are available for two, three and four-year-olds for 15 or 30 hours per week during term time.
- We are a Forest School, Healthy Smiles and Hygge accredited.
- Children from outside the Whitchurch catchment area are welcome to apply.

To register your interest, please use the form on our website or email:

**[hello@whitchurchpreschool.org](mailto:hello@whitchurchpreschool.org)**

*Rebecca Bell*

## WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

We have had a lovely start to the Spring Term at Whitchurch. The children have been enjoying lots of different and exciting things in the curriculum. Years 5 and 6 enjoyed a glider challenge during a special Science Day in which they had to think about engineering factors to create the best glider, a Royal Air Force Youth STEM activity. They also had a visit and inspiring talk from a member of staff from the UK Space Agency. Year 4 delighted parents with a fantastic performance demonstrating excellent acting and singing skills. The whole school enjoyed celebrating World Book Day. Year 2 had particular fun creating their own Top Trumps characters. Years 1, 2 and 3 all enjoyed a fantastic trip to the Oxford Science Centre. The children in Willow enjoyed a 'stay and play' morning with their families. The school has been very fortunate to receive some support from the 'Mend The Gap' resource enhancing their outdoor space and the children recently added a willow dome to their playground, that the year 5 pupils helped to build.

Great fun was had observing the French tradition of '*Poisson d'Avril*' which is the custom of sticking a fish to somebody's back without them noticing before midday on April Fools. They also had a great Easter hunt on the last day of term in which younger pupils were assisted by older pupils to find letters hidden around school to spell a special Easter message.

The school enjoyed a Friday breakfast where families are invited in with their children to share a delicious cooked breakfast together before the start of the school day rustled up by our fantastic school chef Katy.

We would like to extend our thanks to the wider community for supporting our January and March Art Cafes. We always enjoy hosting them. Our upcoming one in May will also have a small plant sale with a number of indoor plants and some lovely flowers planted by the children available to buy.

Finally, we have been enjoying collaborating with the new care home Cedar Lodge on Eastfield Lane. The children have been busy thinking of names for the new households and entering them into a competition, the winners of which will receive a book token. Furthermore, we are immensely grateful for their support sponsoring our school quiz, they have very generously offered to sponsor the quiz in May – keep your eye out for posters around the village with details.

Thanks once again for the support we receive from the community of Whitchurch with our wonderful school.

*Nicola Armstrong*

Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association Chair



## NEWCOMERS AND OUR “COCOON”

A number of houses in the village, have recently changed hands. I am sure that the newcomers will be welcomed but they may not know what a wise choice they have made.

In Whitchurch on Thames, we not only live in a circumscribed “Conservation Area” but also the majority of us live in another bubble; a “Cocoon” where our daily life for most of us is unhindered by constant traffic noise or the presence of obvious commerce (we leave all that behind when we cross our Toll Bridge). Perhaps that and other benefits are what we unknowingly also pay for?

The next benefit is that we can immediately access the natural beauty which greets us if we look or step outside. The Beech woods are there for you to explore, but we also have access to history; we are surrounded by reminders of those who have gone before us. From *Achulean* hand axes and Stone Age Scarpers in our gardens to our daily use of the *Tuddingway*, an ancient highway and trade route. At some time, most of us walk along Hardwick Road (now part of the King Alfred cycle route from Goring to Mapledurham and onwards to Reading) and many of us use the Hartslock Bridleway to walk or cycle to Goring or to access our section of the long-distance modern Thames Path. When you walk on either of these two routes (east or west) you are following in the footsteps of our previous Saxon villagers and many before us on the *Tuddingway*.

The Iron Age fort encampment sits above us as another immediate reminder of the past, also the lower level Sheepwash Lane, its name similarly evokes thoughts as it gives us our only main access to the river. Access to all our major points of history is immediately available to you, all our major paths are suitably marked and described and await your boots! The village web site gives you access to my “12 village walks” which will gradually introduce you to our world, completely different to any other hereabouts. You can extend this to 24 walks by walking the same walks in the opposite direction and you will be surprised by what you missed, particularly the views of the valley when going downhill. So you can spend a year of weekend walking and exploring without going outside our village boundaries. What need for elsewhere other than your new home and village?

When you have completed these local walks and you feel more adventurous, and willing to explore further, there are 27 other walks on the web site, written and available to you to scan and copy.

Another benefit I have marked is the friendliness and neighbourliness of all our villagers, particularly the many dog walkers. Maybe it is true of all villages, and indeed this is the only one I have lived in for any length of time, but perhaps the close neighbourhood of most of the village – our “Cocoon” – encourages and enables this.

Enjoy the experience of living here.

Eric Hartley

## **WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY**

On May 15<sup>th</sup> we are diving into the archives again to look at two quite different things, prompted by national commemorations. The meeting is at 2.30pm in Goring Heath Parish Hall.

Firstly, in the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth, we explore Jane Austen’s links to Reading, Henley and Whitchurch – by way of meeting Caroline Lybbe Powys in Bath. Hampshire can lay claim to most associations with the author, but Oxfordshire also played a part in her life.

We will also look at Whitchurch in the Second World War on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe day. Like everywhere, no aspect of life was untouched by the war. Everyone welcome, non-members pay £3, including tea and biscuits.

In June and July, we go on outings, and reassemble in September in Goring Heath Parish Hall.

*Vicky Jordan*



## **ST MARY'S CHURCH SAVE OUR SPIRE APPEAL IS LAUNCHED!**

Around 40 people attended the launch event at St Mary's on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April, where the *Save Our Spire* team shared interesting information on the background to the project, the history of the Church and its role in our lives and our community, along with detailed information on what restoration is needed and why.

There is a big fundraising challenge with a further £200,000 to be raised. Grant applications are being progressed alongside local fundraising and community engagement. The information boards used at the launch event will remain in St Mary's so you can pop in on weekdays and take a look. Summary information is also in the leaflets shared at the event, which together with further updates will soon be available on the Whitchurch Village Website ([www.whitchurchonthames.com](http://www.whitchurchonthames.com)), and also in the next editions of the Whitchurch Bulletin and Parish Magazine.

We all have a part to play in ensuring this community asset and part of our heritage is maintained for future generations – please do get involved in whatever way you can in this once in a lifetime project in our village.

Thank you for your support, from the *Save Our Spire* Fundraising Team.

*For further information, please contact:*

*James Leach – Vicar of St Mary's Whitchurch & St John's Whitchurch Hill –  
[jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com](mailto:jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com)*

*Graeme Pearce – Buildings Sub-Committee Whitchurch PCC  
[graemekpearce@btinternet.com](mailto:graemekpearce@btinternet.com)*

*Ken Baker (Churchwarden and Assistant Treasurer Whitchurch PCC)  
[baker\\_kenneth2@sky.com](mailto:baker_kenneth2@sky.com)*

# THE WHITCHURCH SOCIETY

## Garden Walks

Please make a note of the date of this year's Gardens Walk: **Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>**. As always, details will follow in a leaflet to be delivered to each household nearer the date.

## Whitchurch Award 2025

The Whitchurch Society is pleased to announce that nominations are now open for this year's Whitchurch-on-Thames Award. The Award can be given to an individual, or possibly a group, in recognition of their contribution to the village.

Please email the name of your nomination, and why you think they should receive the award, to The Whitchurch Society at [TheWhitchurchAward@gmail.com](mailto:TheWhitchurchAward@gmail.com). The deadline for nominations is **Sunday May 18<sup>th</sup>**.

*John Bradon, Chairman Whitchurch Society*

# THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S AND ST JOHN'S

(Reg Charity No 1168355)

*The Friends are an independent charity and welcome members from all faiths and none. We aim to bring together the local community in support of the preservation and improvement of our two churches and their churchyards.*

## Fund Raising

Our recent *Quiz Night* which was held in Whitchurch Village Hall on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March, was a resounding success. The room was filled to capacity – the quizzers were challenged and entertained by the quiz, and provided with a popular chilli supper. The winning team led by Peter Dragonetti were worthy winners. It was a very sociable occasion and we were very pleased to net an excellent profit of £700 for The Friends' funds. Thank you to everyone who came along to support our charity, and to the trustees and family members who helped make the evening run smoothly.

We continue to run the *ArtCafe* at The Old Stables on a regular bi-monthly basis. Our next date is on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June – please come along to support us and find out about our current activities.

We will be running the popular *Granny's Attic* stall again at Whitchurch Hill Fete on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May, so do visit us and be tempted by some new treasures that you didn't know you wanted!

Please get in touch with me if you have any pre-loved items, small tools, unwanted gifts or bric a brac that you would like to donate. Please bear in mind that items should be small enough to be carried away at the end of the fete, so nothing too big, and no books or clothes.

### **Churchyard Work Parties**

We have decided to hold monthly work parties at St John's during 2025. They will be on the last Wednesday of the month starting at 10 am. This large rural burial ground has been transformed over the past six months with a combination of working parties and individual sustained efforts – nearly all the bramble patches have been cleared and those that remain have been deliberately left for the butterflies! The next challenge will be to stop the regrowth taking hold again. Work parties at St Mary's will be on a more ad hoc basis as the churchyard is well tended at the moment. Do get in touch with Sally Woolhouse at [whitchurchfriends@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchfriends@gmail.com) if you fancy joining one of these sessions, where a welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time and many hands really do make light work!

### **Spire Restoration**

The St Mary's spire restoration project – 'Save Our Spire' – has now been launched by the Whitchurch Parochial Church Council as described elsewhere in this Bulletin. The Friends will be supporting the PCC both financially and practically for the duration of the work. As a start, we provided refreshments at the well-attended Launch Event on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April in the church.

We are always keen to welcome new Friends and for more information on how to join please go to the Whitchurch on Thames village website at [Whitchurchonthames.com](http://Whitchurchonthames.com) and follow the link for the Church, or ask me, or Sally Woolhouse.

*Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of The Friends*  
[whitchurchfriends@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchfriends@gmail.com)



# THE SIR RICKMAN GODLEE FUND

Charity Reg No 204441

Sir Rickman Godlee was a distinguished English surgeon, one of the founders of modern brain surgery. He was appointed Surgeon to the Household of Queen Victoria and Surgeon Ordinary to Edward VII and to George V, and was created a baronet "of Whitchurch in the County of Oxford" in 1912. After his retirement he moved from London to Coombe End near Whitchurch, where he died in 1925. The Sir Rickman Godlee Fund is a registered local charity. With its limited resources it aims to financially assist residents of the parishes of Whitchurch and Mapledurham with unmet needs from physical disabilities. For more details, please email one of the trustees Jane Bowen at [bowenje52@gmail.com](mailto:bowenje52@gmail.com)

*Sarah Dragonetti*

## GORING CHAMBER CHOIR

### Stories We Share: A Celebration of Folksongs

Goring Chamber Choir invites you on a musical journey through the human experience as we explore the rich tapestry of folk traditions. *Stories We Share: A Celebration of Folksongs* weaves together songs of love and loss, work and adventure, memories and moments of pure joy. From North Country ballads to sea shanties, from Hungarian folk dances to African lullabies, this concert promises a vibrant exploration of life's universal stories. Hear tales of sailors and sweethearts, housewives and war heroes, set to beautiful arrangements that bring these timeless narratives to life. With outstanding soloists and accompaniment by local pianist Olivia Canolle, the concert features a rousing audience singalong that will have you tapping your feet and joining in the music. A celebration of human connection through song awaits!

**Musical Director:** Frances Brewitt-Taylor

**Accompanist:** Olivia Canolle

**Where:** St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Goring

**When:** Saturday 17th May 2025 at 3pm

**Tickets:** £15. Free for under-18s. Obtainable from a choir member, from Inspiration in Goring, from Garlands Organic in Pangbourne, or on the door.



# WILD OXFORDSHIRE

## Hedgerows in Spring

Spring is the season of growth, and our local hedgerows are no exception. This season you can expect to see hedge species beginning to flower. Blackthorn will begin to flower from early spring, blossoming before its leaves even begin to show, into beautiful five petal white flowers strikingly similar to Hawthorn. Hawthorn, however, like Buckthorn, Guelder Rose, Dogwood, Wayfaring and Spindle blossoms later in mid spring. Cherry Plum (which began to blossom in winter) will only continue flowering into early spring, preparing to bear berries in early summer.

All of these species are extremely beneficial to pollinators as well as other insects that feed on hedges (eg Chestnut moths and Brown hairstreak butterflies). Observe the wildlife benefits mature hedges offer this Spring and get ready to see them in your own local spaces once your newly planted hedgerows reach maturity!

## A Selection of Garden jobs to Help Wildlife this Spring

Everyone's waking up!

- **Put out bird food** with high fat content to give extra energy when food is hard to come by. Suet treats like fat balls are ideal and sunflower hearts.
- **Feed hedgehogs and create at least one hedgehog gap**
- **Have plants in your garden that offer winter/early spring nectar** – e.g. mahonia, ivy, willow, hellebores, crocuses and snowdrops to provide a boost for our pollinators after the dormant months. You can also start to think about sowing seeds. Have a look at the packets as many are now marked with a 'pollinator-friendly' symbol. Why not grow your own bird food this year and grow sunflowers?
- **Create a pond or improve yours for amphibians**
- **Leave perennials and herbaceous, hollow-stemmed plants unpruned until early April or late this month.** These will still be providing homes for overwintering invertebrates like ladybirds.
- **On freezing days, break the ice on bird baths and water bowls.** Refresh the water supply weekly.

- **Build a bug hotel**
- **Leave piles of leaves and logs undisturbed.** In mild weather, it can be tempting to get going in the garden but avoid the urge to tidy away leaf and log piles just yet. Wait until late this month or early April.
- **Avoid turning the compost heap until April,** even if conditions are mild. Frogs, small mammals, and insects may be hibernating, and any disturbance could harm them.
- **Check bonfires before they are lit** for sheltering and hibernating animals, such as hedgehogs, toads, frogs, and newts.

*Jess Bouwer*  
*Wild Oxfordshire*

## HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

### Stud Farm Update

The future of the Stud Farm and the surrounding land, which we know holds deep significance for many of you has, finally been settled. As you may be aware, the Estate provided notice on the Stud Farm tenancy three years ago. Since then, we have worked closely with the tenants to ensure that this transition is managed in a way that is fair and balanced for all parties involved.

This has been a very difficult and emotional process, and we acknowledge the challenges it has presented. While legal proceedings were initially pursued by the tenants and defended by the Estate, it soon became clear that a prolonged dispute would come at a significant financial and emotional cost to both parties. We are therefore pleased to share that an amicable resolution has been reached, avoiding the need for further legal action and the stress that comes with it. By settling this matter outside of court, we have ensured a fair and practical solution that spares everyone from unnecessary strain. As part of this agreement, the tenants will vacate the Stud Farm and surrounding land by 1st October 2025. Additionally, in recognition of the need for a smooth transition, they will retain access to some areas for a further 6 months, allowing time to relocate equipment in a practical and manageable way.

We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the tenants for their cooperation and understanding throughout this complex and emotional process. Their willingness to engage in constructive dialogue has been instrumental in reaching a resolution that works for everyone, and we deeply appreciate the patience and collaboration that have allowed us to move forward in a way that prioritises both financial and emotional well-being.

### **Transition News – Interim Trustees Elected**

Congratulations to Hardwick's first community Trustees whose election was announced at our 'Interim AGM' event on Thursday 3rd April. The night was a huge success due to the ongoing commitment of the Hardwick community and the relentless hard work given by the transition Steering Group who have guided this process over the last year. Participation in the election was very high with 51 participating in the nomination process; 58 people were nominated; of those 18 people chose to stand for the election. 62 people voted out of a potential 80 people who are eligible to vote. That is a very impressive 77.5% turnout! The seven new interim trustees will now be able to co-opt up to five further Trustees from within or outside the community who bring skills and experience they need. We expect the full board to be complete by July. Watch this space for more transition news throughout the year.



Hardwick's first AGM

# THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH ON THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE

*Acreage – 1,320, Population – 824 (2011 census), Electors – 622*

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL			
Chair	Jim Donahue	cilrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	07557 668601
V/Chair	Diana Smith	cilrsmith.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Katherine Higley	cilrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Paul O'Grady	cilrogrady.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Frances Parkes	cilrparkes.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Debbie Leach	cilrleach.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Romilly Swann	cilrswann.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
Clerk	Brian Inglis	parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	07737 982907

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL			
135 Eastern Ave, Milton Park Estate, Milton, Abingdon, OX14 4SB, <a href="http://www.southoxon.gov.uk">www.southoxon.gov.uk</a>			
Councillor	Peter Dragonetti	Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom	0118 9844711

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL			
County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND, <a href="http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk">www.oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>			01865 792422
Councillor	Kevin Bulmer	35 Springhill Road, Goring on Thames, RG8 0BY	07526 743091

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES VILLAGE WEBSITE			
<a href="http://www.whitchurchonthames.com">www.whitchurchonthames.com</a>			
News Editor	Richard Wingfield	rmwingfield@btinternet.com	0118 9843682

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL			
St Mary's Whitchurch and St John's Whitchurch Hill			
Contact			0118 9765905

WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL GROUP			
Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7EJ			
Supervisor		Kathleen Barrow	0118 9842347

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL			
Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7EJ			
Head Teacher		Dawn Chesters	0118 9842347
Head of Parent Association		Nicola Armstrong	
Chair of School Governors		Eleanor Sugrue	

LANGTREE SCHOOL			
Woodcote, RG8 0RA			
Head Teacher		Simon Banford	01491 680514
Chair of School Governors		Alan Dunstan	01491 680514

**WHITCHURCH AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY**

Chair	John Coupland	jvcoupland@yahoo.co.uk	07397 778872
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**WHITCHURCH TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

Chair	Wendy Ferguson	wendyefergie@gmail.com	0118 9841262
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**WHITCHURCH SOCIETY**

Chair	John Bradon	john@bradon.co.uk	0118 9841574
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**WHITCHURCH BRIDGE CLUB**

Enquiries	Phillipa Turner		01491 875648
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**WHITCHURCH AND GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY**

Contact	Vicky Jordan	Little Langtree, Whitchurch Hill, RG8 7PU	0118 9843260
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**WHITCHURCH CRICKET CLUB**

Sec	Cormac Neeson	cormac.neeson@gmail.com	0118 9843347
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**PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT BOWLS CLUB**
**Recreation Ground, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne**

Contact	Roy Rosekilly	22 Swanston Field, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7HP	0118 9843080
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**PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT TENNIS CLUB**
**Recreation Ground, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne**

Chair	Louise Shearer		0118 9842934
Sec	Amanda Holland		07814 369566

**WHITCHURCH ON THAMES HABITAT STUDY GROUP (WoTHabs)**

Contact	Gill Goodwin	1 Swanston Field, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7HP	0118 9842934
Sec	John Bradon	Rylands, Hardwick Rd, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7HW	0118 9841574

**VILLAGE HALL**

Hall Manager	Richard Searce	38 Manor Road, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7EU	0118 9842004
Events Mgr	Jean-Marc Grosfort		07881 312233

**OLD STABLES ROOM**
**High Street**

Contact	Geoff Weir	oldstablesbookings@btinternet.com	
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**GORING HEATH GUIDE AND SCOUT GROUP**

Contact	Doreen Pechey	doreen@pechey.org (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides)	01491 681236
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**PANG VALLEY SCOUT GROUP**

The Barn, Purley on Thames

Contact	Ian Shenton	ishenton@ntlworld.com (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts)	0118 9678769
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**PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE**

Committee Room, Pangbourne Village Hall

	Open 09:30 – 11:30am Mon–Friday	0118 9844586
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**AFC WHITCHURCH FC (ages 5–16)**

Chair	Alex Hilton	hilts123@hotmail.com or afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk	
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**THAMES VALLEY POLICE**

Wallingford Police Station, Wallingford, OX10 9DW

	Non Emergency Police Number (manned 24/7)		101
Neighbourhd Supervisor	Barbara Taylor	barbara.taylor@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk	07814 485286

**PANGBOURNE LIBRARY**

Reading Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7LY

Monday 14:00-17:00	Tuesday 10:30-18:00	Wednesday CLOSED	
Thursday 9:30-12:00	Friday 10:30-17:00	Saturday 10:00-12:30	

**ST MARY'S CHURCH**

Contact	For Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals	0118 9765905
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**THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S AND ST JOHN'S**

Chair	Sarah Dragonetti		
Secretary	Sally Woolhouse	whitchurchfriends@gmail.com	

**PANGBOURNE BOATHOUSE SURGERY**

Whitchurch Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7DP

Routine health conditions	Mon to Fri, 08:00–18:30 excl Weds 07:30–18:30	0118 9842234
Urgent unplanned conditions		NHS 111
Life-threatening emergencies		999

**WHITCHURCH ON THAMES BULLETIN**

Editor	Richard Williams	rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com	07810 374280
Associate Editor	Tim Hardwick		
	<i>Deadline for Articles</i>	<i>Planned distribution</i>	
Summer 2025	13th July	27th July	
Autumn 2025	12th October	16th October	

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