

WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

WINTER
2025



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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – JANUARY 2025

Happy New Year everyone! I hope you had a good Christmas break. I was glad to see some festive Christmas events in the village including the second annual Christmas Eve Torch Procession around the village. The procession leader and bagpiper Alastair Dunstan was joined this year by the village's second bagpiper Louis Van Der Merwe from Manor Road. I also heard that the Greyhound's Christmas event with the Never Nevers and the Four Square Saxes was very festive indeed!

As has been the case recently, an ongoing priority has been maintaining the safe condition of our roads. First a few positive developments:

Hardwick Road Verges Project – The Parish Council have selected Butler & Proctor as the contractor for the Hardwick Road verges project that was initiated by the WoTHabs team led by John Bradon and Sally Woolhouse. The overall aim of the project is to repair and protect the growing deterioration of the verges on Hardwick Road between the entrance to the village and the Hardwick Estate. This project has been ongoing for a number of years in different guises, but now has a target to be completed by the end of June 2025. The work will be funded primarily by the '*Mend the Gap*' initiative that funds projects in the area to alleviate the unsightly electric railway gantries seen over the Goring Gap and Chilterns National Landscape. Please contact Cllr Diana Smith or our Clerk Brian Inglis for more details. John and Sally did the design, successfully applied for the funding and have recently completed the procurement phase. The PC will now take the lead on the next stage of the project.

Photo courtesy of Jim Donahue shows the Pre-School opening on 17th January with Tim Suiter (Chair of PS Comm) and Becky Bell (PS Comm) in foreground

Village drain clearing and street cleaning/pedestrian safety - OCC spent more than a week in November clearing the drains in the village ahead of what is likely to be another wet winter.

- I arranged for SODC to clear the leaves from the village streets in November following the clearing of the drains and again in December once all the leaves had fallen.
- Unfortunately they didn't have time to fix some drains that were more difficult to clear, including one on the High Street near the Ferryboat. OCC now reports that 25 March is the soonest that they can come back due to other priorities in the county.
- The Parish Council has requested that OCC deep clean all pavements in the village which is likely to happen in the February/March timeframe.

Trial for improved lighting in the upper narrows – Cllr Frances Parkes will be arranging a trial with some motion-sensitive battery operated lights in the upper narrows to see if they can adequately improve visibility and overall safety. This would be an alternative to installing a new street light that would be expensive, difficult to locate in the narrows and may be overkill for this situation. The trial will last approximately one month and the lessons and feedback will feed into a decision on a more permanent solution.

And now a few difficult situations with our roads that you may be aware of:

Eastfield Lane construction and road safety – You are likely aware that there have been at least 8 or 9 different construction projects in progress on Eastfield Lane raising serious concerns about the risks to traffic and pedestrian safety, especially for parents and children using the lane. Apart from the Cedar Lodge Care Home work, these projects include a new large home at the end of the lane by the school with regular large construction vehicles coming and going. Unfortunately, no one is really able to control when individual projects can start. As a Parish Council, we have limited control over the situation, but we have been working with various parties to try to keep the area as safe as possible:

1. **Road surface improvements** – I have been working with OCC Highways to address urgent road surface damage, and they have now repaired the 'ditch' on the south side of the lane and will reassess the condition of the road once work is completed. Both OCC and the Cedar Lodge contractor Zephyr X are in agreement that the contractor is responsible for restoring the road and verges to their original state once work is complete, now planned for the end of March. You may have seen that Zephyr X tidied up the verges and cleaned the street before the Christmas break making for an improved situation over the holidays, but street conditions are likely to continue to be muddy and crowded until the Spring.
2. **Contractor car parking** – I have asked Zephyr X if they can look at options to reduce the number of vehicles on the street. They are aiming to park predominantly only in front of the Cedar Lodge property and will seek to minimise parking on the street going forward, as more space becomes available on-site. With all the other work going on, it is really hard to know which vehicles belong to which project.
3. **Communicating with the school** – I have also been updating the school to the generally dangerous situation and asking them to reinforce the message to parents to avoid driving on Eastfield Lane and taking extra care as pedestrians on the road for the next few months.
4. **Gas Utilities works disruption** – Thankfully, the SGN utilities work that caused traffic delays in December, still allowed residents access at all times as only half the width of the road was dug up at a time.
5. **Muddy Lane maintenance** – I participated in a Green Team working party to clear the leaves off Muddy Lane in December that will ensure the route to school is as clear as possible and protect the surface for the year to come. Thanks to Neil Huntington and Jill Bradon for organising!
6. **New sewage pumps on Eastfield Lane** – Whilst additional Thames Water work added to the congestion for a few days in November, the good news is that there are now two fully operational pumps at the Eastfield Lane sewage pumping station. In peak flooding periods both primary and back-up pumps can now be used to help keep sewage off the streets. Thank you Cllr Diana Smith and the Flood Forum Team for raising this with Thames Water!

Sink hole on Manor Road and ping pong between OCC Highways and Thames Water – If the situation with Eastfield Lane was not bad enough, a dangerous sinkhole appeared on Manor Road by the playground just before Christmas. The situation is now stabilised and secure, but the ongoing work to get this urgent situation addressed highlights an all too frequent ping pong match back and forth between OCC Highways and Thames Water over responsibility for repairing it.

- As a FixMyStreet superuser, I am able to action repairs of qualifying potholes within 28 days or 24 hours if it is a safety issue. In this case OCC agreed that it was safety critical so actioned the team for a 24 hr response, however the OCC then handed the issue to Thames Water as they suspected the cause was a water leak.
- During the Christmas break, Thames Water put more cones around the hole, but then ultimately determined it to be a 'void' and not caused by a water leak, so it was handed back to OCC Highways to repair in early January.
- OCC treated it as an urgent situation and had the hole covered and secured with extra signage, making it more secure, but as at January 15th, they are still investigating it.
- Meanwhile some have seen Thames Water engineers on site who indicate that they suspect the previous sewage works on this part of the road was the cause and have raised a ticket to investigate further, so it may be Thames Water's responsibility after all.

It's not clear who will ultimately win this match of ping pong but at least the safety of the road and playground is secured while we watch from the sidelines.



A "sinkhole" or a "void"?

SSE pavement work at Ferryboat unsatisfactory – A similar ping pong is occurring between OCC and SSE on this. SSE caused the hole on the pavement when they upgraded the power to the Ferryboat last year. I have had to chase OCC on this again recently, and they sent a team to review it confirming it was unsafe as it was crowning significantly in addition to the incorrect materials being used. OCC have raised this as an issue to SSE again and as of this update it was due to be repaired by the end of January.

Emergency Power Cut Demonstration at the Village Hall – Wednesday 26

February, 8pm: John Bradon and Jean Marc Grosfort will be demonstrating a power cut scenario at the Village Hall. The goal will be to cut the power and use the generator to power lights, wifi and other emergency provisions at the Village Hall to prepare for an emergency power cut scenario. A short annual Emergency Team meeting will follow to review any required changes to the Village Emergency Plan. All are welcome!

Parking on double yellow lines – We have received some complaints from residents concerned about cars parked on the newly installed double yellow lines impeding traffic. As of early January, OCC parking enforcement contractors have been patrolling the High Street issuing tickets to those in violation of the new restrictions. This seems to have already resulted in more orderly parking.

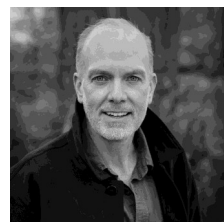
Dangerous manhole cover in playground – Thanks to Cllr Frances Parkes for identifying this tripping hazard and reporting it to Thames Water.

Parish Council Vacancy – Nick Brazil has decided to step down from his role on the Parish Council creating a vacancy for a new councillor. Please join me in thanking him for his contributions to the Parish Council over the past few years. Nick is clearly someone with great knowledge of the village and passion for our community. He has contributed significantly to many important council decisions.

The vacancy will be formally advertised shortly and remain open until the end of February. If joining the Parish Council may be something you are interested in, please contact myself or the Parish Clerk Brian Inglis.

kind regards,

Jim Donahue
Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council



QUARTERLY PLANNING UPDATE

– OCTOBER to DECEMBER 2024

Planning Ref	Address and Application	Comments by Parish Council	SODC status
P24/S1965/ FUL	Whitchurch Primary School, Whitchurch Pre-school Group, Eastfield Lane Replacement of a single storey "terrapin" type building currently used as a pre-school with a new building of the same overall footprint constructed to current standards for the same use.	The Parish Council voted to support the application.	Granted 18/10/24
P24/S2700/ S73	Cedar Lodge Care Home, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ Retrospective application to change of rooms with some impacts to roof dormers and other external impacts not in approved plans.	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.	Application under consideration Re-consultation notified 6/11/24 See comments below
P24/S2999/ HH	1 Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ New openings made in existing rear elevation to provide french doors and a new window.	The Parish Council voted to support the application.	Granted 12/11/24
P24/S3000/ HH	Glebelands, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ First floor rear bedroom extension with glazed balcony.	The Parish Council voted to support the application.	Granted 21/11/24
P24/S3273/ HH	Mellifont, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HW Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory.	The Parish Council voted to support the application.	Granted 05/12/24

QUARTERLY PLANNING UPDATE

– OCTOBER to DECEMBER 2024

<p>P24/S2700/ S73</p>	<p>Cedar Lodge Care Home, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ 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>The Parish Council voted to object and submit the following comments – "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. 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. 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 build-up 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>P24/S3591/ HH</p>	<p>11 Hillside Hardwick Road Whitchurch-On-Thames RG8 7HL Loft conversion with rear dormer to allow floor space for a fourth bedroom with a possible ensuite.</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to support the application.</p>	<p>Granted 18/12/24</p>
<p>P24/S3881/ HH</p>	<p>Oakfield Eastfield Lane Whitchurch on Thames RG8 7EJ Refurbishment of garden shed.</p>	<p>The Parish Council voted to support the application.</p>	<p>Application under consideration</p>

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

One of the things that the District Council is particularly good at is picking up fly-tipping and, where ever possible, prosecuting those responsible. Recently the director, Masood Khanloo, of a restaurant in the Cowley Road, Oxford, who was responsible for tipping waste at Shotover Country Park had to pay fines and costs totalling £8,500. This was the second time he had committed this offence, and when questioned by officers came up with a string of inconsistent accounts of how he had disposed of his waste. Other offenders who have dumped garden waste and household items across the district have been successfully traced and prosecuted. Our council officers are diligent and persistent, and will rummage through dumped waste to find evidence as to who was responsible. If you see fly-tipping, please contact SODC as soon as possible, so that not only can an officer check it out for evidence but also it can be picked up by our contractor as quickly as possible. This is important as one tip attracts other fly-tips; I am pleased to say that there is not a huge fly-tipping problem here.

Another aspect of the environmental work that the Council does is the inspection of food premises; you will have seen the Food Hygiene Ratings outside restaurants and food shops, and it is good that this work is carried out and the public is protected. Serious issues are publicised in the local press, and can lead to prosecution. I understand that owners are warned and are then subject to re-inspection, failure a second time will lead to more serious action. While the notices displayed outside should show the ratings, you can check the ratings online quite easily. Perhaps something to do while waiting for the first course!

It's not only food hygiene that can be an issue, but other environmental issues such as noise and smell, and a restaurant in Wheatley was recently fined for not fixing issues of this kind despite being warned. Another matter which SODC is responsible for is the licensing of taxis and taxi drivers. The legislation on taxis is quite detailed, and is there for the protection of the public. On Saturday 26th September an enforcement operation was conducted, where inspections were carried out of vehicles road worthiness and the drivers' compliance with the legislation. During the four-hour operation, 34 vehicles were stopped and 19

were non-compliant with issues such as fare charts not displayed or drivers not wearing their badge. Police also took action against FIVE vehicles and issued fixed penalty notices.

Another aspect of the Council's work in this area is the licensing of street traders. The District Council's policy in respect of this matter is under review, and has been out for consultation. The aim of the policy is, as always, to ensure the safety of the public and the maintenance of a well-ordered public realm. More information about these matters can be found on the SODC Website. All of this work done by the Council is for the protection of the public, and enables us all to be more confident that we can live safe and happy lives, and this work is an important and unsung part of the District Council's function.

Peter Dragonetti (Peter.dragonetti@southoxon.gov.uk)

SODC Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames



Our New Pre-School Building is Here!

We are thrilled to announce that construction of our brand new Pre-school building was completed in December. This modern facility provides a vibrant and welcoming environment for our little learners to explore, discover, and grow.

Thoughtfully designed with both children and staff in mind, the new space features an improved layout that maximizes comfort, safety, and creativity. It's not just a place for learning - it's a space where imaginations can take flight and lifelong memories are made.

One of the standout features of our new building is its energy and space efficiency. It has been designed to meet the needs of today while planning for tomorrow, ensuring that it remains a wonderful space for future generations.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible support of our community. A heartfelt thank you goes out to our past and present parents, as well as our amazing neighbours, for their generosity and unwavering belief in this vision. Together, you've helped us turn a dream into reality, and we couldn't be more grateful!

As we step into this new chapter, we can't wait to see the joy, curiosity, and creativity that will fill these walls.

This project was part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with South Oxfordshire District Council serving as the lead authority.



Listening Learning Leading



Funded by
UK Government



"Top row Chris Willis (Offpod), Tim Suiter & Becky Galea, Bottom l to R Chris & Becky Bell & Lawrie Gatherum, photo courtesy of Jim Donahue

Seeking Local Artists

To make our Pre-School environment as warm and inspiring as possible, we are seeking a talented local artist to volunteer their time and skills to paint a mural on one of our main walls.

The mural will play a key role in brightening up the space and sparking imagination in our little learners.

While this is a volunteer opportunity, we would be delighted to showcase your work on our website and social media, giving credit to you as the artist. If you are interested in contributing your talent to this project, please contact us at: hello@whitchurchpreschool.org. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a meaningful impact on our preschool community. We can't wait to hear from you!

Forest School Adventures

When we are not inside enjoying our new Pre-school building, we are outside taking part in forest school activities on our very own allotment.

Forest school offers an incredible learning experience, allowing children to embrace the changing seasons, learn about local wildlife, and engage in hands-on arts and crafts in the great outdoors. With the short days, time spent outside is especially valuable, providing not only fresh air but a chance for creative exploration in nature. We're thrilled to have this unique outdoor space where children can dig, plant, and discover, fostering curiosity and resilience through direct contact with the natural world.

Limited Spaces Available

We still have a few spaces available for new starters aged from two years upwards in our brand-new Pre-school building.

- 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 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

*Jo Malcolm
Communications, WPS
Registered Charity: 1183193*

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

It is with great excitement that we started a new year at school. We had a lovely festive period kicking it off with our Christmas Cracking event at which we draw the school raffle which raised over £1,500 for the school this year! A huge thank you once again to the wider community for providing some fantastic raffle prizes and also purchasing lots of tickets. A special mention to Warminghams who very kindly sponsored the event this year. With the money raised the school was able to fund the software required to convert a number of donated laptops to turn them into Chromebook, vital support in the children's learning.

As a school we enjoyed some great festive performances including Willow class nativity and a performance of 'The Landlord's Cat' by year 1 and 2. Upper school performed a lovely carol concert with some children performing amazing musical solo performances and Year 3 acting out the nativity accompanied by Upper School singing beautiful carols including a fantastic rendition of 'Carol of the Bells'. The children enjoyed a delicious Christmas dinner cooked by the school chefs and each class had a great time at their Christmas party with a special surprise visit from Father Christmas and his elves.

We kicked off the new year with another fantastic Art Café; it was great to see it so busy we pretty much sold out of cake! Another £300 raised for the school and a lovely community event we greatly enjoy hosting.

We look forward to the new year ahead with residential trips in the near future, school discos and also our quiz night. Keep an eye out for more details about our infamous quiz night. It would be lovely to see some of the wider community there, it's a really fun night and open to all!

All that's left for me to say is Happy New Year from all of the school community!

Nicola Armstrong
Whitchurch Primary School Parents Association Chair

THE WHITCHURCH SOCIETY ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION 2024

This was a very successful exhibition, which was held over the weekend of 23rd/24th November in Whitchurch Village Hall. There were more exhibitors and exhibits than in any previous years, since the Exhibition was first held over fifty years ago. The quality of the entries was most impressive and this was commented on by many visitors.

The exhibits were judged on the Friday evening by three external experts, and the winners were chosen in all the art, craft and photography categories, entered by adults and young people. The theme for the Joyce Voysey Prize was 'Colours of Autumn' and, not surprisingly, this encouraged a wide range of imaginative creations, especially from the younger exhibitors.

There were 13 adult exhibitors who had never taken part before. In total, there were 246 entries across the full spectrum of classes, in art, craft, photography and new media, from 132 exhibitors, both adult and young people. It was enjoyed by many visitors over the weekend, as were the refreshments which were served on both days.

Also, on the stage, the three local schools, namely Whitchurch Pre-School, the Whitchurch Primary School and the Oratory Preparatory School, had set up impressive and colourful displays of school work by their students. These are always enjoyed by all the visitors.

A new award called The Founder's Award was presented for the first time. It has been given by the family of the founder of the very first exhibition back in 1969. It was awarded to the exhibit which the judging panel decide is the 'Best in Show'. The full list of the prize winners can be found via the link on the Exhibition webpage on the Whitchurch website (whitchurchonthames.com/groups/artscrafts.html). Also, the website's Photo Gallery holds a great selection of photos of the exhibition.

I would like to thank all of the great team that helped in many ways to set the exhibition up, and without whom it would be impossible to achieve, in the tight schedule. My special thanks must go to the planning and organising team (Sarah & Adrian Dixon, Wendy Ferguson, Jean-Marc Grosfort, and Kate Lowe) and to the Whitchurch Society committee, for all their hard work and support which made it another successful show.

And remember, it is never too soon to start work on your entries for the 2025 exhibition!!

*Sally Woolhouse,
Chair, Organising Committee*

THE ART CAFE

The Art Café is open in the Old Stables, High Street (opposite The Ferryboat) from 10:30am to 12:30pm every Saturday. It is a well-established and popular social event organised each week by a different local group offering tea, coffee and homemade cakes in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. It is also an important fundraiser; in 2024 our Art Cafes raised over £12,400 for local groups.

Thank you to all the organisers, cake-makers and other helpers without whom our Art Cafes could not operate. Thanks also to all those local residents who come along and support our Art Cafes each week.

Please get in touch if you would like to organise an Art Café. Finally, if you haven't been to an Art Café for a while please pop in: we'd be delighted to see you and to make you feel welcome.

Geoff Weir

OldStablesBookings@btinternet.com

WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

We're at Whitchurch Village Hall on Thursday, 20th February for our AGM, and to hear Alan Copeland's presentation of the Curiosities of the Cotswolds. He's always a popular speaker who encourages us to notice unusual things as we travel around the countryside. The meeting starts at 2.30pm and there will be tea and biscuits.

Why not come and join us? Subscriptions for the year are £12, or non-members pay £3 for each meeting. Contact Vicky Jordan vickyjordan5@hotmail.com for further information.

Mike Holland Quiz Night. A fun evening, though fiercely fought, the annual quiz in aid of the Goring Heath Parish Charity will be held on Saturday 1st March at 7.30pm in Goring Heath Parish Hall. There is a car park adjacent.

The evening will cost £15 a person, which includes a fish and chip supper. Book your table for a team of up to six by emailing events@goringheathparishhall.uk.

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

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.

Work Parties

Our regular work parties in both churchyards have wound down over the Christmas period, but great clearance of brambles has been done in the centre of the churchyard at St John's. On January 8th, volunteers from Sonning Common Green Gym made the first of two visits and started to clear the brambles in the North East corner with significant effect.

We have decided to have monthly work parties at St John's during 2025. They will be on the last Wednesday of the month beginning on February 26th at 10 am. At St Mary's the next work party will be on February 19th, again starting at 10 am. 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 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 spire restoration at St Mary's is our main future funding project. This remains in the early stages of planning as the architects have applied to the Diocese for the work to be allowed. Once this has been agreed, quotes can be sought for the restoration work. One development that is exciting is that we have bats in the belfry! It is in fact the brown long eared bat that has been detected sheltering in the spire. This little critter is known as the whispering bat as, due to its long ears and acute hearing, it has a quiet call/voice. We will need to find out whether a special licence is needed to begin work because of its presence.

Fund Raising

After the success of our last Quiz Night in April 2023, we will be holding another this year, so please make a note in your diary for **Saturday 29th March** at Whitchurch Village Hall. The ticket price will include a light supper and there will

be a bar and raffle on the night, as well as a mixed bag of entertaining questions posed by our Quiz Master. More details will follow in due course and we look forward to seeing you there.

The Art Café at The Old Stables on Saturday 7th December was well received despite heavy rain. On the day, local artist, Sarah Shore, displayed some beautiful pieces of artwork, many of which were inspired by local landscapes. Our Art Cafes will continue regularly and our next date is on Saturday 1st February so do drop in if you can.

New Trustee

We will be sorry to say farewell to Geraldine and Paul Witcher who plan to move out of the area sometime soon. Paul has been a very proactive trustee for the Friends and was chairman of the Friends for a number of years. We are therefore seeking a new trustee to join us on the Committee. We meet about six times a year: please contact me or Sally Woolhouse for more information if you are interested.

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 and follow the link for the Church, or ask me, or Sally Woolhouse.

*Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of The Friends
whitchurchfriends@gmail.com
Registered Charity no. 1168335*

THE GREEN TEAM

The Green Team is looking for new people to join its team of volunteers. Although we are fairly quiet at this time of year, once spring starts and everything begins to grow again there will be lots to do.

We have regular monthly working parties to look after the maze and the village green, and additional working parties are arranged for other parts of the village as and when needed. For example, in November we had a litter picking day and in December we had a team clearing leaves from Muddy Lane.

This is not a big commitment and you can help as much or little as you like. I know many people lead very busy lives, but even giving an hour or two of help every couple of months would make a difference. If you are interested and would like to know more just email me. Alternatively, just turn up at our working parties – upcoming events are listed in the What's On section of the Whitchurch website (whitchurchonthames.com).

*Jill Bradon
jill@jbradon.co.uk*

VILLAGE HALL

New Exercise Class for Seniors. A new Physio-Led Exercise Class has started this term at the Village Hall. Petya, who runs the class, is an experienced chartered physiotherapist who already has regular clients in the village who speak highly of her. She says the aims of the class are to:

- Improve your strength, balance and mobility so you can stay steady and safe, avoiding falls.
- Boost your mood and energy.

It's every Thursday at 10:00 am. To find out more and/or book your space, please ring Petya on 07552 129230 or email getitrightphysio@gmail.com.

Three Men in a Boat. This one-man show at the end of November was the first public theatre production in the hall for over a decade. It was a success and the Village Hall Committee hope to organise more productions in future. Thanks to all who supported it.

Afternoon Teas. The first event of the year is at 2:30pm on Thursday 13th February. Hopefully this is a good time to catch up with old friends and perhaps meet some new ones.

John Bradon

THE SIR RICKMAN GODLEE FUND

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. Within 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

Sarah Dragonetti
Reg Charity No 204441

RABBITS

In my early walking and exploring days in Whitchurch, once I had accepted the pleasure of walking down or alongside Hardwick Road (not much traffic), I got as far as the black gates. I then discovered that I had a right of way to enter the Estate and admire the beautiful racehorses in the paddocks alongside and to proceed unhindered to the eastern gates. Emerging into Mapledurham, the hillside and the adjacent field were both alive with rabbits, the crop in the field below was devastated by their hungry presence. Maybe it was or had been one of the local Warrens.

On returning to the Hardwick Estate and the road junction with Path Hill, I realised that the copse above me was also alive with rabbits and indeed it was the source of supply within the village. It was possible on one weekday evening to visit the Greyhound and to ask for a rabbit for the following weekend. Our local ferret owner could be seen on the Saturday morning slipping his ferrets into the rabbit holes and capturing the rabbits as they emerged - sure enough one dead rabbit would be found later on our doorstep to be skinned and prepared for the pot.

One other memory of the road through Hardwick, a section of the *Tuddingway*, is of me picking the fallen walnuts from the trees lining the road, to be greeted by Old Lady Rose who said 'Eric, I don't mind you picking them up from the road but you must not pick them off the trees' and I didn't! Wonderful memories for a city lad.

Eric Hartley

HEDGEROW HIGHWAYS

Hedges are a vital part of our local nature, providing shelter and resources for many species of mammals, insects, and birds (from hibernating hedgehogs to the smallest of beetles). They're crucial wildlife corridors that allow safe travel between isolated habitats.

The benefits that hedgerows provide for biodiversity are endless. In a heavily fragmented landscape, hedgerows link up valuable habitats for wildlife such as woodland, grassland and ponds. This connects populations that would otherwise be isolated and vulnerable and allows relocation to better habitat. Over 100 priority species utilise hedgerows for a variety of reasons such as for shelter, food, or navigation. Birds and small mammals nest in hedges, bats use hedgerows as foraging grounds and navigational markers, and reptiles hide in the long tussocky margins associated with hedgerows.

November through to March is the best time of year to plant new hedges. The first step is to acquire your roots. In Oxfordshire, we recommend planting Blackthorn, Spindle, Buckthorn, Guelder Rose, Hawthorn, Wild Privet, Cherry Plum, or Hazel. Plant 4 or 5 plants per metre, about 25cm apart using the slit planting method, ensuring all fibrous roots are completely buried in the soil. To see a detailed tutorial of this planting method, head to our website where you can watch a demonstration from expert Nigel Adams.

<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/hedgerows-guidance>

Aftercare for hedgerows is crucial. Keep weeds and grass away from the hedge plants for the first 2-3 years to give them plenty of space to absorb moisture and light. Thoroughly water the plants during dry spells. Compost can be very helpful to maintain vigour due to the competition for nutrients between such closely situated plants. Try to trim your hedge annually in the first three to five years to encourage bushy growth. Once your hedgerow is fully established (approximately 5 years) you can trim every year or every two or three years but make sure you don't trim your hedge to the same place every cut. More detailed aftercare information is also available on our website. Good luck with your new hedges!

New Year – New Nature! Why not make some **green themed resolutions** this new year! Perhaps yours is to cultivate new hedge life. Maybe you're going to reduce your meat intake, find eco-friendly cleaning products, or make your garden more wildlife friendly using native plants. There are endless ways to make a difference!

Why not sign up to our monthly email Bulletin, visit our website, and follow us on social media for the latest nature news and ways you can join others in helping nature in Oxfordshire <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/news>

Jess Boucher
Wild Oxfordshire Hedgerows & Partnerships Officer

HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

Hardwick Winter Market. The third annual Hardwick Winter Market, held on 15th December at Lin's Veg Shed, was a resounding success, with local crafts and foods enjoyed by those who came. This festive event showcased and supported many of the diverse offerings currently on offer at Hardwick, including our newly introduced experimental rye and heritage whole-wheat flours (more on this below). The market also featured a variety of beans, Tim Sheldon's renowned honey, beautifully crafted willow baskets, hemp products, fine ironwork, handmade jewellery and naturally dyed wool socks and yarn. It was also a feast for the senses with delicious options including fresh vegetables, hot soup, fermented delicacies, vegan s'mores, kimchi bloody Marys and more! Adding to the festive atmosphere were live performances ranging from Christmas carols to lively ceilidh dances. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the organisers and attendees who came out to support our local producers and craftspeople, and the wider Hardwick project - it was a wonderful event.

Hardwick Heritage Flour. At the market, we were excited to feature two new types of traditionally milled flour - rye and heritage whole-wheat - processed right here at Hardwick using our stone mill. This time-honoured method of stone milling involves grinding grains between two large stones, a process that minimises heat buildup to preserve the nutrients in the flour.



Pictured here, alongside Tim Sheldon's honey, the flours quickly sold out, priced at £3 per 500g bag, with many patrons purchasing both types to blend in their baking. What distinguishes Hardwick Flour is its pure, unrefined nature and wholesome authenticity. Unlike commercially available flour, which has typically been sieved, our stone-milled flour is unrefined. This means it retains every part of the grain, offering the full spectrum of nutrition - truly the antithesis of ultra-processed food.

Hardwick Flour is incredibly versatile, ideal for making pancakes, flatbreads, biscuits, crumbles, and bread. It yields a particularly lovely loaf when kneaded and allowed to rise twice - easily achieved with a mixer equipped with a dough hook, or by hand for those who enjoy a bit more of a workout. For those interested in baking cakes that require a finer flour, a simple pass through a pair of stockings will suffice, much like our grandmothers did during the war.

Pumpkin Festival. Despite the extremely challenging weather conditions, it was decided that the 2024 Pumpkin Festival at Tolhurst Organic would still go ahead. Torrential downpours could not dampen the spirits of the Tolhurst team and community volunteers, whose resilience and determination to ensure the festival was a success were nothing short of remarkable. Together, they provided an enjoyable and memorable event, showcasing an incredible community effort. We are hopeful for more favourable weather next year, but regardless of the conditions, this event highlighted the strength and unity of our community and provided delicious pumpkin-goodness to those who came.

Transition News. 2025 is set to be filled with new and exciting challenges for Hardwick as we continue our journey towards becoming a charity. The Hardwick steering group meets regularly, and continues work toward the goal of having the charity set up by the end of the year. Updates and any transition news will follow in due course.

Upcoming Events at Hardwick.

Fermentation Workshop - Winter Roots

Sat 22nd Feb 10:00 - 15:00 Walled Garden, Hardwick Estate. Fermentation workshop with Tolhurst Organic. Seasonal veg, water and salt! Earthy Goodness!

Path Hill Outdoors To book events - <https://www.pathhilladventures.com/upcoming-courses-events>

February 2025

Sun 09/02/2025 Forest Bathing - £35.00

Sun 16/02/2025 Woodland Women - £8.50

Tue 18/02/2025 Family Bushcraft Day - £60.00 Adults & £40 Children

March 2025

Sun 09/03/2025 Forest Bathing - £35.00

Tue 18/03/2025 Woodland Women - £8.50

Sat 22/03/2025 Woodland Wellbeing Retreat for Women - £70.00

THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH ON THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE

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

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL			
Chair	Jim Donahue	cllrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	07557 668601
V/Chair	Diana Smith	cllrsmith.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Katherine Higley	cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Paul O'Grady	cllrgrady.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Frances Parkes	cllrparkes.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Debbie Leach	cllrleach.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, www.southoxon.gov.uk			
Councillor	Peter Dragonetti	Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom	0118 9844711

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL			
County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND, www.oxfordshire.gov.uk			01865 792422
Councillor	Kevin Bulmer	35 Springhill Road, Goring on Thames, RG8 0BY	07526 743091

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES VILLAGE WEBSITE			
www.whitchurchonthames.com			
News Editor	Richard Wingfield	rmwingfield@btinternet.com	0118 9843682

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL			
St Mary's Whitchurch and St John's Whitchurch Hill			
Hon Secretary		Rosemary Pearce	07761 056125

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		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 Scearce	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

		0118 9844117
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	rwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com	07810 374280
Associate Editor	Tim Hardwick		
	<i>Deadline for Articles</i>	<i>Planned distribution</i>	
Spring 2025	20th April	2nd May	
Summer 2025	20th July	2nd August	

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