



WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

WINTER
2026

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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – JANUARY 2026

Happy 2026 to you and your family! It was great seeing so many people at the community Torch Procession on Christmas Eve. Thanks to Alistair Dunstan and the Dunstan family for organising this event supported by the Parish Council. This is the third year for this festive event that now appears to have grown to over 100 people participating.

I am also looking forward to the annual Whitchurch Art & Craft Exhibition at its new time at the end of February. Please consider entering or at least visiting the exhibition, especially if you haven't done so in the past. All visitors get to vote on their favourite piece of art and there is a special trophy for the best first-time adult entrant.



Eastfield Lane Condition – I have continued to raise the state of Eastfield Lane to OCC Highways to address the deteriorated condition due to all the construction work over the last two years.

- As of December, all of the eleven larger areas of compromised road surface I raised as a FixMyStreet Super User have been repaired, focussing on surfaces along the south verge of the road.
- OCC's official position is that the road has been proposed for 'surfacing

Whitchurch Bridge at Christmas, photo courtesy of Jim Donahue

inlay or minor patching in the next financial year'. They explained that this could mean a full or partial resurfacing, or selected areas of large patches, but are not able to commit at this point.

- Most drains on Eastfield Lane were very full of mud and silt following the extended period of construction on the road. As a FMS Super User, I also raised ten incidents for blocked gullies on Eastfield Lane in December. As of 14th January, many of these have now been cleared.
- Cllr Diana Smith is reviewing concerns raised by residents about parking issues on Eastfield Lane. She is working with OCC to consider whether further changes to parking restrictions in the village may be needed, including the impact on Manor Road, following the first year of residents' parking High Street restrictions.

Flood Prevention – Eastfield Lane Culvert Topological Survey Follow-up

We are following up on the options to reduce the risk of flooding in the village following the SODC Topological Survey of the Eastfield Lane culvert. At the moment, Option 1 seems the most promising and we are also following up on Options 2 and 4:

1. A trial has been set up to reduce the flow of water at the entrance to the culvert to the river under Eastfield Lane at Walliscote Farm. The culvert change effectively limits the rate of water from the farm into the culvert to a level that the Eastfield Lane culvert can cope with during flooding periods without overflowing onto Eastfield Lane. There is a risk that this would increase flooding on Walliscote Farm so this is just a trial at this point. The SODC engineer and Flood Forum are supportive of this trial.
2. Investigating the SODC recommendation that the ditches behind Eastfield Lane be cleared of silt leading to the river, making use of the £20k budget that the Parish Council could use for this. SODC's view is that this should be done prior to any changes to pipes going through properties because the silt is built up above the level of the pipes outflow. This would require consent from affected riparian landowners.
3. Replacing the pipes under properties south of Eastfield Lane with wider pipes or open ditches leading to the existing ditches to the river. This option would be more difficult because landowner consent would be required and the SODC engineer believes the cost would be in excess of £50k. OCC/SODC would be unlikely to support this level of funding. The Flood Forum team believes this work should be done but agrees it is likely to be too difficult to achieve.
4. Jet and clear the pipes under the affected properties on Eastfield Lane. SODC believes that clearing the ditches behind them must be done first as

described in Option 2. As discussed above, I also requested the clearing of drains on Eastfield Lane where required and many of these are either now cleared or are scheduled to be cleared.

Hardwick Road Verges Project – You may have noticed the work that has been done to restore and maintain the extremely biodiverse verges on Hardwick Road leading up to the entrance of Hardwick Estate. This was a Parish Council project initiated and led by WOTHabs and funded by a grant from Mend The Gap. The objective is to stop the deterioration of the verge with ever-expanding passing places. There are now clearly designated passing places marked by posts with reflectors. The passing places have also been repaired with potholes filled to make them more usable for drivers. The verges are being recovered in some areas with new soil that is muddy at the moment and will be improved with wildflower seeds in the spring. The drainage grips have also been cleared to help maintain the verges. There are temporary cones in some places to help keep drivers off the new built-up temporary verges until things get bedded down. Please be careful driving there until you are used to the new passing places!

This has been a project that we have been planning for a number of years. Thanks to Sally Woolhouse, John Bradon, Cllr Diana Smith, our Clerk Brian Inglis and everyone involved!



Whitchurch Conservation Area Appraisal Approved – After several years of work by SODC, several residents of the village, and led by Cllr Katherine Higley, the village Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) has now been approved by SODC. The CAA is in the form of a 64-page illustrated document available on the

village website. The Conservation Area covers the historic village High Street and many neighbouring properties and other conservation assets. The purpose of the appraisal is to protect important historic and architectural aspects of the village including views of the village from various vantage points. There has been a Conservation Area in the village for many years but this is the first document to formally define it. There are three main changes to the Conservation Area boundary in the approved document:

- The addition of land on Hardwick Road east of the existing boundary to include a historic avenue of trees.
- The removal of the modern dwellings at Old Gardens on the southern side of Manor Road.
- Corrections of the boundary in three places to follow the property boundaries at Eastfield House, at Pluto House and at Chiltern Edge.

Annual Budget Approval – The Parish Council approved an annual budget for FY 2026/27 without any local tax increase from the previous fiscal year. The village precept will remain at £29,121 from local taxes. This precept is the main source of funding for Parish Council activities. Additional funds can come from grants such as the £15,000 grant we received from 'Mend the Gap' for the Hardwick Road verges project. In the ten years since 2015, the Parish Council has only requested a tax increase for two years to address higher than normal inflation (FY 23/24 and FY 24/25 for a 4% increase each year).

Residents' issues – Recently raised issues include:

- The gate at the top of Muddy Lane has now been repaired by James Norman and one of his colleagues Mark. The Parish Council purchased the two wooden posts from Bouchiers. Thanks also to Charles Cotgreave and Neil Huntington.
- There was a Green Team activity to clear Muddy Lane of leaves at 11am on Friday 12th December led by Jill Bradon. Jill and I also cleared some of the fallen figs or grapes on the High Street pavement by the Walled Garden that were a slipping hazard for pedestrians.
- Overgrown hedges blocking the pavement near the tollbooth have now been cut back by the landowner.

Councillor Vacancy – Cllr Frances Parkes has stepped down from her role as councillor due to personal circumstances, creating a vacancy that we will be advertising this month. We request that expressions of interest be submitted to myself or our Clerk Brian Inglis at parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com

We need a range of views and experience on the Parish Council and hope that you will consider a role as a councillor. In the words of former Parish Councillor

Parkes: "I have greatly enjoyed my time on the Parish Council. I would encourage anyone who wants to get involved in our wonderful village to consider joining. You will meet lots of interesting people and have the opportunity to tackle issues which affect all of us who live in Whitchurch and the wider area."

As a council, we will certainly miss Frances as she has done so much for the village in her time as Parish Councillor. She originally joined us as a member of TAPAG, working on the village High Street Traffic Scheme and, as a councillor, she was instrumental in getting the scheme approved and delivered after many years of hard work. Frances has been our lead on the Village Green, working to address a number of issues between the various stakeholders who sometimes have conflicting aspirations. We would not be where we are today without her charm and professional approach. Overall, Frances brought many qualities of a model Parish Councillor, including her ability to take on challenges, come up with pragmatic solutions, and work with key stakeholders to see decisions through to delivery. She always came well prepared for meetings, contributing in a constructive and positive manner, seeking out areas of agreement and compromise wherever possible.

kind regards,

*Jim Donahue
Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council*



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Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

This is a voluntary position and requires a minimum of one evening a month to attend Parish Council meetings, currently the second Thursday of the month. You may choose to focus on specific areas that will require you to investigate issues and meet with stakeholders in the village or externally. Councillors bring local issues to the attention of the council, help it make decisions on behalf of the local community, and represent the views of residents within and outside the village.

The key requirements are that councillors have a minimum age of 18, are on the electoral roll and are a citizen of the UK, Commonwealth or EU. They must be a resident of the village or live within three miles of the parish, own land or work in the parish.

We are looking for people who are interested in local issues with a willingness to represent the views of the whole community in a professional and effective manner.

To apply, or to obtain a full job description, please contact our Parish Clerk, Brian Inglis, by 28th February:

parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com

There is a lot more information on the Parish Council section of the website that may be helpful including an article called: "Make a Change: Become a Parish Councillor".

Please feel free to contact Council Chairman Jim Donahue or another councillor if you have any questions.

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Quarterly Planning Update - October to December 2025

Planning Ref	Address and Details of Application	Comments by Parish Council	SODC status
P25/S3121/ O 10/10/2025	Land south of Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HL Erection of four dwellings with all matters reserved except access.	The Parish Council submitted a detailed OBJECTION to this application. Comments submitted can be viewed on the SODC Planning Portal.	Under Consideration
P25/ S3326/HH 28/10/2025	13 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP First floor dormer extension to the rear for new ensuite bathroom to principal bedroom. Replacement cladding to front and rear gables of new weathered ash. New enlarged doors to rear garden. New roof light to stair well. New timber pergola to rear with glazed roof.	The Parish Council voted to SUPPORT this application.	GRANTED on 25/11/2025
P25/ S3228/FUL 06/11/2025	Land adjacent to Church Cottages, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DL . Replacement of a fence. Existing fence is in poor state of repair in places. Proposal to increase height of garden boundary fence to 1.8m from 1.35m.	The Parish Council voted to OBJECT to this application. Comments submitted can be viewed on the SODC Planning Portal.	Under Consideration
P25/ S3590/HH 17/11/2025	10 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP Proposed new rooflight and change of fenestration	The Parish Council voted to SUPPORT this application.	GRANTED on 19/12/2025
P25/ S3756/HH 03/12/2025	Royal Oak Cottage, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HF . Proposed ground floor front/side extension.	The Parish Council voted to SUPPORT this application.	Under Consideration

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

One of the matters that concerns many people is potholes, and indeed these do cause a lot of problems, and the question is asked repeatedly as to why nothing is done about them. A few days ago the government published a map of England showing which local authorities were doing well or badly in addressing this issue, classifying each authority as either red, amber or green, with red of course being the worst performing. The scoring is based on various factors, and Oxfordshire has done well on the amount of money spent on road maintenance, although only amber on road condition and best practice. Oxfordshire's overall score of amber places it amongst the majority of local authorities, 125 of whom scored amber while only 16 were scored green and 13 red. Locally, West Berkshire scored green and Reading amber. None of this means much of course if you encounter a particularly vicious pothole unexpectedly. The recent period of cold weather following a rather wet spell has meant that the roads are particularly susceptible to potholes forming.

In the last financial year, Oxfordshire County Council fixed an estimated 37,042 potholes, the highest number for five years. The County Council is responsible for 2,900 miles of road and in this financial year it will spend £69m on maintenance, while receiving only £33m from the Department for Transport, so most is paid for by general council funds. There is always a demand for more money to be spent on road maintenance, as indeed there is a demand for more money to be spent on all sorts of matters from the NHS to Nature Conservation to Defence to farmers to social services. Everyone, and every lobby group, insists that their need is greater than that of others. In making judgements of fairer spending of resources, it can be difficult to distinguish between the demands of self-interest and the public good.

Locally, the progress towards a Unitary Authority is now wholly with the government. While there has been talk of local elections being cancelled or postponed, that is not relevant to our area as both the County and District Council elections are some way off, and in South Oxfordshire the whole council is elected every four years, whereas in other districts, such as Cherwell and West Oxfordshire, a third of councillors are elected each year.

Progress on our new Joint Local Plan has now restarted; it is at the examination stage, which was paused as the Inspectors considered that the duty to co-operate with other local authorities had not been met, a position with which our planning department strongly disagreed. However, the government has changed the rules mid-examination, and there is now no longer a "duty" to co-operate, so the plan will go forward as written and consulted on. Planning decisions are still being taken on the current plan, and refusals can be appealed. The District Council's track record at appeals being dismissed is very good; just before Christmas an appeal was dismissed for an application for a huge warehousing complex near the M40 at Waterstock. This application had been made by a speculative property company, and the District Council had to put a lot of resources in to support its original decision, so it was good to be vindicated.

Peter Dragonetti



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WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

And just like that..... our children have returned to Whitchurch Primary School for yet another exciting spring term.

This follows on from an incredibly busy and action-packed winter term. In November we hosted our school's first ever Bingo night, which raised a whopping £1,862.15. We were delighted some of the wider community joined in the fun and we hope to host another Bingo extravaganza this year – watch this space! A huge and special thank you to Beata Hageman (one of our school's parents who organised and hosted this fabulous event) and to all our parents and local businesses who donated prizes. November was also a time for giving back and our wonderful elected school council were straight in with their first initiative, a fundraising event for Children in Need, raising £387.12 towards such an important cause.

December of course was filled to the brim with many festive events. We kicked off the Christmas cheer with our school's Christmas Cracking event, a visit from Father Christmas and his naughty elves, class parties and school nativity plays. We ended with a wonderful Christmas concert at St Mary's Church, where our children sang carols beautifully and some children played musical instruments and sang individual pieces.

Our fundraising efforts this term have gone towards many things at our school including our Astroturf annual maintenance (an amazing asset that all our children use for PE and play time), letter joining subscription (which helps to teach our children the correct way of joining their letters), Language Angels yearly subscription (which helps our children brush up and learn the art of a different language – French), Twinkl subscription (used for additional activities, games, digital tools for phonics, learning and wellbeing); and a new sparkling chompsaw for designer technology projects – some fantastic creations have already been produced!

As we start to wave goodbye to winter, we are looking forward to the year ahead and we kicked it off with a Parents' Association organised cake sale on the 10th of January at the Art Café. It was wonderful to see the local community enjoying the lovely homemade baking and we hope to see some of you again on the 7th March. Thank you to all the parents who volunteered, baked, and donated raffle prizes – we raised £198, which all goes towards a very good cause.

The Parents' Association and our wonderful school plan for many more events and opportunities this term. On the cards are residential trips, school day trips, discos, Easter shenanigans, sporting tournaments and much much more. So, here's to yet another successful term at Whitchurch Primary School.

We would like to thank you – our local community – for all the support we receive towards our wonderful school. Happy New Year to you all and enjoy 2026 – we know we will!

*Hayley Wilkins
Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association Treasurer*

WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION 2026

This much-loved annual event is coming soon! The 2026 Exhibition is being held on the weekend of 28th February-1st March 2026. Everything that you need to know about how to enter the exhibition is now available on our smart new website at www.wotarts.co.uk and on our Facebook event page. It is being held in the Whitchurch Village Hall in Manor Road, and is open to all current residents and ex-residents of Whitchurch-on-Thames, Whitchurch Hill and Goring Heath to enter, and also children attending the local schools. There are various categories – something for everyone! Our judges will be awarding cups for best exhibits in Art, in Craft, in Photography and for Film & Animation. There is also recognition for best first-time adult exhibitor, Best in Show overall, and junior winners in four age groups too. The theme for this year's Joyce Voysey prize is "My Happy Place". It will be fascinating to see how this subject is interpreted by you all, our creative community.



So, it's time to get ready with your creations and help make this year's show the best ever! If you have any queries or would like to offer to help in any way, please email us on admin@wotarts.co.uk

Sally Woolhouse

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

(Registered Charity no. 1168335)

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. Those visiting St John's Churchyard may have noticed the recent work done on the trees that are on the northern boundary. Four Blue Atlas Cedars and the Bishops Pine have been trimmed, and also a low-hanging horizontal ash branch has been removed. This has opened up the churchyard on its northern aspect, and made it less likely for branches to fall and cause damage in high winds or storms. Also, the yew trees on the south side of the church have been trimmed and re-wired, to restore their columnar shapes. Both of these projects have been carried out by local professional contractors for the Parochial Church Council (PCC), paid for by The Friends at a cost of just over £3,000. Goring Heath Parish Council has organised the removal of the laurel hedge on the southern boundary and are liaising with the PCC concerning the future management of that boundary.

Working Parties

Our regular churchyard working parties at St John's take place on the last Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am. Working parties at St Mary's are on a more ad hoc basis as the churchyard is well tended at the moment. Thank you to all those that make a regular appearance, as many hands really do make light work. If you fancy joining one of these sessions, please get in touch with Sally Woolhouse whitchurchfriends@gmail.com. A welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

Save our Spire!

The Save our Spire funding continues and the PCC are currently waiting to hear if their application for National Lottery Funding has been agreed. The Friends have currently set £20,000 aside towards the project. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact graemekpearce@btinternet.com

Future Events

An Art Café is booked at The Old Stables for February 7th from 10.30 am and it would be lovely to see as many people as possible come to enjoy the ambiance, a cup of coffee and home-made cake.

Granny's Attic is once again planned for the Whitchurch Hill Fete on May 23rd. If you are currently having a bit of a clear out, please remember The Friends for any articles that are small enough to carry away on the day, such as unwanted tools, knick-knacks, kitchen implements, plant pots, vases, etc. We do not take clothing or books. Please contact me via the website address below if you would like me to come and collect and store any donated items.

Membership

We are always keen to welcome new Friends. For more information on how to join please go to the Whitchurch on Thames village website at <https://whitchurchonthames.com> and follow the link for the Church, or ask me or Sally Woolhouse.

*Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of The Friends
whitchurchfriends@gmail.com*

WHITCHURCH VILLAGE HALL

There are a couple of new things at the village hall:

Tai Chi Class

Held weekly on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:00am this new class is run by Peter Clapham of the Mindful Flow Community. The class aims to improve balance, strength, flexibility and overall well-being. Beginners are very welcome. Your first class is free, then it will be £12 a session. Peter can be contacted on 07803 005338 or peter.mfctaichi@btinternet.com

Theatrical Production on Thursday 26th March at 7:00 for 7:30pm

"My Dog's got no Nose" is a one-man show performed by Giles Shenton. Giles' performance in the village hall last October was very well received and we were glad to be able to book this. It is a "thought provoking and cleverly constructed piece of theatre about a man preparing to fulfil his lifelong ambition to be a stand-up comedian". You'll find plenty of positive reviews if you look online. Details of how to book will follow.

Please also note that the next Teas and Patisseries is on Thursday 12th February, 2:30 to 4:30pm. Hope you can come.

John Bradon, Village Hall Treasurer

WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

For our February meeting we're delighted to welcome back Alan Copeland, who will present "Curiosities of the Cotswolds, part 2". His talk will follow our Annual General Meeting on Thursday 19th February at 2.30pm in Whitchurch Village Hall.

At our January meeting we looked at the celebrations held in 1935 for the silver jubilee of George V. Apart from tea in St John's Rooms, the gift of commemorative mugs, and tobacco for the men and tea for the ladies, there was an afternoon of sports. The usual wheelbarrow and sack races for children are still fete favourites, but the rhubarb race for 5 to 8 year olds had us guessing. Any ideas?

We meet most months on the third Thursday, at 2.30pm at either Whitchurch Village Hall or Goring Heath Parish Hall. Membership costs £15 per person, or guests pay £3 for a single visit, which includes tea and biscuits. Our talks from local historians cover topics that are very local, such as the Whitchurch Home Guard of World War 2, to the history of local places such as Caversham Park or Reading. In the summer there are outings. Information about our meetings can be seen on the "What's On" section of the Whitchurch website, or from Vicky Jordan, 0118 984 3260, or vickyjordan5@hotmail.com

Vicky Jordan

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 2025 our Art Cafes raised over £12,600 for local groups, and since they were started by Gill Williamson in 2015 they have raised over £100,000.

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 us each week. Please get in touch if your group 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*

QUIZ NIGHT

The annual Mike Holland Quiz Night will be held on Saturday 28th February 2026. A mixture of knowledge and entertainment, the evening starts at 7.30pm, and includes a fish and chip supper. It will be held at Goring Heath Parish Hall, which has a car park adjacent and will cost £15 per person. Book your table of up to six people at events@goringheathparishhall.uk

PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE

(Pangbourne Volunteers)

Pangbourne and district volunteer centre was established in the early 1980s by the churches of Pangbourne and the neighbouring parishes. Initially Pangbourne Volunteers had a much wider brief than at present. When it was founded, Volunteers undertook a whole host of activities including gardening, shopping and of course transportation to and from medical appointments. Nowadays our brief is much narrower, solely offering transport to and from medical appointments, be that at hospital, doctors' surgeries, dentists or opticians. Occasionally we are able to take people to support groups and the like.

We are finding an increasing number of clients in the Whitchurch area, but sadly we don't have any volunteers at present in the Whitchurch area. Is this something that you might consider? We are currently seeking volunteer drivers and volunteers to work in our Pangbourne office, fielding calls from potential clients and connecting them with an appropriate driver. When seeking new drivers we require two referees, and that you have a roadworthy MOT and taxed vehicle that is insured for volunteer purposes. Our clients are invited to make a contribution towards the running of the organisation and our drivers are reimbursed at 45p per mile.

As well as chairing the organisation I am also a volunteer driver. I can honestly say that this is one of the most rewarding activities that I have undertaken. Our clients really appreciate the care that goes into the service we provide and for the duration of that service they enjoy the company of another human being. For some of our elderly clients this might be the only interaction they have during the week.

If you feel that you'd like to explore this further please feel free to telephone me on 07528 087733. or email me at bartonvicarl@gmail.com

If you are a potential client I invite you to phone our office between 9:30am and 11:30 am Mondays to Fridays on (0118) 984 4586.

*Reverend Alan Gates
Chair, Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre*

GAP FESTIVAL RETURNS

We are delighted to announce that this year's GAP Festival will take place from 12th to 21st June in Goring and Streatley. This year we are inviting everyone to embark on a Journey of Discovery. As at previous festivals, the programme will once again celebrate creativity, curiosity and connection, bringing together a vibrant mix of arts, music, science, spoken word, theatre and more. Much-loved favourites will be back – from Market Day, art workshops and Family Science Day to wellbeing sessions, Fringe music, Open Gardens, the Festival Concert and the ever-popular opera. Alongside these, the 2026 programme will offer fresh opportunities to discover something new: build confidence through hands-on performing arts workshops, explore local heritage through talks and self-guided trails, step into other people's lives through powerful theatrical storytelling, and enjoy the wealth of local talent showcased in a lively series of concerts. To be first to hear when tickets go on sale, sign up to our mailing list at www.thegapfestival.org

As we prepare for June 2026, we're also inviting more people to become Friends of the Festival. A £50 donation could help to sponsor a Journey of Discovery for children in our community, funding a wide range of low-cost and free events. As a thank you, children will create a handmade gift for each Friend, and all Friends and Sponsors will be welcomed to a special afternoon tea at the final teatime Festival Concert. Find out more and sign up at www.thegapfestival.org/get-involved/become-a-friend.

Katie Gristwood



Photo credit: Julia Jones

PAWS GROUP

Make your home warmer and cheaper to run!

Pangbourne & Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS) Group has a thermal imaging camera so you can see where your home is losing heat.

It is free to borrow from PAWSG. Email pawsg21@gmail.com for details.

HARDWICK ROAD VERGES RESTORATION PROJECT

At long last, we are delighted that the major part of this project was completed just before Christmas. The contractors' team from Butler & Proctor worked tirelessly through wind and rain for the whole week at the start of December. (The full details of the work they did are described in the Chairman's Update.)

This village project has been in the pipeline for many years. Way back in February 2015, the first phase was completed, when two surfaced passing places were constructed at the village entrance. Now, eleven years on, this most significant part of the plan has been achieved. The final stage of work will be carried out in the spring when the newly banked sections will be re-seeded with locally sourced wildflower and grass seed. This will be done by volunteers, so look out for more details on the village website if you would like to help with this.

The project was originally initiated by WoTHabs, the local wildlife group, back in 2012, but was later formally adopted by Whitchurch Parish Council. The final trigger for getting it underway was the generous 'Mend The Gap' grant of £15,000 which was awarded last year. The 'Mend The Gap' programme manages a fund provided by Network Rail as compensation following the electrification of our local section of the mainline rail network.

John Bradon and I would like to acknowledge all the hard work put in over the years by the Parish Council (especially Diana Smith and Brian Inglis) and our WoTHabs colleagues James Norman and Sandra Parkinson. If you are one of the many residents who enjoy walking, running or cycling down this lovely country road, we hope you will appreciate the improvement to our environment this summer.

Sally Woolhouse, WoTHabs

WILD OXFORDSHIRE

Seasonal Spotlight

Winter can be quite a harsh time of year for much of our wildlife, but for some species it can offer a bit of respite from the harsher, colder climates further north. Winter is a fantastic time to see many bird species that we won't see in summer such as redwings and fieldfares. Birds such as starlings start to flock, forming impressive murmurations in the sky. Why not visit your local nature reserve on a winter's day and see what new species you can find?

Bees in Winter

In the cold winter months we need to be even more considerate to our local bees than usual. In winter honeybee queens remain in their hives with the exception of particularly sunny days. Bumblebee queens may also emerge from hibernation if prompted to by mild weather. Solitary bees will leave their nests once ready to mate. When bees do emerge during winter, they need to have access to nectar, or they risk dying of starvation. In order to help these pollinators survive the winter, we recommend you plant winter bloomers in your garden. These include single flowered Hellebores (the open face gives great access to pollen and nectar!), crocuses (make sure to plant them in an area with lots of light so they fully open), snowdrops and aconites. Ivy also works well as a late nectar source as well as shelter from any harsh conditions. If gardening isn't your thing, you can make natural spaces bee friendly by creating twig and leaf piles (which can be as easy as not raking your garden when fallen leaves drop!) and caring for wayward queen bumblebees by either carefully relocating them to flowers or offering her a 1:1 sugar and water solution.

The Yellow Wagtail Partnership

We wanted to bring a bit of colour to this winter by mentioning one of our main projects, the Yellow Wagtail Partnership. The Yellow Wagtail is not a species one would think about at this time of year as by now they will be back in the wintering grounds in sunny West Africa. Wild Oxfordshire has partnered with the Earth Trust and Church Farm Partnership and Lower Farm to collectively manage four-miles of wet grassland along the River Thames from Clifton Hampden to Shillingford. The aim of the project is to sustainably manage these grasslands for the benefit of wildlife including the Yellow Wagtail but also in a way that is economically beneficial for the partnering businesses. However, this project is not just about the Yellow Wagtail; we want to increase the plant and

insect diversity and abundance as well. This in turn will increase the amount of food available for many species of bird including house martins, swifts, snipe and lapwings.

Tips for looking after wildlife this winter:

- Always move your burn piles before you light them! The best habitat piles are usually created on nature reserves and to the untrained eye, these look a lot like burn piles. The wildlife thinks so too and so many creatures use burn piles to sleep in, including hedgehogs, frogs, voles and lizards. To avoid burning hibernating wildlife, you must move burn piles before lighting them.
- Crack ice on your bird baths, water dishes and ponds so that our winter wildlife can still drink. Who knows which birds you might see enjoying a sip.
- Leave areas of your garden undisturbed to allow hibernating wildlife to sleep in peace and unharmed. Some invertebrates hibernate in hollow stems of grassland and scrub species such as cow parsley and other umbellifers. Avoid cutting these as they might be home to sleeping beetles, bees, spiders or even ladybirds.
- Log piles are well sought over for both people and wildlife at this time of year. If you can, try to leave a pile outside untouched to allow hedgehogs and other hibernating wildlife to sleep in it over winter.
- If you find a sick or injured hedgehog or other wild animal, please call Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital on 01844 292292

To find out more about **Wildlife friendly gardening** – head over to the Wild Oxfordshire website at www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk and have a look in guidance.

SURROUNDED BY HISTORY

(Second of 2 parts)

[At the end of Part 1 in the last issue of the Bulletin, we were at the end of Sheepwash Lane next to the River Thames. Our walk continues...]

I always told the schoolchildren to look upstream for Ratty and Mole and downstream for the upcoming Viking invasion – this is where they probably landed, coming upriver from Reading and gaining access to the higher ground and maybe the fleeing natives. In Saxon times this was known as Bleccesford (Black's Ford) and so must at times have provided access on foot to the opposite bank.

So now you turn, to go back up the lane and meet yet more history! The hedge on your right was the eastern boundary of the Saxon village (now at the Hardwick eastern gates) until it reached our present two opposing field gates and a noticeably damp patch near the northern dividing fence between the

two fields – this is the site of a Saxon Jug Well. The rain falling on our deep chalk underlay is finally retained in our now accessible aquifers but our Saxon population would have been delighted to have a source of clean water available on draught rather than the contaminated water generally available. Having reached the Well, the boundary then went on a diagonal up to Collins End. Perhaps another story?

Does anyone fancy walking or leading a walk round 95% of our present boundary? I can describe it but not walk it. It was my last village walk and I would be delighted if someone could take on the walk again, thus "Beating the Bounds". In Saxon times children or a village child would be beaten at various places along the walk to ensure that the boundary was not forgotten! Perhaps the walk (without the beatings!) could be used as an annual thank you for the pleasure and privilege of living here together in this lovely area?

Eric Hartley

HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

Christmas Market

A huge thank you to everyone who came along to the Hardwick Estate Christmas Market this year. It was a real pleasure to see so many familiar faces, and plenty of new ones too, enjoying the festive atmosphere. We were especially pleased to host our first ever event at the Stables, and what a brilliant way to start. The space was buzzing, the stalls looked fantastic, and the whole day had a really warm, fun, and Christmassy feel. It genuinely exceeded our expectations and felt like a great success all round. A very big thank you goes to everyone who helped make it happen, from stallholders and performers to volunteers, staff, and all those who mucked in behind the scenes. Your time, energy, and good humour made the day what it was. We're incredibly grateful for the support from the local community and hope this will be the first of many events at the Stables. Thank you again, and we wish everyone a very happy New Year.



Candles and Carols

Thank you to everyone who came along to Candles and Carols at the Pumphouse - what a wonderful way to start the Christmas celebrations. We were incredibly lucky with the weather, which really did feel like a small Christmas miracle and made the evening all the more special. With candlelight, music, sausage rolls, a warm drink from the bar, and a brilliant band setting the tone, the whole event had a lovely, festive atmosphere. The walk from the Pumphouse down to the bonfire was a real highlight and brought everyone together in a simple, joyful way. Thanks to all those who helped organise the evening, provided food and music, managed the bar, and made sure everything ran smoothly. Most of all, thank you to everyone who came along, sang, walked, and celebrated together. It was a perfect, relaxed start to the Christmas season, and we're very grateful to have shared it with you.

Hardwick Harvest Supper – a steady tradition transformed into celebration

Harvest Suppers at the Tolhurst Organic Packing Shed in the walled garden have been happening for nearly 20 years, around mid-November with a showcase of seasonal home-made dishes made to share. More recently, with the launch of the Hardwick transition to community leadership, and Hardwickians becoming more cohesive, the event transformed into a true celebration of the agricultural year adjourning, ahead of the bustling Christmas season. Last November we had more than 45 guests, each bringing sumptuous dishes to share. Competitions for the 'most colourful', 'fastest going' and 'longest lasting' dish were a new addition to the feast, and brought laughter and surprise gifts to the three winners. To mark the 60th birthday of Tamara, the hostess, we enjoyed a beautiful light show in the garden and a dance of 60s covers, both organised by the local enthusiast Tim Chatterton. Mark your calendar for the next Hardwick Harvest Supper on Saturday, 14th of November.

Michael Faretra, Estate Manager

THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH ON THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE*Acreage – 1,320, Population – 824 (2011 census), Electors – 622***WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL**

Chair	Jim Donahue	cllldonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	07557 668601
V/Chair	Diana Smith	cllrsmith.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Katherine Higley	cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Paul O'Grady	cllrogrady.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Debbie Leach	cllreach.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
	Romilly Swann	cllrswann.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	
Clerk	Brian Inglis	parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com	07737 982907

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL135 Eastern Ave, Milton Park Estate, Milton, Abingdon, OX14 4SB, www.southoxon.gov.uk

Councillor	Peter Dragonetti	Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom	0118 9844711
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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILCounty Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND, www.oxfordshire.gov.uk 01865 792422

Councillor	Maggie Filipova-Rivers	maggie.filipova-rivers@oxfordshire.gov.uk	
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WHITCHURCH ON THAMES VILLAGE WEBSITEwww.whitchurchonthames.com

News Editor	Richard Wingfield	rmwingfield@btinternet.com	0118 9843682
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PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

St Mary's Whitchurch and St John's Whitchurch Hill

Contact		0118 9765905
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WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL GROUP

Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7EJ

Supervisor	Kathleen Barrow	0118 9842347
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WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7EJ

Head Teacher	Dawn Chesters	0118 9842347
Head of Parent Association	Rachael Kelly	
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@brandon.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	Alan Copeland	14 Wayside Green, Woodcote RG8 0QJ	01491 681471
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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
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Neighbourhd Supervisor	Barbara Taylor	barbara.taylor@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk	07814 485286
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PANGBOURNE LIBRARY

Reading Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7LY	0118 9844117
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Monday 14:00-17:00	Tuesday 10:30-18:00	Wednesday CLOSED
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Thursday 9:30-12:00	Friday 10:30-17:00	Saturday 10:00-14:00
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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	
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Secretary	Sally Woolhouse	whitchurchfriends@gmail.com
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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
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Urgent unplanned conditions		NHS 111
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Life-threatening emergencies		999
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WHITCHURCH ON THAMES BULLETIN

Editorial Team	Richard Williams	rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com	07810 374280
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Editorial Team	Tim Hardwick		
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	<i>Deadline for Articles</i>	<i>Planned distribution</i>	
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Spring 2026	12th April	26th April	
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Summer 2026	10th July	24th July	
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Cedar Lodge

Your Way, Every Day

At Cedar Lodge Care Home a part of EQ Care Group located in Whitchurch-on-Thames you'll discover a true haven where everyone feels comfortable, secure, and valued. The home is rich in character, blending the charm of the original building complete with beautiful stained-glass features with stylish modern touches.

Cedar Lodge offers spacious en-suite bedrooms, along with elegant lounges and dining areas that combine luxury with a cosy, welcoming atmosphere perfect for spending time with friends or enjoying a quiet moment.

Beyond these spaces, the people living here can enjoy a fully equipped hair salon, a serene therapy room, and a sensory garden filled with mature trees and peaceful nature walks all thoughtfully designed to promote relaxation and wellbeing.

Personalised care, tailored to you

We're registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to provide "Personal Care with Nursing" – a specialised service designed for individuals who are unable to meet their personal care needs due to age, illness, or disability. This care is delivered in the comfort of their own living space, creating a homely, familiar environment.

About EQ Care Group

EQ Care Group is committed to providing high-quality, heart-centred support to older individuals. With a focus on innovation, emotional intelligence, and community engagement, we create homes where people who live here can thrive.

Our core values of 'Your Way, Every Day', is borne out in the homes which we operate, enabling people to live life to the full, whether that is a desire to go to a trampoline park, have swimming lessons, or have your ears pierced at the age of 84 – we support you to make these and other dreams happen!



Welcome to
Cedar Lodge!

Come & visit us!

Join Us

For more information about Cedar Lodge or on the care support we offer, please contact us.

Tel: (+44) 0118 324 1411 | www.eqcare.org/cedar-lodge | julia.berry@eqcare.org



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