



WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

**SUMMER
2025**

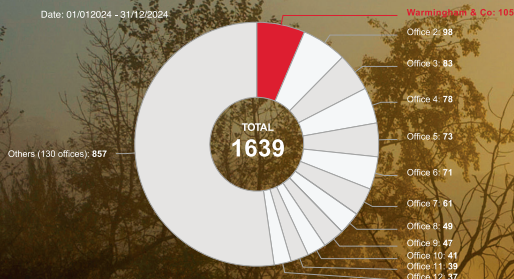
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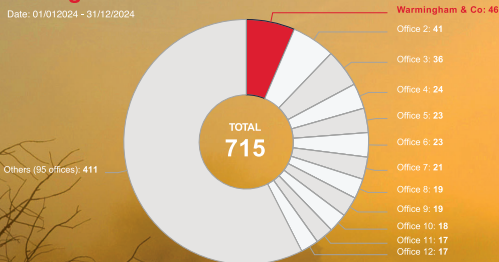
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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – JULY 2025

Hello everyone! You don't need me to tell you what a wonderful Spring and Summer we've been having. Just this weekend, I enjoyed a wonderful evening of Jazz at St Mary's rectory, featuring WotJam and guitarist Denny Ilett, raising money for the 'Save our Spire' fund. The balmy summer evening was perfect for the occasion, putting everyone in a good mood.

Some of the things that the Parish Council has been getting up to since our last issue in April include:

Muddy Lane ownership – Muddy Lane is pleasant, but it is worth reflecting for a moment on its important role in the village. It is a critical pedestrian route in the village that is straddled by some of the most important community spaces and facilities in the village; the Village Green, the allotments and the Primary and Pre-schools. The Primary School actively promotes its use for parents' daily drop-off and pick-up via Hardwick Road due to the narrow nature of Eastfield Lane. This is much safer, and less stressful, for everyone involved, especially given all the work happening in the past year or so on Eastfield Lane.

Despite there being no official owner of the lane, the Parish Council has been maintaining it by default through use of our maintenance contractor each year, organising regular work parties to maintain it, the recent resurfacing activities and addressing issues as they come up such as vandalism and dangerous fallen trees. According to Eric Hartley, the Parish Council has been involved for at least 59 years. With this in mind, the Parish Council applied to take over ownership of Muddy Lane to the Office of Land Registry over the past year; this is known as 'Adverse Possession'.

I am pleased to report that we have recently received notice from the Land Registry that the official Land Registry title now confirms the Whitchurch Parish Council as the owner of the lane. I'd like to thank some people that were involved in this, including our Clerk Brian Inglis, Muddy Lane guardian Neil Huntington, Eric Hartley and Cllr Diana Smith who all worked on this.

Related to this, I received two residents' issues:

- The Primary school raised an issue about an old, barbed wire fence found in the trees near the Village Green by the school entrance. I was able to remove this with Neil Huntington.
- I also received concerns from a neighbouring resident about dangerous dead trees and branches along the lane that risk falling on children or other users of the lane. At our July meeting, the Parish Council agreed to hire a tree surgeon to have dangerous dead trees and branches along the lane removed.

Highways Issues escalation – The Parish Council has escalated the 9 priority highways related issues agreed in our June meeting to OCC Highways and our County Councillor:

- We had feedback on three issues related to pedestrian crossing at the Greyhound, lower narrows pedestrian safety, and the bent bollard at the lower narrows. All are being progressed, but timeframes are uncertain as is the norm in these kinds of issues.
 - In the case of pedestrian safety at the Greyhound, there are plans to resurface the intersection with Eastfield Lane to enable an even surface for pedestrian crossing, in a matter similar to recent work done at Station Road in Goring.
 - At the lower narrows, bollards protecting pedestrians on the pavement had been rejected in the past due to the range of utilities located below the pavement and road. Recently, new types of 'smarter bollards' are becoming available that are shallow mounted, flexible, and aesthetically pleasing, that make this option worthy of further investigation. Cllr Parkes has shared some harrowing videos of cars mounting the pavement in front of the Ferryboat, seeming to chase pedestrians off the pavement.

We also raised the need for resurfacing of at least parts of Eastfield Lane, Manor Road, Hardwick Road upper narrows and Path Hill Farm Road. Feedback from OCC was less forthcoming on these, emphasising their ongoing inspections and work prioritisation processes. I have pushed back on this, requesting more definitive responses. Since then, Cllr Smith spoke to members of OCC Highways inspection team on Eastfield Lane. They were non-committal, but we will keep pushing for repair of the road and verge damage over the past year or so to be rectified.

Drains Clearing in the Village – This was also raised as a key issue to OCC Highways. Despite drains being cleared over the last several months, this is an ongoing concern. OCC Highways say they have now committed to annual drains clearance on the streets across the county, including the 'catchpits' coming down Whitchurch Hill to the High Street. This is good news but given the flood risks in the village we need to watch them closely to ensure it actually happens.

For example, despite most drains being cleared last November and January, some critical drains on the High Street between the Ferryboat and toll bridge were not cleared due to difficulty removing the grates from some of these gullies. The good news is that OCC Highways finally cleared the drains between the Ferryboat and the toll bridge. This happened as a result of the issue I raised as a Fix My Street (FMS) superuser. The ability for FMS superusers to action drain clearance was only added recently, and this was a test to see how it worked. I actioned it on 12 June for a 28-day repair and the work actually happened 28 days later on 10th July. You can see (below) that the gully cover closest to the Ferryboat was broken in the process of being removed, so will need to be replaced.



Based on this experience, I would be happy for residents, who are aware of blocked street drains, to raise them to me as a FMS superuser to action them to be cleared. Ideally, if you raise it on FMS, I can then log in and action it.

Grant for Eastfield Lane Flooding Survey – The Parish Council was successful in being awarded a grant from OCC/SODC to address concerns related to the January 2024 flooding of Eastfield Lane. Geoff Weir from the Flood Forum team has been liaising with SODC and OCC Flooding teams who recommend that an initial sum of £2,500 be used for a topological survey to be conducted south of Eastfield Lane to the river before making further recommendations on remedial work to remove potential blockages. The course of action was approved by the Parish Council in our July meeting.

Traffic Calming sign on the High Street – As reported by Cllr Frances Parkes in the Spring Bulletin, the 20mph speed limit and Speedwatch activities have had a positive effect on reducing speeding on the High Street. Speeds recorded on the High Street have noticeably decreased between 2018 and 2024. Measurements from last November show that 61% of northbound drivers and 65% of southbound drivers were doing between 15 and 25 mph. Compare that with 2018 when 49% of northbound drivers and 56% of southbound drivers did 15–25mph.

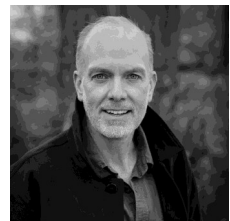
Despite this improvement, a strong case can be made for extra traffic calming measures due to some alarmingly high speeds by a minority of drivers, combined with the need for safety for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters in the village. Flashing traffic calming signs are now common in neighbouring villages (eg Goring and Woodcote) in the area. With this in mind, the Parish Council approved a £3,000 quote to initially purchase one traffic calming sign for the High Street. The sign would flash the driver's speed with a green happy face or a red angry face. The plan is to initially install a sign at an appropriate location in the northbound direction where most speeding takes place. Exact details, including the location and timing for this new sign, will be communicated in the near future.

Playground Manhole cover – Thank you to Cllrs Higley and Smith along with Brian Howse of Manor Road who built up dirt around this to reduce the risk of this as a tripping hazard.

Whitchurch Award – At May's Annual Assembly, I was pleased to present the annual Whitchurch Award to the Pre-School for all the work done by the Pre-School Committee, parents and other members of the community to replace their old school building. Given the urgency of the situation, where the pre-school building had to be replaced for the school to continue, the effort literally saved the school in their time of need. It was an impressive example of how our community got together to rally around the school to make it happen, helping them raise an impressive amount of funds and getting the work done in a very ambitious timescale. Well done everyone!

kind regards,

Jim Donahue
Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council



WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Quarterly Planning Update - April to June 2025

| Planing Ref | Address and Application | Comments by Parish Council | SODC status |
|-----------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| P24/ S2309/ FUL | <p>Land to north and west of Pangbourne Technology Centre, Bozedown Drive, Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR.</p> <p>Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels and battery energy storage system to supply electrical power to Pangbourne Technology Centre; associated plant, plant enclosure and cabling; access driveway; landscaping; and ancillary works.</p> | <p>The Parish Council voted to object to the application, supporting the Heritage and Landscape Officer recommendations to avoid development on AONB green land and consider car park mounted solar panels.</p> <p>Further comments made by PC objecting to amended plans. Comments available to view on SODC Planning Portal</p> | Ap- proved on 21/5/25 |
| P24/ S2700/ S73 | <p>Cedar Lodge Care Home, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</p> <p>Variation of conditions 3 (Landscaping compliance), 11 (Windows obscure glazed and fixed shut) and 14 (Approved plans) on application P23/S4055/S73 to allow internal and external changes to the approved building and changes to landscaping. (Amended plans received 1 November 2024) (Variation of conditions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13 and 14 of planning permission P11/S0126 to allow changes to tree protection measures and landscaping details. (Partial demolition of existing care home, Eastfield House, construction of extensions and associated works and change of use of land at the rear of the home from C3 to C2 to provide additional external amenity space)</p> <p>Amendments to this application were submitted April 2025. Parish Council response to be agreed at a meeting on 17th April, comments submitted will be available to view on the SODC Planning Portal</p> | <p>The Parish Council voted to object – "Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council consider the contents of this application and the proposed changes to be inappropriate for a Section 73 application. The Parish Council strongly feels that the proposed changes are not of a minor nature, and that a new, part-retrospective planning application would be more appropriate in this case.</p> <p>The Parish Council continues to strongly object to this application, and fully supports the residents of Eastfield Lane who have lodged objections on the planning portal. The Parish Council considers this development to be unneighbourly, overbearing and oppressive in its scale and bulk, out of proportion and damaging to the street scene of existing dwellings along Eastfield Lane and the Whitchurch-On-Thames Conservation Area.</p> <p>The Parish Council has concerns over the siting of the Plant Room, now proposed to be at ground level and likely to be a source of noise disturbance to neighbours. The Parish Council is concerned that there is no mention of any plans for the safe evacuation of fumes from this area, or from the kitchen area, fearing a buildup of smells and cooking aromas which would create an unpleasant environment for neighbours. Finally, the Parish Council requests that, should the Planning Officer be minded to approve this application, that it be called to panel for a final decision to be taken"</p> | Ap- proved on 21/5/25 |

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Quarterly Planning Update - April to June 2025

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| P24/ S2700/ S73 | <p>Cedar Lodge Care Home, East-field Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ</p> <p>Retrospective application to change of rooms with some impacts to roof dormers and other external impacts not in approved plans.</p> | <p>The Parish Council voted to strongly object to planning application due to the increased massing of the extension and there are concerns about the implications to the tree plan which has not been provided. The proposal was implemented without approval and is considered unneighbourly due to increased over-dominance and overlooking from a gable end that has previously been objected to and rejected. The building in question is a key part of the village Conservation Area with the plans impacting neighbours on all sides.</p> | <p>Approved on 21/5/25</p> |
| P24/ S2959/ FUL | <p>The Greyhound, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames, RG8 7EL</p> <p>The works are the laying of a hard non porous surface of about 104 square metres to the rear of the property. The resurfacing covers an area of grass and is designed to mitigate issues created by flash flooding which is becoming more frequent. (Retrospective)</p> | <p>The Parish Council requests that reports from SODC Drainage Team, OCC Flood Team and OCC Highways are submitted to provide sufficient expert opinion to allow councillors to make a fully informed decision.</p> <p>The PC realises that the impact on neighbours because of these works within the Conservation Area are yet to be seen, but considers that a porous material would be more appropriate in this location which lies in Flood Zone 3 and that the Flood Risk Assessment submitted by the applicant lacks detail, considering that the OCC Flood Toolkit is freely available for reference. The PC has concerns over the stated intention to deal with run-off surface water from this location via the main sewer, and requests clarification on this point.</p> <p>Following a note from the South and Vale Flood Risk Engineer, The Parish Council made a further comment - Councillors are in support of the conditions specified in the most recent note from the South and Vale Flood Risk Engineer and agree they should be imposed, noting the six-month timescale for compliance. Should this retrospective permission be granted, Councillors would ask to be notified when the conditions are met, and when a compliance report is approved.</p> | <p>Application Under consideration.</p> |

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Quarterly Planning Update - April to June 2025

| | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------------------------|
| P25/ S0794/ HH | Lerryn Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on- Thames RG8 7EJ New front dormer, replacement rear extension, new single storey-side extensions and demolition of existing front extension and garage. | The Parish Council voted to make no comment on this application | Granted on 7/5/25 |
| P25/ S0669/ HH | 5 Hillside Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HL Loft conversion and single storey rear extension. | The Parish Council voted to support this application | Granted on 12/5/25 |
| P25/ S1053/ S73 | Oakfield Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) and removal of condition 14 (ecology) on planning application P24/S0988/FUL (Replacement dwelling including a swimming pool building with linking roof to the east of the replacement dwelling approved by P23/S4171/FUL, dwelling now proposed to be moved 3m to the west) - addition of home gym onto pool building. | The Parish Council voted to make no comment on this application | Granted on 20/6/25 |
| P25/ S1535/ HH & P25/ S1536/ LB | Meadow Court High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DB Existing rear extension to be replaced with new single-storey orangery extension. | The Parish Council made a comment as follows – Councillors note the comments of Heritage Officer and neighbour and encourage the applicant to review their application in greater detail with these consultees | Application Under consideration. |

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

The prospect of the new arrangements for local government with a Unitary Authority of some sort is becoming clearer, with the options now really down to three; 1) an Oxfordshire wide authority, 2) the five district size councils in Oxfordshire (South, Cherwell, Vale, West and City) being compressed into two, that is basically the City combining with Cherwell and West Oxfordshire and taking in parts of South Oxfordshire while the rest of South Oxfordshire and the Vale combines with West Berkshire and 3) South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire forming a new council, Ridgeway. The second and third options should not really be available, as the government had indicated that boundaries of existing authorities should not change.

There are difficulties with all the proposals in different ways; a single authority for Oxfordshire would cover a very large population, greater than the proposed optimum of 500,000, while the proposed Ridgeway council covers a very diverse area. One feature of Ridgeway is that a lot of Britain's nuclear industry from AWRE to Burghfield and Culham will come within one authority.

West Berkshire is already a Unitary Authority, and, facing the challenges of Adult and Child Social services, is already under financial pressure. Apparently, the prospect of these pressures being relieved by the strong financial position of South Oxfordshire is enticing; one has to hope that if this solution comes to pass the weaknesses of West Berkshire does not drag the rest of us down.

A unitary council covers highways, social services and what's left of the local education system as well as planning and waste. The problem lies in the open-ended nature of adult and child social services where statutory obligations can often only be met by engaging private companies who will sometimes take advantage of the situation, and can cost local councils huge amounts of money. Oxfordshire County Council is already addressing this by building its own children's homes with the objective of reducing out of area placements. However, the days of large children's homes has passed, and these new homes are for four children or fewer, albeit for children with very special needs.

South Oxfordshire Headquarters. Although it is now nearly ten years since the Council Office at Crowmarsh was destroyed by fire, we still don't have a replacement building. While the reorganisation of local government may mean a new office will never be needed, the planning for the new office has continued so that options are still open, and planning permission was granted last week. If the office, as planned, is not built, this site will continue to be vacant, with no better use than a rather unpleasant open car park. This location has the potential to provide the economic growth that we are all supposed to be pursuing, as it's one of the best railway connected locations in southern England, with a fast service to London and Bristol, connections to Oxford and before long to Milton Keynes and in due course Cambridge.

Waste Collection. An important function of the council that we use every week is waste collection, and it's very good that South Oxfordshire now tops the national league in respect of the percentage of waste that is recycled at 62.9%. This is a very good position, although when you look at the volume of waste per person South Oxfordshire does seem to be a very throwaway society, as per head we produce 354 kilograms a year, about a third of a tonne, much more than many authorities, although not topping the league. Whether the volume we produce includes garden waste, which is also then included in the percentage that is recycled is not clear from the statistics.

Peter Dragonetti

peter.dragonetti@southoxon.gov.uk

SODC Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames

WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL

(Registered Charity: 1183193)

Our Summer term has gone in a flash. We've been proud to take part in The Big Green Week, supported by an OCC grant, which helped us plant vegetables at our preschool allotment and purchase exciting new investigation tools. The children have loved exploring nature and learning how things grow; it is hands-on science at its best!



Our adventures have taken us beyond the Pre-school gates too. We recently visited Pangbourne Library and the local church, giving the children a chance to explore their community and enjoy stories. We even took a little mini bus to visit Tollhurst Organic. These outings support growing independence and curiosity about the world around them.

As we approach the end of term, we're proud to say our children are thriving and school-ready, thanks to the wide range of activities we offer—from early writing and story sessions to science experiments and our much-loved Sporty Mini's sessions.

We're now looking forward to a special visit to Mill Cottage Farm for our leavers' party, which will be a joyful celebration to mark the end of a fantastic year.

Committee vacancies. We currently have two vacant positions on our committee starting in September. These roles are secretary and comms lead and supplement the existing committee members. As a small, community-based charity, we rely on volunteers to support our operations and keep our prices affordable. We value outside expertise and you really can make a difference to early years education being part of our committee. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact hello@whitchurchpreschool.org.

Fundraising for our new playground space. Now that our new building is in place, we have turned our attention to improving our outdoor space. We have been busy fundraising this term with a successful bingo night, selling strawberries on sports day, an epic raffle with some super prizes and finally we have been back for ice creams on Fridays, which are always a hit!

Plans for the new outdoor space are being developed and grant applications are progressing. We hope to have more to update on this in the coming months.

Spaces available and changes to government funding.

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

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

- We're open from Monday to Friday during term time from 8.45am - 3.15pm with an early drop-off option at 8.30am and late pick up to 3.30pm.
- Government-funded places are available for two, three and four-year-olds for 15 or 30 hours per week during term time.
- We are 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

Comms - Rebecca Bell

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

We have had a wonderful summer term and are looking forward to a nice summer break where hopefully this lovely weather continues, although I am sure some would find it a welcome relief if it was slightly cooler. The children have enjoyed making healthy salads as part of DT; explored what makes a stable structure; made moving models; been visited by the Romans; investigated the school pond habitat; created colourful mackerel art and created art work inspired by Gormley, and drawings inspired by the book "The Fox" by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks.

We had a fantastic sports day with new school records being made, the children participated in a wide range of activities throughout the morning, culminating in a series of competitive running races throughout the afternoon. The children and staff did an amazing job in the heat. We then continued in true Whitchurch tradition with a BBQ and celebrations on the green. A huge thank you to Warminghams for sponsoring the event, a sponsorship that has been in place for many years. Their continued support is hugely appreciated and it wouldn't be sports day without the Warmingham flags at the finish line! A further thank you to Cedar Lodge for their support and for paying for the toilets at the event. In addition, a great number of local businesses contributed prizes for the raffle including Cozze, Ada Meyhane, The Cheese Shop, Greens, Beauty Box and many more. Without the support from our local community, we couldn't make these events as successful as they are. It is hugely appreciated! In total we raised just over £2000 for the school, much needed funds when budgets are pushed to their limits!

The year six children have been doing plenty to enjoy their final term including putting on a fantastic rendition of the Lion King alongside the Year 5 children. The musical performances were outstanding with many budding actors and actresses showcasing their talents. We wish the year 6 all the best in their adventures!

We shall also be bidding farewell to Mrs Braithwaite and Mrs Turtle, two longstanding members of staff. They will be greatly missed by all the children and we thank them for all their hard work over many years, supporting a great many children. We wish them all the best with their new adventures. As we wave 'Bon Voyage' to year 6 we have welcomed the next year's Willow Class for their first visit, and are excited to see their school adventures beginning. Good luck in September! We look forward to welcoming you into our school community. As we draw to a close on another year at Whitchurch Primary we reflect on how lucky we are to have such great staff and such a supportive parent body and wider community. I shall be handing the reigns of Chair over to a new parent in September as we welcome in a new Parents Association Team. It has been a privilege to be Chair for the last two years. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Richard for being the Treasurer and to Katie for being Secretary, and we look forward to supporting the new team.

Nicola Armstrong
Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association Chair



St Mary's Save our Spire Appeal update

The fundraising team are pleased to report a good start and a big thank you to all those who have given support and donations to date – these are very much appreciated.

Applications for grants are in progress and updates on these will be shared when available.

We still have a long way to go to meet our target of £200,000, so your support is still very much needed. The fundraising activities continue with a number of activities planned over the coming months, including successful Jazz in the Garden event held on Saturday 12th July which over 50 people attended – see photo and caption below.



Jazz in the St Mary's Garden to raise funds for the Save Our Spire Project. Local group WoTJam with guest guitarist Denny Ilett. Photo courtesy of David Robinson.

For further updates on upcoming events and information on the project, how you can support fundraising and how to donate, please see the Whitchurch Village Website. Whitchurch-on-Thames > News

Thank you for your continued support for this once in a lifetime community and heritage project in our village, from the Save our Spire Appeal Fundraising Team.

For further information, please contact

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

Graeme Pearce – Buildings Sub-Committee Whitchurch PCC – graemekpearce@btinternet.com

Ken Baker – Churchwarden and Assistant Treasurer Whitchurch PCC – baker_kenneth2@sky.com

WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION 2026: IMPORTANT DATE CHANGE

The organising team for this Annual Exhibition is making a radical change to the timing of this much-loved show. For as long as I can remember, this village event has been held in November, on the weekend following the Remembrance weekend.

We have consulted The Whitchurch Society, the Primary School and other interested parties, about moving it away from the busy period in the lead up to Christmas. It has been agreed that the new date will be in the early spring, after the half-term break and when there are not so many conflicting events happening.

So, we are very pleased to announce that the next Exhibition will be held on the weekend of **28th February – 1st March 2026**. This means of course that you will all have an extra three months in which to finish your entries – no excuses!!

Apart from this date change, it will be in the same format in the Whitchurch Village Hall in Manor Road, and open for all current residents and ex-residents of Whitchurch-on-Thames, Whitchurch Hill and Goring Heath to enter.

More information about the categories and the Joyce Voysey theme will be available by the end of October on the WoTArts website (via the village website), on Facebook and in this magazine.

Meanwhile, save the dates in your 2026 diaries and get busy now with your... brushes, paints, camera, needles, glue, varnish, stamps, inks, wool, chisels, pliers, cottons, clay, pens, paper and lovely ideas!

Sally Woolhouse

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

(Reg 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 2 churches and their churchyards.

Save Our Spire! The spire restoration at St Mary's is our current main future funding project and the Parochial Church Council has launched the fundraising Spire Appeal, Save our Spire. Approximately £200,000 is needed to replace the cedar shingles, replace the decaying timbers and repair the leadwork, and other associated work.

The Friends have currently set et £20,000 aside towards the project. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact graemekpearce@btinternet.com.

For further information on progress of the fundraising please see the St Mary's Save our Spire Appeal update from the Save Our Spire Fundraising team elsewhere in this bulletin.

Granny's Attic at Whitchurch Hill Fete. This was very well supported by local donations of unwanted gifts and bric-a-brac, and we raised nearly £600 thanks to everyone's generosity and the wonderful attraction of Whitchurch Hill Fete.

The Fundraising Draw. It's a sell out! All the tickets for the draw for a stay at the Luxury Lodge at Laugharne have been sold, and the draw will take place at our next Art Café on August 2nd. Do come and support the event and find out if your ticket is the winning one!

A Musical Evening. On Saturday October 18th there will be a Musical Evening at St Mary's, which is a great way to relax and appreciate the beautiful and historic building of the church, as well as to join in with a community activity. Do make a note of the date in your diaries.

Work Parties. If you wander through the church yard at St John's you may have noticed that we have been removing quite a lot of brambles and doing some pruning and clearing. This is not only because of the regular work parties (which happen on the last Wednesday of the month), but also because an individual has been giving up so much of his time to progress this task, for which we are most grateful.

Work 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 whitchchurchfriends@gmail.com. A welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

Fund Raising. We are always keen to welcome new Friends. For more Information on how to join please go to the Whitchurch on Thames village website and follow the link for the Church, or ask me, or Sally Woolhouse.

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

WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

By the end of July, we will have enjoyed two outings.

In June, we ventured west to visit Wilton Windmill. It was constructed in 1821 to provide an alternative to the water mills on the River Bedwyn which was used to provide water when the Kennet and Avon canal was built. It is a working mill, restored in the 1970s after being derelict for fifty years. Our members were given a thorough briefing on the workings of the mill, starting at the top and working their way down to the ground floor. The volunteer guide reassured us when a thunderstorm broke out that the mill, a tall building at the top of a hill, had a very good lightning conductor.

After a pub lunch we went on to Tidcombe a tiny settlement in Pewsey Vale. Our visit to the Mediaeval church in its tranquil setting was made in bright sunshine.

Our April meeting had heard a talk about the gardens at Caversham Court and the prominent families who had owned the house there, which no longer stands. In July we followed this up by visiting the gardens, appreciating how the style of planting reflected the various families and their times.

We don't meet in August, but reconvene on Thursday 18th September at 2.30pm in Goring Heath Parish Hall to go with Catherine Sampson on a (virtual) stroll through Berkshire's graveyards. Non-members are welcome to join us; we ask for £3 to cover our costs, and this includes tea and biscuits.

Vicky Jordan

WHITCHURCH VILLAGE HALL

Three fundraising events being held in the village hall in the next few months are:

Quiz Night Saturday 6th September 7:00 for 7:30pm. This is a repeat of the very enjoyable quiz last year and again we will provide supper and there will be a bar. Please let Adrian Dixon (adrian@adriandixon.com) know if you'd be interested in hosting a table of 6 or joining a table.

Theatrical production on Thursday 23rd October. "Old Herbaceous" is the much-loved, humorous one-man show written by Alfred Shaughnessy and performed for us by Giles Shenton. It is described as "Downton Abbey with gardening tips". Details of times and how to book will follow.

Afternoon Teas on the second Thursday of the month 2:30 to 4:00pm. We're skipping August again this year so the next event is **Thursday 11th September**.

Of course, the Village Hall is always available to book online (whitchurchonthames.com/villagehall) or by contacting John Bradon (john@jbradon.co.uk or 07789 944676).

We charge a special low rate for children's parties.

John Bradon, Village Hall Treasurer

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WHITCHURCH BRIDGE CLUB

The Whitchurch Bridge Club meets on alternate Wednesday afternoons all year round at Whitchurch Village Hall.

We play a friendly hand of Chicago Bridge. There is no need to bring along a partner. Although perhaps not suitable for absolute beginners, the club welcomes a wide range of abilities.



If you would like to join us or want more information please contact:

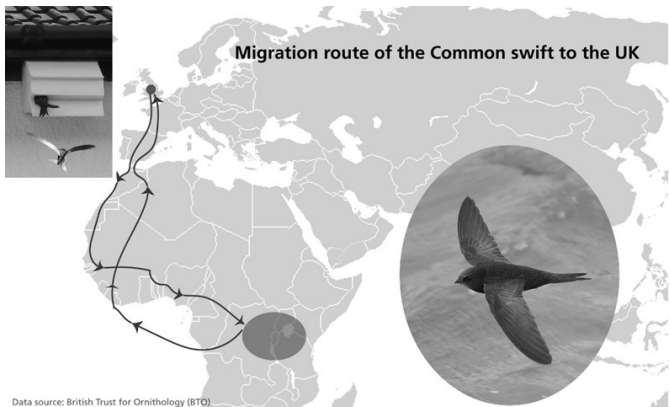
- Philippa Turner (Chairman) on 01491 875648 or kenya@gmail.com
- Ann Weller (Treasurer) on 07818 620192 or ann@weller.tw

WILD OXFORDSHIRE

(Reg Charity No 11311540)

About Swifts. These birds are the TopGun "*Mavericks*" of the bird world as they can do almost everything in the air! Swift's feet and legs aren't designed for sitting on the floor or a perch. They can perch vertically but they can't sit like a Robin or pigeon for example, as their wings are far too long. They are perfectly designed for flight and this means they do everything whilst flying – drinking, eating and even mating! True acrobatic flyers.

Swifts have one of the longest migration journeys in the world! Our swifts migrate approximately 14,000 miles to return to our swift boxes in Oxfordshire every year! What a journey – really makes us think of 'Home sweet home'.



Data source: British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)

The swifts we see in our towns and villages have overwintered in Africa and come back each summer to nest and raise their chicks. Once the chick(s) leave the nest, they're off – they will never return to the family nest again.

Sadly swifts are endangered and need swift boxes on buildings to nest. Find out more about how you can help them on the Cherwell swift project website <http://www.cherwell-swifts.org/>

Wildlife friendly gardening jobs. Birds diligently seek caterpillars to nourish their chicks, while bees, moths, butterflies, and other pollinators thrive amidst blooming plants and sunny days. At night, hedgehogs forage for beetles, millipedes, and other invertebrates along our borders to provide for their young. As if this wasn't enough, this season's amphibians will venture from garden ponds in search of cool, moist refuge for the first time.

Put out and top up water. Water is crucial for wildlife beyond drinking. Keeping the bird bath topped up means birds can drink and bathe in dry weather. With clean feathers, birds are better able to regulate their body temperatures, fly from predators and are less likely to get disease. Amphibians like newts, frogs, and toads use water for shelter and breeding, while butterflies obtain essential minerals from muddy water. Any water source, from puddles to ponds, attracts and helps wildlife – particularly now we're in the warmer months! Make sure you've got water sources in your garden.

- Try placing water dishes and bird baths near trees or shrubs so that wildlife can get to safety easily.
- Also try putting water at ground level in dishes or a dug-in pond so that hedgehogs can drink (make sure your pond has an easy escape route).
- You could also put in butterfly puddling stations which are shallow dishes of gravel and water to help butterflies get the minerals and hydration they need.

Create a cool, damp spot for amphibians to take shelter. Make a log pile or 'hibernaculum' in a shady corner. If doing a log pile, bury the bottom layer of logs and fill nooks and crannies with fallen leaves and moss to make it good for amphibians. Or use the Wildlife Trust's 'how to' to make a hibernaculum. This is a dug-down structure that can be used by reptiles and amphibians for shelter in the summer and hibernation in the winter.

*Jessica Bouwer
Wild Oxfordshire*

HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

50 Years Organic by Sir Julian Rose 1975 - 2025.

Fifty years of hard graft interspersed with sparks of euphoria, leading to steady positive transformation – might sum-up the transition from chemically assisted conventional dairy farm to a chemical free holding supporting a wide range of natural biodiversity and high-quality foods, mostly for local consumption. Back in 1975, Hardwick (specifically Path Hill Farm) became the 7th certified organic holding in the UK. It was an auspicious and symbolic step.

That same year I had attended a Soil Association conference presided over by Fritz Schumacher (Small Is Beautiful), Lady Eve Balfour (Founder, Soil Association), the legendary John Seymour (The Guide to Self Sufficiency) and Sam Mayal, the pioneering organic dairy farmer from Shropshire – as well as other luminaries of natural health, nutrition and market gardening. Hugely inspired by the vision and pragmatism on offer at this event, I immediately set about devising a plan for the estate's transition into organic management.

At that time, we were running a herd of eighty Friesian cows at Path Hill Farm with the herd's milk being sold to the Milk Marketing Board and with maize and grass for silage being cultivated on the arable land. With a limited budget and a largely experimental farming system to be initiated, it required some ingenuity to get things underway! The permanent pasture that forms around 50% of Path Hill Farm had never been sprayed and was immediately eligible for organic status.

The decision to sell the dairy herd was made a few years later and this freed up the arable land to go into conversion. I decided to rent this land to our neighbour, John Goldsmid of Copyhold Farm, who wanted extra land to grow cereals on – which I agreed to – but only on condition that he used no chemical sprays or nitrogen fertiliser. Thus, when I took back the land a few years later, it became eligible for the farm's first organic rotation.

We kept back three cows from the original dairy herd that were looked after by Betty Jay, who lived in the cottage at Path Hill Farm and, along with her husband, had been the tenant on the farm in earlier years, milking and managing a herd of Guernsey cows. It was with these very cows; Milly, Bugle and Valley, that I chose to form the beginning of the new dairy herd, selling their unpasteurised milk and cream on a doorstep delivery-round in the immediate area. When another neighbouring farmer's son wanted to start a free-range hen unit, I offered to rent him a field to get his enterprise started on. This added free range eggs to the milk round.

Next up was a small herd of Saddlebacks and soon organic pork came on offer alongside the milk and eggs. Meanwhile on the arable land I established a rotation of barley, oats and rye, followed by three years of grass clover and herbal leys. The old market garden at Hardwick House was a right mess when I took over the farm. It had been abandoned by the tenant as economically non-viable and grown weeds and brambles for around ten years. In my mind I saw a return to its former glory, when it was the main supplier of the house at the time of my Great Grandfather. And of all those I interviewed who showed interest in becoming tenants, only Iain Tolhurst, and his wife Lin, had the vision and expertise to take it on. It was in 1987 that Tolly and I settled on a share farm agreement which made it possible to clear the site and start the new organic enterprise going. And the rest – which includes the expansion of Tolhurst Organic onto the current field-scale stockless enterprise – is history – as they say.



Sir Julian Rose

Meanwhile we added a flock of sheep to the farm to graze and increase fertility on the old pastures. Our own flock of 150 free range hens replaced the flock run by the neighbour farmer's son. By then the Guernsey dairy herd had grown considerably and the milk round had gradually expanded. A suckler beef herd was also roaming the meadows of Path Hill Farm and we established a Farm Shop (now home to Path Hill Outdoors).

The most remarkable feature of the whole organic farming venture was/is the overwhelming evidence of the natural resilience of nature. When given a chance! Once a proper crop rotation was in place, cereals were never overcome by disease and the farm animals were equally resilient. The doomsday preaching of the agrichemical culture states that without the continuous application of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides – and heavy applications of nitrogen 'fertiliser' – nothing of any value or volume will grow on the land. And without antibiotics and prophylactic use of pharmaceuticals, dairy herds would suffer endless sickness and never be a viable proposition. For me, the most exciting part of the organic adventure has been proving all this wrong! Trial and error played their part in what was a steep learning process, but intuition and common sense nearly always proved the most valuable assets. An important factor was deciding to start small and grow further based on witnessing the evidence of what worked. Economically it was a struggle from beginning to end. 'Making money' was never the main issue, making the soil come back to life – was – and inevitably such pioneering endeavours are prone to financial risk. But we got through. Farming is 'a way of life' not an industry.

Around the turn of the century, I passed the organic farming baton on to James Norman, experienced organic farmer and lover of nature. James soon became part of Hardwick's pro ecological extended family, and has, like Tolly, made an important contribution to furthering the fertility, biodiversity and productivity of the farm. Now new hands will come forward to man the organic sails; and it could hardly be more fitting that the first steps of the pioneering Community led structure are being initiated just at the point of this celebration of '50 years organic' for Hardwick's farmland. Under Ben Manning's guidance, the estate's forestry enterprise has now also come into the fold. I envisioned Hardwick evolving into a 'collective' (as I called it) when I was in my early twenties. And now, in my late seventies, my strongly motivated children are turning this into reality. A whole new chapter is thus opening for Hardwick, and its reputation as an estate which combines idealism and pragmatism, will surely continue to grow.

Sir Julian Rose

THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH ON THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE

Acreage – 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 | cllrogrady.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com | |
| | Frances Parkes | cllrparkes.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com | |
| | Debbie Leach | cllrleach.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com | |
| | Romilly Swann | cllrswann.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 | Maggie Filipova-Rivers | maggie.filipova-rivers@oxfordshire.gov.uk | |

| 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 | | | |
| Contact | | | 0118 9765905 |

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

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

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

WHITCHURCH AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

| | | | |
|-------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Chair | John Coupland | jvcoupland@yahoo.co.uk | 07397 778872 |
|-------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|

WHITCHURCH TWINNING ASSOCIATION

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

| | | | |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Chair | John Bradon | john@bradon.co.uk | 0118 9841574 |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|

WHITCHURCH BRIDGE CLUB

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|--|--------------|
| Enquiries | Phillipa Turner | | 01491 875648 |
|-----------|-----------------|--|--------------|

WHITCHURCH AND GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|---|--------------|
| Contact | Vicky Jordan | Little Langtree, Whitchurch Hill, RG8 7PU | 0118 9843260 |
|---------|--------------|---|--------------|

WHITCHURCH CRICKET CLUB

| | | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Sec | Cormac Neeson | cormac.neeson@gmail.com | 0118 9843347 |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|

PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT BOWLS CLUB
Recreation Ground, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne

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

| | | | |
|-------|----------------|--|--------------|
| Chair | Louise Shearer | | 0118 9842934 |
| Sec | Amanda Holland | | 07814 369566 |

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES HABITAT STUDY GROUP (WoTHabs)

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

VILLAGE HALL

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

OLD STABLES ROOM
High Street

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

| | | | |
|---------|---------------|--|--------------|
| Contact | Doreen Pechey | doreen@pechey.org (<i>Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides</i>) | 01491 681236 |
|---------|---------------|--|--------------|

PANG VALLEY SCOUT GROUP

The Barn, Purley on Thames

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|--|--------------|
| Contact | Ian Shenton | ishenton@ntlworld.com (<i>Beavers, Cubs, Scouts</i>) | 0118 9678769 |
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PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Committee Room, Pangbourne Village Hall

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

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| Chair | Alex Hilton | hiltsi23@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

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| Thursday 9:30-12:00 | Friday 10:30-17:00 | Saturday 10:00-12:30 | |

ST MARY'S CHURCH

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| 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

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Editorial Team | Richard Williams | rwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com | 07810 374280 |
| Editorial Team | Tim Hardwick | | |
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| Autumn 2025 | 12th October | 16th October | |
| Winter 2026 | 11th January | 25th January | |
| | | | |



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