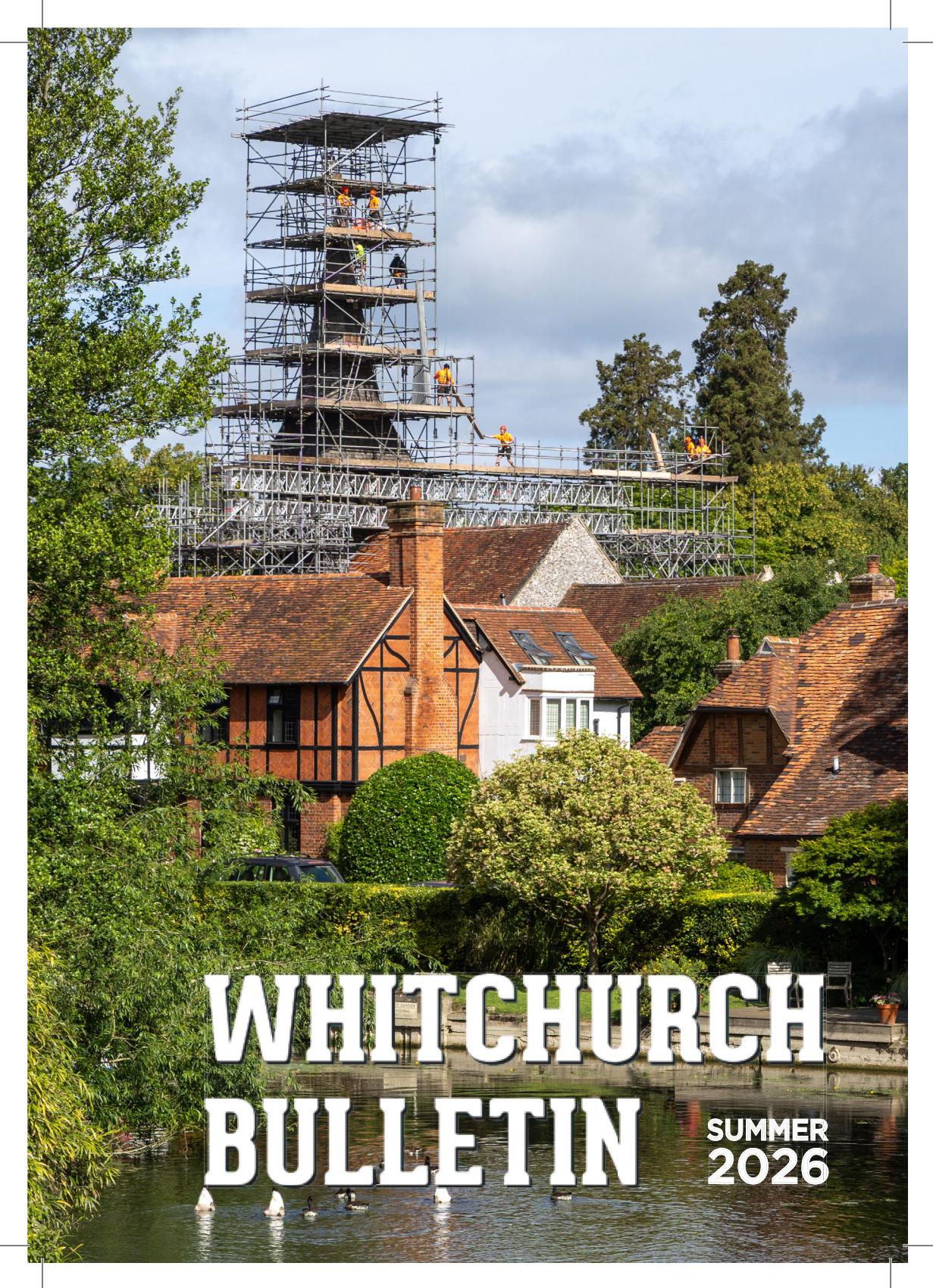


A photograph of Whitchurch Church, a large brick building with a prominent tower. The tower is completely encased in a complex system of metal scaffolding, indicating a major renovation or restoration project. Several workers in high-visibility orange clothing are visible on different levels of the scaffolding. The church is surrounded by lush green trees and a well-manicured lawn. In the foreground, a body of water, likely a pond or lake, reflects the scene, with several ducks swimming. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

SUMMER
2026

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*OX10 0, OX10 6, OX10 9, OX11 0, OX11 9, OX49 5, RG18 0, RG18 9, RG20 6, RG20 7, RG20 8, RG4 7, RG4 9, RG7 5, RG7 6, RG8 0, RG8 7, RG8 8, RG8 9, RG9 4, RG9 5, RG9 6.

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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – JULY 2026

There is a lot happening around the village this Summer between the annual Gardens Walk, the Church Spire replacement and new tenants in the Ferryboat Inn. Also, there is some significant street works activity described below you should be aware of at the end of July on Eastfield Lane and on that part of the High Street.

Eastfield Lane resurfacing – Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has confirmed the timing of the much-needed Eastfield Lane re-surfacing work. Some of the work will also be on the High Street at the intersection with Eastfield Lane and in front of the Greyhound in preparation for the pedestrian crossing described below. There will be traffic disruption and road closures impacting both Eastfield Lane and the High Street (B471) with a diversion via Goring.

- **Wednesday 8th July until Wednesday 22nd July** – Not full road closures but some disruption is likely for 11 days to install new kerbing and drainage which will be completed between the hours of **07:30 and 17:00**.
- **Thursday 23rd of July until Monday 27th of July** – three days with full road closures during off-peak hours (not rush hour) to complete siding out and ironworks adjustment which will be completed between the hours of **09:30 and 15:30**. **Both the High Street and Eastfield Lane will be closed from 9:30am** but will be open for the Whitchurch Primary School runs in the morning and afternoon. There will be no work or closures over the weekend of the 25th and 26th July.
- **Tuesday 28th & Wednesday 29th July** – two full overnight road closures of Eastfield Lane and the High Street (B471) between the hours of **20:00 and 06:00** to resurface the full width of the carriageway and reinstate all existing and legal road markings and lines.

High Street and Eastfield Lane virtual pedestrian crossing plans – The Parish Council has been working with OCC for several years on a number of traffic initiatives for the High Street to improve pedestrian safety, reduce congestion and prioritise parking for residents.

The vision for these improvements was first outlined in the 2019 Village Plan. Progress to date has included:

- Reduction of the speed limit to 20mph in the village – May 2022
- Village Speedwatch team established – 2023
- Residents parking scheme implemented on the High Street – September 2024
- Traffic calming sign on High Street – 2025

One of the final steps in implementing this 2019 Village Plan vision is to have a virtual pedestrian crossing on the High Street to improve safety for pedestrians crossing to the Greyhound and Eastfield Lane, especially for parents and children on the school run coming from Manor Road and the High Street. This crossing has now been approved for implementation this summer in conjunction with the Eastfield Lane resurfacing programme.

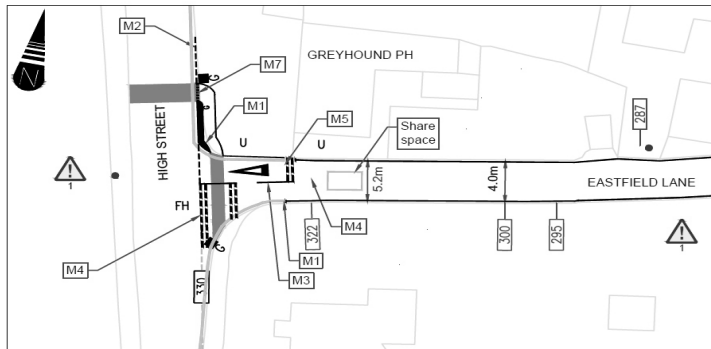
The planned crossing point aligns with the residents parking scheme implemented almost two years ago. The designated crossing point is at an existing dropped kerb opposite the Greyhound. The residents parking restrictions now provide pedestrians crossing at this point with the statutory 20m of clear visibility in either direction.

As shown in the diagram below, the crossings will include line markings for virtual footpaths over the High Street and across Eastfield Lane. There will also be new markings on Eastfield Lane to emphasise the pedestrian and cyclist priority along the narrower section of the road.

There will be a grey virtual pavement crossing across the High Street from the previously developed dropped kerb opposite the Greyhound to another virtual footpath on the verge in front of the Greyhound. The virtual footpath in front of the pub will be bordered on one side by double yellow lines indicating no parking on the road and by a hatched white line on the other side. OCC has stated that the crossing should not impact the existing vehicle parking in front of the pub as the road will continue to act as the pedestrian path along Eastfield Lane.

There will also be a virtual pavement across Eastfield Lane to the High Street pavement south of Eastfield Lane for those walking in the direction of Pangbourne.

OCC also confirmed that the virtual pedestrian footpaths across the roads will be grey. These are normally red, but they are recommending grey for the village Conservation Area.



ROADMARKING KEY:

- M1** DIAG. 1018.1 - CONTINUOUS DOUBLE YELLOW LINES 75mm GAP, 75mm WIDE
- M2** DIAG. 1010 - INTERMITTENT WHITE LINE, 1000mm MARK, 1000mm GAP AND 100mm WIDE
- M3** DIAG. 1004 - INTERMITTENT WHITE CENTRE LINE, 4000mm MARK, 2000mm GAP AND 100mm WIDE
- M4** DIAG. 1003A - INTERMITTENT WHITE STOP AND GIVE WAY MARKING, 600mm MARK, 300mm GAP AND 200mm WIDE
- M5** DIAG. 1023A - GIVE WAY MARKING 3750mm LONG, 1250mm WIDE
- M6** DIAG. 1012.1 - SOLID WHITE EDGE LINE, 100mm WIDE
- M7** DIAG. 1003B - INTERMITTENT WHITE LINE, 300mm MARK, 150mm GAP AND 100mm WIDE

Pedestrians walking down Eastfield Lane would use the road as usual, as the narrow section near the High Street is too narrow to segregate pedestrians and vehicles. OCC are therefore proposing to use bespoke road marking transfers to emphasise and encourage a 'Shared Space' (one marking to be installed at either end of the narrow section) as this is a recognised symbol. Eastfield Lane as a shared space is essentially what already often happens, and, with the road marking transfer, this will add extra clarity for all drivers – especially those unfamiliar with the area.

Weather permitting, the line marking will follow the Eastfield Lane and High Street resurfacing by a few days at the end of July/early August.

Replacement of water infrastructure on the Village Green – Despite previous attempts to repair water leaks on the Village Green, recent water bills indicate that there are severe leaks in the plastic water pipe infrastructure that runs beneath the Village Green. The Parish Council and Cricket Club have been working together to have water contractors investigate the likely cause of the leaks. The feedback we have had was that the plastic material used for the pipes dates back to the 1980s and is known to be prone to leaks, especially given its age. To avoid ongoing problems, the Parish Council approved funding of a replacement system with modern piping material, under the length of the Village Green, that should last for several decades. This work was successfully completed in June.

Star Pubs and the Ferryboat Inn – The Parish Council has received several concerns from residents about the previous landlord of the Ferryboat Inn. Whilst the Parish Council does not have any responsibility for regulation of commercial enterprises, we agreed that I should write a letter to Star Pubs, as Chairman of the Parish Council, highlighting the potential impacts on the community from their operations and requesting that they ensure rigorous due diligence is followed for selection of future landlords.

The Parish Council received a constructive response where they outlined their upcoming plans: *"We are currently preparing the pub for its next chapter with a new tenant and are working hard to ensure the site is ready to reopen as soon as possible. Our intention is to bring the pub back into operation and re-establish it as a thriving venue at the heart of the community. We welcome the Parish Council's offer of support and would value working positively together to help make The Ferryboat Inn a long-term success for the village."*

Benches on Village Green removed – Cllr Hyde has removed two benches on the village green that were damaged and unsafe for visitors to the village green. Cllr Hyde is investigating options to replace them.

The 2026 Whitchurch Award – At the annual Village Assembly in April, I was pleased to present John & Jill Bradon with the Whitchurch Award that recognises outstanding volunteering in the community. Both are models of effective volunteers in the community, acting as team players and consensus builders while also leading and organising activities in the village.

- John is an obvious and very well-deserving winner having played a critical role in so many village activities over the years. He has done this as a volunteer acting outside the Parish Council but also working closely with us where needed. His contributions are too numerous to list here, but he is a long-time active member of WOTHabs, former chairman of the 2019 Village Plan Committee, treasurer and committee member of the Village Hall and now chairman of the Whitchurch Society.
- Jill has been contributing so much as leader of the Green Team for a few years now and she is also clearly supportive of many of the other activities John has been involved in over the years.

- Both John and Jill are modest and kind in nature belying the enormous contributions they have made to our community.

Finally, on behalf of the Bulletin editorial team and the Parish Council, I would like to extend our thanks to our advertisers, particularly PR Motors, Warmingham, EQ Care and PJ Wise & Son. Together they help fund about 30% of the annual cost of publishing and printing four bulletins a year. If anyone is interested in advertising in our bulletin, we can offer B&W adverts; full page £95, half page £55 and quarter page £30, these cover four editions covering a year. Please contact the editorial team, details in the Village Directory in this bulletin.

Kind regards,

Jim Donahue

Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council



WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Quarterly Planning Update - April to June 2026

Planning Ref	Address and Details of Application	Comments by Parish Council	SODC status
P25/S3121/O 10/10/2025 and 22/06/2026	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. Amended documents and plans have been submitted, which are yet to be considered by The Parish Council	Under Consideration
P26/S0630/HH 11/03/2026	6 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP Single storey porch extension and conversion of existing garage to provide ancillary accommodation.	The Parish Council voted to make NO OBJECTION to this application.	GRANTED on 10 th May 2026
P26/S1609/HH 09/06/2026	Swanston West, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7ER House: Proposed front extension, insertion of new windows to first floor side elevation and roof lights to main house. Roof: Retiling of main house roof with tiles to match, replacement double glazed windows to main house. Garage: Demolition of existing conservatory, construction of new pitched roof extension for home gym and raising of existing roof to enable home office in roof space.	Yet to be considered by The Parish Council	Under Consideration

FROM THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Although the government had said that it would make an announcement on Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire after the May elections, an announcement that had already been delayed, the elections have come and gone and there is no announcement. Amongst all the other political excitement that's going on as I write, perhaps Local Government Reorganisation seems rather unimportant. We now hear that there will be an announcement before the summer recess, and that the matter is "on the minister's desk".

The influence that local people can have over planning decisions is likely to be reduced as the government is proposing that virtually all planning decisions must be made by planning officers and that planning committees, and their ability to make decisions on planning matters, will be effectively abolished. As a member of the South Oxfordshire District Planning Committee, I see many applications that have come to the committee as a result of Parish Council objections against officer recommendations. Very often, the Parish Council can be wrong, but sometimes when the Committee disagrees with an officer recommendation, and, when the application goes to appeal, the Planning Committee is vindicated when the Planning Inspector agrees with the Committee against the officer's recommendation.

Although the recent elections are now fading from memory, the presence and influence of Reform on public life remains. I am pleased to learn that an injunction has been raised against the fixing of flags to street lights in Oxfordshire. It has been reported that the people behind the flag fixing include a number of men with criminal convictions.

It seems that the Oxford congestion charge that raised so much opposition when proposed, has turned out to be quite successful. It is so often the case that the worst predictions for such changes rarely come to pass, and things turn out just fine. Remember that as an Oxfordshire resident you get a number of free passes, while the alternative of the X40 bus to Oxford (or Reading), can be a good option.

The main interaction most people have with the District Council is not about potholes, which are the County Council's responsibility, but bin collections. And the exciting news on that front is that the existing bin collection contract with Biffa has been renewed for at least eight years and it could be extended to sixteen years. I think that, generally speaking, Biffa do a pretty good job, and one of the additional things that the contract covers is picking up fly-tipping, which I have found is always done very promptly when reported. The Council is also building a new depot for the waste service vehicles, as the arrangement for the existing depot at Culham has come to an end. The new depot, near Great Milton, has been bought outright so this facility is secure for the future.

With the summer upon us, don't forget the wonderful heated open-air swimming pool at Crowmarsh by Wallingford Bridge. Although you have to book a session on-line, which sounds onerous but isn't really, it's a wonderful facility. And for those with children, the adjoining splash park needs no booking and is in a great location for a low-cost family day out.

Peter Dragonetti
District Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

(Extracts)

Political Changes at OCC. At the time of writing, there are significant changes taking place at the Oxfordshire County Council ruling group. Following the LibDem Group AGM, Liz Leffman confirmed she is stepping down as Group and Council Leader as she will not be standing for the shadow authority election in 2027. Andrew Gant has also stepped back from cabinet after several years leading the highly demanding highways portfolio. Several new councillors were elected to cabinet.

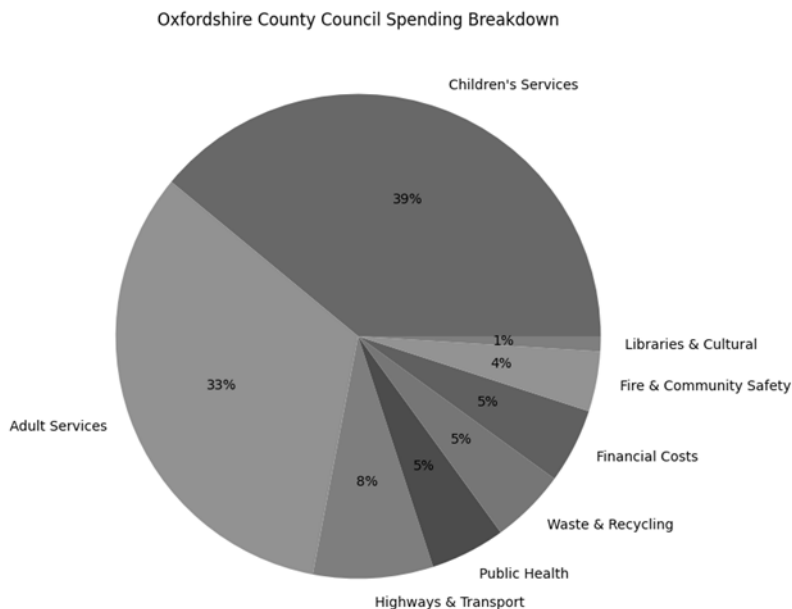
Due to the timing of the AGM and the Council ACM falling very close together, it was not possible to elect the new Group Leader as council leader in time for the annual council meeting. As a result, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) will now be held to elect the new leader, who will then allocate portfolios and appoint the refreshed cabinet. Councillor Tim Bearder has been named as the new Leader of the LibDem group, and therefore the ruling group's nomination for leader of the council. These changes reflect the normal annual process of political groups reviewing leadership and responsibilities, with some councillors choosing to step back after many years of public service.

You may have spotted as well that the LibDem group has recently lost two Councillors who are currently sitting as independents. This means that currently in the council is in **No Overall Control**. I can say a few more words about this at upcoming meetings but my hope is that this situation is temporary.

OCC Finances. OCC is having to find savings following a £24m Government cut. If you add to this the rise of costs of delivering services OCC will have a budget gap of £15m in 2027/28 and £22m in 2028/29.

OCC officers have been tasked with finding savings in their directorates which is likely to lead to difficult decisions. This situation is really difficult because when it comes to statutory services, such as Adult and Children Social services, the council does not have a choice but to provide those services. Also, the council outsources significant numbers of services and so OCC has to meet its contractual obligations.

Below you will find a diagram of how OCC spends its money and as you can see there are very few places the council can make savings as the social care bill is crowding out any discretion councils have over how to spend council tax.



Maggie Filipova-Rivers
County Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames

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Whitchurch Pre-School

Registered Charity: 1183193

Our Summer term has gone in a flash. The children have loved exploring nature and learning how things grow, it is hands-on science at its best! We are looking forward to having minibests visit us later this term.

We recently had four lovely little ducklings visit us at pre-school. It was a most enjoyable experience to see the ducklings hatch and grow with us for a couple of weeks before they left to grow up on the farm!

Our adventures have taken us beyond the pre-school gates too. We enjoy walking to Cedar Lodge weekly to visit and take part in our 'Little Cedars' sessions, singing, stories, a run around and a healthy snack. It's a wonderful experience for both the children and residents alike. We recently visited Pangbourne Library, local shops in Pangbourne, the cheese shop, pet shop and the local church, giving the children a chance to explore their community and enjoy stories. We even took a little minibus to visit the lambs at Hardwick Estate. These outings support growing independence and curiosity about the world around them.

We also had a lovely visit from our own local children's author, Issy Ruxton, who read her latest story, 'Too Big', all about starting big school, followed by a colouring activity which was enjoyed by many!

As we approach the end of the 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.

We're now looking forward to a special disco party for our leavers, 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 Fundraising Lead and Vice Chair, supplementing our 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 by being part of our committee. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact us at 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, including 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. We have spaces available for new starters aged from two years in our brand-new pre-school building. Get in touch today to secure your place for next term.

- We're open Monday to Friday during term time, 8.45am–3.15pm, with an early drop-off option at 8.30am and late pick-up until 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

Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association

Whitchurch Primary School has launched into the summer term with energy, enthusiasm and plenty of excitement, with pupils already enjoying a packed calendar of learning, sport and special events.

Classrooms have been buzzing with fascinating topics and hands-on learning. Children celebrated Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday by learning about conservation, wildlife and the importance of protecting our planet. Pupils have also loved exploring the bird topic, while younger children have been captivated by learning about turtles and their life cycle.

Lessons have been full of discovery, investigating the viscosity of liquids, learning about the fire triangle and exploring the structure and function of plants. Creativity has also flourished, with children experimenting with stained glass window designs and making colourful bracelets ready for the upcoming summer fair.

Our broad curriculum has brought festivals and traditions to life, with pupils learning how and why Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi and exploring the vibrant Hindu Festival of Colour. Meanwhile, music has filled the corridors as children enthusiastically learned to play bucket drums and the ukulele.

Outdoor learning continues to thrive thanks to fantastic new pond dipping equipment funded by the PA. Pupils have thoroughly enjoyed getting closer to nature and discovering the wildlife living in and around the school pond. Who knew!?

There has also been plenty happening beyond the classroom. Football, netball, tennis and boccia tournaments have kept our teams busy, representing the school brilliantly through teamwork and sportsmanship. Year 3 had an unforgettable residential trip to Youlbury, building confidence, friendships and independence, while several year groups enjoyed a visit to the Earth Trust.

Our Year 6 children have shown incredible determination and resilience as they completed their SATs exams. The whole school community is enormously proud of their hard work and positive attitude throughout the week.

Our school community also had an absolute blast at the PA's Colour Run, raising an incredible amount for our school funds! Sports Day was another fantastic success, with every child proudly representing their school house with enthusiasm, determination, and great team spirit. And before the term is over we still have the end-of-year picnic and the always-entertaining Year 6 stalls to look forward to!

As we look to sign off for the summer, we would like to say a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful headteacher, Mrs Chesters. At the end of this academic year, Mrs Chesters will be stepping down from her role to begin an exciting new chapter, enjoying an early retirement with Mr Chesters.

For the past seventeen years, Mrs Chesters has led Whitchurch Primary School with unwavering dedication, kindness and compassion, touching the lives of countless children, families and staff.

Mrs Chesters leaves behind an incredible legacy, and while she will be greatly missed, we wish her and Mr Chesters every happiness as they embark on this well-deserved new adventure. Bon voyage!

And that's a wrap from the Parents' Association, we wish you all a fantastic, sunshine-filled happy summer.

Hayley Wilkins
Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association

The Friends of St Mary's and St John's

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

Work Parties. We usually have regular churchyard working parties at St John's on the last Wednesday of the month, but due to the heatwave, Sally has had to cancel those planned for May and June. I apologise for any disappointment caused and we will have a lot to catch up with when we next meet in July – on the 8th (an extra date) and the 29th. The next working party at St Mary's has not yet been scheduled. Although there is now secure fencing around the building for the Spire project work, there is still access to the outer areas, especially around the memorials, so that we can continue to trim and weed to keep it looking tidy.

If you fancy joining one of these sessions, please get in touch with Sally Woolhouse at whitchurchfriends@gmail.com. A welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

Save our Spire! The Friends are delighted that the scaffolding has now been erected to enable work to commence on the Spire. The amount that the Friends have donated to the project now comes to about £20,710 which includes the interest it has accrued. This is a marvellous achievement and we are so grateful to all those who have assisted The Friends to make this contribution (please also see following article).

Fund Raising. A successful Art Café was held in The Old Stables on June 6th when £181.50 was raised. It was an exciting morning as the result of the Silent Auction for the two oil paintings donated by local resident and professional artist, Alistair Dunstan, was announced. A further £7,400 has been raised in this way towards the Spire, which is great news. Thank you to all of those who support the Art Café, it is always much appreciated.

The beautiful late May Bank Holiday weekend meant that **Whitchurch Hill Fete** enjoyed a fabulous attendance, and Granny's Attic made more money than ever before! Our net profit was £501, which was incredible. My thanks to all of you who contributed to our stall, and to those who helped on the day.

Also at the Fete was the Churchyard Nature Trail, devised and organised by Sally Woolhouse. This was aimed at children, but interesting for anyone who likes wild flowers and nature. Amongst the different plants to spot were Green Alkanet and the beautifully named Mouse-Ear Hawkweed, which I enjoyed identifying using the description supplied and the markers in situ. Thank you to Sally for this new event.

Future Events. Our next **Art Café** will be held at The Old Stables on August 1st.

Membership. We are always keen to welcome new Friends; our membership currently stands at 67 members. 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. Subscriptions start at a minimum of £10pa and can be Gift Aided for UK taxpayers.

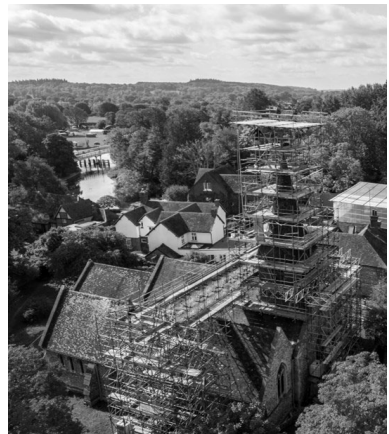
*Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of The Friends
Registered Charity no. 1168335*

SAVE OUR SPIRE UPDATE

In the Spring edition of the bulletin, we were looking forward to the work on site at St Mary's beginning. As can be seen from the photo on the front cover of this edition, the scaffolding is now in place, the spire is covered and restoration of the spire is well and truly underway!

Once again a big thank you to everyone whose generosity and support have made this happen.

Updates on the project – including photos tracking progress – will be posted on the Whitchurch village website (www.whitchurchonthames.com) and in the next edition of this bulletin (Autumn).



Spire seen from a drone during re-construction work, courtesy of Jim Donahue

Our next fundraising event is *Jazz in the Garden* from 6pm–8pm on Saturday 18th July in the Garden of St Mary's House just off the High Street and along Walliscote Drive. Tickets are £10 on the door and free admission for children. The music will be from our local band *WOTJam* and there will be a bar selling Pimm's, wine and soft drinks. Please bring your own picnic and seating/rug and join us for a summer's evening of great music and (hopefully) weather to match.

Sat 18th July 2026
6pm to 8pm

SAVE OUR SPIRE!
ST MARY'S CHURCH, WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES

Jazz in the Garden

by local group
WoTJam

Garden at St Mary's House
High Street
Whitchurch-on-Thames
RG8 7DF

Tickets: Adults £10
on the door
Children – Free

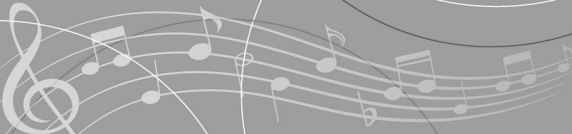
All proceeds to Save Our Spire Appeal for St. Mary's Church.

Please bring your own picnic and seating/rug. Bar selling Pimm's, wine, and soft drinks available.

Please note there is no parking available at the venue.

In the event of bad weather, the concert will be held in Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Road, RG8 7EU.





If you would like to donate to the Save Our Spire appeal, please scan the QR code shown here or contact Ken Baker at baker_kenneth2@sky.com



Thank you for your continued support.

The Save Our Spire Project Team.

Whitchurch & Goring Heath History Society

Our May meeting about the Goring Heath almshouses and school, founded by Henry Allnutt, proved to be of interest to more than our usual membership. There were members of a book club who had just read Trollope's "The Warden", those who had attended school there, and two current residents, among others. We learnt that we were lucky to have the charity founded on Goring Heath, as it was only after a disagreement with his nephew that the original site in Cassington was abandoned.

We were forced to postpone our Chiltern outing at the end of June because of the "red alert". At the beginning of July, we'll be visiting several churches near Lewknor, including mediaeval St Margaret's with "its ostentatious but enjoyable piscine, sedilia, tomb recess and priest's door, all richly carved" (Richard Wheeler, Oxfordshire's Best Churches). A pub lunch will be followed by a visit to St Mary's in Chalgrove to look at the amazing wall paintings.

After a summer break we return to Goring Heath Parish Hall on 17th September to hear about the trench humour of the First World War from Stephen Barker.

Vicky Jordan

Hardwick Road Verge Restoration

The section of Hardwick Road, from the eastern end of our village to the entrance gates of Hardwick Estate, must be the most popular route out of Whitchurch for walkers (with or without dogs), runners and cyclists (with or without children) – a safe and level road to reach the Veg Shed and the Hardwick Estate footpaths and tracks. Not only are there lovely views towards the Chiltern escarpment and south to the river, but the flower-rich verges are a delight, especially in the summer months.

However, it was increasingly obvious that these precious verges were getting more and more eroded over the years by vehicles driving 'off-road' – without some positive action, the situation would just get worse. The *WoTHabs* team started the ball rolling by drawing up a proposal to reverse the erosion by building up the damaged sections and installing protective posts.

This proposal was adopted by Whitchurch Parish Council in 2022, an application for funding was made to the *Mend The Gap* project and they agreed to support this application with a grant of up to £15,000 in 2023.

Finally, after much protracted planning and discussions with the Highways department of OCC and local contractors, the first stage of the work was carried out by Butler and Proctor at the start of December 2025, on probably the wettest week for months. They installed the wooden marker posts (according to the rigorous Highways specification) and imported lorryloads of soil to bank up the verges, as agreed in the detailed Work Specification.

The second stage, to seed the newly created sections of verge with grass and wildflower seed, was planned for this spring, when conditions were favourable. You may recall that there was a very dry period in March and April, which resulted in the new soil getting baked hard – not ideal for germination!

We took delivery of 10kg of a very special wildflower and grass seed mix which had been harvested from 'The Park' – the 60 acre river meadow which lies to the east of Sheepwash Lane and is an organically managed hay meadow, on Hardwick Estate and managed by James Norman. One of the key requirements of the *Mend The Gap* team was that the seed used was locally sourced – you couldn't get more local than that!

We finally were able to carry out the preparation and seeding in two sessions (30th April and 6th May) with a very hard-working team of Green Team volunteers. The areas were marked off with tape to prevent damage and the traffic cones have also been kept in place until fully established. The weather since the seeding has not been kind – there has been some rain but not enough for really good germination. The two heatwaves may have killed off some of the delicate seedlings too. However, the bare soil will gradually get colonised through the year with the introduced species as sown and other species from the surrounding verges – nature will take its course and it will be very interesting to watch the outcome.

It has been very encouraging that the drivers using the road since last December, when the posts were installed, are using the defined passing places as intended. Also, when the newly seeded verges become fully established and floriferous, this should also encourage considerate driving, benefitting our local environment for the delight of us all.

Sally Woolhouse, WotHabs

MAURICE THE TOLL CAT

Maurice the toll booth cat was sadly involved in an accident on Saturday 26th June, and has been badly injured. She is now under the care of the vets and we are praying for a full recovery. Thank you to all of Whitchurch and beyond for the well wishes, help with the search party and donations towards her vet bills.



Hopefully she will be back in the toll booth window enjoying all the attention soon

Vicky Willcock

HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

Greetings all from Hardwick! As summer has set in early with the recent heatwave the fields are already buzzing with crickets, moths and butterflies, and glow worms are appearing in the hedgerows. The river, and the public swimming spot at the bottom of Sheepwash Lane are a sanctuary from the heat for us ill-adapted humans, and we welcome locals to use this spot, parking in the layby at the top of the lane and walking down through the pedestrian gate (as there is no parking at the bottom). Needless to say please take all rubbish with you and be respectful of the rowing clubs that also use the area.

We'd like to extend a big thank you to all local people who kindly gave their time to help clear the 'garden' area behind the Stud Farm buildings. It was a very productive day clearing brambles to reveal many wonders including a third huge underground water tank (two were already known of). These were presumably built at the same time as the Stud around 1900 to take water from the roofs as well probably from the Estate's private water system which distributed water from a well and reservoir on Collins End until the 1950s.



Water for horses was a major consideration and possibly connected to another recent discovery in the Stud Farm barn. An inscription on the wall says "J Nott, RHA, 1914". This seems to refer to the Royal Horse Artillery, who were largely

based around the area including at Goring and Blewbury. On 8th October 1914 King George V reviewed nearly 6000 mounted troops on the Fairmile near Wallingford, in preparation to go to war in Europe. It seems that Hardwick's Stud must have been requisitioned to house and train some of these horses as part of the war effort. It's so interesting to unearth these fascinating pieces of local history as we look to develop these buildings for the future. Perhaps some of this could feature in a Hardwick mini-museum one day.....a pipe dream of mine!

For those who don't know the story of the incredible discovery of the largest IRA weapons cache in England behind the Stud Farm by Hardwick woodsman Tim Sheldon in 1983, I encourage you to listen to the recent BBC Berkshire podcast 'Bombs in the Forest' in which he is interviewed (find on BBC Sounds).

A further discovery recently made when clearing out the old Estate Office was a weighty and detailed journal written by Estate Forester Clive Marriot between roughly 1905 and 1940. This incredible resource describes the planting of huge areas of fields into the woodland we know today, including much of Bottom Wood. It seems strange to think that so much of Hardwick's woodland was agriculture only 100 years ago.

After resting the Stud Farm fields over the winter and spring, they will soon be cut for hay, in order to remove some of the rye grass introduced by horse's hay and promote a more productive and biodiverse sward. A biodiversity survey has recently been carried out, and the results of this, and work by the Hardwick community and Trustees to fine tune the Vision and Mission of the Hardwick Trust, will help inform the future use of these fields. We will keep you updated on developments as they occur.

Upcoming events:

- The Organic Coffee Cart is open for delicious coffee, pastries, bread and more at Lin's Veg Shed every Saturday 9am – 1pm.
- 12th Sept – **Fermentation Course with Tamara Schiopu** – learn to use autumn veg to create delicious pickles and ferments. 10 am – 3 pm. See Tolhurst Organic website.

Miriam Rose
Transition Lead, Hardwick Estate

WILD OXFORDSHIRE

They may be small, but insects make a BIG difference to nature recovery! There are more than 24,000 species in the UK alone, and they can be found in almost every habitat. Their jack-of-all-trades role spans pollinators, predators, pests, parasites and prey, and the study of insects has long been central to conservation, food production, medicine and ecology.

At Wild Oxfordshire, insects are essential to our Yellow Wagtail Partnership project. Established in 2020 by patron Dr Robin Buxton, the Partnership works with the Earth Trust, Church Farm Partnership and Lower Farm, to “learn and communicate as much as possible about the impact of different land management techniques both on this species and the wider environment”.

As a migrant species, insects are a vital part of Yellow Wagtail diets. However, recent changes in farming practice and other human impacts on the landscape have led to habitat and insect declines, harming Yellow Wagtail populations. They now find themselves on the conservation red list.



Gardening Tips

Want to help garden birds? Don't feed them in warmer months. The RSPB has released guidance on feeding birds, stating that putting up bird feeders in your garden could be putting some species at risk of disease. Stop filling bird feeders with seeds and peanuts from 1 May to 31 October as this will prevent too many birds gathering in one place and transmitting disease. Instead, continue to put out small amounts of mealworms, fat balls or suet all year round.

Let the grass grow. Summer is peak time for insects like butterflies, bees and beetles. Leaving even a small patch of lawn uncut creates shelter and food for the likes of Meadow Browns, Large Blue butterflies and Thick-legged flower beetles.

Go chemical-free. Gardening organically is a good way to ensure that the food and plants you grow are free of pesticides or chemicals, and the wildlife will thank you for it too. By stopping the use of chemicals, slugs, snails and insects such as aphids will return, but don't worry! In time, so will their natural predators, such as hedgehogs and slowworms to help keep pest numbers down.

Cut back on the cutting back! After a beautiful bloom, avoid deadheading roses this time of year. This way, some will develop hips (the fruit of the species of rose plant), which will feed birds and small mammals come winter.

Keep bird baths topped up. Fresh water is essential for birds in warm weather. Keep a shallow dish with a few pebbles and help insects drink safely. However, only put out a bird bath if you can replace the water daily and clean the bird bath at least weekly to prevent the spread of diseases, especially in the warmer months.



*Jessica Bouwer
Wild Oxfordshire*

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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	
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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	Julie Huntington	hunters.87@outlook.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		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@bradon.co.uk	0118 9841574
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WHITCHURCH BRIDGE CLUB

Enquiries	Phillipa Turner		01491 875648
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WHITCHURCH AND GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

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

Sec	Cormac Neeson	cormac.neeson@gmail.com	0118 9843347
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PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT BOWLS CLUB

Recreation Ground, Thames Avenue, Pangbourne

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

OLD STABLES ROOM

High Street

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

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

	Open 09:30 – 11:30am Mon-Friday	0118 9844586
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THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Wallingford Police Station, Wallingford, OX10 9DW

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

PANGBOURNE LIBRARY

Reading Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7LY

			0118 9844117
Monday 14:00–17:00	Tuesday 10:30–18:00	Wednesday CLOSED	
Thursday 9:30–12:00	Friday 10:30–17:00	Saturday 10:00–14:00	

ST MARY'S CHURCH

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

Chair	Sarah Dragonetti		
Secretary	Sally Woolhouse	whitchurchfriends@gmail.com	

PANGBOURNE BOATHOUSE SURGERY

Whitchurch Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7DP

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

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES BULLETIN

Editorial Team	Richard Williams	rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com	07810 374280
Editorial Team	Tim Hardwick		
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