

# WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

AUTUMN  
2025



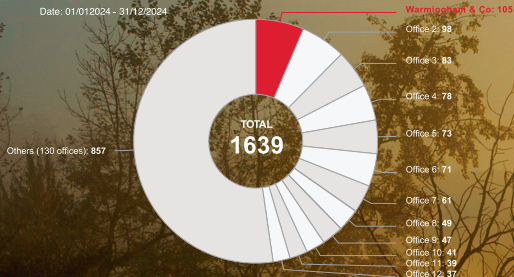
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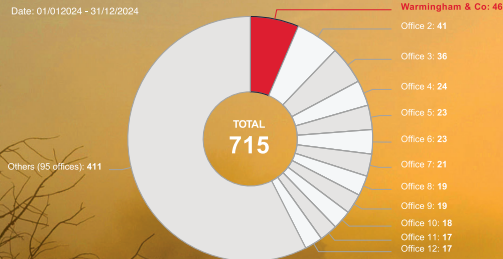
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## CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – OCTOBER 2025

It's been a beautiful Autumn so far with a record crop of apples harvested for this year's PAWS Apple Juicing Day at the Maze. I also participated in the Pumpkin & Squash Festival at Tolhurst Organic farm which was also well attended and very festive as always.

I realise that it is not even Halloween yet, but I would like to draw your attention to the advert for the **Christmas Eve Torchlit procession** (see below) that is becoming an increasingly popular annual event. Starting at the Greyhound Pub at about 6pm, the procession is normally led by Alastair Dunstan playing the bagpipe, sometimes joined by other musicians. It includes carols and mulled drinks at the Village Green with the procession carrying through the village streets back to the pub. Torches will be provided!

### Join us for the Whitchurch-on-Thames Christmas Eve Torch Procession!



**Meet outside the Greyhound at 6:00pm following  
St Mary's Christingle Service  
Torches will be provided!**

**Cedar Lodge opening and Eastfield Lane** – I attended the opening celebration for Cedar Lodge in August. It was very well attended by members of the community, and the facilities all look very new and stylish with first-class facilities as you can imagine. There are at least two long-time residents of the

village who work at the front reception and the new owners seem committed to engaging with the community going forward.



*Photo courtesy of Richard Williams*

Ten care home residents had moved into the facility at the time of the opening, and I understand a few more have joined since then. The owners stated that their policy was to only gradually increase the number of residents after smaller numbers were settled, before eventually reaching full capacity of 45 residents.

I have been raising the condition of Eastfield Lane to OCC Highways as it is clearly worse than the condition was prior to all the construction work over the last two years. I know how important this is for residents of the area, parents and children using the lane on the school run, and now employees and residents of the care home. We are starting to see some improvements:

- I reported 17 smaller potholes as a *FixMyStreet* (FMS) super user in August and they are now all filled, although a couple have since crumbled.
- In September, I reported 11 much larger areas of potholes and deteriorated road surface, especially along the south verge. While these are larger than normally allowable for FMS super users to action; 10 of these have now been addressed, with only one outstanding that OCC says will be resolved by the end of October.
- OCC's official response from the road inspection in July was that 'this road has been proposed for surfacing inlay or minor patching in the next financial year'. They explained that this could mean a full or partial resurfacing, or selected areas of large patches. This budget is for a crew with a paving machine as opposed to the small team with shovels that the current work is being done with. I will work to keep the visibility of this raised to ensure it stays a priority.

- Much of the damaged verge on the lane was repaired with new turf by the care home contractor. The Parish Council is also working with residents to ensure verges are protected from further deterioration with logs or other obstacles.

**Eastfield Lane Culvert Topological Survey** – The survey to understand the root causes of past flooding of Eastfield Lane area was completed in early August. This is being assessed SODC's Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer. Geoff Weir and the village Flood Forum team are supporting this work and waiting for SODC's recommended next steps.

**SSEN Tree work on Muddy Lane** – SSEN has contacted the Parish Council seeking approval to cut back the trees that have grown up close to the electricity lines along Muddy Lane. The area of work is quite extensive and includes the entire length of Muddy Lane and the eastern End of Eastfield Lane, close to the school entrance. Green Team Muddy Lane Guardian Neil Huntington is working with SSEN and other stakeholder including the school, Allotments Society, and WOTHabs. There is no date yet for the work, but due to its disruptive nature, the work will likely be planned during school holidays.

**Conservation Area Appraisal consultation** – The Parish Council has been working with SODC and Asset Heritage Consulting to produce the draft Conservation Area Appraisal, which is in the form of a 64-page illustrated document available on the village website. The Conservation Area covers the historic village, High Street and many neighbouring properties and other conservation assets. The purpose of the appraisal is to protect important historic and architectural aspects of the village. There has been a Conservation Area in the village for many years but this is the first document for formally define it. A public consultation was held from 10<sup>th</sup> September to 8<sup>th</sup> October. SODC will now consider comments and make appropriate changes to the draft document and boundary revision before taking it to the council's cabinet for approval.

**Residents' issues** – The Parish Council tracks issues that residents raise to us to ensure that they are not lost and that they get resolved wherever possible. As you can imagine, some issues may take several months or even more than a year to resolve.

- We have issued an updated list of Residents Issues at our October meeting that is available on the Parish Council section of the village website. In the

past year, 9 longstanding issues have been closed, with a further 10 that are either new or ongoing issues that we are continuing to progress.

- **Closed issues** include repair of the pedestrian pavement in front of the Ferryboat (after the 3<sup>rd</sup> effort), making safe a dangerous manhole cover on the playground, addressing overgrown hedges blocking pavements in some areas, raising complaints about construction regulations not being followed to SODC, annual cleaning of streets and pavements, drains cleared on lower High Street near toll booth, removing dangerous barbed wire near the school, and implementing speed calming signs on the High Street.

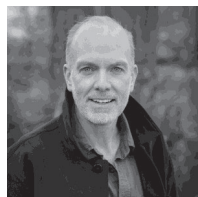
Recently raised issued include:

- **Resident comments on Manor Road parking** – We have received concerns about the need for parking restrictions near the entrance to Manor Road to address safety issues from lack of visibility from a long row of parked cars. This will be considered as part of the upcoming one-year review of the High Street parking scheme.
- **Yew Tree on Hardwick Road** – a resident is concerned about the yew tree by the power sub-station on Hardwick Roads upper narrows. The tree appears to be in poor health and could get blown over in a storm. Cllr Highley to discuss options with SODC tree officer.
- **Blocked drains in upper and lower narrows** –
  - Upper narrows – After investigative digging during recent three-way traffic restriction, the OCC drainage team are still considering options to address a blockage near the upper narrows. The situation is complex due to 11kVA power lines that were buried on top of the existing drainage pipe that prevents a straightforward repair.
  - Lower narrows – Following clearing of the gullies on the stretch of road near the toll booth, the drainage team have requested the jetting of the pipes between them to determine if they are viable or collapsed. If they are collapsed, they will need to be repaired as this clearly blocks drainage of the High Street storm water to the river.

*kind regards,*

*Jim Donahue*

*Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council*



# WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

## Quarterly Planning Update - July to September 2025

| Planning Ref          | Address and Application                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Comments by Parish Council                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | SODC status        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| P24/<br>S2959/<br>FUL | <p><b>The Greyhound, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EL</b></p> <p>The works are the laying of a hard non porous surface of about 104 sq/m 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> | Granted on 17/7/25 |

# WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

## Quarterly Planning Update - July to September 2025

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                       |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| P25/<br>S1535/<br>HH<br>P25/<br>S1536/LB | <b>Meadow Court High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DB</b><br>Existing rear extension to be replaced with new single storey orangery extension.                                                                                               | The Parish Council made a comment as follows –<br>Councillors note the comments of Heritage Officer and neighbour and encourage the applicant to review their application in greater detail with these consultees | Granted<br>on 12/8/25 |
| P25/<br>S2132/<br>HH                     | <b>Cedar Cottage High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7ER</b><br>Demolition and replacement of existing summer-house (6x3 metres) with a new single storey shed and garden office (8x4m total) on same site for incidental/occasional use only. | The Parish Council made no comment on this application                                                                                                                                                            | Granted<br>on 1/9/25  |

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

There is much excitement, among those who are excited about such issues, arising from the imminent congestion charges planned for Oxford. The scheme is designed to reduce congestion in Oxford, which currently makes difficulties for everyone, not least the bus operators. While the claims by objectors to the scheme are that the congestion charge is punitive and a huge attack on freedom, in reality it only applies to cars, so taxis, vans, etc are exempt, and community health and care workers, carers and blue badge holders get free passes. Residents of Oxford get passes for 100 days, and the residents in the rest of Oxfordshire get passes for 25 days. Even if you have to pay the charge, it's £5 for a whole day. Now that might seem a lot, but nowadays it's less than the cost of a pint of beer at most pubs. There is of course always the alternative of taking the bus, either all the way or from the park and ride, and the train service from Pangbourne is a good alternative, although having to change at Didcot makes it less attractive than it used to be.

It is apparent that Oxford has a congestion problem, and it's not one that can be fixed by building more roads. It is now over 50 years ago that a road across Christchurch Meadows was planned, at the time claimed as the only solution to Oxford's congestion, but wiser heads prevailed and the scheme was abandoned. If built, it would have had only a short-term solution.

Our own dear Reading had of course a similar scheme, the IDR. That was only partially built, with the proposed section through Forbury Gardens being abandoned like the Christchurch Meadows scheme in Oxford. Looking at some old photos of Reading, it seems that some attractive old houses in the Forbury were demolished in anticipation of this proposal, and, in turn, the ghastly Prudential office block that was built in their place with a bridge for a dual carriage way underneath, has also been demolished.

Reading is also getting up to date with a Singapore style approach to litter; a private company has been engaged to patrol the streets and issue Fixed Penalty Notices or FPNs for littering or graffiti, with a maximum penalty charge of £500. I am sure no Whitchurch residents will be picked up for posting graffiti in Reading, but a discarded sweet wrapper or cigarette end could cost you the same. As I understand it, the company gets to keep the fines, so the Enforcement Officers will be very zealous, and no doubt the maximum charge will often be the minimum charge.

*Peter Dragonetti*

## WHITCHURCH PRE SCHOOL

# WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL



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[www.whitchurchpreschool.org](http://www.whitchurchpreschool.org) or ring 0118 984 4516**

## PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

As the leaves begin to turn gold, and the air fills with the energy of new beginnings, we're thrilled to have welcomed students old and new, families, and staff back for another exciting school year at Whitchurch Primary School.

And there's no better way to start the new academic year, than with a BANG! Our school has featured in the Telegraph's list of the Top 10 primary schools in the UK, out of 15,000 schools nationwide. What an absolutely AMAZING achievement, reflecting the incredible dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our pupils and the support of our families.

To kick off our new school year, we have welcomed 19 new students (including a set of twins) into our reception class! Our little ones have been buzzing with excitement as they begin their academic journey, learning letters and numbers 1 to 5. They have also been exploring the world around them enjoying time outdoors with a weekly forest school session, a visit to the alpaca farm and a trip to Oxfam.

This October, our year one class had their first opportunity to take part in a cross-country tournament at Langtree. We can see quite a few budding runners. Year two also had the opportunity to race again, with one Whitchurch pupil securing first place! Years three and four have taken part in a football tournament at Langtree, scoring quite a few goals.

The year fours have been bursting with excitement as they prepare to enjoy a two-night residential to Dorset and the Jurassic Coast. They will be exploring the beaches for fossils and learning all about Mary Anning, the famous English fossil collector, dealer and palaeontologist. We know our children will have a fantastic time.

In November, years five and six are set to enjoy a four-night residential to Devon, where a world of fun awaits them. Excitement is high on the agenda as they will be enjoying team building activities and potentially tackling the surf – brrr!

And..... Behind every good school is a supporting Parents' Association! We are pleased to welcome a new team who are looking forward to helping raise essential funds to maintain and enhance our children's learning experiences. We would like to say a heartfelt thanks to our outgoing team for their tireless work over the last two years.

Our first parents' association event this academic year was the year six Art Café. Our year sixes hosted the exciting community tea and cake sale and raised a whopping £212.50 to boot. Our year five class is now looking forward to their stint on the 10th of January – we hope to see many of you there.

Drum roll please.... in November, the Parents' Association are hosting the school's first ever "Bingo" night at the Greyhound. We would love to see some of the wider community join us in the fun. You can also grab yourself a tasty cheese board too!

Finally, we look forward to the rest of the Autumn term as we plan for many more exciting events and continue to help support our children make this school year one filled with learning, growth and exciting opportunities.

*Hayley Wilkins*  
*Whitchurch Primary Parents' Association Treasurer*

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## **PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE (Pangbourne Volunteers)**

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

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

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

If you feel that you'd like to explore this further, please feel free to call me on 075280877334. or email me at bartonvicar1@gmail.com.

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

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

# 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 two churches and their churchyards.*

## **The Luxury Lodge Draw**

I am pleased to report that this popular fundraiser was a sell out! The winning ticket was drawn at our successful ArtCafe session in The Old Stables on 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Thank you to everyone who supported The Friends by buying one of the 100 tickets and congratulations to the lucky winner!

## **A Musical Evening**

Our final big fundraising and social event for 2025, held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October, was A Musical Evening at St Mary's Church. A full report will appear in the next Bulletin (too late to make this issue). Thank you to everyone who came along to support The Friends that evening, and we do hope you found it enjoyable and entertaining.

## **Work Parties**

Our regular churchyard working parties at St John's take place on the last Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am. 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 [whitchurchfriends@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchfriends@gmail.com). A welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

## **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, as well as other non-essential work. The Friends have currently set £20,000 aside towards the project. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact [graemekpearce@btinternet.com](mailto:graemekpearce@btinternet.com).

## **Membership**

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

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

# WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

We're continuing to meet in the afternoons during the darker months, so it will be 2.30pm when our speaker, Stephen Goss, begins his talk on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October at Goring Heath Parish Hall. His topic is "*Caversham Park, from the Domesday Book to listening for Doomsday.*" All are welcome at our meetings. Visitors pay £3 to include tea and biscuits.

The present neo-classical mansion dates from the mid nineteenth century, but previous buildings at Caversham Park saw royal visits and the imprisonment of Charles 1<sup>st</sup>. It was from there that he was escorted to Collins End to play bowls. In 1923 the mansion was bought by the Oratory School and in 1943 it became the BBC Monitoring station. All are welcome at our meetings. Visitors pay £3 to include tea and biscuits.

At the same time, in the same place, our November meeting is on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>. We'll be welcoming back Bill King, who will enlighten us on "*The Industrial Revolution in your garage, shed and attic*" As this is the last meeting this year there will be suitable refreshments.

Please come too, to the Art Café on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November when the History Society will be hosting with tea, coffee, and cake from 10.30 to 12.30 in the morning. Some of our publications will be available to buy.

*Vicky Jordan*

# THE WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION 2026

The organising team are very pleased to announce that the next Exhibition will be held on the weekend of **28<sup>th</sup> Feb/1<sup>st</sup> March 2026**. The change from the usual date in mid-November was announced in the previous Bulletin. After much consultation, we decided to move it to the early spring, after the half-term break and when there are not so many conflicting events happening. 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, and also children attending the local schools.

There are various categories – something for everyone! Our judges will be awarding cups for best exhibits in Art, in Craft, in Photography and for Film & Animation (New Media). There is also recognition for best first-time adult exhibitor, Best in Show overall, and junior winners in four age groups too.

The team are delighted to now be able to reveal that the theme for this year's Joyce Voysey prize is '**My Happy Place**'. It will be fascinating to see how this subject is interpreted by you all, our creative community! Please remember that only one entry per person is permitted in this particular category. All the information about how to enter the exhibition will be available in the coming weeks on our website at [www.wotarts.co.uk](http://www.wotarts.co.uk) and on our Facebook event page.

In the meantime, save the dates in your diaries and get busy with your... brushes, paints, camera, needles, glue, varnish, stamps, inks, wool, chisels, pliers, cottons, clay, pens, paper and lovely ideas. We very much look forward to seeing your creations this coming Spring!

*Sally Woolhouse*  
*[sally@wotarts.co.uk](mailto:sally@wotarts.co.uk)*

## HARDWICK HAPPENINGS

The recent sale of Moorings 1-3 marked a really positive milestone for Hardwick, directly supporting the ambitious plans now taking shape at the Stud Farm, a cornerstone project for Hardwick's future. Some of the funds raised will go towards the next stages of the Stud Farm, enabling us to move ahead with essential restoration work and detailed designs.

We are particularly excited about how this next phase will strengthen Hardwick's role as both a working landscape and a shared community resource. The Stud Farm will provide a vibrant focal point, a place where people can come together, whether for a coffee, to buy produce, for a workshop, or a community event, while also preserving the heritage and spirit of the Estate.

The remaining moorings 4-6 are currently up for sale with auctioneer Robinson & Hall.

### **The Squash & Pumpkin Festival by Tolhurst Organic**

What a spooktacular day it was! On a glorious sunny autumn day, just after Storm Amy had huffed and puffed her way through, Tolhurst Organic hosted the 11th edition of our annual Squash and Pumpkin Festival, and it lived up to our best expectations. The farm welcomed hundreds upon hundreds of visitors throughout the day, with the car park holding over 350 vehicles at its peak as families came and went to enjoy this beloved community event. The atmosphere was electric with excitement as children and adults alike explored everything the festival had to offer.

The numerous pumpkin themed activities kept everyone thoroughly entertained from start to finish. Children were absolutely thrilled climbing on the rustic tractor and trailer, which at one point was loaded with an entire pumpkin patch, much to the delight of the enthusiastic groups of youngsters helping out. The *Bubble Man* drew crowds of mesmerised children, while Andrew Clover organised games including an autumnal dress parade, with lucky participants taking home adorable felt pumpkin prize bags. The Giant Pumpkin Competition

was a highlight, crowning a winner for the largest pumpkin grown at Tolhurst this year, a truly impressive Jack-o'-lantern variety. Face painting proved so popular there was a constant queue of eager children waiting their turn, as well as Storytelling and Paint Your Own Pumpkin kept creative minds busy all day long.

You could often spot people wandering through the event clutching unique and boldly bright cut flowers from Sarah, The Flower Artisan of the Dahlia Patch, located in the back beds of the garden. Court Hill was bustling with visitors browsing The Outside Shop and various artisan potions, business as usual for that lively corner of the estate.

Tamara prepared delicious (and now infamous!) on-farm-made Pumpkin Dumplings, while Karen Buckland contributed her legendary Vegan Pumpkin Mac'N'Cheese. The Organic Coffee Cart in their smart new horsebox served a steady stream of coffee enthusiasts from morning until evening. The wood fired pizza sold out once again! And the locally based Double Barrel Brewery were well-supported by thirsty festival-goers throughout the day.

Lin's Veg Shed did tremendous business, shifting an incredible amount of vegetables including, of course, hundreds of on-farm organically grown squashes and pumpkins!

The music line-up added the perfect festive touch, with magical performances from our very own local musicians, Rose Music, Daughter of The Water, The Ironics and Dolly And The Clothes Pegs, keeping spirits high and the atmosphere lively.

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to everyone who made this day such a success; the dedicated community volunteers who formed the crew, Dave The Stick Smith for his weaving stall and for providing the beautiful stage, and every single person who attended, purchased goodies, and showed their support for the farm. It was truly heartwarming to see so many local families come together to celebrate the squash and pumpkin harvest season at Tolhurst

Organic's Walled Garden. The festival was a wonderful reminder of the vibrant, supportive community we have here at Hardwick Estate, and we look forward to many more celebrations together.



**Sadhama End of Season Round up by Karen Buckland.** It's been another great season hosting retreats at Hardwick – our sixth year of inviting people to come and share the profound healing power of this special land. A few brand new additions for this year – we added an extra date for our Vipassana silent meditation retreats after such a great response to our first one last year. Both May and September retreats sold out and had a hugely positive impact on participants. The other new project was to run smaller, monthly events in the south wing of Hardwick House. We have now found our rhythm as a twilight supper club retreat, offering beautiful wellbeing practices, sauna sessions, and showcasing the best of Hardwick's seasonal produce in a gorgeous fine dining, two course meal. We also won two awards this season! Wellness Retreat of the Year and Meditation Retreat of the Year. We also had a mention in the Guardian as one of the UK's favourite wellness trips. Hooray!

Next up for us are our international projects, as Dmitry travels to Thailand to teach 7 day Vipassana meditation in a retreat centre on Koh Phangan, and we bring a group with us to Kerala over the new year for a revitalising ayurvedic cleanse in India. Get in touch if you'd like to come along! We are super happy to keep building on our success and look forward to what 2026 will bring.

*Laura Lucas*

## **SURROUDED BY HISTORY BY ERIC HARTLEY**

### **(First of 2 parts)**

As we approach the western gates of Hardwick along Hardwick Road, we are following in the footsteps of many thousands before us. This is the saxon packhorse route '*the Tuddingway*' which is above the floodplain and no doubt served many others during the centuries with a drier route.

To our left, we have our observation hillside, an encampment in the Iron Age and a protection retreat thereafter, although the Vikings appear to have easily defeated the occupants in their local foray. Sheep were first introduced into Britain some 3000 years ago and again by the Romans for food and protective garments, and perhaps for wool. There was some indication of Roman presence on the nearby hillside.

To our right, we have Sheepwash Lane, a path with an obvious purpose of access to and from the river, but where was the river and where was the ford, or shallower area, which would have allowed the sheep to be washed?

But let's turn to the lane and head down to the river as it is now. The fields to your right all bear Norman names and would have been cultivated, perhaps as now. It is not the most fertile soil but Tolly's organic farming have successfully proved otherwise. The two fields on your left may have been one field with a tributary of the present Thames flowing across the lane at the site of our two gateways on either side of the lane, thus providing the sheepwash? The lower field of the two, has distinct signs of ridge and furrow cultivation as it leads down to today's Thames – this historical feature deserves to be maintained and preserved.

The field on your right has today's evidence of another craft – that of weaving using local willow. Our skilled weaver has an acre here devoted to growing his willow trees and osiers (types of willows known for flexibility). Again both field areas are used for cattle grazing, putting the wetland to good use. As we approach the river, we are even more aware that it is wetland; Loddon lilies occupy the last fenced area on the right (the Loddon valley is a wet valley on the east side of Reading). To your right is the storage area for the Oratory boats and to your left, the Oratory Boat club building. On your right as you

reach the river, is a solitary willow tree drooping into the river. Around its base is an oak bench, 'Molly's bench', selected and built for me by the Hardwick forrester. It is there to commemorate the many happy hours spent walking my dog Molly here and throughout the Hardwick estate. Now it is used as a riverside resting spot, a good 'Gainsborough photograph' and a bench for the clothes of the many skinny dippers who use this access point for their sport.

*Eric Hartley*



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# WILD OXFORDSHIRE

**Seasonal Spotlight – Autumn.** It's that time of year when the trees will be changing colour, the air is getting colder and fresher, and we can't help thinking of warm drinks, cosy clothes and playing in the crunchy leaves.

As we enter Autumn, it can be tempting to cut back all the dead and dying vegetation in our gardens and green spaces. It's worth considering that many of these woody stems will become perfect winter homes for insects as they enter hibernation and can create areas of architectural beauty in our homes and communities.

In Oxfordshire, the hedgerow species we generally recommend planting (for their capacity to provide for both people and wildlife year-round) and you're most likely to see in your local area include Blackthorn, Spindle, Common Buckthorn, Guelder Rose, Wild Privet, Cherry Plum, Dog Rose and Hazel. Fruiting season for many of these species starts from late summer to early autumn. As such, by this time of year, most of the species listed above will be fruiting. Hawthorn berries have traditional use in heart-strengthening natural medicines but also act as a vital source of food for caterpillars, moths, and migratory birds. Keep your eyes peeled for spindle, which has vibrant autumnal colours with vibrant pinks, and the leaves turning from a deep green to a beautiful red.

## Tips for looking after our hedgehogs this winter:

- Always move your burn piles before you light them as hedgehogs and frogs often use them to sleep in. This is, after-all, how hedgehogs were once upon a time cooked to be eaten! Thankfully it is now illegal to eat this endangered species.
- If you find a sick or injured hedgehog, or one that's up and about during the middle of the day, call either Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue centre on 07549322464 or Tiggywinkle's wildlife hospital on 01844 292292.
- Leave some areas untouched! Messy log piles, long grass and fallen leaves are great for hibernating hedgehogs. Please leave a wild area in your garden so our hedgehogs can hibernate in peace – nice and cosy and safe.

- Put out a shallow dish of water or make sure your ponds are easy to get out of for hedgehogs, so they have water to drink. Sometimes hedgehogs come out of hibernation to eat and drink, especially in warmer weather, so even at this time of year, putting out water can help.

Avoid using pesticides or herbicides as this will make hedgehogs very ill. Find out more at [www.hedgehogrescue.org.uk](http://www.hedgehogrescue.org.uk)



To find out more about Hedgehogs head over to the Wild Oxfordshire website at [www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk) and have a look in guidance for mammals.

*Rhiannon Young*  
*Wild Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Engagement Officer*  
<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/>

# 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, <a href="http://www.southoxon.gov.uk">www.southoxon.gov.uk</a> |                  |                             |              |
| Councillor                                                                                                                      | Peter Dragonetti | Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom | 0118 9844711 |

| OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL                                                                       |                        |                                           |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------|
| County Hall, Oxford, OX1 1ND, <a href="http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk">www.oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> |                        |                                           | 01865 792422 |
| Councillor                                                                                       | Maggie Filipova-Rivers | maggie.filipova-rivers@oxfordshire.gov.uk |              |

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

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

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

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

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

**WHITCHURCH AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY**

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

**WHITCHURCH TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

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

**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 |
|---------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|

**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 |  |
|---------|------------|-----------------------------------|--|

**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 |
|---------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

**PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE**

Committee Room, Pangbourne Village Hall

|  |                                 |              |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|
|  | Open 09:30 – 11:30am Mon–Friday | 0118 9844586 |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|

**AFC WHITCHURCH FC (ages 5–16)**

|       |             |                                                   |  |
|-------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|--|
| Chair | Alex Hilton | hilts123@hotmail.com or afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk |  |
|-------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|--|

**THAMES VALLEY POLICE**

Wallingford Police Station, Wallingford, OX10 9DW

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

**PANGBOURNE LIBRARY**

Reading Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7LY

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

**ST MARY'S CHURCH**

|         |                                    |              |
|---------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Contact | For Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals | 0118 9765905 |
|---------|------------------------------------|--------------|

**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                 |                               |              |
|                | <i>Deadline for Articles</i> | <i>Planned distribution</i>   |              |
| Winter 2026    | 11th January                 | 25th January                  |              |
| Spring 2026    | 12th April                   | 26th April                    |              |
|                |                              |                               |              |



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that encourage engagement and enjoyment, from communal lounges to quiet corners perfect for reading. Our landscaped garden is fully accessible, inviting people living with us to spend time outdoors, relaxing in nature or taking a gentle stroll among the flowers.

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