

A note on the history of the Whitchurch Web, our village website.

by Richard Wingfield, January 2026

The site was created by Phil Weir as a sixth form school project. That may make it unique among village websites. Now an IT professional, Phil has continued to maintain and host it ever since, via his company Site Spider. By the early 2000s, the site had many features that are familiar today, as shown in this screen shot of the home page in 2001. IT specialist David Robinson of Swanston Field was the webmaster. The site was owned and run by the Parish Council. Those wishing to receive emails to tell them that the site had been updated had to join a mailing list.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Whitchurch-On-Thames website. At the top, the title "Whitchurch-On-Thames" is displayed in a blue serif font. Below it, a small line of text reads "Click here to make this your homepage" and "Don't forget to bookmark this site! (CTRL-D)". A red italicized line states: "This is the official website for Whitchurch-on-Thames. It is owned and managed by Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council on behalf of the Village." Below this, two lines of red text provide context: "This aerial view of Whitchurch-on-Thames is taken from above Pangbourne, looking north over the River Thames towards the Chilterns." and "To find the names and locations of features in the Village, pass your mouse over the Map. Left click to see a photograph." The central feature is a large aerial photograph of the village, showing a mix of green fields, trees, and buildings. Below the photo, a red line says: "To see some photographic views from around the village and photos from recent events, [click here](#)." Further down, a blue line of text describes the village: "Whitchurch-on-Thames is a picturesque south Oxfordshire village with a population of about 721, lying within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Most of the village is designated as a Conservation Area. The village has an ancient church - St. Mary's - a thriving primary school, and two characterful inns - The Greyhound and The Ferryboat." This is followed by another blue line: "Across the River Thames, and reached by a 100 year old lattice girder Toll Bridge, are the shops and public transport amenities of Pangbourne." A red line then says: "The Parish Council would like to support village people as much as possible on this site. So if you are involved in a local organisation or business and would like a page or link on this site then please go to the ["Village Groups"](#) or ["Village Businesses"](#) pages for details." Below this is a blue line: "Join our mailing list and receive E-mails to tell you when this site has been updated!" This is followed by a form with a text input field labeled "Enter your E-Mail address here", a "Subscribe" button with a dropdown arrow, and a "Sign Up" button. At the bottom, there is a logo for "Site Spider" and a blue line: "This site is designed and managed by SiteSpider. Any suggestions on content, or any other comments, should be submitted to the [Webmaster](#)." Below that, a blue line says: "You are the visitor to this site since 13/04/00". A list of blue links follows: "Home Photo Gallery Diary and News Parish Council Village Hall The Schools The Church The Bulletin Village Groups Village Businesses The Toll Bridge Public Transport Links Guest Book Search E-Mail Us". At the very bottom, a blue line says: "Last updated on Friday, June 01, 2001 10:59" and a small copyright notice: "© Copyright Whitchurch-On-Thames Parish Council 2001".

Work by residents on the Village Plan published in 2009 led to a Key Action of "Develop the village website for better exchange of information and to increase involvement of residents in village activities."

In that year I was approached by Parish Council chair Matilda Oppenheimer and Village Plan chair Stephen Trinder and asked if I would take this task on. I accepted the challenge and was told I had *carte blanche* to do whatever was needed.

After a brief period considering options for re-starting with a brand new site, it was clear that by far the best solution was to continue with and develop the existing website. In 2010 and 2011 I was fortunate to be joined by fellow retired residents, Pam Scott and Hilary Jensen, and before long we had evolved the website into a shape familiar to many of us today. This enabled David Robinson to retire honourably after many years. The word 'webmaster' would no longer be needed.

The Parish Council accepted that the new management arrangement was that the website would be independent of them and managed by volunteers from the village. However, the site would carry parish council news and information.

By February 2011 we had a freshly designed front page (below), emphasising the website's offering of news. Better displaying of news was Pam's suggestion. Hilary brought her invaluable skills with the editing software MS Expression to handling and updating the increasing number of back pages. Pam agreed to look after the What's On column and the Message Board, leaving me to concentrate on News items. Nick Brazil became our Photographer-at-large. Phil did his best to implement whatever structural changes we asked for and he made many improvements.



The website flourished and readership expanded (even to include some from across the river and others up the hill) with the increasing coverage of the news and comprehensiveness of information offered. Phil's technical improvements included a change to the font and links, as seen in this home page of 7th December 2020.

In the Spring of 2021, the Whitchurch Web team was delighted to be voted winner of the annual Whitchurch Award, organised by The Whitchurch Society. Names mentioned included Sally Woolhouse, editor of the Nature Notes page. The Henley Standard published an article.

In 2025 it was considered wise to enlarge the team by identifying understudies/deputies for Richard and Hilary, who had both served for 15 years. Julie Huntington and Adrian Dixon volunteered and were warmly welcomed as members of the strengthened team.