

# **BLETCHINGTON VILLAGE NEWS**

*YOUR COMMUNITY MAGAZINE – SERVING THE VILLAGE SINCE 1979*

**ISSUE 279**

**December 2025 – January 2026**



**Happy Christmas to all our Readers**

Reports from village organisations

A Christmas Message from the Southern Ocean

Reflections on Remembrance

History Corner: A Tudor Christmas

Wren at Bletchington Rectory?

## GALLERY



The annual funfair comes to Bletchington



The Macmillan cake sale – further details on Page 5



Live music at the Sports & Social Club

This is Reverend Ferriday who entertained us all with some superb blues music

Do come along to the Club and support the live music nights, which take place about once a month

## **EDITORIAL**

The sight of a red kite soaring in the skies above Bletchington is a familiar one, but that hasn't always been the case. These majestic birds of prey were virtually extinct in England until 1989 when a reintroduction programme began with a small number of birds from Spain and Sweden being released in the Chilterns, on the border between Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The success of this far exceeded expectations and I was interested to read that the species hasn't been doing very well of late in Spain so some young local birds, ancestors of those released here in 1989, have been returned to Spain to help build up their population once again – a fine example of a conservation project turning full circle.

It's that time of year again! It has certainly turned very much colder in the last few days, as I write this. The sounds of Slade and Mariah Carey will be playing on radio stations and in supermarkets and Christmas trees and festive lights will be brightening up homes, shops and public spaces. This year's festivities in Bletchington began at the Sports & Social Club on 29<sup>th</sup> November with their Christmas Quiz which promised to be a fun evening, but took place after we went to press for this edition of Village News. On Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> December, the Silver Band will be holding their Christmas Concert. Do come along to that – the plan is to turn on the Christmas lights in the Village Hall Plaza at the end of the performance (further details on Page 16). The church will then be holding their carol service with the Silver Band on 21<sup>st</sup> December (details on Pages 6 & 8).

At this festive time of the year, I would like to say a few thank yous. Firstly, to all our advertisers, without whose financial support, it would not be possible to produce your free community magazine. Thank you also to my colleague Ian Gedling for many years of behind-the-scenes support that he has given to the Village News. Also thank you to our delivery team who go out in all weathers to ensure you receive your copy of Village News. Finally, thanks to everyone who contributes to the magazine, either regularly or on a casual basis. I would like to take this opportunity to wish a very happy Christmas to all Bletchingtonians and best wishes for the New Year. Here's to 2026!

Do you make New Year resolutions? Me neither, but if you are thinking about making one, why not consider contributing an article to the Village News? We are always keen to hear from new contributors and it would also be great to hear from some of our younger readers. Not keen on writing? No problem! Just get in touch and we can capture your views via an interview and produce an article on your behalf. We are reliant upon material from organisations in the village and, of course, from you, the readers so please keep your articles and photographs coming and do keep us updated with news of anything going on in our community, including any fundraising activities. Please contact us via e-mail at [bletchnews@gmail.com](mailto:bletchnews@gmail.com). The deadline for us receiving material is always the **18<sup>th</sup> of the month** prior to publication – so articles for inclusion in the February/March edition must reach us by **18<sup>th</sup> January** please.

[bletchnews@gmail.com](mailto:bletchnews@gmail.com)

*Pete Baker*

### **Co-op Christmas/New Year opening hours**

Christmas Eve, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December - 7am to 6pm  
Christmas Day, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December - CLOSED  
Boxing Day, Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December - 9am to 5pm  
Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December - 7am to 10pm (normal hours)  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December - 7am to 10pm (normal hours)  
Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December - 7am to 10pm (normal hours)  
Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> December - 7am to 10pm (normal hours)  
New Year's Eve, Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December - 7am to 8pm  
New Year's Day, Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January - 8am to 6pm



### **Do you drive into Oxford?**

The temporary congestion charge for cars driving through certain charging points came into effect on 29<sup>th</sup> October. As an Oxfordshire resident you are entitled to apply for a permit which allows you to pass through the charging points as many times as you like in a single day, for 25 days in the year. As a person you are only entitled to one set of passes per year and a maximum of three sets for separate people per household.

To apply for your passes, go to [oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge](https://oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge) then follow instructions. You will need to provide proof of your address, such as a utility bill or council tax document and proof that you are the registered keeper of the vehicle, such as a form V5C (logbook). You will also be required to set up an account with Oxfordshire County Council (if you don't have one already). Each day in which your car is identified passing through one or more of the charging points, your account will automatically be 'debited' with one pass-through until all 25 have been used up. You can go into your account at any time to see how many passes you have left.

If you do not apply for passes, or have used them all up, and pass through one of the charging points, clearly identified at the roadside, you must make an on-line payment of £5 by visiting the above website by midnight on the day after you passed through the charging point to pay the charge of £5. If you do not have internet access, you can pay by telephone by contacting OCC on **01865 519800** and ask for the Congestion Charge Team. Failure to do so will leave you liable to a much larger fine. Charges are applicable daily between 7am and 7pm, except the Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way points, at which charges only apply Monday to Saturday, 7am to 9am and 3pm to 6pm.

### **Something for the New Year: "Treasure Island" panto**

Once Christmas and New Year have passed, we all need something to look forward to, to brighten up the cold, dark winter days. So how about a panto? Launton Village Players are proud to announce their 2026 panto: "Treasure Island", written by Rod and Nikki Fine, directed by Julia West, with music by Steve Webber.

There will be 7 performances during the February half-term in Cooper School Performance Hall (Bicester):

- Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February at 7:30pm
- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 10:30am (relaxed performance) and 2:30pm
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 2:30pm and 7:30pm
- Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

Tickets went on sale from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025 from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp). Tickets cost £7-£14 but family discounts are available for all shows.

This is a family show, suitable for all ages and it includes all the traditional pantomime elements, with plenty of magic, comedy and audience participation. Will the wicked Captain Hook get his hands on the long-lost treasure? Our heroes will need your help to make sure good triumphs over evil!

All profits will be donated to Dementia Oxfordshire and Dementia Active, two charities who provide activities, support and opportunities for those diagnosed with dementia, and their families and carers in the local area. Come and enjoy the Bicester area's biggest and most magical award-winning panto!

### **A Christmas greeting from Annesley Close**

Once again, I would like to use the pages of the Village News as a huge Christmas Card for all my friends and neighbours in Annesley Close and Bletchington as a whole. As usual, I will be donating the money that I would previously have spent on Christmas Cards and postage to a Charity Christmas Appeal.

This idea comes from a scheme we used to have at the church I attended when I lived in Kent and I hope all my friends and acquaintances in the village agree that this is in-keeping with the spirit of the season.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

***Irene Barwick (1 Annesley Close)***

### Macmillan Cake Sale

Bletch Babes would like to say a big thank you to everyone who came along and supported their annual Macmillan cake sale. "We were overwhelmed with donations of cake and tombola items."

"We raised £1,200 on the day and we still have some money squares to sell so if anyone would like to buy any, please contact any of the Bletch Babes to buy a square. If you are the lucky person to win you will receive a first prize of £501. Second prize is £50. We will update you with final total once these have been sold. Thank you all again for supporting this worthy cause."



### Royal British Legion poppy appeal



We would like to thank everyone who supported this year's Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. We raised an amazing amount of £3,211.93. Your generosity and respect for our Armed Forces make a real difference to the lives of serving personnel, veterans, and their families. Every donation, every poppy worn, and every act of remembrance helps ensure that those who have sacrificed so much are never forgotten and continue to receive the care and support they deserve.

A special thank you to Tony who gives up his spare time to sell poppies, the Co-Op who allow him to do so inside the store and the staff that look after him so well also to everyone that donated prizes bought raffle tickets and attended the race night at the Sports & Social Club.

**Grace & Barney**

### Road closure

Weston Road, between Bletchington and Weston-on-the-Green will be closed for pre-surface dressing works between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December, 7:30am to 4:30pm. Access to all properties will be maintained, as will access for emergency vehicles. Travel between the two villages at this time will necessitate a journey via either Kirtlington or the A34.

### Glass recycling

From 1<sup>st</sup> January, you will no longer have to take your glass to the bottle banks for recycling. On Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November, a meeting of Cherwell District Council's executive gave the green light to plans to collect glass at the kerbside. So from the new year, residents will be able to dispose of their glass in the blue recycling bin. The bottle banks located in the village will be removed in due course.

The introduction of kerbside glass collections is expected to increase the district's overall recycling rate by 1 to 1.5%, adding 500-700 tonnes of glass per year to the recycling stream. Glass collected from Cherwell residents' blue bins will be separated from other dry recycling by machines at a sorting centre. The large pieces will be sorted by colour for further processing, whilst smaller pieces will be used for road aggregate or shot blasting material.

## **ST. GILES' CHURCH NEWS**

We are part of the AKEMAN BENEFICE (Bletchington, Kirtlington, Weston-on-the-Green, Chesterton, Middleton Stoney, Wendlebury and Hampton Gay). The benefice is named after Akeman Street, the Roman road which runs through it.



### **Ministry Team**

|                                                       |                           |                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rector:</b> The Rev'd Gareth Miller                | 01869 350224              | akemanbenefice@gmail.com                 |
| <b>Associate Priest:</b> The Rev'd Nick Ktorides      | 01869 324191              | nickktorides.akeman@gmail.com            |
| <b>Assistant Priest:</b> The Very Rev'd Robert Wilkes | 01869 350159              | bobwilkes.akeman@gmail.com               |
| <b>Licensed Lay Minister:</b> Paul Clifford           | 01869 351652              | paulclifford.akeman@gmail.com            |
| <b>Safeguarding Officer:</b> Nicky Donne              | 01869 351748              | safeguarding.akeman@gmail.com            |
| <b>Benefice Website:</b>                              | www.akemanbenefice.org.uk |                                          |
| <b>Churchwarden:</b>                                  | Judith Ledger             | <b>Treasurer:</b> Kate Ehrman            |
| <b>Assistant Churchwarden:</b>                        | Fiona Teddy               | <b>Members of the PCC:</b> Natasha Pitts |
| <b>Secretary:</b>                                     | Kathy O'Connor            | Sally Cross                              |
|                                                       |                           | Pam Hayes                                |

If you or anyone you know would like to talk to a member of the ministry team please do not hesitate to phone or email.

A small prayer group meets remotely each Wednesday morning. If you would like to join or if you have a request for prayer, please phone 351542. The church remains open each day for private prayer.

Details of services and an introduction to the ministry team together with information about the benefice churches can be found on our website at: [www.akemanbenefice.org.uk](http://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk).

### **From the registers:**

5<sup>th</sup> October                      Enzo Valpy Warren Coles                      Baptism

We welcome Enzo to the family of the Church.

## **CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN BLETCHINGDON**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December: 4pm Carol Service accompanied by the Siver Band**  
**Christmas Eve: 10pm Midnight Mass**

During December the church will be decorated for Christmas and the crib will be set up.

## Remembrance Service

A very moving Service of Remembrance took place at St Giles' on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November. We are grateful to Bletchington Silver Band for accompanying the hymns and to Sheldon Barwick for playing the Last Post.

The service was attended by several members of the Ruck-Keene family who lost three sons in World War II. Johnny Ruck-Keene laid a wreath in remembrance of his great-uncles (below, left).

The names of The Fallen were read by Captain Oliver Dean of The Rifles (below, right). Captain Dean is to be married to Caro Ehrman at St Giles next May.



## FROM THE RECTOR

Dear friends,

Advent is one of those seasons that asks us to slow down — just when the rest of the world seems to be speeding up. While shops are full of glitter and Christmas songs in early November, the Church quietly lights one candle, then another, and says: *wait*.

I was reminded recently how hard we find waiting. I was standing in a long queue at the supermarket, watching people sigh and tap their phones impatiently. Then I noticed a small child in the trolley ahead of me. She wasn't frustrated — she was watching the lights on the shelves with wide-eyed wonder, as if she had all the time in the world. I thought: perhaps that's what Advent asks of us — not to wait grumpily, but to wait *with wonder*.

Our world often feels weary. News headlines can leave us anxious or numb; it's easy to feel that darkness has the upper hand. Yet Advent tells a different story. It invites us to lift our eyes and remember that we are part of something much bigger — a story that stretches from the first creation to the new creation still to come. God has not forgotten His world. The light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

At Christmas we celebrate that light breaking into the world — God with us, not distant or detached, but right here in the mess and beauty of our humanity. And as Epiphany arrives, we see that this light is for *all* people, not just a chosen few. The wise men's journey reminds us that faith is also about searching, asking questions, and following the faint glimmer of hope until it leads us to Christ.

So, as we move through Advent and into Christmas and Epiphany, may we find time to wait well — to look for light in small places, to see God at work in ordinary moments, and to trust that, in the long view of eternity, His promises hold true.

With every blessing,

**Gareth**

### Church services for December & January

| <b>DECEMBER<br/>2025</b>        | <b>Sunday 7<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Advent 2</i></b> | <b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Advent 3</i></b> | <b>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup><br/><i>Advent 4</i></b>                                           | <b>Wedn'day 24<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Christmas Eve</i></b> | <b>Thursday 25<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Christmas Day</i></b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bletchington</b>             | 09:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                      |                                                   | 09:30<br>Holy<br>Communion<br>16:00<br>Carol Service<br>with<br>Bletchington<br>Silver Band | 22:00<br>Midnight Mass                                   |                                                          |
| <b>Chesterton</b>               | 08:00<br>Holy Comm.<br>11:00<br>Family Service   | 11:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                        | 18:00<br>Carol Service                                                                      | 16:00<br>Crib Service<br>23:00<br>Midnight Mass          |                                                          |
| <b>Hampton Gay</b>              |                                                  | 15:15<br>Carol Service                            |                                                                                             |                                                          |                                                          |
| <b>Kirtlington</b>              | 11:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                       | 09:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                       | 18:00<br>Carol Service                                                                      | 16:00<br>Crib Service                                    | 10:30<br>Holy<br>Communion                               |
| <b>Middleton<br/>Stoney</b>     | 09:30<br>Breakfast<br>Church                     |                                                   | 16:00<br>Carol Service                                                                      | 22:00<br>Midnight Mass                                   |                                                          |
| <b>Wendlebury</b>               | 09:30<br>Holy<br>Communion                       |                                                   | 09:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                                                                 | 17:00<br>Crib Service                                    | 09:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                               |
| <b>Weston-on-<br/>the-Green</b> | 11:00<br>Morning<br>Worship                      |                                                   | 18:00<br>Carol Service                                                                      | 22:00<br>Midnight Mass                                   | 10:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                              |

| <b>JANUARY<br/>2026</b>         | <b>Sun. 28<sup>th</sup> Dec.<br/><i>Holy Innocents</i></b> | <b>Sunday 4<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Christmas 2</i></b>      | <b>Sunday 11<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Baptism of Xt</i></b> | <b>Sunday 18<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Epiphany 2</i></b> | <b>Sunday 25<sup>th</sup><br/><i>Conv. of St. Paul</i></b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bletchington</b>             | 10:00<br>Benefice<br>Communion                             | 09:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                              |                                                        | 09:30<br>Holy Comm.<br>15:00<br>Family Service      |                                                            |
| <b>Chesterton</b>               |                                                            | 08:00<br>Holy Comm.<br>(said)<br>11:00<br>Family Service | 11:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                             | 11:00<br>Café Church in<br>Community<br>Centre      |                                                            |
| <b>Hampton Gay</b>              |                                                            |                                                          |                                                        |                                                     |                                                            |
| <b>Kirtlington</b>              |                                                            | 11:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                               | 09:30<br>Breakfast<br>Church                           | 16:00<br>Evensong                                   |                                                            |
| <b>Middleton<br/>Stoney</b>     |                                                            | 09:30<br>Morning<br>Worship                              |                                                        | 09:30<br>Holy<br>Communion                          |                                                            |
| <b>Wendlebury</b>               |                                                            | 09:30<br>Holy Comm.                                      |                                                        | 09:30<br>Breakfast Ch.                              |                                                            |
| <b>Weston-on-<br/>the-Green</b> |                                                            | 11:00<br>Morning<br>Worship                              |                                                        | 11:00<br>Holy<br>Communion                          | 10:00<br>Benefice<br>Communion                             |

## **BLETCHINGTON RESIDENT HONOURED**

In October 2022 we published an article about Neil and Marion Stockton each celebrating 50 years of volunteering with Radio Cherwell, the hospital radio in Oxford.

Since then, they have continued with their work and in June this year chairman Neil Stockton was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to Hospital Radio and to the community in Oxford in the King's Birthday Honours List 2025.

Neil has been a dedicated volunteer and the driving force in Radio Cherwell since he became a member in 1972.

Over the past 50 years he has supported the station by establishing a management structure, assisting with the ever changing engineering potential, promoting patient-participation programmes and concepts for diverse shows, and liaising with the OUH staff to enable its smooth running.

From the mid-1970s he advocated that Radio Cherwell should be self-supporting by using its resources and members' skills to raise funds, so he formed an enterprise to provide public address and recording systems for local events. This still exists today.

Neil is passionate about supporting all members. His constant leadership and drive, plus his ability to recognise members' skills has helped to encourage everyone to become involved, and he's always keen to support and inspire young members in their chosen career paths.

On receiving his nomination, Neil said: "This has come as a huge surprise and I feel so humbled. I'm thrilled to accept this award on behalf of every member of Radio Cherwell, past and present, who have helped shape me and the station. I also wish to thank my family, and especially my wife, Marion, who joined Radio Cherwell with me in 1972 and has supported me throughout."

In September Neil had the honour of receiving his award from the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Mrs Marjorie Glasgow BEM at a ceremony in Abingdon School.

For further information about Radio Cherwell, visit: [www.radiocherwell.com](http://www.radiocherwell.com)



*Photograph by Stewart Turkington*

Congratulations to Neil for achieving this prestigious and much deserved award.

### **Defibrillators**

We have three defibrillators available in the village, located at the Village Hall, on the side nearest to the Co-op, at the Black's Head pub and at the Sports & Social Club. To access these devices, you will need to call 999 to obtain a code whilst also requesting an ambulance. Instructions on how to use the defibrillators and how to keep the patient safe are posted close by. Your prompt action before the ambulance arrives may save a life.

## **REFLECTIONS ON REMEMBRANCE**

Having been born shortly after the end of World War 2, Remembrance Sunday was a big deal as I grew up. There were many men locally who had fought in one or other of the World Wars and some bore both physical and mental scars as a result. Very few families had escaped the impact of one or other of these great conflicts. Quite a few local men and women had died and their families suffered quietly as well. As the years went by the scars could have healed, children like myself grew up and perhaps became bored with the repetition and so the day carried less significance. The men who had fought tended not to talk about it. The only thing that I knew was that a great uncle had died at sea in the second war.

It was only many years later that I took an interest in my family history and discovered that my father's immediate and extended family had lost a number of members. Quite unusually my mother's family had escaped any loss. My grandfather and his brother Harold lived in Hull and had joined up in 1914. Grandfather was a skilled boiler maker and so was sent to work in the shipyards. Harold however contracted TB in the army and after being invalided out died in 1917. My great-grandfather's first cousin was Frank Ledger who also lived in Hull. He was conscripted into the army in 1916. He was involved in the battle of Polygon Wood in October 1917 which was part of the overall battle of Passchendaele. He died there on 7<sup>th</sup> October. His remains were never found but his name is inscribed on the wall along with 35,000 others at Tyne Cott cemetery.

He was one of some 7,000 men from Hull who died in that war and most of streets in the city lost men. One of the most moving memorials is in the foyer of the main railway station there which over 70,000 men passed through on the way to the front. The walls are covered in boards listing those who did not return.

Cyril Ledger was Frank's nephew. He was 27 when the war broke out and was conscripted into the Navy. Probably because he had spent time working on a trawler, he was posted to the mine sweeping service (RNPS) which used these requisitioned fishing boats. In May 1941 his ship was attacked by German planes and sank off of the coast of Cornwall. His body was never recovered but his name is recorded on the RNPS memorial in Lowestoft. He had been married for less than a year.

My grandfather's half-brother (my great uncle) Eric was also at sea during the war. He was second engineer on a merchant ship called the Lulworth Hill. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March in 1943, on his first voyage, the Lulworth Hill was torpedoed off the coast of Africa by a submarine. The ship had previously been in a convoy, which had offered protection but, for some reason, they were ordered to sail home alone. There were 36 crew and 6 gunmen on board. 28 men went down with the ship or were machine gunned whilst in the water.

Fourteen men, including Eric, managed to board a very basic life raft despite it being rammed by the submarine. The submarine captain took on board one survivor, a gunner, but deliberately left the rest to die. Eric's feet were seriously injured, it is thought by the submarine driving through the men in the water and, after a several days, he became delirious as gangrene set in. He eventually died along with 12 others on the raft. After 52 days with hardly any food and water, there were only two survivors. They were picked up by a HM destroyer Rapid on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1943. One of the survivors wrote a book about the story which later became a film. Eric left a wife and two small children. Until 1<sup>st</sup> July that year the rule was that pay ceased for any seaman on the day their ship was sunk. Eric's wife was left bereft and shortly afterwards evicted from her house. Eventually a memorial was raised for merchant seaman and stands close to the Tower of London.

Harry Ledger was a rather more distant relative, a cousin once removed of my great grandfather. Has was in the RAF and died over Germany in July 1942. He left a wife, two children and an unborn child who lived in Bampton where he is remembered on the war memorial there.

Discovering the lives and deaths of these five men and the impact that their deaths had has reawakened my feelings of remembrance. Going to Tyne Cot cemetery in Flanders (the largest in the world) also increased the impact of my awareness of these tragic events. Tyne Cot and the other cemeteries have become tourist attractions and in the last few decades many will have been on family and more importantly school trips to visit them. Family history research has enabled them to see the names of relatives and in many cases lay tributes. Today's teenagers are as remote from the two World Wars as I was at their age from the American civil war and the Boer War but are perhaps more in touch with the personal tragedies that resulted from them.

The reasons for remembrance were perhaps best summed up by King George V on a visit to Tyne Cot in 1922 during a trip around the battlefields and graveyards:

“We can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead. In the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war.”

*Duncan Ledger*

## **1<sup>st</sup> BLETCHINGTON BROWNIES**

It's award time...

Well done to Demelza, Daisy, Grace, Abi, Lyra and Elodie who have completed their Silver awards and Willow who has finished the Bronze award.

We have been working on lots of badges this term. The Kindness badge involved making gifts for people and completing kind acts. Oxfordshire Rocks badge saw us out and about, looking at local issues, learning the promise in Makaton and raising awareness of Brownies.

“We've got no cheese Gromit”, well we had cheese that was turned into cheese straws for our Wallace and Gromit challenge. We also designed the wrong trousers, made Shaun sheep and Gromits.

We attended Remembrance Parade with Woodstock Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. We had our own service beside the Soldiers at the village hall that the Brownies previously fundraised for and purchased. We made name plates for each of the men from Bletchington who died in World War One and Two and read them out. The Brownies were sad to see that the plaque that was beside the soldiers and stone is missing. Girlguiding theme for Remembrance this year was dig for victory and we designed vegetable gardens and planted runner beans. Some of the beans have grown fabulously tall!

At the end of term, we will be having a memory share and promise night.

We have the following spaces available:

Rainbows in Woodstock, girls age 4-7, meeting Wednesdays 4:45-5:45pm

Brownies in Bletchington, girls age 7-10, meeting Mondays 6-7:30pm

Guides in Woodstock girls age 10-14, meeting Thursday 6:30-8pm

Trefoil for adults meets monthly. We do pretty much everything Brownies do - badges, activities, laugh, camp and more.

Register at [www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus)

or email [girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk)

## **Combe Mill - Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Combe, OX29 8ET**

Although Combe Mill is CLOSED for the Winter, opening again and `In Steam` on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026, the Riverside Tea Room is still open on Wednesdays only, 10:30am to 3:00pm (closed 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December). Come along for homemade soup with crusty bread, scones, cakes and a selection of hot and cold beverages. Everyone is most welcome. See our full menu and further details on Page 42.

Combe Mill would like to thank all who came along and supported our Charity during 2025.

## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE SOUTHERN OCEAN



If you are reading this, it probably means you are taking a break from tucking into your Christmas dinner of turkey and all the trimmings. This Christmas will be a very different for me as I will be bobbing about in the Southern Ocean. If you are old enough you may remember that in 1997, Tony Bullimore, was rescued an awful long way south of Australia by the Royal Australian navy after 5 days sheltering in his upturned yacht. That is roughly where I will be over Christmas but hopefully the right way up. My slightly anxious wife, Helen, has kindly agreed to let me spend Christmas away from the family in the company of 21 strangers on an ocean challenge.

Our route starts off from Freemantle on the West Coast of Australia then heads straight south towards the Roaring Forties, one of the most remote parts of the world, around the bottom of Tasmania and then up the East coast of Australia to the Barrier reef. The Southern Ocean often experiences the Earth's strongest winds and largest waves from towering swells to tropical squalls. In total I will be sailing 6,500km, along with ten teams in identical 76ft/23m racing yachts which will be circumnavigating the globe over 11 months. The race eventually finishes in Portsmouth next July. I will be one of over 500 crew taking part in this epic adventure which involves men and women from 43 countries and I will be at sea for over 20 days. We will be working in a 4-hour shift pattern sailing through the night and hot-bunking in the extremely cramped stripped-down quarters below deck. There are no mod-cons on a racing yacht and certainly no turkey and no trimmings. Getting dressed into drysuits at a 45-degree angle in a small boat that is being thrown around like a cork is exhausting and that's even before you have put your head above deck.

As you know Bletchingdon is probably the furthest you can get from the sea in England, so to prepare for this adventure I have spent much of the summer in the English Channel in a 68ft yacht with military style training, learning how to survive at sea and how to race a powerful yacht under all conditions. I have been violently sick, been a rescue swimmer for several of our daily man-overboard practices and learned how to cook at a 45-degree angle and tried to sleep in an echo chamber which feels more like a washing machine. So far I have met some incredible people from all walks of life and been taught how to sail fast and above all survive by some talented young professional sailors. My voyage is raising money for UNICEF and is entirely self-funded so anything you would like to donate will go straight to UNICEF.

You can visit my JustGiving page here to find more about the charity:  
<https://www.justgiving.com/page/mark-webber-1>

If you don't fancy donating you can simply follow the race on this tracker. Our boat is called "London Business School": <https://clipperroundtheworld.geovoile.com/2025/viewer/>

Thanks in advance and have a happy Christmas.

**Mark Webber**

## **CALUM MILLER MP – Autumn update**



Over the summer months, I have really enjoyed spending more time with businesses, charities and individuals in our community. I am returning to Parliament full of admiration for the many volunteers who serve others across our area. Thank you, too, to all those who have shared their concerns about what is happening personally, locally, nationally and internationally.

Many people spoke to me about the level of development proposed for our area. At Salt Cross by Eynsham, in Yarnton, Begbroke and Kidlington and in Bicester, thousands of homes are already planned. Some have been held up by the underfunding of new road connections. Challenges in getting connections and service for energy, water and telecoms are also real constraints – and we know that we need more doctors, dentists and health services alongside childcare and school places.

I have been working with local residents on two specific issues. In Bicester, this is a crunch month for a decision about the London Road crossing. East West Rail will bring new connections to our area but our campaign has been to ensure that it does not come at the cost of cutting Bicester in two. In Woodstock, I continue to work with the GPs, the local NHS, the councils and Blenheim to develop a firm proposal for a new doctor's surgery, which I believe we can deliver by the end of 2028.

Over the summer, we have heard more detail on new proposals for the Puy du Fou resort, a whole new town at Heyford airfield and the strategic rail freight interchange at Ardley. These only highlight further the need for national government to take responsibility for delivering infrastructure – both physical and social – before new developments open. I will continue to press ministers for these commitments.

## **WING'S FISH & CHIPS**

Did you know that before Uber Eats, Bletchington had its very own food delivery service?

Back in the 1940s, my Grandfather Charles Wing and family ran a fish & chip shop on the land next to the old school, along with a Timber yard. Deliveries were taken to nearby villages in his car- one of the only cars in the village.

My dad Brian remembers being age 6 and going to get chips with his friends. Everyone knows that chips need vinegar so the three of them went to the store room where a huge barrel of vinegar was. They managed to turn the tap on but couldn't turn it off again so ran leaving a flood of vinegar and an empty barrel behind them. They got into a lot of trouble for that!

Charles also had an ex-army lorry with drop sides that he used in the timber yard. Trees were cut into logs over a deep saw pit with a long saw.

He was the village ARP warden during World War II, going around the village making sure the lights were out.

Sadly, Charlie Wing died in 1949 aged 45, when Brian was just 7, and the shop, business and land were sold. Who knows what would have happened if he had lived longer. I may be serving you chips tonight!

***Lorraine Wing***

## **History Corner**

### **A Tudor Christmas**

The Tudor dynasty ruled from 1485 until 1603 and during this time Christmas was celebrated to the utmost over a twelve day period. The concept of the Twelve Days of Christmas actually dates back to the year 567 when the Council of Tours (a significant Catholic Church Council) declared there should be this period of celebration beginning on Christmas Day and concluding on the eve of Epiphany (Twelfth Night), 5<sup>th</sup> January.

Advent, the lead-up period to Christmas, was a time for fasting, not celebrating, meaning no meat, cheese or eggs. On Christmas Eve, people decorated their homes with locally gathered greenery including mistletoe, holly and ivy, a custom which was considered lucky and may be seen as a forerunner to the Christmas tree. Decorations were often been placed over equipment such as a spinning wheel, thus making it unusable during the festive season – a time for celebration, not working.

Christmas Day began with Midnight Mass then, after attending church again on Christmas morning, festivities could begin. In charge of entertainment within a community was the Lord of Misrule, an extrovert character who would be chosen to behave mischievously whilst encouraging general merriment and organising feasts, processions and games. Mummers (known in some parts of the country as guisers), entertained with their traditional folk plays.

Christmas dinner began with a dish known as plum porridge, an early version of Christmas pudding, a broth that included meat as well as plums and other dried fruit. This would be followed by a variety of roast meats but probably not turkey which did not become established until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, although there are records of Henry VIII feasting on it. Poorer people who could not normally afford meat may have saved up enough for a goose on Christmas Day. Mince pies were also consumed but these would have been very different to those consumed today, based on meat, mixed with some dried fruits.

The second day of Christmas was the Feast of St. Stephen, recognised at the first Christian martyr, a day for charity; giving to those in need. Church alms boxes were opened on this day for onward distribution to the poor, hence Boxing Day, although this name was not recognised until Victorian times. Followed by the Feast of St. John, this was a day when much drinking took place – wine for the wealthy and ale for those less well-off. The fourth day of Christmas was known as Childermas or the Feast of the Holy Innocents, a day dedicated to the children, when they would be in charge instead of their parents. New Year's Eve, the seventh day of Christmas, was traditionally a day for playing sport and games. Under Henry VIII, some games were forbidden to working people, except over Christmas, so people made the most of this time to play cards or dice or more energetic activities. Games such as Hide & Seek and Blind Man's Buff were popular during Tudor times. The day for exchanging presents was New Year's Day. It was mainly the upper and middle classes who gave gifts – those who could afford to were generally expected to give a gift to the lord of the manor on New Year's Day, meanwhile those in Court circles would give a gift to the monarch.

Twelfth Night, on 5<sup>th</sup> January, was the climax to Christmas, the night before Epiphany, celebrated with another great feast plus games, singing and dancing. The Twelfth Night cake was a feature of the feast, a large, rich fruit cake, a forerunner to today's Christmas cake. Epiphany followed the next day, the twelve days of Christmas having passed. After attending church, people enjoyed a final feast of the Christmas period which may have included an Epiphany tart, made in the shape of a star. Christmas was over for another year, although at the time, it was often the practice to retain the decorations until Candlemas on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.



## ***Bletch Diary***

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> December – 4:00pm   | <b>Village Hall</b> – Christmas Concert<br>With Bletchington Silver Band ( <i>see Page 16</i> )<br>Christmas lights on the Plaza to be turned on |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> December – 8:00pm  | <b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Christmas bingo ( <i>see Page 29</i> )                                                                         |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> December – 4:00pm  | <b>St. Giles' Church</b> – Carol Service<br>With Bletchington Silver Band ( <i>see Pages 6 &amp; 8</i> )                                         |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> December – 10:00pm | <b>St. Giles' Church</b> – Midnight Mass Service ( <i>see Pages 6 &amp; 8</i> )                                                                  |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> December – 8:00pm  | <b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – New Year's Eve Party ( <i>see Page 29</i> )<br>With Tommy's Tunes                                              |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> January – 9:00pm   | <b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Live music ( <i>see Page 29</i> )<br>With Fraud Squad                                                          |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> January – 8:00pm   | <b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Cash bingo ( <i>see Page 29</i> )                                                                              |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> January – 3:00pm   | <b>St. Giles' Church</b> – Family Service ( <i>see Page 8</i> )                                                                                  |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> January – 7:30pm   | <b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Race Night ( <i>see Page 29</i> )                                                                              |

## **THE VILLAGE NEWS CHRISTMAS QUIZ**

***No prizes – Just for fun!***

1. Who had a Christmas hit in 1962 with “*Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree*”?
2. An advertising campaign in the 1930s for which product set the trend for Father Christmas being depicted wearing red (previously he was generally depicted in green)?
3. Which was the first US state, in 1836, to officially recognise Christmas as a public holiday?
4. Born on Christmas Day 1971, who was Prime Minister of Canada from 2015 until earlier this year?
5. From which 1942 film was the song “*White Christmas*” taken?
6. Which brewery produces the Christmas themed beer, Twelve Days?
7. Latin name, *Gecarcoidea natalis*, what creature is Christmas Island famous for?
8. In the 1974 Christmas special of the sitcom “*Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads*”, what characters did Bob and Thelma go to the fancy dress party as?
9. The word *Noel* is derived from the Latin word *Natalis*, meaning what?
10. From which popular Christmas carol do these lyrics come: “*The playing of the merry organ, Sweet singing in the choir*”?

*Answers in the next edition of Village News*



## BLETCHINGTON SILVER BAND

Huge thanks to everyone who joined us for our Autumn "Disney+" concert. Hopefully you enjoyed the full range of Disney franchises from their traditional Princess films, through Star Wars and Marvel, to the Muppets. Not to overlook the contributions of our B-Band who took us to the world of The Simpsons and then left our audience with Disney's most famous ear-worm "It's A Small World After All" – which is probably still playing in the heads of some of you!

As always, the Band were very pleased to be involved with Remembrance events, both in Bletchington (where we played for the Remembrance Service at the Church and our MD, Sheldon, sounded the Last Post at the Memorial Stone at the Village Hall on Armistice Day), as well as other local villages where we provided buglers for the commemorations on both Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day.

The Festival also saw the first awarding of the Dr David Hoffler Brass Cup – donated to us by David's widow in his memory after we lost our Friend and Euphonium player to covid. This was awarded to the outstanding performance of the day, the one which made us all smile and pushed the players beyond what they thought they could do. The first recipients of this cup were a trio made up of Laura P and her two sons, Freddie and Bertie.

Finally, we are very happy to welcome Will Taylor back to the Band. Will returns as our Principal Euphonium after a few years off and has slotted straight back into the balance as though he had never been gone. This does resolve one of our recent player issues quite neatly but unfortunately, as is often the case, once we solve one problem, another crops up. We are currently in need of cornet players (our section currently consists of 7 players where there should be 10) and would welcome any experienced players looking for a new challenge. Please visit our website, or contact:

[md@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk](mailto:md@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk)  
for more information.



For full details of our upcoming engagements, and all our other news, why not visit our website: [www.bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk](http://www.bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk) or follow us on social media.

## THURSDAY CLUB

The October harvest lunch went down well with fish & chips from Albert's Fish Bar in Kidlington, plus a very well organised quiz from Val.

For the November meeting, Neil and Sandra presented a painting session.

Members were given pebbles, plus acrylic paints and all the necessary equipment required to decorate the pebbles.

The session was well received and the members appeared to enjoy the experience. Sam Samways was awarded first prize for the best design.

A ploughman's tea followed.



*Sam with his prize-winning pebble*



*Betty Jackson with her decorated pebble*

December events are as follows: 4<sup>th</sup> December it's Bingo then on 12<sup>th</sup> December we have our Christmas lunch at Kirtlington Golf Club. Please note, members and guests are asked to bring Christmas themed raffle prizes to this event.

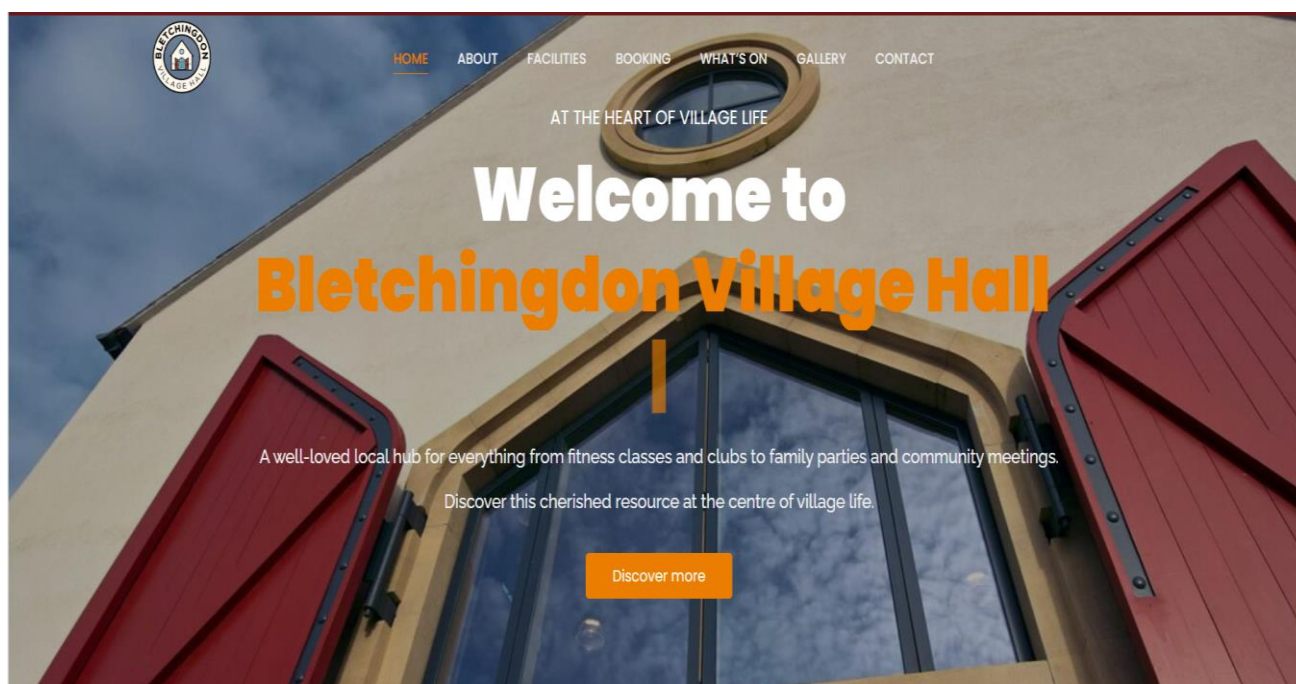
The committee thought it would be a good idea to find out from members what they would like so members were given a survey to complete to get ideas for next year's programme. If there is anything you would like to be included, please fill in the form or let a committee member know.

Thursday Club is for anyone aged 50 or over. We meet on the first Thursday of the month at 2:00pm in the Village Hall for a variety of activities including tea, talks, raffles and entertainment.



## The Bletchingdon Community Foundation

### Introducing our new website



The trustees of the Bletchingdon Community Foundation are pleased to announce that our new website is ready to go live during December. Designed by local resident Diane Montrose, the new website gives the BCF its own platform to promote the Village Hall, under our own control, rather than just having a page as part of the Parish website. The website also consolidates the activities of the BCF as a whole, including the Charity and the Allotments.

Visit: <https://bletchingdonvillagehall.co.uk> to take a look.

Please note the website is in a state of continuous development so may not be fully completed at the start of December.

### Christmas lights

The trustees of the BCF wish you all a very happy Christmas. Please come along to the Silver Band Christmas concert on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, starting at 4:00pm. This promises to be a great way for us all to start the festive season. We will also be turning on the Christmas lights in the Village Hall Plaza as part of this event.

Unfortunately, we are unable to hold a separate Village Hall event marking the turning on of the lights this year, as has happened in recent years. This is due to a suitable date in the diary not being available.

## Village Hall directory

The Village Hall offers a wide range of activities for all age groups. Our directory below details the regular groups currently operating. If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact the organiser.

| Event                                                   | Days & times                                                                            | Contact                                           | Telephone / E-mail                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physio-led Pilates/Yoga classes                         | Monday – 10:00am<br>Thursday – 7:15pm<br>Friday – 10:30am                               | Gemma Queralt<br>(MCSP Chartered Physiotherapist) | 07974 692287<br>gemma.c.queralt@gmail.com                                                                 |
| Zumba Gold (low impact)                                 | Thursday – 10:30-11:30am<br>(Term time only)                                            | Mariana Bujons Palmer                             | zumbawithmarianaoxford@gmail.com                                                                          |
| Tumble Tots (walking up to 4 years, play sessions)      | Wednesday<br>(Term time only)<br>10:15am to 2 yrs.<br>11:15am 2-3 yrs.<br>12:15pm 3yrs+ | Catherine Codd                                    | 07305 097209<br>northcotswolds@tumbletots.com<br><br><u>Website:</u><br>www.tumbletots.com.northcotswolds |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Bletchington Brownies (girls, 7-10yrs.) | Monday – 6-7:30pm<br>(Term time only)                                                   | Lorraine Wing                                     | girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk                                                                        |
| Total Body Conditioning                                 | Monday – 7:30pm<br>Wednesday – 6:30pm                                                   | Geraldine Jennings                                | 07875 364130<br>geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk                                                            |
| Stretch & core (non-sweat)                              | Wednesday – 7:30pm                                                                      | Geraldine Jennings                                | 07875 364130<br>geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk                                                            |
| Thursday Club (over 50s)                                | First Thursday of the month – 2:00pm                                                    | Tommy Coombes<br>Neil Spencer                     | 01869 350860 / 07931 817235<br>01869 350437 / 07508 442550<br>neil.sandra@hotmail.co.uk                   |
| Bletchington Silver Band (Senior band)                  | Tuesday - 7:30pm<br>Friday – 7:30pm                                                     | Laura                                             | secretary@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk                                                                    |
| Bletchington Silver Band (B band)                       | Friday – 6:30pm                                                                         | Laura                                             | secretary@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk                                                                    |
| Children's Martial Arts Class (Jiu Jitsu)               | Wednesday – 5:15pm                                                                      | David Plested                                     | 07515 560201<br>inspirebjjuk@gmail.com                                                                    |



**Soldiers of  
Oxfordshire  
Museum**

The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock, is now hosting a powerful new exhibition of artwork by Level 3 Art & Design Students of Abingdon & Witney College. The exhibition, open until 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025, marks 80 years since the end of the war and since the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by Allied forces. The exhibition forms part of the museum's wider commemoration of the Holocaust and the Oxfordshire Yeomanry's role in liberating Bergen-Belsen.

The project has seen students respond to deeply personal stories and artefacts from the museum's collection - among them, those of Holocaust survivor Naomi Kaplan and Oxfordshire Yeomanry soldier Arthur Tyler. Arthur was approached by Naomi and wrote letters to her family in the US, eventually leading to her reuniting with them, and the start of a new life in Houston, Texas.



## **The Charity is here to help anyone who needs it**

### **The purpose of the charity is to:**

- **Relieve financial hardship**
- **Reduce social isolation**
- **Support education**

It is available to anyone living in the parish of Bletchington.

The Charity committee would like to wish everyone in Bletchington a very happy Christmas. Our final meeting of the year was held on 19<sup>th</sup> November when various grants were awarded, helping ensure that no-one in the village goes hungry or cold over the festive season.

The committee assesses all grant applications, aiming to help as many people in Bletchington as possible, as well as providing support for village organisations. Unfortunately, there is only so much cash to go around, so the committee must prioritise applications and has to say no sometimes. That said, the committee does not want to see anyone in the village facing hardship so will always give fair and careful consideration to any reasonable requests for help. Examples of some of the things the Charity can help with are listed below.

If you would like to apply for financial support for yourself, a friend, family member or neighbour then you can do this using a form downloaded from the Charity's page on the village website, [www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk](http://www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk). As you will have read in the BCF article on Page 18, their new website is about to go live. As part of the BCF, the Charity's on-line presence will move over to this platform and, going forward, the grant application form for downloading will transfer to this (with a crossover period when it will be on both websites). If you do not have internet access, then a member of the committee will happily drop a form off to you and can assist applicants in filling it out. Preferred contact is via e-mail: [charity.secretary@thebcf.net](mailto:charity.secretary@thebcf.net) or ring and leave a message on **01869 350180**. All applications are treated in complete confidence.

Examples of regular grants given include:

- Utility bills
- Travel to school
- School uniform
- Sixth form grants
- University grants
- Help towards funeral costs
- Payment of over-75s television licence

Applications are considered at our meetings - generally held quarterly. If an application is urgent, please let us know and the committee will consider it sooner. Please submit applications punctually and only mark 'urgent' if that really is the case. Any which do not appear genuinely urgent may be held until the meeting date.

**The next meeting is scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – Applications to be in by 27<sup>th</sup> February please.**



## Kirtlington Morris

It was only three years ago, in Autumn 2022, post Covid, that we were bemoaning our continuing lack of members and consequent inability to do anything much, with the prospect of either making a major policy change or facing the inevitable.

We made that change in Spring 2023 by going mixed, open to all, and we haven't looked back, except perhaps to wonder why we didn't do so sooner. We had four new recruits that year, which made all the difference in that we were able to practise every week, and in 2024, starting with the Kirtlington Wassail, we were once again able to get out and about and Raise Our Profile.

Fast forward to Lamb Ale 2025 and Kirtlington Fete, after which four more new recruits were so enthused by the new mixed side that they joined us for regular practice in September, since when practice nights have been positively busy.

It's at this point that I should single out our dance foreman Dillon, on whose patient shoulders fall the duties of training up the new recruits. 'Patient' doesn't really cover it, as Tuesday evenings for him are a juggling session, teaching new dancers the basic moves while keeping the more experienced dancers on their toes, so to speak, with the finer points of our dances. A heartfelt thank you to Dillon, I don't know where you find all that patience.

Our danceouts this year have increased along with our manpower, starting with Kirtlington Wassail in January, guests at a couple of morris events, Oxford Folk Weekend, then of course the Lamb Ale Morris Festival, a local wedding, and several Tuesday evening danceouts at local pubs.

And we have several invitations for events next year, not least the Kirtlington Wassail on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2026, and our own Kirtlington Lamb Ale Morris Festival, 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May.

Things are definitely returning to where they should be, and for this I thank all our members, old, older, and new and newer...

And don't forget our practices are open to all, Tuesdays 8pm, Kirtlington Village Hall.

Onward and Upward!

***Nigel Holt, Squire, Kirtlington Morris - November 2025***  
**07871 856323**



### ***Did you know.....?***

The song "Jingle Bells" was written by James Lord Pierpont, an American pastor, in 1857. The song was originally called "The One-Horse Open Sleigh" and it was not specifically written as a Christmas song, making no reference at all to Christmas in the lyrics. The song evolved somewhat over the ensuing decades and, under its new title, gradually became associated with Christmas.

## **WREN AT BLETCHINGDON RECTORY?**

Before we moved to the Old Rectory, we were told that Christopher Wren, the great architect of St Paul's Cathedral, had lived there for a while as a boy. But the dates, and the exact circumstances of his stay were obscure, due to the disruptions caused by the Civil War.

Wren was born in 1632 into a religious, intellectual and well-connected family. His father, also named Christopher, was a scholarly clergyman on the "high" wing of the Church of England, while his uncle Matthew Wren was a bishop, first of Norwich, then of Ely. This was the wing of the Church loathed by the Puritans who eventually went to war against the King.

In 1635 his father succeeded uncle Matthew as Dean of Windsor and Register of the Order of the Garter. These posts brought their holder into close contact with King Charles I and the royal court. The Wren family lived in a large house within the walls of Windsor Castle, close to St George's Chapel. Dean Wren took his duties seriously, and documented the history of the Order including a full list of Garter knights dating back to the foundation in 1348. The Order was especially close to King Charles' heart. Dean Wren officiated at all Garter ceremonies, including the installation of the eight year old Prince of Wales, later King Charles II, in 1638.

The Dean's house was also the scene of a good deal of discussion on scholarly and what we would now call scientific interest. Among the people who regularly met there were Prince Charles Louis, the Elector Palatine, who was in England looking for help in regaining the German lands which he had lost in the Thirty Years War; his English chaplain Dr John Wilkins; and others interested in astronomy, anatomy, medicine and other areas of research. Wilkins in particular was to play a vital part in Wren's later development.

At some point before 1641 Christopher was sent to Westminster School, whose headmaster, Dr Richard Busby, was a firm royalist. Wren was already attracting notice as an unusually intelligent boy with a wide range of interests. By the age of ten or eleven he was writing long and expressive letters in Latin to his father. He was also extremely good with his hands, for instance making sundials and other mechanical devices.

When the Civil War broke out in 1642, the Wren family left Windsor and followed the King to his wartime capital at Oxford. The Dean's brother Bishop Matthew Wren, by contrast, was imprisoned in the Tower of London and not released for eighteen years. Young Christopher remained for a time at Westminster, protected by Dr Busby. But as the war became more bitter, and the Parliamentary side grew more vindictive, the boy moved back with his family, who were living in straitened circumstances at Oxford. Dean Wren had lost nearly all of his income, and Oxford was essentially an armed camp, crowded with soldiers, horses and military clutter.

In 1643, Wren's eldest sister Susanna married Revd William Holder, a scholar and noted musician who had been appointed rector of Bletchingdon in 1642. However, because of the war, the Holders were unable to settle in Bletchingdon immediately. From early on in the conflict, wounded soldiers had been treated in the village, no doubt because it was more conducive to healing than cramped and unhealthy Oxford. In spring 1645, Oliver Cromwell led a surprise raid into the county, comprehensively defeating a Royalist force at Islip on 25<sup>th</sup> April before pushing on to capture Bletchingdon.

During that summer of 1645, Dean Wren and Revd Holder were both away, serving as chaplains to Prince Rupert's army defending Bristol for the king, but when Rupert surrendered in September, they were mercifully sent back to Oxford by the Parliamentary forces.

In 1646, King Charles cut his losses and retreated to the north; the cash-strapped Wren family now needed a refuge. Revd Holder and his wife had by then moved to Bletchingdon. As they had no children, there was room at the rectory for Dean and Mrs Wren, along with fourteen year old Christopher and his younger sister Elizabeth. Dean Wren lived here until his death in 1659, and was buried in the churchyard.

This must have been a happy time for the family, although their royal connections meant they always had to be careful not to draw the attention of the new rulers of England.

John Aubrey, writing probably in the 1690's, observed in his Brief Lives that at Bletchingdon, Holder's "*hospitality and learning, mixt with great courtesy, easily conciliated the love of all his neighbours to him.*"

In addition *"He was very helpful in the education of his brother-in-law, Mr. Christopher Wren, a youth of a prodigious inventive wit, and of whom he was as tender as if he had been his own child, who gave him his first instructions in geometry and arithmetic, and when he was a young scholar at the University of Oxford, was a very necessary and kind friend. The parsonage-house at Bletchingdon was Mr. Christopher Wren's home, and retiring-place; here he contemplated, and studied, and found-out a great many curious things in mathematics. About this house he made several curious dials, with his own hands, which are still there to be seen."*

Aubrey says further of Holder:

*"He is a handsome, graceful person.... and of an even and smooth temper; so that, if one would go about to describe a perfect good man, would draw this Doctor's character. Of a just stature; grey eye; tall and well-set; sanguine; thin skin; roundish face; graceful elocution; his discourse so gentle and obliging; clear reason."*

And he gives this remarkable (for the time) tribute to Holder's wife Susanna, Wren's sister:

*"It ought not to be forgot the great and exemplary love between this Doctor and his virtuous wife, who is not less to be admired, in her sex and station, then her brother Sir Christopher; and (which is rare to be found in a woman) her excellences do not inflate her. Amongst many other gifts she has a strange sagacity as to curing of wounds, which she does not do so much by precedents and receipt books, as by her own excogitancy (diagnosis), considering the causes, effects, and circumstances. His majesty King Charles II, had hurt his hand, which he trusted his surgeons to make well; but they made it much worse, so that it swelled up, and pained him up to his shoulder; and pained him so extremely that he could not sleep, and began to be feverish. Someone told the king what a rare she-surgeon he had in his house; she was presently sent for at eleven clock at night. She presently made ready a poultice, and applied it, and gave his majesty sudden ease, and he slept well; next day she dressed him, and in time perfectly cured him, to the great grief of all the surgeons, who envy and hate her."*

This incident took place much later, in the 1670's, when William Holder had ceased to be rector of Bletchingdon and was a canon of St Paul's Cathedral, then in the process of being rebuilt to Wren's design. But that is getting ahead of the story of Wren's life at Bletchingdon.

Wren was fourteen when he moved there with the rest of his family. He lived permanently at the rectory for at least two years, after which he began to come under the tutelage of Dr John Wilkins, whom he had known when he was a boy at Windsor, and who was warden of Wadham College from 1648 to 1659. This was the period of the Commonwealth, when Cromwell ruled England after the execution, in January 1649, of King Charles I. Wilkins was not a Royalist, but his well-known support for the Commonwealth meant he was able safely to gather round him a number of Royalist gentlemen with scholarly interests and time to spare on intellectual pursuits. This informal group was known as the Oxford Philosophical Club or the Oxford Circle. Years later, after the restoration of the monarchy, it developed into the Royal Society.

Wren was much the youngest of this group, and was clearly regarded by Wilkins and others as a youth of remarkable promise. He was enrolled as a Fellow/Commoner (undergraduate) at Wadham in the academic year 1649/50, when he was seventeen. It seems that he divided his time between Wadham and the rectory at Bletchingdon for the next three years. It is unlikely that his father would have been able afford the fees of a fellow commoner, which covered board and lodging as well as tuition. Bletchingdon would also have sheltered him from the increasingly vengeful Commonwealth authorities, and given him the encouragement of his loving family.

Nevertheless, Wren took a prominent part in the Oxford Circle. At Wadham Wren successfully injected a substance into the blood stream of his own dog, thus demonstrating the feasibility of inoculation in humans. He was noted for his keen astronomical observations, and his brilliance in devising and constructing telescopes, microscopes and sun-dials, in fact for his accuracy in measuring all sorts of things.

In 1653, aged only 21, Wren became a fellow of All Souls (which in contrast to Wadham had been strongly royalist during the civil war). This gave him an income as well as scholarly prestige. With his parents still living at Bletchingdon, no doubt he regularly visited the rectory. His prospects took an upward turn when the monarchy was restored in 1660, and King Charles II returned from exile. He moved to London, and was noticed by the King, who in 1668 asked him to design a new St Paul's Cathedral following the Great Fire of 1666. He was also much involved in the subsequent construction of St Paul's, as well as many of the City churches for which he was also responsible.



He was now secure, politically and financially, and in 1669, aged 37, he married Faith Coghill of Bletchingdon. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Coghill, who owned the manor house that stood where Bletchingdon Park is now. Given that Wren had spent so much time in the village it is tempting to imagine them being childhood sweethearts. At any rate his uncle the rector is thought by some to have played a part in bringing them together.

They clearly loved each other. A scrap of a charming letter survives from Wren to Faith about a watch which she seems to have dropped into water and which Wren has mended:

"I have sent your Watch at last & envy the felicity of it, that it should be soe near your side & soe often enjoy your Eye. ... but have a care for it, for I have put such a spell into it; that every Beating of the Balance will tell you 'tis the Pulse of my Heart, which labors as much to serve you and more trewly than the Watch; for the Watch I beleieve will sometimes lie, and sometimes be idle & unwilling ... but as for me you may be confident I shall never ..."

Faith, who was 33 when they married, moved to London with Wren and swiftly bore two sons: Gilbert, who lived only for 18 months and is buried in the chancel of St Martin's-in-the-Fields; and Christopher, born 1675, who lived a long life, and having been trained by his father as an architect, supervised the topping out of St Pauls in 1710. Sadly, Faith died of smallpox when Christopher was only six months old, and is buried next to Gilbert. After the funeral, Faith's mother, Lady Coghill, took the infant Christopher home to Bletchingdon to be raised in security.

Less than two years after Faith's death, Wren married Jane Fitzwilliam, daughter of the second Baron Fitzwilliam. She also bore two children: Jane, born the year of their marriage, suggesting there might have been an element of necessity in the nuptials; and William, who was born with a disabling condition. The theory that this marriage was hurried is supported by the fact that Wren's close friends had never heard of her and only met her some weeks after the wedding. Jane died of tuberculosis in 1680. Wren never married again, though he lived to 90.

If Wren were to return to Bletchingdon today, he would not recognise the rectory. It was largely rebuilt in 1752 by a later rector, the Revd Peter Brown. The front of the building, which faces away from Weston Road, is totally Georgian in style, as are the rooms in that part. However, the rear of the house, the side which you first see when you approach from Weston Road, is on a lower level than the front, and the ceiling heights are lower, at least on the ground floor. It may be that this rear part is a survival from the older 17<sup>th</sup> century house. In fanciful moments I imagine the teenaged Wren being taught mathematics by his brother-in-law in what is now my study on the first floor.

The rectory at Bletchingdon played a vital part in Christopher Wren's life. It sheltered his family from the political storms raging after the end of the civil war. Here he found love with Faith Coghill. Here he began his ascent to becoming one of the most brilliant scholars in an age of enormous scholarship and intellectual discovery, as well as England's greatest architect.

**Patrick Heren**

## **HOW TO AVOID COSTLY PROBATE**

You've spent your life working, saving, and accumulating nice things - your home, your car, your stash of fine wines, and that utterly pointless collection of commemorative coins you once thought might be worth something. Then, when you finally pop your clogs, your family should simply inherit everything and get on with their lives, right? Well, yes - but only if you actually do something about it now. Ignore it and instead of a smooth inheritance, your loved ones will be staring into a bureaucratic abyss, unsure where your liabilities begin or end, how to report your tax, or even where the hell your Will is - if you bothered to make one.

So, let's avoid that particular disaster. Here are four very simple ways to ensure your estate doesn't become a legal and financial black hole.

### **1. Make a Will (Seriously, Just Do It)**

The simplest way to cut probate costs and speed up the whole process is to make a will. Without a Will, your estate falls under the delightful rules of intestacy, meaning the government decides who gets what. And trust me, they're not interested in efficiency. A properly written will means your assets are distributed faster, fewer legal disputes arise, and you won't end up paying thousands in legal fees just to sort out who gets your collection of antique golf clubs. And before you think, "*I'll just scribble something on a napkin*" - don't. Get it done properly by a solicitor. It's money well spent.

### **2. Talk to Your Family and Executors**

You can meticulously plan your estate, dodge as much tax as legally possible, and leave behind a watertight Will and still your probate can be costly. Why? Because families erupt into all-out war when there are surprises. Your executors are the ones who'll be doing the admin of your estate. Your beneficiaries are the ones getting your stuff. If you don't tell both who's getting what and why then expect tears, tantrums, and years of awkward Christmas dinners. A simple honest conversation now means no one is blindsided by your decisions later. Plus, your executor will actually know what to do (rather than learning on the job badly), and you reduce the risk of fights, resentment, and eye-watering legal bills.

### **3. Get Organised**

Executors have a tough enough job without having to play Sherlock Holmes with your finances. If you don't fancy your family spending months on a treasure hunt for your assets (or debts), then get your paperwork in order. Keep everything they will need after you die - your Will, bank statements, mortgage details, life insurance policies, investments, and any outstanding debts - in one safe place. This isn't just about making things easy; it's about avoiding a bureaucratic circus that could see probate drag on forever.

### **4. Keep It Updated**

Now, just because you've stuffed everything into a folder once doesn't mean you're done. Keep it updated at least once a year. Nobody wants to wade through a stack of decade-old bank statements from an account you closed years ago or - worse - find out you had a secret offshore fund only after probate is wrapped up. A little regular maintenance means your executor won't be blindsided by a financial mess that could delay probate.

### **The Bottom Line**

Probate is an expensive, slow-moving bureaucratic process, but with a bit of planning, you can avoid the worst of it. Make a Will, tell your executors and beneficiaries what to expect and keep your paperwork organised and up to date. Yes, all this requires effort and conversations about estate planning can be uncomfortable, but a quick chat now could save your family thousands in solicitor fees later. And if all else fails? Well, you could always take the ultimate tax-saving approach and spend it all before you go.

Who's up for a luxury cruise?

***Anna Boucher, The Burnside Partnership***

Please see the Burnside Partnership advert on Page 37.

## **KIRTLINGTON & BLECHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Our 2025-26 programme began in late **September** with a lively talk by local historian, **Gillian Crane**, on the **Mitford Sisters**. Seeming to combine glamour and eccentricity in equal measure, they remain a fascinating piece of 20<sup>th</sup> Century British social and political history. Taking each sister in turn, Gillian recounted her life and career. Several of them had a weakness for wealthy and sometimes notorious men (Sir Oswald Moseley and Hitler among them) and a penchant for extreme political views (of both right and left).



More might have been made of Nancy whose novels and books of social comment have more enduring value than some of the ephemeral infatuations with the great and the bad. Leavened with anecdotes, Gillian's talk also contained interesting exchanges between the sisters and comments about one another from their diaries and letters. Debo, the youngest, who became Duchess of Devonshire and chatelaine of Chatsworth, died only in 2014. Alan Bennett described her in his diaries as "tough, kind, but above all, fun". It's a generous epitaph for the entire sisterhood.

Our **October** talk took the form of an interview with the Conservative peer, **Lord Nigel Biggar**, a former Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford and the author of the best-selling ***Colonialism: a moral reckoning***. This attracted a sizeable turnout including a number of visitors.

The book has been highly controversial as Nigel takes issue with what he believes is a very imbalanced recent view of the history of the British Empire as an evil project. He described why he set about to try to alter this in a wide-ranging discussion beginning with a consideration of whether it is ever right for one nation to invade territory which does not belong to it, displace some of the indigenous inhabitants and expropriate its assets. From there the interview covered issues including Britain's role in slavery, the effect on India of the East India Company, British attitudes to the issue of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the character of Cecil Rhodes, and the degree to which racism which exists in Britain today can be said to have originated in imperial contact with other peoples. Nigel gave thoughtful and cogent replies to some penetrating questions from the audience and left us all with plenty to reflect on as we ponder our own views of the issues.



*Paul Clifford*

### **Our January meeting**

## **Salt in Prehistoric Britain**

**JANICE KINORY**

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January at 2:30pm, Kirtlington Village Hall**



**St Mary's Church, Kidlington**

# **CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL**

**SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER, 10AM TO 4PM**

**SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER, 11:30AM TO 5PM**

**FREE ADMISSION**

**REFRESHMENTS**

**LIVE MUSIC**



Sponsor a tree!  
Scan for details or email  
[office@kidhp.org.uk](mailto:office@kidhp.org.uk)

**Donations in aid of:  
Papyrus and Noor Society**

Papyrus registered charity no. 1070896. Noor Society is a registered charity in Palestine

# BLETCHINGTON

## SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB



Bletchington Sports & Social Club is situated at the end of the drive in the Sports Ground on Oxford Road. The club is self-funded and run entirely by volunteers. We offer memberships throughout the year, renewable on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Annual memberships costs just £15 for a family, £10 for an individual and £5 for senior citizens and u18's. You are more than welcome to come in for a drink.

We have Sky Sports, Darts, Pool and a Bar Billiards table. We generally open for any major televised sporting events. Our opening hours vary during the week, but we are always open from 5:00pm on Friday and 7:30pm on Saturday evenings. More details can be found on our Facebook page.

We are able to offer use of the clubhouse outside of normal hours for private events such as Christenings and Funeral Wakes. If you would like to make use of the facilities, drop into the club or contact a member of the committee to check availability. We can also accommodate parties during normal opening times, but members will still be permitted to use the bar.

### Polite Notice

If you are using the public footpath that runs from Oxford Road through the sports field, please keep dogs on leads and clean up behind them. This helps us keep the area safe for the children and sports teams that use the facilities. We have also experienced some damage to the clubhouse where ball games have been played against the building, necessitating costly repairs. We respectfully ask that this is avoided.

### TEAM NEWS



*Team captain, Carl Davies lifts the trophy for winning the Championship for the summer season*

**Bletchington Nomads – Quiz Team:** After winning the Championship (second tier) for the summer season, the Nomads find themselves promoted to the Premiership of the Oxfordshire Quiz League in the winter season and thus face a daunting task over the coming months.

The season got off to a great start with the Nomads winning the tabletop opener at the Blackbird against ten other teams, leading from start to finish and top scoring or joint-top scoring in five out of the seven rounds.

Unfortunately, this promising start to the season could not be continued into the league campaign, which saw the Nomads lose their opening two matches. They returned to winning ways at the third attempt, beating a very strong team in the Ploughman's Bunch!

**Football:** The First team, playing in Division 1 of the Oxfordshire Senior League, are in a midtable position and the Development team, playing in Division 3, are at the wrong end of the table.

**Cricket:** The Cricket AGM will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> December. Please visit the cricket club website at: [www.obncc.play-cricket.com](http://www.obncc.play-cricket.com)

**Pool:** The A team are second in section 2 of the Oxford Landlords Pool League and the B team are third in section 3.

**Bar Billiards:** The teams have just started the winter leagues.

**Darts:** The teams have just started the winter leagues.

**Cribbage:** The season started at the beginning of October.

**Aunt Sally:** At the Finals night the team won the Jim Whitbread Cup, Wally Harwood was runner up in the Ted Houghton singles cup and Chris Thorne and Steve Brock were runners up in the pairs competition.

## *What's On at the Club?*

**SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup> December –**  
**CHRISTMAS BINGO (eyes down 8:00pm)**

**WEDNESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> December –**  
**NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY**  
**with Tommy's Tunes (8:00pm)**

**SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup> January –**  
**LIVE MUSIC: Fraud Squad (9:00pm)**

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> January –**  
**CASH BINGO (eyes down 8:00pm)**

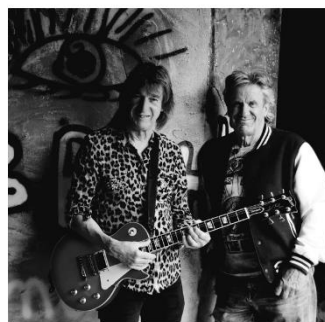
**SATURDAY 31<sup>st</sup> January –**  
**RACE NIGHT (7:30pm)**

**Bletchington Sport and Social Club**

**LIVE MUSIC**

with

**The Fraud Squad**



playing rock classics from  
the 60s through to the 90s

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January at 9.00pm**

**ALL WELCOME**

# RACE NIGHT

**SATURDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY**  
**BLETCHINGTON SPORT AND SOCIAL CLUB**  
**DOORS OPEN 7PM - FIRST RACE 8PM**  
**ALL WELCOME**

Bletchington | Enslow | Heathfield

# YOUR COUNCIL MATTERS

"DEVELOPING A THRIVING, INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RURAL COMMUNITY"

## What's happening?

### Neighbourhood Plan Update

After a very long gestation period, the neighbourhood plan has reached the next stage.

Subject to approval from the Parish Council we will now move to the pre-submission consultation stage. This gives local residents and other interested parties the opportunity to comment on the plan prior to its formal submission to Cherwell District Council.

You can look at and/or download the documents on the PC website at:

<https://www.bletchington-pc.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning-documents>

A hard copy should also be available in the Village Hall.

There will also be a consultation form for you to complete if you wish to make any comments about the plan. Subject to approval, the consultation period will run from 15<sup>th</sup> December until 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

### What do you want to know?

If there is any information from the Parish Council that you would like included in the next Village News, please let us know.

## Call for Volunteers

Your parish council is run by volunteers who are always looking for willing people to get involved in village matters. Any time or skill you can offer, however large or small really makes a difference. If you want to know more about how you can support your community please get in contact ([clerk@bletchington-pc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@bletchington-pc.org.uk)). Here are just some of the initiatives that are currently going on in the community that need your support. Help make it happen, help make it better:

- Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) – Installation of signs to show the speed of vehicles as they enter the village
- Speedwatch – There is a small team doing a great job; the more people involved the less each needs to do!
- Neighbourhood Plan
- FixMyStreet SuperUser – Help identify and report local problems
- Community Fitness Area
- Community Emergency Plan

We're not looking for a huge commitment as even the smallest thing can make a big difference.

## Planning Matters

### New Applications Put Forward

**24/03381/F** – Robin Investments Limited - Caravan and Camping Park, Diamond Farm, Islip Road, Bletchingdon, OX5 3DR – The use of land for the siting of eight holiday lodges (technically static caravans), infrastructure and landscape planting, in place of 13 touring caravan pitches.

## Next meeting

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026** – there is no meeting in December.

Visit our website for information on public attendance and participation at Council Meetings.

Website: [www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk](http://www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk)



## Contact Details

| Name    | Role         | Email                                                                          | Phone  |
|---------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Sam Cox | Parish Clerk | <a href="mailto:clerk@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">clerk@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a> | 351967 |

Website: [www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk/parish-council/](http://www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk/parish-council/)

### Parish Councillors

| Name           | Role       | Email                                                                                            | Phone        |
|----------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Dan Robins     | Chair      | <a href="mailto:dan.robins@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">dan.robins@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>         | 350007       |
| Rachel Pirie   | Vice Chair | <a href="mailto:rachel.pirie@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">rachel.pirie@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>     | 07790 025110 |
| Chris Lane     | Councillor | <a href="mailto:chris.lane@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">chris.lane@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>         | 350257       |
| Mark Taylor    | Councillor | <a href="mailto:mark.taylor@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">mark.taylor@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>       | 350609       |
| Duncan Ledger  | Councillor | <a href="mailto:duncan.ledger@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">duncan.ledger@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>   | 351542       |
| Matt Whitehead | Councillor | <a href="mailto:matt.whitehead@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">matt.whitehead@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a> | 350991       |
| Nicola Morris  | Councillor | <a href="mailto:nicola.morris@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk">nicola.morris@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk</a>   | 351025       |

### District Councillors

| Name           | Email                                                                                    |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gemma Coton    | <a href="mailto:Gemma.Coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">Gemma.Coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a>       |
| Julian Nedelcu | <a href="mailto:Julian.Nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">Julian.Nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a> |
| Alisa Russell  | <a href="mailto:Alisa.Russell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">Alisa.Russell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a>   |

### County Councillor

| Name         | Email                                                                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Laura Gordon | <a href="mailto:laura.gordon@oxfordshire.gov.uk">laura.gordon@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> |

## **GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES**



## **ALLOTMENTS AVAILABLE TO RENT**

Each plot is approximately 28m. x 8m. = minimum 220 square metres

Rental is £15 per annum per plot

Available in double-plots, single plots and half-plots

If you are interested in renting an allotment, contact the Allotment Association

E-mail: [bletchingdon.allotments@gmail.com](mailto:bletchingdon.allotments@gmail.com)

*Christmas at*  
**BLENHEIM  
PALACE**  
2025



THE  
**ILLUMINATED**  
TRAIL

*The*  
**Palace  
of Oz**

PLUS  
**THE GREAT SKATE**  
AND  
**THE CHRISTMAS MARKET  
IN THE GREAT COURT**

**14 NOV – 3 JAN**

[blenheimpalace.com/christmas](http://blenheimpalace.com/christmas)





# BeccaLou Designs

## Celebration cakes



Christmas cakes and decorated chocolate oranges are now being made!

This year, cakes and chocolate oranges will be available on a 'buy them when you see them' basis. A variety of sizes and designs will be available to buy from Weston Community Shop from October and at the Big Breakfast in Weston Village Hall 6th December.

Unfortunately, I am unable to fulfil bespoke Christmas cake orders this year.

Birthday and other celebration sponge cakes can be ordered as usual before 6<sup>th</sup> December for collection up until 20<sup>th</sup> December.

Mandy Jones: [mandy@cobi.co.uk](mailto:mandy@cobi.co.uk)

**Tel/text: 07941 949743**

Message through Facebook or Instagram (beccalou\_designs) or through Weston-on-the-Green Community Shop

## ARBOCARE TREE SURGERY LTD

Tree surgery  
Landscaping  
Grounds Maintenance



**Qualified, insured,  
experienced arborists**

- Contractors to the National Trust
  - Surveys & reports
  - Patios & Decking
  - Turfing & Fencing

*For more details contact us on:*

Freephone **0808 155 5815**

Mobile **07778 811136**



Email **mharvey31@gmail.com**

**www.arbocare.co.uk**



## ALL ROOFS, GUTTERS & CHIMNEYS

- House maintenance
- Repointing
- Internal & external decorations
- Patios
- Decking
- Fencing

For a personal service, call Peter N. Southam:

• 01869 278333 • 07721 633220

• [peterroofer@aol.com](mailto:peterroofer@aol.com)

**INSURANCE APPROVED**



## Keep warm and well this winter at a Porthaven Care Home

Book an exclusive tour at [Porthaven.co.uk](http://Porthaven.co.uk)

### COTSWOLD GATE

BURFORD  
A PORTHAVEN CARE HOME



Cotswold Gate Care Home  
34 Forest Grove, Burford OX18 4FF  
01993 222800  
[csm.cotswoldgate@porthaven.co.uk](mailto:csm.cotswoldgate@porthaven.co.uk)

### LINCROFT MEADOW

KIDLINGTON  
A PORTHAVEN CARE HOME

Lincroft Meadow Care Home  
The Moors, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 2AA  
01865 950500  
[suzanne.morgan@porthaven.co.uk](mailto:suzanne.morgan@porthaven.co.uk)

NURSING • RESIDENTIAL • DEMENTIA • RESPITE



# THE TRAVEL DIRECTORS



## **Joanne Scurr & Kelly White are the Travel Directors, your local travel experts**

We are based in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and have between us more than 60 years of Travel Industry experience. We have worked a leading luxury long haul tour operators and have been lucky enough to have experienced first-hand the most amazing destinations across the globe. This means our experience and training helps guide and advise you on your holiday plans.

Our ethos for setting up our own business as The Travel Directors was that we felt there is a genuine gap in the market for a local Travel Company that not only has a wealth of knowledge, a love of travel but also a genuine passion for great customer service.

**We can offer you everything from Luxury Long Haul, Worldwide Escorted Tours, Sporting Events & Golfing Holidays, City Breaks, Cruise, Weddings, from the Americas, Europe right across to the Far East and Down Under to Australia**

**We are fully ABTA bonded and ATOL protected meaning your money is 100% safe**

Why would you risk your money booking online, trawling through endless websites where you cannot speak to a person and are just a number or a seat on a plane. Even with a High Street agency, you will see directional selling, promoting their own products rather than what is best for you. We are truly independent but with the financial backing and buying power of the Mid-Counties Co-operative meaning that we have access to the best rates from only trusted suppliers.

## **HOW TO CONTACT US**

**Joanne Scurr** Tel: 07900 492787 / Email: [joanne.scurr@thetraveldirectors.co.uk](mailto:joanne.scurr@thetraveldirectors.co.uk)  
Website: <https://www.thetraveldirectors.co.uk/joanne-scurr>

**Kelly White** Tel: 07732 353592 / Email: [Kelly.white@thetraveldirectors.co.uk](mailto:Kelly.white@thetraveldirectors.co.uk)  
Website: <https://thetraveldirectors.co.uk/kelly-white/>

 <https://www.instagram.com/joandkellythetraveldirectors/>  
 <https://www.facebook.com/joandkellythetraveldirectors/>

**DISCOVER**  **EXPLORE**  **RELAX**  **UNWIND** 



# The Shop Bicester Candles

**Diffuser & Candle Making Workshops  
Chunky Yarn Arm Knitting Workshops**



**Jewellery & Gifts**

**Homeware**

**Custom Paw Collars - Leather & Biothane**

**Crafters - Sell with us**



[www.bicestercandles.co.uk](http://www.bicestercandles.co.uk)

[Info@bicestercandles.co.uk](mailto:Info@bicestercandles.co.uk)

Greenhill Farm Campsite, Station Road, Bletchington, OX5 3BQ



## UK SOLAR GENERATION

POWERING CHANGE



**Friendly, responsive,  
Oxfordshire company**

**Save up to 70% on your  
electricity bills**

**Solar PV Systems  
Battery Storage Systems  
Electric Car Charging Points**

**TESLA**  
POWERWALL  
CERTIFIED INSTALLER

**MCS**  
CERTIFIED



**t: 01869 932250**

**e: [info@uksolargeneration.co.uk](mailto:info@uksolargeneration.co.uk)**

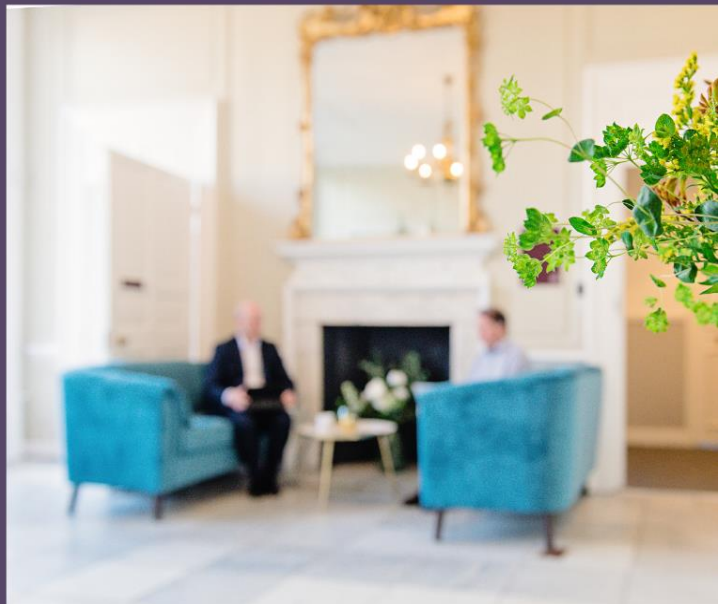
· T B P ·

THE BURNSIDE  
PARTNERSHIP

Specialist Private  
Client Lawyers &  
Tax professionals

Trusted advisors to  
individuals and their  
families

We provide specialist advice on Wills, inheritance tax planning, probates, powers of attorney and generally protecting your assets. Our tax specialists are also here to help with your personal tax compliance.



For more information, please call our Combe office on 01865 987781, visit [www.theburnsidepartnership.com](http://www.theburnsidepartnership.com) or email [anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com](mailto:anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com)

*"The team is superbly put together, showing professionalism and personality in equal measure"*  
Legal 500, 2024

The path to your future  
starts here...



## Sixth Form Open Evening

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
5:30pm to 7:30pm



Dedicated  
Sixth Form facilities



Bespoke  
pastoral support



Consistently  
outstanding grades



[www.gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk/sixth-form](http://www.gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk/sixth-form)



01865 374971

# BLETCHINGTON VILLAGE NEWS

Wishes all our advertisers

*A very Happy Christmas*

*&*

*A prosperous New Year*



**Thank you for your continuing  
support over the past year**



As the year draws to a close, we want to thank the wonderful Blethington community for your support and trust throughout 2025.

From all of us at AR Property Partners, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace, joy and time well spent with loved ones. May the New Year bring happiness, good health and exciting opportunities.

If moving is on your wish list for 2026, we'd love to help you make it happen.

Experience a smarter way to move with AR Property Partners.



01865 364541 Head Office  
01865 419630 Oxford Office



[Hello@ARPropertyPartners.co.uk](mailto:Hello@ARPropertyPartners.co.uk)



[www.ARPropertyPartners.co.uk](http://www.ARPropertyPartners.co.uk)

*Happy Christmas*



## Albany Care Home

7 London Road, Headington, OX3 7SN



Welcome to Albany Care Home where our friendly team truly care for your family like they would their own - providing compassion, respect, and dignity.

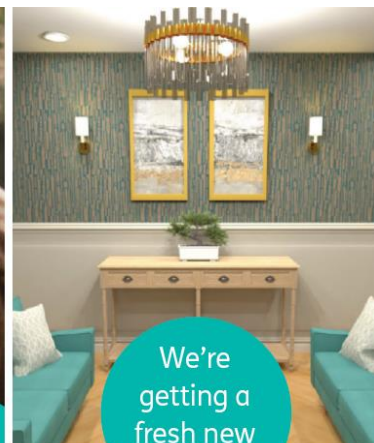
With a deep commitment to meeting residents' individual needs, whether it's **residential**, **nursing** or **dementia care**, Albany is your perfect choice.

**Call 01865 950750 for a friendly chat with an advisor.**

[healthcarehomes.co.uk](http://healthcarehomes.co.uk)



Images for illustration purposes



We're getting a fresh new look



## Kirtlington Property Maintenance

*Local and reliable home and garden improvements, maintenance and repairs*

- Painting and decorating internal and external
- Household repairs
- Various jobs inside and out
- Garden maintenance
- Pressure washing
- Landscaping including fencing, gates, decking, turfing, patios, driveways, shed/base installation etc.

Competitive rates, fully insured and references available on request

No job is too small – please call Noel Price on 07884 185171 or 01869 351619 or email [noelprice@btinternet.com](mailto:noelprice@btinternet.com)

[www.kirtlingtonpropertymaintenance.com](http://www.kirtlingtonpropertymaintenance.com)

For domestic and commercial cleaning please call Jayne Price on 07795 055202



## Oxfordshire's Magical Christmas Tree Forest



Walk through our famous "forest" of quality Xmas trees and choose a really fresh one this year.



Over 1000 cut and pot-grown trees

- traditional Norway Spruce with bright green foliage
- soft blue non-needled Nordmann firs



Holly Wreaths, holly bundles & mistletoe



Charity Reindeer Hunt for children



Free Hot Chocolates (bring your favourite mug)



Bunkers Raffle Bonanza



Flowering baskets & gifts



Evening Wonderland.



Winter flowering plants e.g. cyclamen, hyacinths, skimmias & more



Wintery photo opportunities.

### December

Open each day  
9am until 7pm  
(closed 25th Dec  
-2nd Jan)



## Bunkers Hill Plant Nursery

Bunkers Hill, Nr. Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 3BA

**01869 331492**

[www.bunkershillgardenshop.co.uk](http://www.bunkershillgardenshop.co.uk)



@bunkershillgardenshopoxford

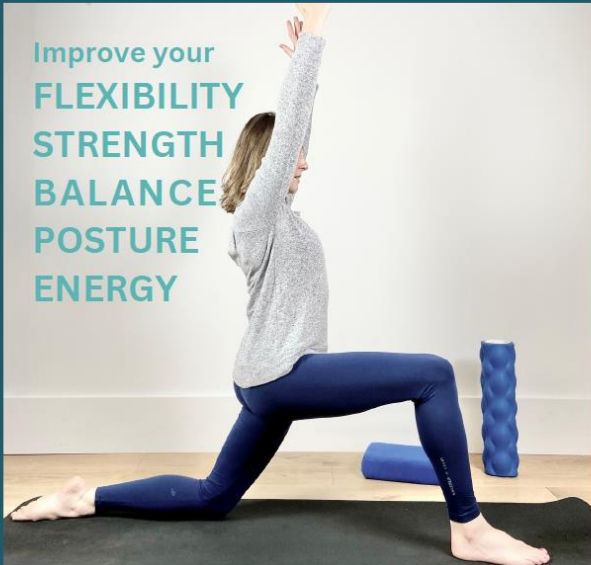


@bunkersgarden



## PHYSIO-LED PILATES/YOGA FUSION CLASSES GEMMA QUERALT MCSP HCPC

Improve your  
**FLEXIBILITY**  
**STRENGTH**  
**BALANCE**  
**POSTURE**  
**ENERGY**



[www.gqphysio.co.uk](http://www.gqphysio.co.uk) | ☎ 07974692287

### BLETCHINGDON VILLAGE HALL MONDAY

10 - 11am (intermediate)

### THURSDAY

7.15 - 8pm (intermediate)

### KIRTLINGTON VILLAGE HALL WEDNESDAY

9.30 - 10.30am (intermediate)

10.45 - 11.30am (beginner/improver)

### *Also available for:*

Physiotherapy consultations  
1:1 pilates or yoga

Why shiver...

... when we can deliver!



- Supplier of oils to homes, farms & industry for over 30 years
- Payment plans & Top-Up service available



01869 342111 | [info@nolanoils.co.uk](mailto:info@nolanoils.co.uk) | [www.nolanoils.co.uk](http://www.nolanoils.co.uk)

## Baby & me Pilates class

Core  
& Co

COME ALONG TO A FRIENDLY PILATES CLASS NEAR YOU!  
REGAIN STRENGTH, IMPROVE POSTURE & CONNECT WITH YOUR BODY  
ALL WHILE HAVING CUDDLES WITH YOUR BABY.

## Class time & location

Monday  
Islip village hall -  
10:30 - 11:30

All abilities welcome - Children up  
to crawling - Mums post 12 weeks

£10 CASH/£11 CARD - NO NEED TO BOOK - MATS AVAILABLE

## Mat Pilates - Oxford

COME ALONG TO A FRIENDLY PILATES GROUP NEAR YOU!  
ALL ABILITIES WELCOME - TURN UP, MOVE, STRETCH, FEEL GREAT & HAVE FUN

## CLASS TIMES & LOCATION

Core  
& Co

MONDAY  
KIRTLINGTON VILLAGE HALL 8-9PM

TUESDAY  
UPPER HEYFORD CHAPEL 8-9PM

WEDNESDAY  
TACKLEY VILLAGE HALL 8-9PM

Confidence is an energy  
not a body type

£10 CASH/£11 CARD - NO NEED TO BOOK - MATS AVAILABLE



## HOME COMFORTS

Moving can potentially be a stressful  
time, that's why we believe it is our  
job to make your move as smooth  
a journey as possible.

Simply give us a call, stick the kettle  
on and we'll be round in a jiffy:

01869 343 600  
cridlands.co.uk





Friendly and reliable  
family-run business  
Passionate about customer service  
Over 15 years' experience

01865 708464  
[info@jmfwindows.co.uk](mailto:info@jmfwindows.co.uk)  
CERTASS approved installer



Moss Removal & Roof Cleaning  
Patio & Driveway Cleaning  
Render & Brickwork Cleaning  
Solar Panel & Skylight Cleaning  
Installation of Bird Protection  
Chimney Cowl Installation



Enhance the appearance of your property  
with our quality assured friendly service  
[info@mossinator.co.uk](mailto:info@mossinator.co.uk) - 01865 362797



**Kidlington Football Club**  
**Tuesdays 4.00, 5.30 & 7.00pm**  
**Wednesdays 9.30 & 11.00am**  
**Saturdays 8.30am**  
**Laura 07795 150872**

**Cassington Sports & Social Club**  
**Thursdays 6.00pm**  
**Gemma 07581 306746**  
[slimmingworld.co.uk](http://slimmingworld.co.uk)



#### COMBE MILL RIVERSIDE TEA ROOM

##### WINTER MENU



**OPEN Wednesday's ONLY** (closed 24<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025)  
(WINTER 10.30 until to 3 pm)



**Homemade Soup & Crusty Bread £5.00**  
**Soup & Cheese Scone or Filled soft roll £6.00**  
**Baguettes £5.00**  
**(Ham, corned beef, cheese or tuna mayo (with salad or pickle))**  
**SOFT ROLL £3.00**

##### SCONES (Homemade)

**Plain or fruit with butter only £3.00 or**  
**Plain or fruit with jam and cream £3.50**  
**Cheese scone with pickle and cream cheese £3.50**



**Homemade Cakes: £3.50 per slice**



**Tea £1.50 (Speciality Teas : £2)**  
**Coffee : £2.00**  
**Hot Chocolate £2.00 (With Marshmallows & Cream £2.50)**  
**Diet Coke/Rio/7 Up : £1.50**  
**Fruit Shoots/Bottle Water: £1.00**  
**Apple Juice : £1.00**  
**Various Ice Creams/Lollies**

Combe Mill, Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Combe, Oxon. OX29 8ET



# DECEMBER AT RECTORY FARM



Tractor Shack Café open until Christmas  
from 9am-5pm except Monday.  
(4pm on Sunday)



Reserve your Free Range  
Norfolk Bronze Turkey for  
Christmas from us.

Farm Shop - full of goodies and fresh  
vegetables, including our farm-grown  
potatoes, to make your Christmas.

**RECTORY FARM, STANTON ST JOHN, OXFORD. OX33 1HF**

**MORE DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE:**  
**[www.rectoryfarmpyo.co.uk/christmas](http://www.rectoryfarmpyo.co.uk/christmas)**

your  
**coop**food

# We're here for you.

We're  
open

Mon – Sun  
7am – 10pm

Visit your Co-op food store in  
Bletchington today.

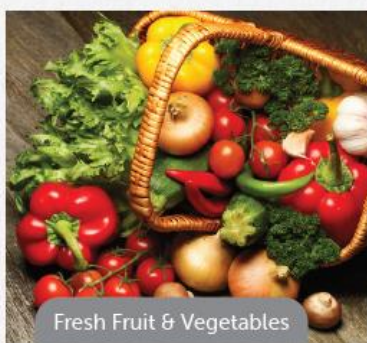
There's so much to tempt you, from our delicious Cook frozen range, to our Costa Express coffee and instore bakery. We've got it all, including chilled beers, wines and spirits, fresh meat and fish, fresh fruit and vegetables. Visit us today and see for yourself!



Costa Express Coffee



Cook Frozen Range



Fresh Fruit & Vegetables



Instore Bakery



Fresh Meat & Fish



Beers, Wines & Spirits



Ready Meals



Fresh Flowers

your  
**coop**food

Station Road, Bletchington,  
Oxfordshire, OX5 3DE

Opening Times:  
Mon-Sun 7am-10pm

 [midcounties.coop](http://midcounties.coop)

 [@coop\\_food](https://twitter.com/coop_food)

 [facebook.com/midcountiesfood](https://facebook.com/midcountiesfood)

Join us at  
[midcounties.coop/membership](http://midcounties.coop/membership)

