

BLETCHINGTON VILLAGE NEWS

YOUR COMMUNITY MAGAZINE – SERVING THE VILLAGE SINCE 1979

ISSUE 280

February – March 2026



Family of Swans on the Oxford Canal at Enslow

Reports from village organisations

The Clientele of the Blacks Head – Late 1960s

Birds seen in St. Giles' Churchyard during 2025

How to make sure your pets will be OK

Bletchington One-place Study

GALLERY



The Christmas festivities in Bletchington begin.....

The Silver Band
Christmas Concert

Brightening up the village.....

The Christmas lights on
the Village Hall Plaza



Meanwhile, at the Sports & Social Club.....

Left: We saw the New Year in with Tommy's Tunes

Below: Fraud Squad entertained us on a cold January evening with their special mix of rock and pop covers



EDITORIAL

As this is the first Village News of 2026, I would like to wish you all a very happy New Year and I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas. As always, there was a fantastic display of Christmas lights throughout the village, so thanks to everyone who made the effort to illuminate their homes and provide us all with some festive cheer. Thanks also to Bletchington Silver Band for putting on a great concert early in December, to get us all into the Christmas spirit.

Do you follow Bletchington in Facebook? An interesting picture appeared in there just before Christmas – a photograph of the clientele of the Blacks Head probably taken in the late 1960s. It was posted by Dave Markham, who now lives in Australia and whose parents, Frank and Jean, ran the pub at the time. It generated a good deal of interest amongst villagers, several of whom attempted to put names to the faces appearing in the line-up. Sadly most, if not all of the people in the picture are no longer with us, but Facebook followers who are long-time village residents were delighted to spot relatives or old family friends. The photograph can be seen on Page 10. It's now three years since the Blacks Head last opened its doors but, as we enter a new year, the news is encouraging as a planning application has been submitted to upgrade and eventually reopen the pub. Due to the current state of the building, it may be some considerable time yet before the next pint is served, but it would be great to think that when it does open, a new photograph of the clientele may be taken – and perhaps this will be featured in the Village News in sixty years' time!

This is **your** Village News and we are reliant upon material from organisations in the village and, of course, from you, the readers. 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. We love to hear from new contributors and we are always keen to hear from 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. Please contact us via e-mail at bletchnews@gmail.com. The deadline for us receiving material is always the **18th of the month** prior to publication – so articles for inclusion in the April/May edition must reach us by **18th March** please.

bletchnews@gmail.com

Pete Baker

Household Waste Recycling Centre Booking System

From 14th January, a new booking system for using Oxfordshire's recycling centres has been introduced. This means that residents will need to book for every visit and this can be done by calling **01865 519800** or visiting www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste. Bookings can be made up to 2 weeks in advance or a minimum 30 minutes before your visit. The new process is designed to help manage demand and traffic flow. Once you've booked, you'll get a confirmation e-mail with all the details you need. On the day of your visit, please bring your booking number and proof of address to show you're an Oxfordshire resident (otherwise you may be charged). To make your trip quicker, please sort out all recyclable items from your waste before you arrive. If that's not possible, there are sorting areas on site to help. More information is available from the County Council at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Bus news

Oxfordshire County Council have announced that the free use of Park & Ride buses has been extended until the end of March. This is only for those who can show their receipt for parking in the Park & Ride areas.

The MyBus weekly ticket prices have risen from 11th January. An adult weekly ticket is now £30 and for a young person (aged 5-18) it is £17. Day ticket prices (£6.50 and £3.50 respectively), are unchanged for now and the National Bus Fare Cap remains in place at £3 for a single fare, until March 2027.

Harry Spence

We were saddened to hear of the passing of village resident Harry Spence on 7th January. His funeral has been arranged for 10th February 2pm at Tackley crematorium OX5 3ER - all welcome. More detail will be put on the village Facebook page as and when it is confirmed.

Read Harry's obituary on Page 9.

Blacks Head - latest

An application for planning permission to refurbish and reopen our much-loved village pub has been submitted to Cherwell District Council. The Grade II listed building has been empty for three years and is now in a poor state of repair. The owner has pointed out that the building is not viable as a pub in its present format and significant upgrades are necessary, whilst a traditional village inn will remain the focal point of the site.

The application includes requests to carry out works to repair the fabric of the building, construction of two side extensions and a new accommodation block, enlargement of the cellar and landscaping works.



If you would like to give your support to plans to reopen our pub, please do so on-line via the Cherwell District Council planning register. Please visit <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/search> then, page down to find the 'Reference number' box and insert **25/03340/F** then click 'Search' near the foot of the page. This takes you to this specific application – under 'Reference No' click on the above number (this should be the only number displayed), then click on 'Comment on this application' and in the resulting field, enter your name, address and e-mail. Please select 'Support' for 'Type of comment' then enter your reasons in the comments field below. Your comments could be along the lines of the village needing a meeting place; not to have to travel to enjoy a drink or eat out; to preserve the historic building – indeed anything positive you can say that shows the planning committee there is local support for the project would be most welcome. After you have done this, click 'Submit'. Comments close on 5th February, so please do not delay showing your support.

Garden waste subscriptions

Don't forget your garden waste subscriptions expire on 28th February. You have until 30th March to renew your subscription, otherwise Cherwell District Council will no longer be able to collect your garden waste. The cost for a single bin for this year is £59. Reminders should have been sent to existing subscribers but if you have not received a reminder or would like to subscribe to this service for the first time, please visit their website:

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/payable-garden-waste-collection>

If you are unable to renew on-line, please call the Customer Service Team on **01295 227003**.

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.

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

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

From the registers:

29th November Danielle, Lady Waterpark Funeral

We offer our condolences to Caroline and all Danielle's family.

Palm Sunday

There will be a special Palm Sunday Procession at 10:00 on 29th March in Middleton Stoney, followed by a church service. Do come along to this.

Looking ahead to Easter

This year Easter Sunday falls on 5th April. Some dates for your diary: the Akeman Benefice will be holding an Agape Meal on Maundy Thursday – venue yet to be decided. On Good Friday, 'An Hour at the Cross' this year will be held in Weston-on-the-Green at 14:00. Bletchington's Easter service will be held at 09:30 on Easter Sunday. Full details of all Easter services and other Easter-related events will be in the next edition of Village News.

Eco Church

The Eco Church movement aims to encourage churches to minimize their carbon footprint and use their resources responsibly.

You may have noticed that a tree fell in the churchyard recently. The wood has now been taken to the back of the church where it will be allowed to decay naturally.

Last year six nest boxes were placed in the churchyard and most were occupied. During 2025, no less than 40 different bird species were seen or heard around the church – please see the full list on Page 15. If you are able to add to the list, please let us know.

St. Giles Bletchingdon has been given a Bronze Award under the eco church scheme.

FROM THE RECTOR

Dear friends,

As we approach the season of Lent (which begins on 18th February) we are invited once again to slow our pace, to reflect, and to think about spiritual discipline. Lent has traditionally been a time of prayer, fasting and generosity, but it is also a time that reminds us that faith is lived out in very practical ways.

This year, across our villages, we will be marking the season with a shared project called **Lent Labour**. We will be offering a series of simple, practical sessions in each village - litter picking, perhaps tidying churchyards and gardens, cleaning signs, and other small tasks that help care for the places we love. Each session will last around two hours and will be open to all, with no special skills required – just a willingness to lend a hand. Obviously what we can achieve will depend on how many turn up!

After each session we will gather in church for a simple lunch of bread, soup and cheese. This shared meal will be an important part of the day: a moment to pause, to give thanks, and to enjoy fellowship together.

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.

From the opening chapters of Genesis, where humanity is placed in the garden “to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2.15), scripture affirms work as a gift rather than a burden. St Paul encourages us, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” (Colossians 3.23). Even the smallest tasks can be acts of love and obedience, shaping both our communities and our hearts.

Lent Labour is about more than getting jobs done. It is about working side by side, caring for our communities, and discovering again that even the simplest acts can be part of our worship. I warmly encourage you to join in, in whatever way you are able.

With every blessing for a reflective and productive Lent!

Gareth

PS: At the time of going to press the full details for Lent Labour are not ready. But the sessions will be on Saturday mornings, from 10:30-12:30, with a cup of coffee beforehand in church. We will move around the six villages (all except Hampton Gay) – one village per week. All you need to do is turn up with suitable clothing and some gloves and perhaps implements. Further details will be posted on the benefice website, in the weekly email, and on Facebook. Watch this space!

Church services for February & March

FEBRUARY 2026	Sunday 1st <i>Candlemas</i>	Sunday 8th <i>4 before Lent</i>	Sunday 15th <i>3 before Lent</i>	Wedn'day 18th <i>Ash Wed.</i>	Sunday 22nd <i>Lent 1</i>
Bletchington	09:30 Breakfast Church	18:00 Benefice Choral Evensong	09:30 Holy Communion 15:00 Family Service		
Chesterton	08:00 Holy Comm. 11:00 Family Service	11:00 Holy Communion	11:00 Morning Worship	10:00 Holy Communion	10:00 Benefice Communion
Hampton Gay					
Kirtlington	11:00 Holy Communion	09:30 Morning Worship	16:00 Evensong	19:00 Holy Communion	
Middleton Stoney	09:30 Breakfast Church		09:30 Holy Communion		
Wendlebury	09:30 Holy Communion		09:30 Morning Worship		
Weston-on- the-Green	11:00 Café Church		11:00 Holy Communion		
MARCH 2026	Sunday 1st <i>Lent 2</i>	Sunday 8th <i>Lent 3</i>	Sunday 15th <i>Lent 4</i>	Sunday 22nd <i>Lent 5</i>	Sunday 29th <i>Palm Sunday</i>
Bletchington	09:30 Morning Worship		09:30 Holy Communion 15:00 Mothering Family Service		
Chesterton	08:00 Holy Communion 11:00 Family Service	11:00 Holy Communion	11:00 Café Church in Community Centre		
Hampton Gay					
Kirtlington	11:00 Holy Communion	18:00 Benefice Choral Evensong	09:30 Morning Worship		
Middleton Stoney	09:30 Morning Worship		09:30 Holy Communion		10:00 Benefice Palm Sunday Communion
Wendlebury	09:30 Holy Communion		09:30 Morning Worship	10:00 Benefice Communion	
Weston-on- the-Green	11:00 Morning Worship		11:00 Holy Communion		

OBITUARIES

Danielle, Lady Waterpark, 15th November 1929 – 30th June 2025

Danielle Giurche (later Lady Waterpark) was born in Paris on the 15th November 1929. She always regretted not being able to say that she was born in the 30's as she thought being born in the 20's sounded tragically ancient. She died on 30th June 2025 at the age of 95. For her 95th birthday, her birthday treat was to be taken out of her care home and spend the weekend in her beloved Bletchington with her daughter Caroline and attending Sunday morning service at St. Giles Church where she saw most of the usual congregation who had been so friendly to her over the years.

As it did for the rest of Europe, the War loomed large in Danielle's youth. Her family's comfortable life in Paris ended when the Nazis invaded France in May 1940. She, together with her younger sister Laurence, her mother and her father, all joined the big exodus out of Paris to Southern France, still unoccupied by the Nazis, and settled in Aix en Provence. There her father joined the French Resistance, crossed into Italy to join the Italian Resistance and finally joined the Allied armies in North Africa. She didn't see her father again for over 2 years, a danger filled absence which affected her quite deeply.

After the Liberation, the family moved back to Paris, where Danielle continued her studies at the Sorbonne. She was always an excellent linguist, speaking fluent English and Italian and decent Russian. It was because she spoke English so well that a common friend introduced her to Caryll, Lord Waterpark, on a visit to Paris in 1950. After they were married in 1951, she enthusiastically accepted Caryll's suggestion that she learn how to fly rather than do the traditional Cordon Bleu cookery course, as they were about to move to a remote farm in Kenya! It must however be said that she, perhaps thankfully, did very little flying.

She never lived in Paris again, but there was very much a case of "you can take the girl out of Paris, but you can't take Paris out of the girl". She remained an elegant Parisienne throughout her life and her biggest criticism was always "you would NOT do that in Paris".



In Kenya, she was able to deploy her considerable joy (and skill) in teaching, for the benefit of both her children and the farm children (for whom there was no local school); she was also kept busy administering First Aid, generally helping with the running of the farm and being a great supporter of and guiding spirit to the local families, at the same time as, of course, being her, learning Swahili fluently.

Her strength of character is amply demonstrated by her response to a dreadful car accident while she was expecting her son, deciding to lie immobile in her bed for six months in order to save the birth. Her son Rory, as you might expect, was extraordinarily grateful to her!

In 1960, Danielle and Caryll decided to give up farming in Kenya to live in England and it was Caryll joining CSE Aviation in Kidlington which first brought them to the Bletchington which they loved. Danielle was now teaching French privately (including, in due course, to the staff of Eurotunnel!) and also qualifying to teach English as a Foreign Language.

She was an intellectual who loved not only books, art, classical music and current affairs, but also fashionable clothes, decoration, dancing and pop music. She was unfailingly enthusiastic and young-at-heart. So much so that her youngest daughter Juliet complained bitterly about her miniskirts and forbade her from going to pick her up from school as "**she** didn't look like the other mums!" Even in old age, she looked young and was often mistaken for one of her daughters, much to **her** delight and their annoyance. She was always very active and energetic, a very good skier and water skier. Up until she so sadly suffered a stroke in 2024, she was a vigorous walker, gardener and olive picker.

She was very intelligent and highly educated. She was also very hospitable and a delightful hostess, even if her strong belief in the power of the will extended to a conviction that food would be cooked when she wished it to be, leading to the invention of her signature "not-really-roast-enough-chicken".

She had friends of all nationalities and ages – her students adored her and credited her with their exam results and many remain close family friends. And later in life, with the arrival of her six grandchildren, she applied her energy, influences and breadth to them, helping with homework, even if Latin homework did not endear her much to some!

She loved Latin and would have been delighted with the Latin transcriptions that were included in her funeral service. Her remarkable memory for the Latin prayers, and the French poems and songs that she had learned by heart in her youth, remained with her for the rest of her life. Even in her last days, she could still recite all of La Fontaine's most famous fables.

Danielle's husband died in 2013. She is survived by her daughters Caroline and Juliet and son Rory, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Judith Ledger, based on Rory's tribute

Henry Spence, 13th April 1938 – 7th January 2026

Henry – known to everyone as Harry – was born in Stirling Scotland where he spent his childhood growing up with his sister Christine.

Harry was a great sportsman, playing football and enjoying road racing on his pushbike as well as achievements during his time in the Boys Brigade.

He studied at Stirling High School, before beginning an apprenticeship to become a carpenter and joiner. His National Service call-up meant he joined the Military Police, serving his time at Bicester Garrison. Here he met his future wife, Rosemarie Smith. They were married in 1960, living at Stratton Audley near Bicester, where their first daughter Nicola was born. From here they moved to Weston-on-the-Green welcoming Carolyn and Stuart.

In 1967 the family moved to Bletchington, where they continued to build happy memories and lasting friendships.

Harry worked in the building trade, becoming a self-employed carpenter, until the late 1970s when he joined the maintenance team at Oxford University.

Gardening became one of Harry's lifelong passions. What began as a simple vegetable patch soon grew into several allotments, where he spent countless hours cultivating fresh fruit and vegetables. His generosity was well known — many neighbours were delighted to find a surprise bag of veggies left on their doorstep.

Dogs were always part of family life. Harry spent many hours walking the fields and areas around the village with the dogs. Sadly, Rose passed away in 2004, Brodie his four-legged companion at the time, was a great source of comfort when Harry was walking around the village, where many villagers met them and stopped for a chat.

Over time Harry's family has extended, with 7 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. He took immense joy in their visits and celebrated their achievements and always encouraged them to 'do your best' and enjoy life to the fullest. Harry's family meant a great deal to him; he was loving husband, wonderful dad and proud granddad, a loyal friend. His kindness, warmth and gentle humour touched all who knew him. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends.

Nicola, Carolyn & Stuart

THE CLIENTELE OF THE BLACKS HEAD - LATE 1960s

This photograph appeared in Bletchington Facebook before Christmas, generating much interest amongst villagers, particularly long-time residents, many of whom recognised a relative or an old family friend. Thought to be taken in the second half of the 1960s, it features the clientele of the Blacks Head pub. Licensees at the time were the wonderful, much-loved couple, Frank and Jean Markham who took over the pub in 1965 and remained there for over thirty years. Frank can be seen seated on the far left of the front (seated) row.

Many Facebook followers in the village have suggested the names to go with the faces – and we have attempted to consolidate these names into the list below, based on people's postings. We cannot be sure that everyone has been identified correctly, so please accept our apologies if any of the names are wrong.

An interesting point is there is not a single female face in the line-up. Where are all the ladies? The theory is the photograph may have been taken on a Sunday lunchtime when, apparently, it was the tradition for the men of the village to meet up at the pub before going home for the Sunday roast. And where is landlady Jean? Perhaps she is taking the photograph.



Back row (L to R): Tony Beckley, Joe Gamage, Percy Trendell, George Swan(?), David Pym, Bob Abbott, Reg 'Bucket' Collett, Frank Parker, Billy Gamage, Fred Saunders, George 'Snooker' Knight, Norman Trendell, John 'Harry' Kirby, Fred Bathe, Roger Bergman

Front row, seated (L to R): Frank Markham (licensee), William Kirtland, Roland 'Sam' Wheeler, Reg 'Cowboy' Gamage

Photograph courtesy of Dave Markham



Bletchingdon
Parochial C of E School

Can you help our village school?

Bletchingdon Primary School needs you!

- Perhaps you're retired and open to getting more involved in our community?
- Or maybe you could spare an hour a few times a week at lunchtimes to break up the monotony of working from home!

Our village school is looking for volunteers to help with lunchtimes – supporting children to enjoy their lunch and playtime.

Can you help? Please contact Fiona or Carol in the school office for more details or to offer your help. Thank you!

Email: office.3141@bletchingdon.oxon.sch.uk or Telephone: 01869 350393 or drop in in person.

PLUS: The school is creating a new sensory room – do you have any of the following items that you no longer use that you could donate to help with this project?

- Ball pit/balls
- Fabric samples that have interesting textures, or voile
- Large (unused) sponges
- Synthetic grass
- Carpet samples
- LED strip lights
- Pool noodles or anything with an interesting texture



1st BLETCHINGTON BROWNIES

Happy new term to you all. 2026 is a year to celebrate 100 years of World Thinking Day. It was in Oxford that WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) decided that the world of Guides should celebrate a special day each year together. February 22nd is our day.

Brownies this term are working on the Take Action theme and giving the older Brownies a chance to lead activities.

We have some spaces, to find out more email us at: girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk.

Woodstock Trefoil for adults age 18+ are looking forward to our annual Gang Show visit where we join in with the singing and dancing from our seats. We meet monthly and have a lot of fun, challenge ourselves and get badges too.

History Corner

The Telephone

Landlines, mobile phones; we take them for granted in the 21st Century. But did you know the first patent for a telephone was granted 150 years ago in the USA to Alexander Graham Bell on 7th March, 1876? Born in Edinburgh in 1847, Bell is generally considered the inventor of the telephone, but several others contributed to the process leading up to his patenting of a working device.

We all remember, as children, making 'toy' telephones by connecting two tin cans by a length of string then speaking into one can and the voice being audible to a friend at the other end – provided, of course, the string was kept taut. And the first concept of a telephone, by Robert Hooke at Oxford University in 1667, was based on this very principle. Obviously, this had very limited use and it was not until the advent of electricity that the idea of a viable 'speaking telegraph' became a reality.

In the first example of commercial use of electricity, the world's first telegraph line was established in West London in 1839, then ten years later the world's first telegraph station was opened in the City of London and soon the first undersea cable was laid between England and France. Telegraph differs from the telephone in that it relies upon coded messages (such as Morse Code). In the ensuing years, experiments began in creating a device that could carry spoken words between locations – the telephone. Italians, Innocenzo Manzetti and Antonio Meucci began developing voice-communication apparatus during the 1840s and 1850s then in the 1860s, a German, Johann Philipp Reis demonstrated his technique for transferring speech electronically.

It was not until 1875 when Alexander Graham Bell, now working in Massachusetts, developed his first experimental telephone, then in February of the following year he applied for a patent for the device which was granted on 7th March. A few days later, he reputedly spoke the first recognisable words transmitted over a telephone, to his assistant Thomas Watson over a distance of 100 feet. The Bell Telephone Company was formed in the USA to market the product although it was not initially seen as a serious rival to the established telegraph. This quickly changed as it soon became obvious that the new telephone was far more flexible and offered much more potential than telegraph.

In the UK the first long-distance calls took place in 1878 when Bell demonstrated his telephone to Queen Victoria by making calls from Osborne House on the Isle of Wight to Cowes, London and Southampton. His company was registered in the UK on 14th June in that year, initially with an exchange in London and capacity for 150 lines and seven or eight subscribers. By the following year, the number of subscribers had grown to 200 with two further London telephone exchanges added followed by seven more in major UK cities.

Did you know.....?

In the Christian faith, the feast of Candlemas is celebrated on 2nd February. It commemorates the presentation of the baby Jesus, by Mary and Joseph, at the Temple. This date, 40 days after Christmas, represents the ultimate conclusion of the Christmas season when, in some places, it is customary to take down the Christmas decorations. It is, however, generally more common for them to be taken down at Epiphany.

The same date in the USA is known as Groundhog Day. Legend has it the eponymous rodent, a relative of the squirrel, first emerges from hibernation on that day. If it sees its own shadow, it returns to its burrow for another six weeks, suggesting six more weeks of winter to come whilst no shadow means the animal remains above ground, heralding an early start to spring.

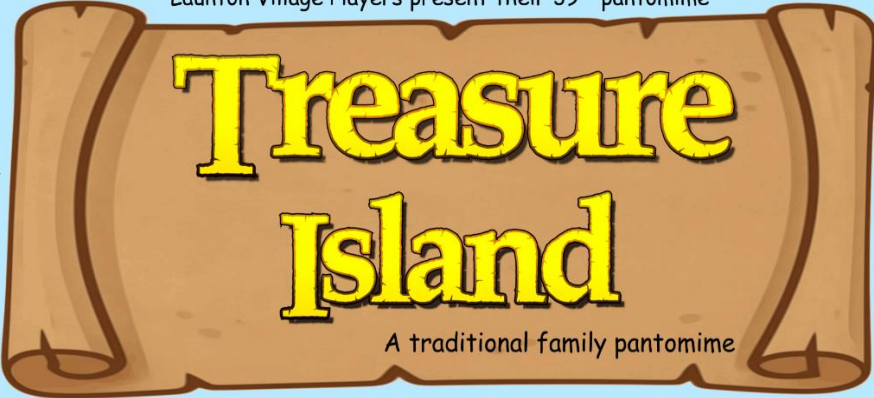
Bletch Diary

1 st February – 9:30am	St. Giles' Church – Breakfast Church (<i>see Page 7</i>)
7 th February – 8:00pm	Sports & Social Club – Cash bingo (<i>see Page 25</i>)
8 th February – 6:00pm	St. Giles' Church – Choral Evensong With Akeman Church Community Choir (<i>see Page 7</i>)
15 th February – 3:00pm	St. Giles' Church – Family Service (<i>see Page 7</i>)
4 th March – 6:00pm	Village Hall – Table tennis taster session (<i>see Page 17</i>) Beginners and experienced players welcome
14 th March – 7:30pm	Sports & Social Club – Comedy Evening (<i>see Page 25</i>) In association with the Laughing Ox Comedy Club – Tickets £15
15 th March – 3:00pm	St. Giles' Church – Mothering Sunday Family Service (<i>see Page 7</i>)
22 nd March – 2:00pm	Sports & Social Club – Live music (<i>see Page 25</i>) St. Patrick's Day celebration with Philbert & Co
28 th March – 8:00pm	Sports & Social Club – Easter bingo (<i>see Page 25</i>)



Launton Village Players present their 39th pantomime





Treasure Island
A traditional family pantomime

Family Discounts
available for
all shows!

Wed 18th to Sat 21st Feb 2026
In Cooper School Performance Hall, Bicester, OX26 4RS

Date	Performance Times		Adult (18+)	Child (1-17)
Weds 18 th Feb		7:30pm	£12	£7
Thurs 19 th Feb	10:30am*	2:30pm	£12	£7
Fri 20 th Feb		2:30pm 7:30pm	£14	£8
Sat 21 st Feb		2:30pm 7:30pm	£14	£8

Suitable
for the
whole family
to enjoy!



***Relaxed Performance Thursday at 10:30am**

Scan here for tickets!



Tickets available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/lvp
(or call 07864 715708 for assistance)
All profits donated to Dementia Active and Dementia Oxfordshire





BLETCHINGTON SILVER BAND

It might have been the 'Most Wonderful Time of the Year' but, for Brass Bands, it's also the busiest. Our Christmas season saw us playing a formal concert, private events, village squares, pubs, and a carol service – making music, entertaining the crowds, and raising money for band funds to allow us to keep going through 2026. Thanks to everyone who joined us at any of our events and we hope to see you again through the coming year.



Our Christmas concert in Bletchington

January is always a slow month. For fun, in one of our early rehearsals, we enjoyed a 'pick-n-mix' session with players choosing a variety of either well-loved or underplayed pieces for us to have a go at. Probably about the only place you could have heard everything from Simon & Garfunkel's 'Bridge Over Troubled Water', through Matt Munro's 'Born Free', all the way to the theme tune to the 1960's TV/puppet spectacular, 'Joe 90'!

Unfortunately, we are short of players at the moment and so unable to enter the local/national competitions for which we would usually be preparing. That means that our next big event will be our Spring Concert with plenty of time to work up a good programme.

January will end with our AGM, on Friday 30th at 7:30pm. As well as electing our managing committee for the next year, we will also be presenting our annual awards to members of both our Senior and B-Band. The meeting is open to anyone who is interested in the running of the Band and, if all goes well, our Senior Band invite you to stay and listen to an open rehearsal.

Since everyone will have received new diaries/calendars for Christmas, why not put our concert dates in there now so you don't miss out!

- Spring Concert – 19th April
- Summer Concert – 5th July
- Garth Park (Bicester) Bandstand – 9th August
- Autumn Concert – 11th October
- Christmas Concert – 6th December

All concerts (except Garth Park) at Bletchington Village Hall and will feature both our Senior and B-Bands.

For full details of our upcoming engagements, and all our other news, why not visit our website:

www.bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk or follow us on social media.

BIRDS SEEN OR HEARD IN ST. GILES' CHURCHYARD DURING 2025

Blackbird
Blackcap
Blue Tit
Bullfinch
Buzzard
Carrion Crow



Chaffinch
Chiffchaff
Coal Tit
Collared Dove
Cuckoo
Dunnock
Goldcrest
Goldfinch

Great Tit
Great-spotted Woodpecker
Green Woodpecker
Greenfinch
House Martin
House Sparrow
Jackdaw
Little Owl
Long-tailed Tit
Magpie



Nuthatch
Pied Wagtail
Raven

Red Kite
Robin
Rook



Song Thrush
Starling
Stock Dove
Swallow
Swift
Tawny Owl
Tree Creeper
Willow Warbler
Wood Pigeon
Wren

THURSDAY CLUB

On 4th December we had Bingo where Brian Wing swept the board with 4 shouts.

Then on 12th December, our Christmas lunch was held at the Kirtlington Golf Club, which attracted 34 members and guests who enjoyed a traditional turkey lunch served with roast potatoes, pigs in blankets and seasonal vegetables, followed by Christmas pudding or sherry trifle, mince pies and tea or coffee. We had a very well presented raffle in which the prizes included wines, chocolates, biscuits, and other seasonal items which were all donated by the assembled members and guests, raising £100 for club funds. Thank you to everyone who donated and bought raffle tickets.

Forthcoming events will be, on 5th February, music by Barry. A regular performer at the Highwayman pub in Kidlington on Friday evenings, Barry's eclectic repertoire encompasses a wide range of traditional and modern folk songs.

Then on 5th March, we look forward to a talk by Lorraine, "Travels my way".

Finally, on behalf of the committee, a very happy New Year to all our members.

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 Bletchington Community Foundation

Have you visited our new website?

As highlighted in the last edition of Village News, our new website went live during December. It 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 Bletchington Charity and you will find access to the grant application form in the Charities section.

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

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 Thursday – 7:15pm Friday – 10:30am	Gemma Queralt (MCSP Chartered Physiotherapist)	07974 692287 gemma.c.queralt@gmail.com
Zumba Gold (low impact)	Thursday – 10:30- 11:30am (Term time only)	Mariana Bujons Palmer	zumbawithmarianaoxford@gmail.com
Tumble Tots (walking up to 4 years, play sessions)	Wednesday (Term time only) 10:15am to 2 yrs. 11:15am 2-3 yrs. 12:15pm 3yrs+	Catherine Codd	07305 097209 northcotswolds@tumbletots.com Website: www.tumbletots.com.northcotswolds
1 st Bletchington Brownies (girls, 7-10yrs.)	Monday – 6-7:30pm (Term time only)	Lorraine Wing	girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk
Total Body Conditioning	Monday – 7:30pm Wednesday – 6:30pm	Geraldine Jennings	07875 364130 geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk
Stretch & core (non-sweat)	Wednesday – 7:30pm	Geraldine Jennings	07875 364130 geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk
Thursday Club (over 50s)	First Thursday of the month – 2:00pm	Tommy Coombes Neil Spencer	01869 350860 / 07931 817235 01869 350437 / 07508 442550 neil.sandra@hotmail.co.uk
Bletchington Silver Band (Senior band)	Tuesday - 7:30pm 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 inspirebjjuk@gmail.com

BLETCHINGDON SERVES UP A NEW COMMUNITY PROJECT

Table tennis is coming to Bletch

Following the fantastic news that our application to the **National Lottery Community Fund** has been successful, we are excited to announce the launch of the **Bletchingdon Active Lives – Community Table Tennis Initiative!**

Thanks to this funding, we will be bringing new, high-quality table tennis equipment into the heart of the village, helping create more opportunities for people of all ages to stay active, socialise, and enjoy a welcoming community space.

Come along for a Taster Session!

To kick things off, we invite residents, experienced players, and total beginners—to join us for a free community taster session on Wednesday 4th March, 6–8pm in the Village Hall.

This will be a fun, friendly drop-in event where you can try out the new tables and, meet neighbours. Bats and balls will be provided—just bring your enthusiasm!

Building a Community Team

To help the project run smoothly throughout the year, we will soon be setting up a **small committee** and building a team of **volunteers**. There will be lots of ways to get involved, including:

- Helping set up or pack away tables
- Supporting social play sessions
- Contributing ideas for future events or tournaments

Whether you can offer regular support or just the occasional helping hand, we would love to hear from you.

Can You Help on the 4th March?

We'll also need a few volunteers to help assemble new tables over next few weeks and on the day of the taster session to help **set up the hall**. If you're able to spare a little time, it would make a huge difference.

Get in Touch

If you'd like to volunteer and help assemble the tables, join the committee, or simply find out more, please contact John Upham:

Email: jjjed0908@gmail.com

Mobile: **07885 693903**





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 New Year.

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 the Village Hall/BCF website. Go to <https://bletchingdonvillagehall.co.uk> then from the 'Home' page, go to the foot of this page and click on 'More About Us and Our charities' then scroll down to find three columns about each of the BCF's charities – our Charity is in the left-hand column. Various pieces of information about the Charity can be found by opening up the sections in there. To access and download your grant application form, open up 'How do I apply for a grant?' then click on the blue text. E-mail the completed form to charity.secretary@thebcf.net.

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 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 4th March 2026 – Applications to be in by 27th February please.

OLIVIA'S FUNDRAISING FOR MENINGITIS RESEARCH

On Sunday 26th April, village resident Olivia Jordan will be taking part in the London Marathon. She is running to raise funds for the Meningitis Research Foundation.

This is a cause very close to Olivia's heart as, in January 2025, her boyfriend Hugo was rushed to Intensive Care with life-threatening bacterial meningitis. Despite being vaccinated, he became critically ill with sepsis and was placed in a medically induced coma. Heartbreakingly, his family and Olivia didn't know if he would survive. Thanks to the most incredible medical team, Hugo pulled through – but he has been left permanently deaf in both ears and now wears cochlear implants.

Olivia writes: "Watching him fight such a devastating illness with such strength and resilience has been nothing short of inspiring. To honour him and to raise vital funds for Meningitis Research, I'm running the London Marathon 2026."

Meningitis can affect anyone, especially university students and young children. Further research is desperately needed to prevent more families from going through what Hugo, his family, and Olivia have.

If you can, please support Olivia's fundraising by donating what you can – every pound truly makes a difference. If you would like to make a donation to this much-deserving cause, please visit her JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/liv-jordan-1> or scan the QR code.....



Thank you so much for helping turn Hugo's story into hope for others.

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

BLETCHINGDON ONE-PLACE STUDY

Why Bletchington and why a one place study? Bletchington was one of the villages where my Oxfordshire ancestors lived, and some distant cousins still live there. One of the acorns to start my interest was a chapter I wrote on changes in four villages in Oxfordshire during the 19th Century within the Oxfordshire Family History Society's book, *Exploring Oxfordshire Surnames*. I had the family history but not really the social history of the village. The start of the work coincided with lockdown and this gave me time to access all of the information I had and could gather from the internet.

Later, I would travel once a month to the Oxfordshire History Centre and pore over all of the records connected with the village which had been made much easier with the updated Heritage Search. Most records were photographed and then I spend much of the following days analysing the information.

Later, I would visit owners and houses within the village with many introductions by Ian and Kathy Gedling. Some of the house histories need to be further added to as I gain permission to use documentation acquired during these visits. I have given various talks on Bletchington, with one for OFHS allowing residents of the village to attend.

Finally, I tried to put all of the information into a book with the intention of self-publishing via Amazon Kindle; four fellow village researchers helped with the final draft. Just when I was getting all the permissions and references sorted, my cousin contacted me to obtain a copy of his family tree GEDCOM for inclusion in a new online family history archive called Weare.XYZ that was owned by one of his very close school friends, Simon Davies. Within days, I was convinced this was the right route as it allowed more information to be added periodically. Following a few ZOOM meetings with Simon, I started the conversion of my book into a website launched in May 2025 which can now be found at:

<https://app.weare.xyz/bletchington-1737-1947/places/naeqq1gd5egi>

The website will grow as I acquire more information from others, so please contact me if you have information on the village between 1737 and 1947 or if you want to harvest information. I am also happy to help with anyone else's one-place study (mine is registered with the Society of One Place Studies) or to talk about the benefits of Weare.XYZ.

Interview on the process of creating the study

How did you start?

Initially, I did not create an outline (or a plan) and hoped that the historical documents would help to tell the story. I wanted to delve further back than the 20th Century and cover a period that included my own family history. Most Ordnance Survey maps only started in the 1870s (too late). One of the first documents that I examined was the 1839 Tithe Map, but the transcription was made in the late 1800s. Another family historian gifted me a MS Excel version of this transcription and explained the Tithe Map to me. I had found my way into placing villagers into buildings. Most of the buildings and farms built by 1839 were still standing in 2020. The 1839 map and 1841 census helped me to understand how the enumerators had ordered the successive censuses with those of 1851 to 1871 being filled in by Charles BULLOCK, my 3xgreat grandfather. Later access to earlier documents has allowed me to identify heads of households and/or families between 1751 and 1939.

How did you get information from the locals?

Fortunately, I knew a person who had lived in the village for 40 years. She introduced me to other villagers and to the editor of the local Village News. Soon, I add my own articles to the Village News and had access to over a dozen properties in the village; all of which had appeared on the 1839 Tithe Map. Conversations with present-day owners were two-way as I could provide a timeline of their property and its occupants, and they shared stories and documents.

What has surprised and/or delighted you?

One aspect that I had not appreciated was the amount of information on families requiring poor law relief between the 1830s to the 1920s. The relieving officer for the Bletchington district (18 parishes local to Bicester) for much of this time was George Dew and most of his records are now stored at Oxfordshire History Centre. Maps were the key into the initial study, but further maps helped clarify changes to village dynamics; for example in 1805, an order approved by Oxfordshire County Council altered the relationship of Bletchington House to the rest of village and isolated Church End. The main village road was diverted into a New Road that has kept that name ever since 1805. Recent planning application floorplans show a row of five terraced cottages converted into a single property known as Quincotts with a 1950 photograph prior to the alteration and a recent modification of two ground floor rooms and the common passageway into a sitting room.

There were so many small discoveries of interest: Jane Austen's grandmother was baptised at St. Giles in 1693; Charles Bullock, my 3xgreat grandfather was the farm bailiff to Viscount Valentia for a period of 15-20 years; correct identification of the Green Man Inn being a former name for the Black's Head Inn; an existence of a methodist chapel in the village for over 100 years plus the discovery of various photocard images and photographs via three villagers: Ian and Kathy Gedling and Monique Harvey. A recent DNA contact with a known 3rd cousin once removed resulted in obtaining copy of original photographs of Charles Bullock and his wife Eliza (née Bazeley) taken in early 1860s in a studio setting plus a personal letter from Charles to his daughter Ruth in 1873 that contained details of some village gossip and commented on his fruits that he was growing in his garden at No 3 The Alley, Church End. Weeks later, I would visit the same cottage now part of an extended cottage owned by Monique Harvey and see the same back garden still with its fruit bushes and trees. It has been a very worthwhile project.

Charles Eldridge, Oxfordshire Family Historian

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

From February, our Riverside Tea Room will be open every Wednesday from 10:30am to 3.00pm – so call by and enjoy a slice of cake and a cup of tea. You all are very welcome.

On Sunday **15th March** we will be hosting our first 'In steam' themed event of 2026: **'Mill in Steam'**. Combe Mill, in its day, was the workshop for Blenheim Palace Estate by the River Evenlode – a late 19th Century Grade II listed watermill with steam beam engine, restored waterwheel, line shafting, towers clocks, barn engines with all machinery running. Make a poker in our Dual Blacksmiths Forge; Tinkering Area for the children and much more. The Tea Room will be open and there will also be a BBQ.

For details of all 'In steam' events during 2026, please see the advert on Page 38.

Adults £9.50 – Seniors £8.50 – Accompanied children FREE – Dogs welcome – Free parking – Ask about Gift Aid. Open from 10:30am to 4:30pm.

Also open Wednesdays from 18th March for self-guided tours, with volunteers on hand to talk about Combe Mill and its history. Call by and also visit our Riverside Tea Room.

Adults £6.00 – Seniors £5.00 – Accompanied children FREE

Answers to Christmas Quiz, in the Dec/Jan edition: 1. Brenda Lee; 2. Coca-Cola; 3. Alabama; 4. Justin Trudeau; 5. Holiday Inn; 6. Hook Norton; 7. Red crab; 8. Captain Hook and Peter Pan; 9. Birth; 10. The Holly and the Ivy

HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR PETS WILL BE OK AFTER YOU DIE

Right. We Brits adore our pets. And if we're being honest, we often like them a lot more than actual people. So, it's only natural to think about what will happen to them when we're no longer around. 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. Now, you might assume that, given how much we dote on our pets, the law treats them with the same respect as, say, a distant relative. But no. Under the law, your beloved pooch is treated as... a possession. Like a rusty old lawnmower or that ridiculous ceramic gnome collection you keep insisting is "vintage."

With pets having no legal personality, you can't leave them money in your Will, nor can you name a "guardian" for them like you would for your kids. In the eyes of the law, they're assets—things to be handed over, like a watch or an old armchair. Charming, isn't it? But before you start ranting about how outrageous this is, fear not! You can make provisions to ensure your furry friend isn't just tossed aside like an old teapot. Here's some of them.

Giving Your Pet Away (Yes, Really.)

One of the simplest ways to make sure your pet is looked after is to gift it to someone in your Will. But before you start scribbling down names, ask them first. Nobody wants to wake up one day to find they've suddenly inherited a Great Dane that eats more than they do. It's also worth naming a backup in case your first choice is *unavailable* (read: has realized the financial black hole they're stepping into). Speaking of which, looking after an animal isn't cheap—dogs alone can cost over £1,500 a year. So, unless your chosen recipient is a millionaire, you might want to leave some cash to help them out. That said, money left in a Will is a gift, not a binding contract. So if the recipient decides to use it for a holiday in the Maldives instead of dog food, tough luck. Bottom line: choose the candidate wisely.

Letters of Wishes: The Pet Owner's Manifesto

Wills are set in stone. Letters of Wishes? Not so much. These are handy little documents that let you provide *extensive* instructions on how you'd like your pet to be cared for—without having to rewrite your Will every time you adopt a new cat. Some people take this very seriously, drafting full-blown pet care manuals. Dietary preferences, favourite toys, bedtime routines—it can all go in. And why not? If we're going to be *that* person who only buys the expensive organic dog treats, we might as well make sure it continues after we're gone. It's also smart to jot down practical details somewhere: vet contacts, insurance policies, microchip numbers—basically, everything someone would need to step in and take over smoothly.

Animal Charity Schemes: Because Not Everyone Wants Your Parrot

If you don't have a willing human volunteer, don't panic. Plenty of animal charities offer schemes to rehome pets after their owners pass away. The idea is simple: you register your pet, include the necessary wording in your Will, and when the time comes, they take over and find your pet a loving new home. Best of all? It's free. Though, let's be honest, it wouldn't hurt to leave a donation as a thank-you.

Don't Forget About Your Pet While You're Still Alive

Wills cover what happens when you die. But what if you're still here, just... incapacitated? A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) can ensure your pet is looked after if, say, you end up in a coma after a particularly unfortunate skydiving accident. And—crucially—don't forget the temporary arrangements. If something happens suddenly, who's going to feed the cat while all the legal stuff gets sorted? Let your loved ones and executors know in advance.

Final Thought

Nobody likes thinking about death. But if you want to make sure your pet isn't left homeless or—worse—sent to live with your least favourite relative, plan ahead. From our office in Combe, I advise clients across Oxfordshire on bespoke will-writing and inheritance planning, drawing on years of practical experience. So, if you need help getting your affairs in order, give us a call on **01865 987781** or email:

anna.boucher@theburnsidepartnership.com.

KIRTLINGTON & BLECHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It was fitting that our **November** talk, in the month of Remembrance, should have been on the history and work of the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)**. **Dick Richards**, one of the two and a half thousand volunteers who work for the CWGC and who is based at the Botley Cemetery, proved a warm and absorbing speaker (and he gave his talk for free in return for a donation to CWGC). As he said, this was “an emotional journey” as much as an historical narrative.



Founded in 1915, the CWGC (originally the Imperial War Graves Commission) early adopted an important series of principles. These were: that all the dead should, as far as possible, have their name recorded (previously, ordinary soldiers were often buried anonymously in communal graves); they should be buried as close as possible to where they fell; they should have a permanent memorial; and there should be no distinction between ranks (generals lie side by side with privates).

Administrators, architects, horticulturalists and writers all came together to design features which would be common to all the major cemeteries: the Portland stone headstones and their inscriptions, the stone of Remembrance; the freestanding cross. While most of the inscriptions follow a standard format, the epitaph (carved near the foot of the headstone) is individual, chosen by the deceased's family. Astonishingly, there are now 1.7 million graves looked after by the CWGC scattered all over the world, from the vast cemeteries on the Western Front containing thousands to single individuals such as Arthur Edgington's in the corner of Kirtlington churchyard.

Remarkably, Arthur's cousin, Walter, died in April 1917 having contracted pneumonia while in training with the Royal Field Artillery in Yorkshire. He too was buried in Kirtlington but his grave is not marked with a CWGC headstone (or indeed, with any stone at all). Some soldiers have slipped through the net for a variety of reasons though the speaker did not know why in Walter's case. Time for some enthusiastic local historian to do some research.

Paul Clifford

Our next meetings

Christopher Wren's Oxford

LIZZIE ROWE

Thursday 26th February at 2:30pm, Kirtlington Church

The Story of the Cotswolds

SEAN CALLERY

Thursday 26th March at 7.30pm, Kirtlington Village Hall

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 1st 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

Football: The First team playing in Division 1 of the Oxfordshire Senior League are in 5th position and the Development team playing in Division 3 are in a mid-table position.

Bletchington Nomads – Quiz Team: At the midway point in the winter season, the Nomads' form so far has been very average: Won 3, Drawn 2, Lost 3, although one of the draws came about as a result of a cancelled match due to snow in the Chipping Norton area. They currently sit in third place in the Premier Division of the Oxfordshire Quiz League.

The Nomads finished runners-up in the pre-Christmas music tabletop quiz held at the Masons Arms.

Cricket: The Cricket AGM was held on 8th December with no huge changes to the setup announced. Please visit the cricket club website at www.obncc.play-cricket.com.

Pool: The A-team are top of section 2 of the Oxford Landlords Pool League and the B-team are fourth in section 3. The Christmas nine ball competition was won by Ian Tharby who beat Matt Stansfield in the final.

Bar Billiards: Eynsham League: both teams are third in their sections. Witney League: A-team third in their section and the B-team are top of their section.

Darts: The teams are halfway through the winter leagues.

Cribbage: The season is halfway through.

Aunt Sally: Registration forms for the summer league will be out soon.

What's On at the Club?

SATURDAY 7th February – CASH BINGO (eyes down 8:00pm)

SATURDAY 14th March – COMEDY EVENING – Tickets £15 per person (7:30pm)

SUNDAY 22nd March – LIVE MUSIC: St. Patrick's Day celebration with Philbert & Co (2:00pm)

SATURDAY 28th March – EASTER BINGO (eyes down 8:00pm)

The poster is for a comedy evening at the Laughing Ox Comedy Club. It features a teal background with a repeating pattern of faint 'X' and 'O' shapes. At the top, the text 'LAUGHING OX' is in large white letters, with 'COMEDY CLUB' in smaller blue letters below it. To the left of the 'OX' is a QR code inside a red starburst shape. To the right is a cartoon illustration of a laughing bull's head. Below this, a red banner contains the text 'BLETCHINGDON SPORT & SOCIAL CLUB' in white. The date 'SATURDAY 14TH MARCH' is prominently displayed in large white letters. Below the date, the names of the four comedians are listed in white, slanted text: 'FELICITY WARD', 'HOWARD ANSTOCK', 'PAUL MCAFFREY', and 'ANDY GLEEKS'. At the bottom, there are four photographs of the comedians. Felicity Ward is on the far left, wearing a pink and white patterned shirt and a 'MOCK THE WEEK' badge. Howard Anstock is next to her, wearing a light blue shirt. Paul McAffrey is next, wearing a green shirt and a 'LIVE AT THE APOLLO' badge. Andy Gleeke is on the far right, wearing glasses and a plaid shirt. A red banner at the very bottom contains the text 'TIX: mattrichardsoncomedy.co.uk' in white.

LAUGHING OX
COMEDY CLUB

BLETCHINGDON SPORT & SOCIAL CLUB

SATURDAY 14TH MARCH

FELICITY WARD
HOWARD ANSTOCK
PAUL MCAFFREY
ANDY GLEEKS

TIX: mattrichardsoncomedy.co.uk

Bletchingdon | Enslow | Heathfield

YOUR COUNCIL MATTERS

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

What's happening?

Election and Parish Clerk

Elections will be held in May 2026 for our 7 Parish Council seats. Our Councillors do a vital job in supporting the village and representing views of the Parish. We are volunteers and meet on a monthly basis. With one of our councillors retiring prior to the upcoming elections, we are actively seeking an individual to fill this important role. If you have ever thought of getting involved and would like to find out more please speak to one of the Councillors or contact clerk@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk.

We currently have a vacancy for our Parish Clerk. This is the only paid role in the Parish Clerk and plays a key role supporting the operation of the Council. The position offers flexible working hours, with a commitment of 10 hours per week. Salary SCP18-23 (£16.35-£17.85 per hour). Prior experience not necessary as training will be provided. If you are interested in finding out more about this employment opportunity please get in touch.

Neighbourhood plan

After approval from the Parish Council we have now moved 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.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning-documents/>. Although there are a lot of documents the Main Document is the one that contains the key information. It contains the policies that will help to frame planning decisions relating to the villages.

There is also a consultation form for you to complete if you wish to make any comments about the plan. The form can be downloaded and contains instructions about filling it in and returning it. Any comments will be considered by the steering committee for inclusion in the plan. The consultation period will run from 15th December 2025 until 12th February 2026. All comments must be received by midnight on the 12th.

Fix my street

The Parish Council continues to raise our concerns about road surfaces (and other maintenance points) with our District and County Councillors. We share villagers' concerns that delays in fixing potholes means that they are a persistent and growing problem. All potholes should be reported via www.fixmystreet.com or the app. This site can also be used to report other issues such as fly tipping or broken street lights. Reporting on www.fixmystreet.com is a quick process and means that the District and County Councils are immediately aware the problem and we can track outstanding issues. The website is available for all to use so we encourage people to report any issues. The more reports, the quicker the response.

The Blacks Head

The planning application for The Blacks Head has been submitted and is open for comments until 5th February 2026. The Parish Council has submitted comments in support of this application and we are aware that many villagers have also submitted comments. With the target decision date set for 17th February we hope for some positive news very soon.

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@bletchingdon-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!
- Community Fitness Area
- Community Emergency Plan
- Playground – we are thinking about any improvements that our playgrounds could benefit from and grants available. We would welcome any views and volunteers to help decide whether this work can be taken forward.

Planning Matters

New Applications Put Forward

25/00180/F	Perdix Partnership	Bletchingdon Park House Springwell Hill Bletchingdon Kidlington OX5 3DW	Incorporate a new boat landing stage into the dam outlet structure on the Central Pool and erection of boat house
26/00101/TCA	Catherine Lange	3 The Row Bletchingdon Kidlington OX5 3BZ	T x 2 Laurel - removal because of excessive shading and low amenity value T x Cherry trees - removal because they are in the wrong place and are being bent by the neighbouring oak tree. They are young trees
25/03340/F	EMN Properties Ltd	Blacks Head Inn The Green Bletchingdon Kidlington OX5 3DA	The repair, alteration and extension of the Grade II Listed Blacks Head Inn including construction of new accommodation and associated landscaping and car parking
25/03341/LB	EMN Properties Ltd	Blacks Head Inn The Green Bletchingdon Kidlington OX5 3DA	The repair, alteration and extension of the Grade II Listed Blacks Head Inn including construction of new accommodation and associated landscaping and car parking
25/03344/TCA	Mr A Stern	Bletchingdon Park House Springwell Hill Bletchingdon OX5 3DW	Tree works
25/03300/TCA	Mr Richard Ehrman	Bletchingdon Park Stables Church End, Bletchingdon	Take the Acer tree back to previous approx. 1.5m
25/03297/Q56	Ms Amber Richardson	Ingleby Farm, Ingleby Paddocks, Enslow, Kidlington, OX5 3ET	Prior approval application for the conversion of an agricultural building into one dwelling
25/03128/F	Mr Doug Bagnall	Dollys Barn, Bletchingdon, Kidlington, OX5 3DP	Erection of stockyard building on existing agricultural holding

Appeals Received/Decisions

None

Applications Approved

24/03381/F	Robin Investments Limited	Caravan & 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
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Applications Refused

None

Next meetings

Wednesday 25th February 2026 and Wednesday 25th March 2026

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

Website: www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk

Contact Details

Name	Role	Email	Phone
Vacancy	Parish Clerk	clerk@bletchingdon-pc.org.uk	351967

Website: www.bletchingdon-pc.org.uk/parish-council/

Parish Councillors

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

District Councillors

Name	Email
Gemma Coton	Gemma.Coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Julian Nedelcu	Julian.Nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Alisa Russell	Alisa.Russell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

County Councillor

Name	Email
Laura Gordon	laura.gordon@oxfordshire.gov.uk



WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

Restoration and Conservation Tours.....7th January - 13th February

FEBRUARY

February Half Term Fun14th - 22nd February

Blueprints of Power.....14th February - 10th April

MARCH - APRIL

Easter Eggstravaganza3rd - 6th April

MAY - JUNE - JULY

Jousting Tournament.....2nd - 4th May

Giffords Circus 8th - 18th May

Blenheim Palace Food Festival23rd - 25th May

Blenheim Palace Triathlon6th - 7th June

Blenheim Palace Flower Show 19th - 21st June

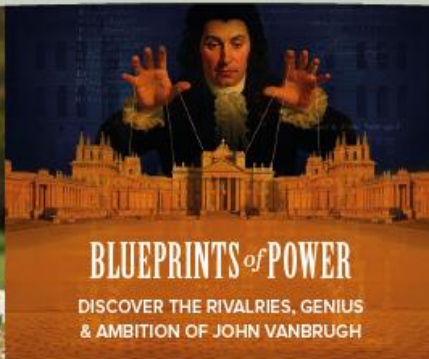
Blenheim Palace Festival June - July

EXPERIENCES FOR 2026 OR BEYOND

Family Treasuresmid February - end of August

Roof Top View..... re-opening January

Life Below Stairs.....permanent exhibition



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HOW TO CONTACT US

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Website: <https://www.thetraveldirectors.co.uk/joanne-scurr>

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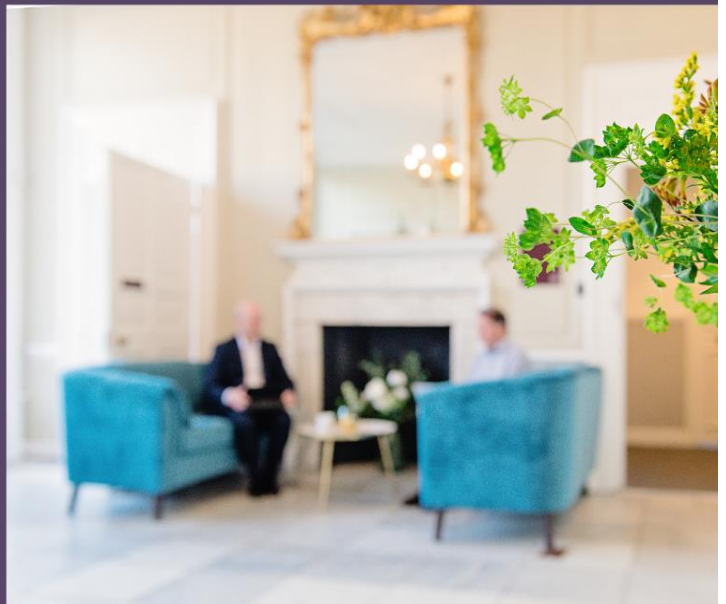
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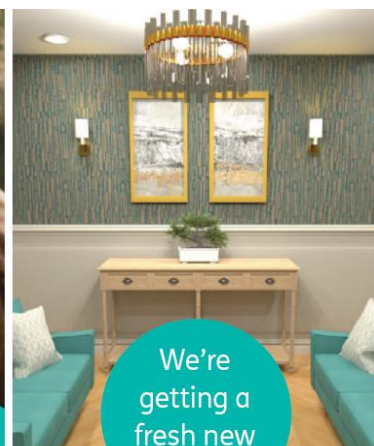
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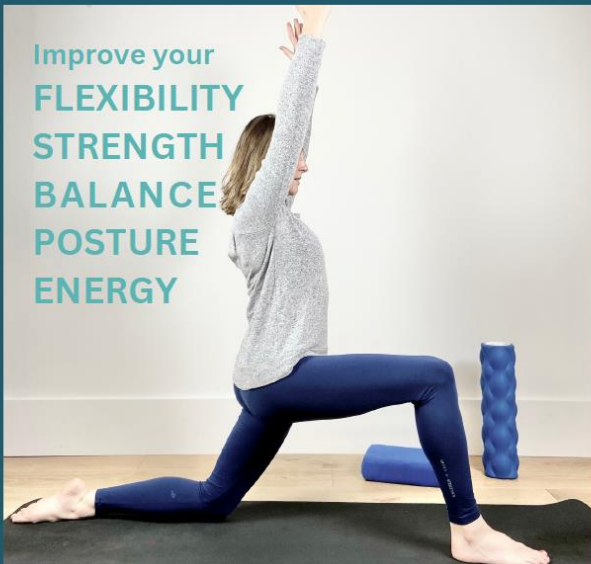


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April	19	Military Vehicles
May	9^/10	National Mills Weekend + Amateur Radio
June	21	Classic Wheels - Fathers' Day
July	12	Wildlife by the Evenlode
August	16	Models and Collections
September	20	Crafts and Skills
October	18	Wood Crafts + Autumn Market
December	6	Christmas Fayre (not in steam) *

^ Not in steam on Saturday 9 May

*Opening hours 11am ~ 4pm



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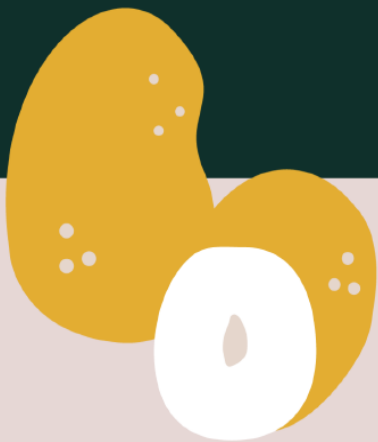
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