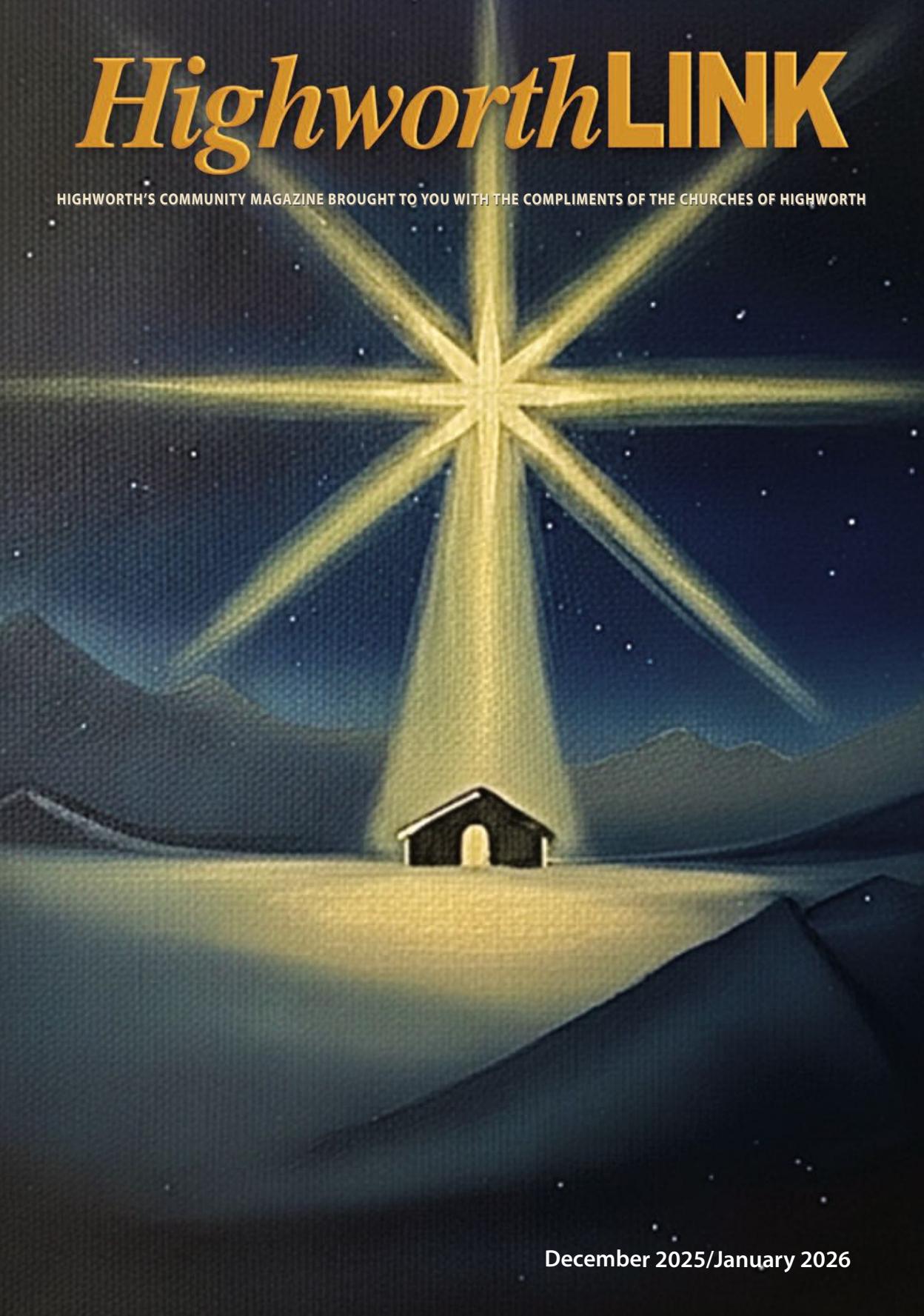


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December 2025/January 2026

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FROM ANCHOR

# EDITORIAL

## Dear Reader

Welcome to your final issue of 2025 – and your first issue of 2026, of course! – and what a bumper edition it is. If it feels a bit weightier in your hand it's because our community has so much to share with you. From news about art exhibitions and sporting feats, to exciting school projects and a guide to this year's church Christmas services, this issue truly has it all.

If you're anything like me, you'll approach this time of year full of anticipation and joy as winter settles in and Christmas approaches. Streets are adorned with twinkling lights, homes glow with festive decorations, and families gather to celebrate traditions passed down through generations. There's a special kind of magic in the air: the first snowfall, cosy evenings by the fire, and the sound of carols drifting from door to door. For many, these moments bring comfort and connection, a sense of belonging and warmth that lights up even the darkest days of winter.



However, it's important to remember that the season is not easy for everyone. While some are surrounded by loved ones and laughter, others may feel the sting of loneliness or grief more acutely during this time. Pressure to appear happy and expectations of plenty can leave people facing hardship, loss, or mental health issues feeling isolated or overwhelmed. The cold months can be harsh for people who don't have stable housing or those struggling to make ends meet. As a community, reaching out with empathy, kindness and support can

make a world of difference. Small gestures – a warm meal, a thoughtful message, or simply listening – can help remind us all that the true spirit of this season lies in caring for one another.

*Lachael*

Highworth Methodist Church

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Charity no. 1139321

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Front cover image: Painting by Tayla Ince

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# FIRST THOUGHTS

## What Do You Really Need to Celebrate Christmas?

Over the centuries, countless traditions have shaped the way we celebrate Christmas. Our Victorian forebears were especially influential in popularising many of the customs we now take for granted – the Christmas tree, festive decorations, and even the beloved Christmas turkey. From Santa Claus to stockings, the season has become rich with symbols of warmth and joy.

Several years ago, I spent four months living at a theological college in South India. My time there included the seasons of Advent and Christmas, offering me the chance to experience the celebrations of a Christian minority within a largely non-Christian culture. Christian households would often keep a lighted lantern in their windows during Advent as a symbol of the coming of the Light of the World. During church services, local prayers and worship songs filled the air, though occasionally we found ourselves singing traditional Western carols about snow and



winter, despite the temperature outside being a balmy 25 degrees!

That experience reminded me that Christmas isn't truly about the trimmings – not the tree, the pudding, or the wintry scenes – but about the message they point to. At its heart, Christmas celebrates love, generosity and hope. People express that spirit in many ways: sharing food, giving gifts, decorating homes, and

gathering for worship. Whether it's lanterns glowing in India, or candles flickering in Europe, the meaning remains the same: light shining in the darkness.

So, what do we really need to celebrate Christmas? Not much, really. A thankful heart and a willingness to share the good news of God's love for the world. Wherever we are in the world, Christmas reminds us that love can bridge every distance and brighten every place.

Rev. Ian Mead

Methodist Minister for Highworth and Shrivenham

## Firewalk Fundraiser for Society Without Abuse

Fearless fundraisers from across Swindon have raised over £14,000 for local domestic abuse charity Society Without Abuse (SWA) by braving the blaze in the SWA Firewalk.

Swindon Cricket Club was alight with bravery and enthusiasm as participants first walked over broken glass before embracing the embers, raising £14,008.08 so far, with money continuing to come in. The majority of money raised was match-funded by the Big Give's Women and Girls Fund, meaning that the money will be used directly for SWA's recovery programmes for adult and child victims of domestic abuse.

Cheered on by friends and family, 30 brave walkers took on the challenge of walking 15 feet over red-hot coals – a symbolic journey mirroring the experience of many survivors of domestic abuse: beginning with fear and



Photo Credit: Stephen Baron Photography

uncertainty, building courage step by step, and finally achieving something once thought impossible.

The event was made possible thanks to sponsorship from Gel Studios and the generosity and support of the Swindon Cricket Club and their

members. Local food vendors Gourmet58, Samosas2go and the Sugar Shack kept walkers and supporters fuelled through the evening.

If you need advice for yourself or a friend relating to Domestic Abuse, call Swindon's domestic abuse helpline on 01793 610610.

To find out more about SWA visit [www.societywithoutabuse.org.uk](http://www.societywithoutabuse.org.uk).

Eleanor Butler



# Pride of Swindon Awards Are Open

Do you know of an individual or team who have provided a special or a long service, who have made a difference, inspired others, or gone that 'extra mile' and deserve to be recognised for their contribution to our community?

SWINDON 105.5, Voluntary Action Swindon and Swindon Borough Council announce the return of the *Pride of Swindon Awards*, first launched in 2008.

Shirley Ludford, Station Manager at Swindon 105.5 and one of the original founders, says, "Each nomination tells a story, and there are so many great stories to be shared and people to be recognised for their contribution to our community. Over the years there have been so many heartfelt and deserved nominations. I am delighted we are able to bring back the *Pride of Swindon Awards*."

Councillor Jim Robbins, Leader of Swindon Borough Council said, "The Council is proud to be supporting this



inspiring initiative and I look forward to recognising the everyday heroes who make the Borough so special."

The 2026 awards will be officially launched by Swindon's newly appointed Town Crier, Rob Hardy, at 12 noon on **Wednesday 5 November** by the statue of Isambard Kingdom Brunel in Havelock Square, Swindon Town Centre.

Nominations close at 5pm on **Friday 15 December** and finalists will be invited to the *Pride of Swindon Award* event at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Swindon, on **Thursday 5 March 2026**.

For more information on how to nominate an individual or a team, please see the *Pride of Swindon Award* page on the Swindon Borough Council website: [www.swindon.gov.uk/prideofswindon](http://www.swindon.gov.uk/prideofswindon) or call Shirley on 01793 611555.

## Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells!

The Rotary Sleigh is on the way! In the run-up to Christmas, our sleigh will be outside some Swindon supermarkets seeking donations in support of several local charities.

Last year, our Christmas Appeal raised an impressive £5,525 which we distributed to Youth Adventure Trust, Wiltshire Treehouse, Swindon Carers, Samaritans, Prospect Hospice, Owen's World Foundation, and the Motor Neurone Disease North Wiltshire Association. We are hoping we can top that figure this year.

Our Club President, Mike Helyer, says, "Every donation, no matter what size, helps us make a real difference for local charities and the people they support. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we're able to bring hope and assistance to those who need it most. All the money collected goes directly to charity."

Our sleigh will be at Asda West Swindon, Morrisons in Dorcan, and Sainsbury's in Stratton. Donations can be made in cash or by card. Or you can donate through our website.

At Asda, our sleigh will be on the Ashington Way side, near the car wash on **6 and 7 December** and **20, 21, 23 and 24 December**.

On **13 December** you will find us at Morrisons in



Dorcan, and at Sainsbury's in Stratton on **19 December**.

Please pay us a visit if you can or make a donation online. Go to our website for more information and to donate online.

Our Rotary Tree is in the *NSPCC Festival of Trees*. The Festival will be in the foyer of the Wyvern Theatre from **6 December to 5 January** during the run of the Wyvern's panto, *Sleeping Beauty*.

Happy Christmas, everyone!

If joining a Rotary Club interests you, please get in touch by emailing [rotaryswindonnorth@gmail.com](mailto:rotaryswindonnorth@gmail.com) or phone 07710 228697 (Ken) or 07712 078942 (Chris).

Ken Winslow

# COMMUNITY

## CAP Expanding to Meet Increasing Demand



Deb Wathen, new Debt Coach

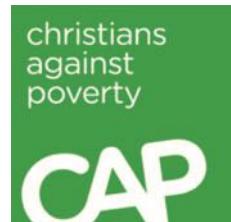
The team at Highworth's Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre, based at The Bridge Centre, is expanding to help people as costs remain high. The Debt Centre team has appointed Deb Wathen as an additional Debt Coach, doubling the number of appointments available to local people.

Since opening in 2014, the centre has seen steady growth in the number of people seeking help with their financial issues.

Kathryn Ford, CAP Debt Centre Manager, said, "Since we started, it has been wonderful to be able to help so many families and individuals go debt-free in Highworth. They can now move forward with their

lives without the constant stress, worry and anxiety that often comes with being in debt.

"Over the years, we've seen the need for free debt help grow, and we want to be able to help as many people as we possibly can. Now, with the addition of Deb to the team, it's great to be able to offer more support for local people."



Deb said, "I love the Highworth area and its people. I want to give something back, and the CAP Debt Centre gives me a chance to do that. I can work with people and walk with them as they see real change and a way out of debt. I know how difficult managing finances can be for us all, particularly at the minute with high prices, and especially if someone is also struggling with other challenges like ill-health, bereavement or unemployment."

If you are struggling with your finances, you can find out more about the services CAP offers in your area by visiting [www.capuk.org/help](http://www.capuk.org/help) or calling 0800 328 0006 free of charge. For more information on a wider range of free help available, visit [www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk).

To support CAP's work across the UK and help more individuals and families get out of debt, you can donate at [www.capuk.org/donate](http://www.capuk.org/donate). And if you're interested in finding out more about how you can directly support your local CAP centre, contact Kathryn Ford at [kathrynford@capuk.org](mailto:kathrynford@capuk.org) – 07885 579876.

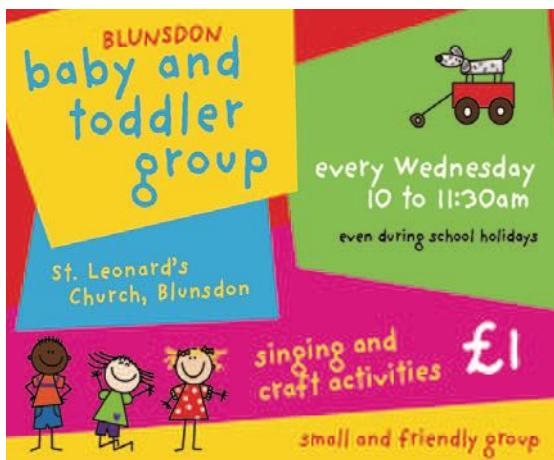


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## New Drop-in Café for Community Larder

The Highworth Community Larder (HCL) drop-in café – Welcome Wednesday – opened in September. Visitors were able to enjoy a free cup of coffee or tea with cake or biscuits, as well as good company in a warm and welcoming venue.

This opening session was attended by Julie Murphy, Mayor of Highworth. We are very grateful to Highworth Town Council (HTC) for their generosity in letting us use the Council Rooms and to the two volunteers from Hilliers who came to help. We were also visited by a reporter from BBC Wiltshire, Karen Gardener, who interviewed one of the trustees, Alison Durrant, and wrote a very supportive article about the café which you can read by going to [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62lgvxp5jxo](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62lgvxp5jxo).

Representatives from Citizens Advice attended our October session. They were able to help a number of people with advice and this was much appreciated by our customers. We hope they will visit us again and that other agencies will also attend to offer information or advice.

The café will be held in the Council Rooms in Gilberts Lane on the **third Wednesday of each month** from 9:30am to 11am. Advance notice of these sessions can be found on the HCL and HTC social media pages. We look forward to welcoming you.

Alongside this new venture we continue to run the Community Larder **every Tuesday**, from 8am to 10am, at Westrop School where we distribute surplus food received from supermarkets and other donors to our visitors free of charge.

To accomplish all this we are reliant on our wonderful team of volunteers, who staff the café and the larder and also collect surplus food from supermarkets. Sadly people do sometimes have to leave us, and we are always looking for new volunteers. If you feel you could help us or would like any further information, do please either drop in and visit us at the larder or the café or contact us at [highworthcommunitylarder@gmail.com](mailto:highworthcommunitylarder@gmail.com).

*Sue Morison*

## National Trust Buscot and Coleshill

**This month, it's all about how we're working with partners.**

In September we were more than grateful to welcome the Scouts who picked loads of apples for Highworth Community Cider. We are looking forward to trying some of this year's batch!

As winter draws in, there is still plenty to be done in the countryside for nature conservation. At Wayland Smithy, we are working in partnership with National Trails who are working with the Ridgeway Partnership. Our Area Ranger, Andy Foley, recently worked with them and a group of volunteers to create dead hedges

to make way for tree planting through the winter.



in support of **National Trust**

Progress is also being made in the flood management of Buscot. Training has been provided by RM Wetlands and Environmental to our valued partner organisations – Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Cotswold Rivers Trust, as well as staff and volunteers. The session was designed to show how we can install leaky dams. These dams are nature-based solutions made from logs and branches. The aim is to install them in ditches south of the village to reduce the impact of flooding. Check back in the months ahead for updates as work begins.

We partnered with Petra National Trust in Jordan this year as part of the Withstanding Change Project. The teams in Coleshill and Jordan connected online and in person, and this has helped both locations progress towards the same goal: helping young people consider careers in heritage and sustainable futures nationally and locally in both countries. The partnership has only just begun, and there are many plans for the future.



Wayland Smithy's dead hedging

*Sarah Hannis, Senior Volunteering and Community Manager*

# Latest News from the Big Highworth Community Foundation

Can you believe it – we are almost at the end of 2025! It's been a busy year at Big Highworth.

As we said goodbye to trustees Russell Dobbs and Chris Kent, we welcomed trustees Jayne Britton, Nigel Fitch and Hannah Edwards.



Jayne Britton

We donated almost £3,500 from our Community Grant Fund to:

The Roxi Foundation	£500
Root and Branch	£528
Highworth Historical Society	£324
Armed Forces Equine Charity	£500
Highworth Choral Society	£1,000
Heart for Philippines:	
Highworth project	£600

In March we held our inaugural Community Awards where we honoured and celebrated our Citizen, Volunteer and Charity of the Year.

We've held successful events and fundraisers that supported our 2025 Community Grant Fund and are now raising funds for 2026. If you have fundraising ideas, email [bighighworthevents@gmail.com](mailto:bighighworthevents@gmail.com).

In September our Community Award judges chose our winners for our next Community Awards which will be held at Wrag Barn in **March 2026**. We thank all of them for their support and time. Thank you for the outstanding nominations this year. Though not all made the judges' shortlist, every nominee is a winner to us.

We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Wiltshire Windows for serving as the headline sponsor of our Community Awards for two consecutive years. We also thank Hilliers Funeral for sponsoring our March



Hannah Edwards



Nigel Fitch



2025 awards, as well as supporting an individual award at our upcoming ceremony. More sponsor information will be available soon. Additionally we are grateful to the many businesses that have contributed raffle and tombola prizes, promoted our events, and provided continued support – your generosity is invaluable to us.

As a community charity, our operations rely entirely on donations; we do not have a retail outlet, nor do we receive grant funding. Each contribution plays a crucial role in enabling us to serve the community effectively. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all supporters who have helped make this year a tremendous success for the Community Foundation. Looking ahead to 2026, we remain optimistic for continued growth and achievement.

If you would like to join our journey, please consider volunteering at our events by contacting us at [bighighworthevents@gmail.com](mailto:bighighworthevents@gmail.com) or applying to become a trustee at [BHCF2023@outlook.com](mailto:BHCF2023@outlook.com).

To follow Big Highworth, volunteer and/or support our journey, you can follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/BigHighworthCommunityFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/BigHighworthCommunityFoundation), or you can donate on Localgiving.



Cheque Presentation to Armed Forces Equine Charity



Cheque Presentation to Highworth Choral Society

## From the Rector's Pen

When I was at college many years ago, I had to write a paper on sociological change based on a book by A.H. Halsey. I can't remember what I wrote in the paper but I do remember the title: *Continuity and Change in British Society*.

We live in a society that continues to change. When I first studied computing, PCs had not been invented, TVs were black and white, and phones were made of Bakelite. But each year, without fail, Christmas would come around, presents would appear and trees would be decorated. The contents of the presents would change, the people I celebrated it with would change, but Christmas itself was a constant.

As I approach a major change in my life – a knee



replacement – I am learning the value of faith in the consistency of God. No matter what is happening in the world or at home, I know that God sent his Son into our broken world to bring peace, reconciliation and healing.

Christmas is about continuity and change, God's everlasting love, and Christ coming to change for the better our lives and His world.

This Christmas, remember one of the names of Jesus: Immanuel, God with us.

And pray for peace in the world and peace in your home, now and for ever.

*Phil Goodey, Vicar of Highworth and Rector of Broad Blunsdon*

## Heart for Philippines at Parliament and Afternoon Tea



*Jamie and Zobel (l) with fellow delegates from Cotabato, Manila and Dublin*

Heart for Philippines was honoured to attend a landmark health policy event at the UK Parliament on 21 October, hosted by the University of Plymouth and the University of the Philippines. The evening marked the launch of the South East Asia Health Policy Network, bringing together over 50 policymakers, health professionals and advocates to address the health impacts of climate change.

Founders Jamie and Zobel Starritt shared grassroots Filipino perspectives, highlighting the resilience and innovation of communities in a nation continually struck by calamities and natural disasters. As a small charity, Heart for Philippines takes pride in its swift action – delivering life-saving aid within 24 hours of a disaster.

Supported by Tony Vaughan MP, the British Council and university partners, the event reaffirmed our



### Heart for Philippines

commitment to urgent, community-led action. Because these calamities happen again and again, your donations are vital. Please email [info@heartforphilippines.org](mailto:info@heartforphilippines.org) to find out how you can support.

We were also delighted to host *From the Heart: A Special Afternoon Tea* at Grove Hill Care Home, an event made possible by a generous grant from BIG Highworth Community Foundation.

The time was filled with warmth and joy as children from the community lovingly served tea and chatted with residents, bridging generations with kindness and smiles. One touching moment came when Dorothy, a resident, said, "What a lovely thought, such a lovely surprise. Why did you have to do these things to old people like us?"

Her words remind us why these simple acts matter so much; they show our elders they are cherished, valued and never forgotten. We are grateful to Fezan Islam and the Grove Hill carers for creating such a welcoming atmosphere. Rooted in Filipino culture's deep respect for elders, this project celebrates family, connection and compassion.

*Zobel Starritt, Co-Founder*

# Barton Court Therapies

## Highworth



Teresa Triggs



Tracey Kassulke

Teresa Triggs and Tracey Kassulke are celebrating 3 years of developing Barton Court Therapies. The centre has grown from their own counselling practices to now also offering a range of therapeutic services with other practitioners.



Bonny Prim



Teresa Udell



Ed Horgood



Zoe Dixon-Saunders



Susie Richards

Tucked away in a peaceful courtyard just off the High Street in Highworth, 4 Barton Court is a welcoming therapy centre offering a calm escape from the outside world. Its beautifully decorated and thoughtfully furnished rooms create a warm, inviting atmosphere where clients can feel safe, supported, and truly heard. Each space is designed to ensure confidentiality and comfort, making it an ideal setting for personal reflection and growth.

The centre provides a range of therapies tailored to individual needs, delivered by experienced professionals dedicated to helping clients navigate life's challenges with care and compassion.

Therapists at 4 Barton Court offer a wide variety of counselling therapies for all ages - including children (11+ years), young people, adults, and couples - as well as hypnotherapy, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), and nutrition support. This comprehensive approach ensures that every client receives the right kind of help, in the right way, at the right time.

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Visit our website for further information and contact details  
[www.bartoncourt-therapies.co.uk](http://www.bartoncourt-therapies.co.uk)

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## Exciting News for Shrivenham

We are delighted to share some wonderful news for our village! The former Lloyd's Bank building on Shrivenham High Street has now been sold, and our new landlord, J. Knapp & Sons Ltd, has stepped in with a strong commitment to keeping essential services and community spaces at the heart of Shrivenham.

This means both Shrivenham Post Office and Sustainable Shrivenham with The Hub have a secure future in the village, and we'll soon be neighbours. Together, we're creating a stronger, more connected centre for our community.

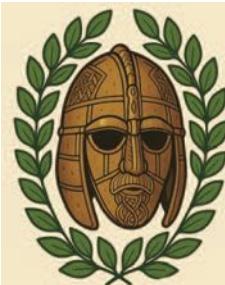
Splitting the building 50/50 will enable both to thrive. For The Hub, this means continuing as a much-loved community space, while for Shrivenham Post Office it means more room to expand and improve services. Customers can look forward to a wider range of Post Office services, alongside an increased selection of greetings cards, stationery, gifts and toys – and hopefully no more queues out on to the pavement at busy times!

There will be a short transition period: The Hub will close in its current form at Christmas to prepare for this exciting new chapter, and Shrivenham Post Office will be open for business as usual for the time being and planning their move after Christmas. Both hope to be open in their new premises by March 2026.

We would like to thank all our customers and supporters who have helped us on this journey and we look forward to sharing more in the coming months.

Together, we look forward to welcoming you into our refreshed space in the spring: a real hub for Shrivenham!

*Stephanie Muir*



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## Highworth Climate Talks

Christmas is a great time to meet friends and family and enjoy their company, to have a laugh, play games, reminisce and enjoy good food. But how can we celebrate without the meaningless consumerism?

Join us on **Tuesday 9 December**, 7:15pm for a free hot chocolate, inspiration on reducing the usual Christmas waste and learn about sustainable Christmas decoration ideas. Find out what party games have stood the test of time and discover recipes that will delight your family but won't cost the earth (in more ways than one).

On **Tuesday 20 January** Thomas Minney will join us to speak about the Wonky Veg Club which he runs at a site on Roves Farm. After studying Maths at Oxford University, Thomas spent some time in Hong Kong with students, teaching and running activities, and so has experience with running groups before following a career in engineering.

The Wonky Veg Club, which is run by volunteers, was established to allow people to enjoy the benefits of growing veg and enjoying the outdoors with others in a sociable, supportive and knowledgeable atmosphere. So if you want to enjoy the benefits of growing and eating fresh veg and learning with others, but don't want the responsibility or time for an allotment of your own, come and join us to hear about the Wonky Veg Club – it might be just the thing for you.

Both events will take place at Highworth Methodist Church, SN6 7HG.

*John Ranford*

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# COMMUNITY

## LINK Magazine Begins a New Chapter

Did you know that Highworth's LINK Magazine has been in production for almost 54 years? Since 1972, the magazine has been produced on a regular basis, evolving from a typed eight-page publication to this glorious technicoloured magazine you now hold!

For those of you interested in numbers, here are some quick facts:

- Approximately 540 editions have been published since 1972.
- Almost 100 hours per month are taken to produce each issue.
- Each issue takes around 15 volunteer hours to sort for delivery.
- Every single copy is sorted and delivered by hand.
- To deliver 6,500 issues to homes takes approximately 140 hours each month.
- Outside of Highworth, around 15 villages receive LINK Magazine, including Hannington, Stanton Fitzwarren, Shrivenham and Blunsdon.

Originally developed by the churches of Highworth as a bridge to the community, LINK has become a key part of life in this area. Many see it as the cornerstone of community, providing news and information and, therefore, deepening a sense of togetherness. New residents are often impressed by the magazine's high quality and the engaging content it offers. You have every right to feel proud of this outstanding publication.

Recognising how vital LINK Magazine is to the community, for two or three years now the churches of Highworth have been considering its future. Like so many groups and organisations, Covid hit the magazine hard and changed our perspective about how

it needs to be run. Above anything else, the team strive to protect the future of the magazine, ensuring it will continue to be a part of community life for many years to come.

Earlier this year, LINK Magazine became a Community Interest Company (CIC), confirming our status as a not-for-profit organisation, and registered with Companies House. As always, we continue to provide a benefit to this amazing community and aim financially to only cover our outgoings. Should any surplus be gained, this is reinvested in the community. We have a board of volunteer directors - Rev. Phil Goodey, Peter Williams, David Roblin, Peter McAuley and Matt Ford - who are responsible for handling finances and personnel issues, and Rachael Laing Smith handles the day-to-day management of the magazine as Editor.

Gaining CIC status is only a beneficial thing and marks a new era for LINK Magazine. We're so grateful to you for your support. Without your articles, adverts and readership there really would be no point, so thank you. Here's to another 54 years!

### Volunteer to Deliver LINK Magazine!

Passionate about your neighbourhood in Shrivenham and South Marston? Do you have a couple of hours to spare each month? Join us as a volunteer to deliver LINK magazine! Help share local stories, events and resources while connecting with your neighbours.

#### Why Volunteer?

- Make a difference in your community
- Flexible delivery times
- Meet new friends and enjoy community spirit!

Interested? Contact us at [keith@xcrosskeys.co.uk](mailto:keith@xcrosskeys.co.uk) or [editor@highworthlink.co.uk](mailto:editor@highworthlink.co.uk)

Let's spread the word together!



# COMMUNITY

## Southfield Students Explore Tales of the Nile and Migration



Years 3 and 4 children at Southfield Junior School have been studying an exciting Ancient Egyptian topic that has taken them back over 5,000 years in history.

By placing Ancient Egypt on a timeline, children have been figuring out exactly when this amazing civilization existed compared to other times they have studied. Using modern maps, they've also discovered where Egypt is in the world today and explored why the River Nile was so important for farming and daily life. It would seem that, without the Nile, Ancient Egypt might have been a very different place and not nearly as exciting!

In History lessons, the children have been learning all about the clothes people wore, the jobs they did, and even the games they played in Ancient Egypt. They've met the Pharaohs, are learning about thousands of gods and goddesses, and discovering what Ancient Egyptians believed about the afterlife. They are now beginning to realise there is more to Egyptian life than just pyramids!

In English, the children got stuck in with writing their own versions of the Cinderella story set in Ancient



Egypt, weaving in everything they've learned about Egyptian culture, clothing and gods. It's cleverly combining history with storytelling, and the children are truly turning into mini-Egyptologists and authors at the same time.

Art lessons have been buzzing with creativity too! The children have been experimenting with mixed media to create interesting textured backgrounds and delved into Ancient Egyptian art and symbols, including the mysterious hieroglyphs. They've found out these symbols weren't just pretty pictures but were believed to have magical powers. Taking it a step further, the children even tried their hand at making papyrus paper from scratch, just like the Egyptians did thousands of

years ago. They topped off their creativity by designing and crafting their own Egyptian scrolls, decorating them with hieroglyphs and symbols.

This fascinating and fun topic is giving the children a solid understanding of one of the world's oldest and most captivating civilizations whilst sharpening their skills in history, geography, art and writing. With this strong start, they're all set to explore even more ancient worlds – and maybe one day discover some new stories of their own!

Mrs. O'Sullivan, Head of School

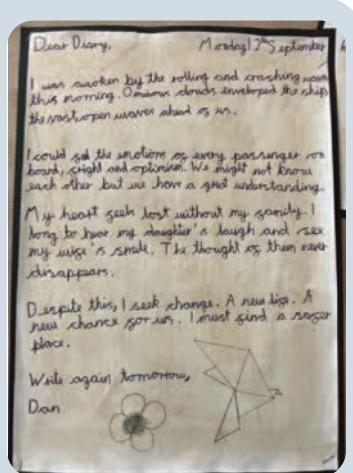
This term, our Year 5/6 students have begun exploring the topic of migration using Shaun Tan's beautifully illustrated graphic novel, *The Arrival*, as a stimulus.

Over the past few weeks, we have looked at why people migrate, focusing on key ideas such as push and pull factors, emigration and reasons why people move to Britain. The children have engaged with the topic in a creative and thoughtful way, producing tea-stained diary entries written from the perspective of a migrant, capturing the emotions and experiences of starting a new life in an unfamiliar place.

They also created delicate origami birds, inspired by the imagery in *The Arrival*, to represent themes of hope and journey.

After half term, we'll be continuing our work by learning about the Commonwealth and how it connects to migration throughout history.

Mrs. Clapham



# UPCOMING EVENTS 2026

**FEB 27** AMY WINEHOUSE TRIBUTE  
8PM - MIDNIGHT  
£20PP

**MAR 15** MOTHERS DAY LUNCH  
3 COURSE CARVERY  
ADULTS - £33PP

**MAY 22** BOB MARLEY TRIBUTE  
8PM - MIDNIGHT  
£20PP

**OCT 9** FREDDIE MERCURY TRIBUTE  
8PM - MIDNIGHT  
£20PP



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# COMMUNITY

## Rollercoaster Year for Visit Highworth

As we come to the close of the year, we would like to thank our supporters and shareholders for their continued and unstinting support – emotional and financial – enabling us to keep the doors open and continue our work in promoting our town.

We are also grateful to the Lechlade Occasional Choir for their generous donation following their recent concert in Highworth United Reformed Church.

We had an unprecedented number of requests this year for our Town Tours and this popularity looks to be continuing into 2026.

This autumn we launched a series of workshops which have proved popular with people from Highworth and beyond, and we will continue to develop this programme. There are still the *Crochet a Creature* workshops to run in December – please contact us if you are interested.

We are delighted to be working with Swindon Borough Council to provide welcome packs for new residents moving into Highworth, promoting the beautiful walks in our area. Furthermore, our 2025



walks book, containing nine well-described walks, is proving a popular seller in the shop.

Our opening times for Christmas week are: 22 and 23 December, 10am to 3pm, and Wednesday 24 December, 10am to 12pm. We have an extensive range of high-quality, locally made craft works and paintings, as well as Highworth Calendars, and the limited edition drawings of Highworth by Paul Newton-Smith. There's still time to purchase the perfect gift and support a local artist.

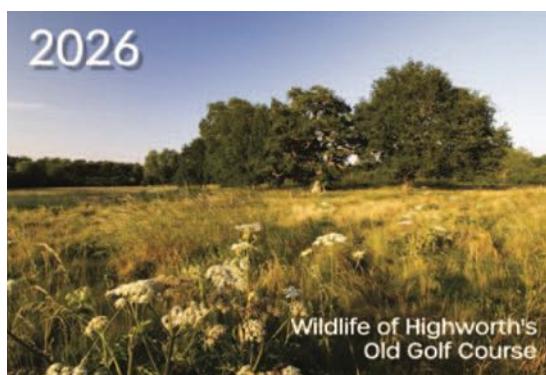
Our first *Meet the Maker* session for 2026 will be on **Saturday 7 February** with Ann March. Come and chat with Ann about her paintings and jewellery and discover what other art forms she excels at.

And why not come and meet award-winning Gold Earth on **Tuesday 9 December**, 7pm to 9pm? Meet Samina, the creator of Gold Earth, and try out some of her amazing products.

The team at Visit Highworth wish you all the best for the festive season and a very Happy New Year!

*Iona Sadler*

## Highworth Old Golf Course Wildlife Calendar

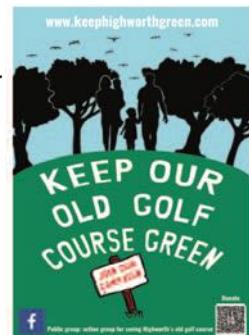


Two of Highworth's finest wildlife photographers, Keith Davidson and Kevin O'Donoghue, have generously produced a Highworth Old Golf Course Wildlife Calendar, with all proceeds going directly into the Action Group's fundraising pot.

The first batch sold out in no time, and a second print run of 150 calendars is now available. Calendars will be

on sale at Visit Highworth, who have kindly agreed to support us by stocking them. Over the coming weeks, Action Group members will also be in the Market Square on some Saturday mornings, where you'll be able to pick up a copy. If you're unable to get to the Market Square, you can order directly by emailing [rob@highworthtower.co.uk](mailto:rob@highworthtower.co.uk) or by texting/WhatsApp 07799 602370. Local delivery can be arranged where possible.

Each calendar is priced at £13, with every penny going to support our cause. They make a wonderful Christmas gift, while helping to protect a much-loved local space.



*Rob New*

# COMMUNITY

## Faringdon's Junior Triathlon Club Celebrates 20th Anniversary



The Vale Trident Junior Triathlon Club, based in Faringdon, proudly celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, and the club is stronger than ever.

To mark the milestone, the club welcomed its founder, Carolyn Murphy, to present the annual awards and trophies. Joining her was Mel Nichols, Paralympian and world-record ultra cyclist, who attended as a celebrity guest and presented the South West Junior Series certificates. Both delivered motivational speeches along with their Chairman Richard Lewis and the Head Coach Tom Gilbert.

The club train every Saturday morning for two hours, combining running and cycling on the FCC grounds and then a coached swim session at Faringdon Leisure Centre. The Vale Tridents also host popular sports events such as an aquathlon and triathlon.



In 2025, the club enjoyed its most successful competitive year yet, with four Tridents qualifying to represent the South West of England at the British Championships.

The Vale Tridents Triathlon club would love to see more locals take part in their events and for youngsters to give the sport a try, so please sign up at [britishtriathlon.org](http://britishtriathlon.org).

Children who are interested in joining the Vale Tridents or taking part in their events can find details at [www.valetridents.com](http://www.valetridents.com), email [valetridents@gmail.com](mailto:valetridents@gmail.com), or follow @valetridentsjuniortriathlon on Instagram and Facebook.

The Vale Trident Junior Triathlon Club looks forward to the next 20 years of inspiring young athletes and celebrating every step, stroke and pedal along the way.

*Kurstie Gilbert*

## Highworth Historical Society

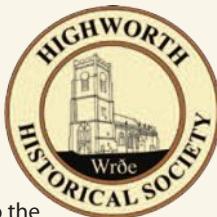
Our first talk of 2026 will be on Wednesday 28 January when our speaker will be Rev. Phil Goodey, vicar of St. Michael's Church. He will be speaking on one of his interests: *Regency Dancing*, and not just talking but also demonstrating!

John Playford wrote his book, *The Dancing Master*, in 1651. This was a complete dance guide with music and how to perform the dance, and it stayed in print through at least 18 editions over the following years.

As usual we meet in St. Michael's Church. The doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start. Visitors are always welcome for a charge of £3 – cash please. If you are new to the town, come along and give us a try.

For more information telephone Chris on 01793 764811.

*Chris Suter*



# Visit from Twin Town Wassenberg

We were delighted to welcome visitors from our German Twin Town of Wassenberg this October. For the first time, our visitors came by coach, plus some by car, and when everyone had assembled, there was a total of 28 people.

Locals from Highworth and Swindon joined our guests as we toured the Cotswolds on the Saturday. By the time further supporters of Twinning had arrived at Wrag Barn for dinner on the Sunday night, our total number reached 73! I'm delighted so many people attended, which contributed to making the weekend a great success.

Thanks must always go to the hosts, especially the three new couples who answered my plea in a spring



**Highworth Twinning Association**

## Visit to our Twin Town of Wassenberg

**Thursday 14 May to Sunday 17th May 2026**

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If you would like more details, please contact Richard Pearce on 07513 009044 or [rjnppearcehta@gmail.com](mailto:rjnppearcehta@gmail.com)



Cream tea in St. Edward's Hall

version of the LINK when we were short of accommodation. (Thank you to LINK Magazine for being the facilitator – perhaps you can help us find a new treasurer?) The ladies of the WI in Stow-on-the-Wold deserve a mention for providing an excellent cream tea in St. Edward's Hall on our way home. And finally thanks to Wrag Barn staff who did an excellent job preparing for the Sunday evening dinner.

As an association, we are invited to journey to Wassenberg for Ascension next year from **14 to 17 May 2026**. It is a proper town in the countryside and has woods and lakes. Wassenberg also has its own Highworth Lane, a cycle and walking path, formerly a railway line, near the centre of town. The history is interesting as we found when on a walking tour; our guide described how the inhabitants were liberated by the Allies. If speaking German is a concern, please don't worry, as English is widely spoken and therefore knowledge of German is certainly not essential – we will ensure you have an appropriate host. Please think about joining us; you will be very welcome. For more information contact me at [rjnppearcehta@gmail.com](mailto:rjnppearcehta@gmail.com).

*Richard Pearce, HTA Chairman*

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# COMMUNITY

## Learn, Laugh and Live with u3a

No longer working full-time? Then 2026 could be the time to join the u3a! If you want to meet new people and pursue new interests you could do no better than join our friendly vibrant community.

Together, we enjoy over 130 activity and interest groups spanning a wide variety of subjects: the arts, sciences, crafts, sports, music, history, literature, games, quizzes, languages, technology and more. We also hold talks and events where everyone can come together, share ideas, and enjoy a chat over a cup of tea.

Groups usually meet in local community centres or sometimes in members' homes. The size of each group depends on the activity and the space required.

Swindon u3a is part of a nationwide movement, independent of political or religious ties. It is run by members, for members, and funded through subscriptions. Membership costs just £10 a year, plus a small fee for each group you join, mainly to cover venue hire.

**u3a**

Every group is led by a volunteer, and we're always open to new ideas for activities. Gill runs a bridge group, a poetry group, and a reading group. She says, "Joining a u3a group can be life-changing – some of the things it can offer are obvious while others are unexpected. For instance, if you were to join my Poetry or Bridge Groups you are obviously going to learn more about reading and understanding poetry or how to play bridge.

But there's much more than that: you also make friends, have fun, exchange information and ideas and have something to look forward to and plan for. What's more, it's a great feeling to be learning something and really enjoying it. Really being in a u3a group is like having another branch of your family."

To learn more about the u3a and all the activities it offers, visit [www.swindonu3a.org.uk](http://www.swindonu3a.org.uk), telephone the office on 01793 614629 between 10am and noon on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or visit our Facebook page.

*Sue Mazzoleni*

## Upper Thames and Ridgeway National Trust Association

UTRNTA invites you to a talk by Dr. Richard Fisher, *Three Choirs and a Reformation: English Cathedrals under the Tudors*, at Highworth Community Centre SN6 7PQ, on Wednesday 14 January 2026, starting at 2:30pm.

Dr. Richard Fisher will explain how the 19 cathedrals of medieval England were administered and funded, including their curious division into two very distinct organisational groups.

Henry VIII is infamous for his dissolution of the monasteries, but not so well known for creating six new dioceses, bishops and their requisite cathedrals from abbeys spared destruction. Which did he choose to save and why?

Using examples from the west of England, focusing on the cathedrals at Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester, the story is told of how our cathedrals survived the Reformation and contributed to the distinctive worship of the emergent Anglican church.

For more details, please check our website: [www.utrnta.co.uk](http://www.utrnta.co.uk). The UTRNTA is your local Supporter Group for the National Trust.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Rachael,

Gill, Pam and Jane would like to thank everyone who attended their Macmillan coffee morning at Cricklade Road on 23 October. It was a wonderful social event which raised an amazing £1,085 to help fund the work of Macmillan Cancer Support. We are very grateful for the incredible generosity of everyone who donated.

*Jane Pearce*



# Celebrate Christmas with Your Local Churches



## ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

HIGHWORTH

Friday 19 December

4pm Christingle Service

Sunday 21 December

6pm Carol Service

Christmas Eve

4pm Crib Service

11:15pm Midnight Holy Communion

Christmas Day

10:15am Holy Communion

## HIGHWORTH METHODIST CHURCH

Sunday 7 December

10:30am Second Advent Service

Sunday 14 December

10:30am Third Advent Service

Sunday 21 December

10:30am Fourth Advent Service

Sunday 21 December

4pm Carol Service

Christmas Day

10am Family Service

## HIGHWORTH COMMUNITY CHURCH

Saturday 20 December

5pm Carols on the Podium

Sunday 21 December

10:30am Celebration of Christmas,  
Warneford School

Christmas Day

10am Family Service  
Highworth Community Centre

## ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH

BLUNSDON

Sunday 7 December

4pm Christingle Service

Sunday 21 December

6pm Carol Service

Wednesday 24 December

3pm Crib Service  
11:15pm Midnight Holy Communion

Christmas Day

10am Holy Communion

## ST. JAMES' CHURCH

SEVENHAMPTON

Wednesday 17 December

7pm Carol Service

Christmas Day

10am Holy Communion

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

INGLESHAM

Saturday 20 December

2pm Carol Service

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

HANNINGTON

Sunday 21 December

4pm Carol Service

Christmas Day

10:30pm Holy Communion

## ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH

STANTON FITZWARREN

Saturday 13 December

2pm Decorate Christmas tree in  
the church

Sunday 14 December

11am Family Christingle

Christmas Eve

3:30pm Walking Nativity,  
Church Lane

7pm Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Day

10am Team Service, St. Margaret's  
Church Stratton

## South Marston Gardening Club

Join us on Monday 1 December, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, in South Marston Village Hall for a fun and relaxed social evening featuring potluck food and a quiz!

This will be a great chance to unwind, enjoy some good food, and test your trivia skills in a light-hearted quiz. Whether you're a regular or new to the group, everyone is welcome – including non-members. We'd love to see you there!

You can bring your own team of six, or come along solo and help form teams on the night. A prize awaits the winning team, so get your thinking caps on!

A buffet-style supper will be on offer (bring a plate of food to share), along with drinks (feel free to bring your own tipple!), all for just £3 per person. There will also be an optional raffle.

Come along for a fun evening. It's a fantastic way to catch up with old friends, meet new ones, share great food and enjoy a fun festive evening together!

All events held at South Marston Village Hall, Old Vicarage Lane, South Marston Village SN3 4SH. There is parking on Old Vicarage Lane, next to the school.

Whether you're just dropping in for the evening on a one-off visit and pay just £5, or considering joining us as a full member at £15 Annual Membership, you're very welcome!

Enjoy a warm, friendly atmosphere with refreshments and delicious homemade cakes, great company and inspiring talks that celebrate all things gardening and beyond. For more information email [angelanewton01@gmail.com](mailto:angelanewton01@gmail.com) or call or text on 07789 068340.

*Angela Newton*

### South Marston Gardening Club 2026 – Dates For Your Diary

**Monday 2 March**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

AGM, followed by clubs members only workshop:  
Potting up a Small Tub

**Monday 13 April**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Rachel Golding Barrett: A Flower Farmer's Year plus rooted dahlia cuttings available to purchase

**Monday 11 May**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Ros Ford: National Garden Scheme

**Monday 1 June**, 7:30pm to 8:30pm

Plant Sale

**Monday 6 July**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

William Case: Lawn Care

**Friday 21 August**, 6pm to 7:30pm

Set up and registration for the Annual Flower and Produce Show

**Saturday 22 August**

Annual Flower and Produce Show

**Monday 7 September**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

David Usher: The Inspiring Life of Gertrude Jekyll

**Monday 5 October**, 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Timothy Walker: In the Not so Bleak Midwinter – Making Your Garden Interesting in the Winter

**Monday 2 November**: 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Members only Christmas Wreath Workshop

**Monday 7 December**: 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Social Evening (with food and quiz)



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# Christmas with the Lions

## Well, what a year it's been!

A massive 'thank you' to all the volunteers in our charity shop who give their time freely every week throughout the year; from beautiful window displays to cheerful smiles, a friendly chat, a laugh and a joke... it's our happy place! We all take great pride in the shop and love to make it a pleasure for everyone to visit. For customers and volunteers alike, it's our own little community!

We would also like to thank the people of Highworth for their quality donations which enables us to continue giving to various charities and, above all, give back not only to the community but also internationally in so many different and positive ways.

The shop will be closing from **Saturday 20 December** at 1pm and reopening again on **Tuesday 6 January** at 9am, but in the meantime it's time for Santa and his sleigh to once again bring delight to the children in and around the area. If we have any street runs, please follow our District Lions Facebook page for any updates nearer the time.



You will be able to see the Santa sleigh at the following confirmed locations:

<b>7 December,</b> 9am to 4pm	Orbital Park, Haydon Wick (by the Christmas tree)
<b>13 December,</b> 9am to 2pm	Highworth Market Square
<b>19 December,</b> 9am to 2pm	Co-op Highworth
<b>19 December,</b> 5pm to 7pm	Blunsdon Community Café (including carol singers)
<b>20 December,</b> 10am to 4pm	Asda Orbital Centre
<b>21 December,</b> 9:30am to 4pm	Haydon Wick Tesco Swindon

Follow us on Facebook for updates as these times may change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances.

We still need elves along the way to collect for us on the stands. If you are able to help, please contact me at [sue@highworthlions.co.uk](mailto:sue@highworthlions.co.uk) or call into our charity shop with your name and number and I will contact you.

Our donations and pledges are as follows:

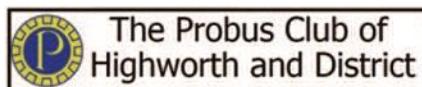
<i>Sponsorship for new defibrillator for Sevenhampton Village:</i>	<b>£1,500</b>
<i>School parcels for Xmas coordinated through local churches:</i>	<b>£600</b>
<i>Warneford School tables</i>	<b>£2,200</b>
<i>CAP Christmas lunches</i>	<b>£250</b>

We wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year.

*Sue Subow*

## Highworth and District Probus Club

We meet at The Cold Harbour in Blunsdon on alternative weekdays at 10:30am. We welcome retired professional and business men with no upper age limit, and we welcome visitors as guests at any of our meetings.



will kick off 2026 on **Tuesday 6 January** with our now traditional new year presentation from well-known local historian Bill King, and on 20 January Ron Jeffrey will be giving a talk on *The Irish Civil War*.

For further information please email [info@highworthprobus.co.uk](mailto:info@highworthprobus.co.uk), or visit our website at [www.highworthprobus1.wordpress.com](http://www.highworthprobus1.wordpress.com).

We will not have any meetings during December, but

*George North*

# COMMUNITY

## Christmas and Beyond with the Scouts

1st Highworth Scouts are always busy and always looking ahead.

The Scouts Christmas stamps will be on sale in the Highworth Emporium until **16 December** which is the final day for posting cards – our post box is also in the Emporium. Please remember we do not deliver to Faringdon or Lechlade. If you've never used our postal service before, why not give it a try this year?

Looking ahead to 2026, our Annual Scarecrow Trail will return during the Easter holidays with the theme of *Things beginning with H*. We are sure this will allow for a huge variety of entries ranging from subjects such as sports, cars, buildings, food and many other categories. We will be receiving submissions in February but, as always, should you require any further information beforehand then please email [scarecrow@highworthscouts.org.uk](mailto:scarecrow@highworthscouts.org.uk).

Look out too for our 2026 Quiz which will be on **17 April**. Full details will be available in the new year.

*Nora Enderby and David Roblin*



*Last year's winning Scarecrow*



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## Prospect Hospice to Collect Christmas Trees

This January, Prospect Hospice will once again be offering a Christmas tree collection service across the local community, giving residents a simple and meaningful way to support hospice care at the start of the new year.

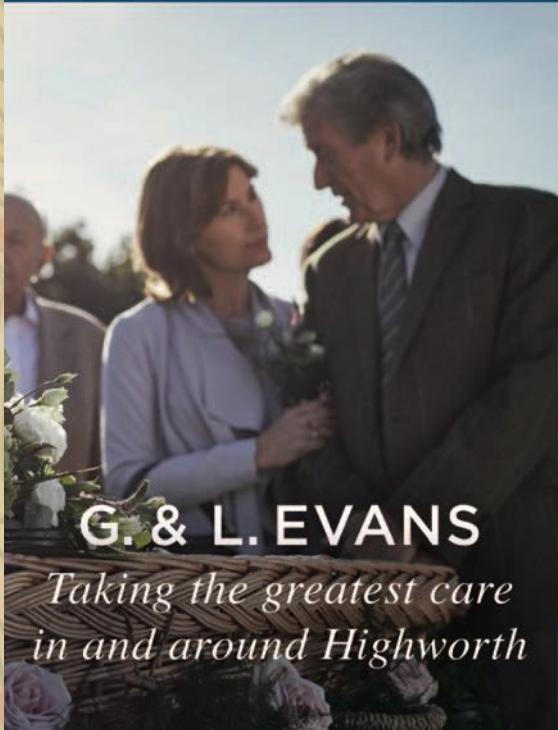


For a suggested minimum donation of £20, households can have their real Christmas tree collected and responsibly recycled. Every tree collected and every donation made will help Prospect Hospice provide vital care, comfort and support to local patients and families living with a life-limiting illness.

Tree collections will take place across the following postcode areas: SN1, SN2, SN3, SN4, SN5, SN6, SN25 and SN26. Residents are encouraged to register their interest now and they will be notified as soon as booking opens.

For more information and to register, please visit [www.prospect-hospice.net/treecollection](http://www.prospect-hospice.net/treecollection).

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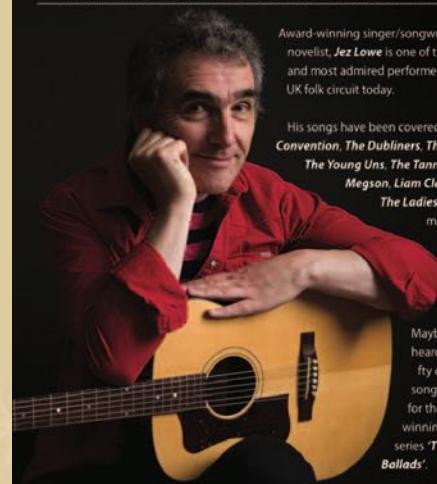
**Highworth Flower Club**  
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# JEZ LOWE

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# COMMUNITY

## Highworth Camera Club

As we approach the end of one year and the start of the new one, the club can reflect on a busy year of changes and events.

The club introduced a new set of open competitions and a new tool online – *Pixaroo* – for members to enter competitions and the club to manage the entries. It also enables members to look back over the competition pictures.

We have been more involved within the Highworth community, attending many of the local events to record the activities. Members submitted photos for the Visit Highworth calendar and one member has also contributed to the Old Golf Course calendar.

In July we invited visitors to hear our guest speaker

Jack Lord. We are happy to announce that Jack has been booked again for 2026 – well worth attending! Other events have included practical sessions with light painting, portraits with Highworth Amateur Dramatics Society members, and an evening outing to Badbury Clump. In September we held our annual exhibition extended over two days. The club's annual award evening at the Christmas party in December will round off this busy year.

2026's first meeting will be on the second Tuesday of the month, **13 January** at the Community Centre, 7:30pm. For more information see our website: [www.highworthcameraclub.com](http://www.highworthcameraclub.com), or email [highworthcamclub@gmail.com](mailto:highworthcamclub@gmail.com).

Hilary Beach



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## Highworth Methodist Church

★ Peace on earth and goodwill to all men

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10.30 – 12 noon  
Coffee and cake

**Craft Group**  
Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>  
10am-1pm

**What's on in December?**

**Sunday Morning Worship at 10.30am**

7 Café Church – Val  
14 Advent 3  
21 Advent 4  
21 at 4pm Carol Service – Rev Ian Mead  
25 at 10am Christmas Day – Rev Ian Mead  
28 Morning Worship

Refreshments served after each service

**Café Church**  
Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>  
10.30am

All Welcome

**Every Friday**  
9.30-11.15 am

**JAM CLUB**

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[www.facebook.com/HighworthMethodistChurch](http://www.facebook.com/HighworthMethodistChurch)

**3Cs – Coffee, cake & chat**  
Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup>  
2.30pm

## Smiles Abound at Autumn Exhibition

Thank you to everyone who visited our autumn exhibition held at the end of October. Although our sales were lower than usual, we enjoyed talking to visitors and appreciate your lovely comments about our artwork.

Laila Rhodes and Kevin O'Donaghue of Highworth Forget-Me-Not Café (our chosen charity for the year) chose their favourite painting on the opening Saturday. This was a mixed media painting by Anthea Hilsom titled *Mixed Messages*. Anthea was surprised



*Morning Still* by Joan O'Rourke

but delighted that her painting had been chosen. She is pictured here with our Chair Lyn Armstrong who presented her with the Bill Bartrop trophy.

The second prize to be awarded for the week went to Joan O'Rourke for her painting *Morning Still*. This was voted the

favourite painting by visitors over the course of the week. Once again, thank you to everyone who voted and congratulations to both Joan and Anthea!



*Lyn Armstrong (l) presents Bill Bartrop trophy to Anthea Hilsom (r)*

We are looking forward to 2026 and wonder what it will bring. In an increasingly uncertain world, meeting with friends to paint is a wonderful thing.

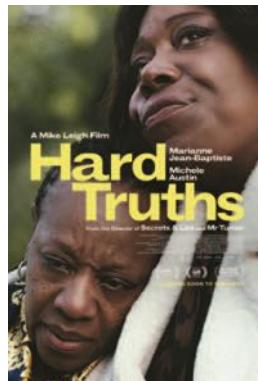
Warm winter wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year!

## Highworth Community Cinema

As we don't have a screening in December, we will begin the spring half of the season in January 2026 with a film directed by Mike Leigh, starring Marianne Jean-Baptiste.

Join us on **Friday 23 January** at the United Reformed Church, High Street, Highworth SN6 7AG, 7:45pm for a showing of *Hard Truths* (cert 12).

Legendary filmmaker, Mike Leigh, returns to the contemporary world with a fierce, compassionate and often darkly humorous study of family and the thorny ties that bind us. Reunited with Leigh for the first time since multiple Oscar-nominated *Secrets and Lies*, the astonishing Marianne Jean-Baptiste plays Pansy, a woman wracked by fear, tormented by afflictions and prone to raging tirades against her husband, son and anyone who looks her way.



Meanwhile, her easygoing younger sister, played by Michele Austin, is a single mother with a life as different from Pansy's as their clashing temperaments – brimming with communal warmth from her salon clients and daughters alike. This expansive film from a master dramatist takes us into the intensities of

kinship, duty and the most enduring of human mysteries: that even through lifetimes of hurt and hardship, we still find ways to love those we call family.

Doors open at 7:15pm. There is no membership fee and admission is £6 on the door, 50p for tea or coffee and biscuits.

For more information, please contact 01793 763907, email [highworthfilms@gmail.com](mailto:highworthfilms@gmail.com), or see our website at [www.highworthfilms.org.uk](http://www.highworthfilms.org.uk).

*Debbie*



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Inset images show people in a gym, a swimming pool, and a dance class.

The logo for halo, featuring the word 'halo' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font with a small, stylized 'h' that has a curved line extending from its top right.

## Lechlade Art Society Pop Up Sale



Lechlade Art Society is ending a busy year with another Pop Up Sale on Saturday 6 December, from 10am to 2pm, in Lechlade Memorial Hall.

This will be a great opportunity for you to see some of the work produced by the Society's members, and you

may also be able to find that elusive Christmas gift too.

These sales are always great social events in the town as we also offer a chance to chat and have a coffee. Proceeds from the sale of refreshments will be donated to Prospect Hospice.

Zoe Hing

## HADS Christmas Production

Season's greetings from Highworth Amateur Dramatics Society! In case you've not seen our posters or spotted us in the market, tickets are on sale for our latest production, *The Great Christmas Cracker Heist*.

Showing at the Highworth Community Centre on 12 and 13 December (doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start), tickets can be bought from the Highworth

Emporium and Visit Highworth, and can also be bought online by scanning the QR code which is on our Facebook page and our posters.

Get in the Christmas spirit and join us for a fun evening at a bargain price of £10 per ticket. Hope to see you there!

Elanor

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## Shrivenham Cricket Club

Lauding the efforts of 2025, our Shrivenham Sharks team campaigned over a 16-match schedule, winning five, losing nine, with two matches abandoned. Stand-out performances were Ziaullah Tokhi picking up 10 wickets and scoring 221 runs and, of course, Helal Qazikhel who contributed the highest individual score of the season: 73 not out.

Our first XI won 11 of their 16 league matches and our second XI won an impressive 13 of their 18 league matches, both in their respective Wiltshire Saturday

Leagues gaining promotion for the 2026 season. To celebrate we held our annual dinner in November and look forward to the indoor nets sessions commencing sometime after the Christmas period – details to follow.

If you are interested in cricket, please do get in touch via the contacts on our website ([www.shrivenham.play-cricket.com/home](http://www.shrivenham.play-cricket.com/home)). We'd love to hear from you.

Julian Stevens

## Swindon & District Motorcycle Club

The chatter between Sections on the first of four laps was when the weather arrived at the old station yard in Hannington. The heavy rain forecast for 10am was already an hour late, but there were signs it was on its way. The sky took on the appearance of thick vegetable soup as drizzle stole visibility from daylight. Motorcycle trials in heavy rain should really be its own sport, and the 50+ motorcyclists circulating the ten fiendish Sections were trying to get through as many as possible before 'it' happened. But it didn't. The final Observed Motorcycle Trial of the S&DMCC calendar, the Jack Croston Trial held in October, of course guaranteed jeopardous weather, but the worst anyone got was moderately damp rather than soaked!

As usual, the organisers set up challenges through Bydemill Brook, over and around the old railway station's strewn brickwork, with plenty of visits up and down the track embankment to ensure concentration levels didn't wander. Natural springs also made sure that certain Sections, whilst quite navigable to the eye, demanded a precise line through, or risked sliding off



Rock steady riding. Photo courtesy of Steve Yeates

course into a bog. With the persistent drizzle turning dirt to mud, the latter laps presented themselves as a greater challenge, but nothing that skilful balance, a pair of knobbly tyres and good throttle control couldn't overcome. By the time the drizzle had become actual rain, the bikes had been loaded, the scoresheets gathered and only wheel tracks remained that slowly transmogrified into large puddles. By the afternoon, the sky soup had turned into oxtail as heavy rain bounced off the ground, arriving though too late to ruin a fantastic day. Thanks must of course go to the organisers and the observers for once again putting on a terrific event.

Those who circulated with the least amount of penalty points in their respective categories were: Graham Wignall, Geoffry and Michael D. Maslin, Brad and Paul Burgess, Adam Coopey, Mick Marshall, Martyn Goodall, Adrian Steel, and Thomas Plank. Congratulations to the day's winners and to everyone who turned up and got their tyres dirty. The next trial will take place at the same venue on **Sunday 11 January** – opportune timing for anyone writing 'trials bike' on their Christmas list!

Jason Daniels

## Wrag Barn Golf Club

As the days grow shorter and the air a little crisper, we start turning our attention to the winter season and the festivities that come with it. There's a certain charm to Wrag Barn at this time of year, with the sound of laughter in the clubhouse, the glow of Christmas lights, and golfers swapping their polos for Christmas jumpers. It's all part of the fun as we look forward to our winter programme.

The Turkey Trot, the Greenkeepers' Texas Scramble, and the individual Winter Knockout competitions are firm favourites on the calendar, bringing members together for a bit of friendly rivalry and plenty of good cheer. Whether you're out on the course or watching from the warmth of the clubhouse with a mince pie in hand, it's a lovely way to celebrate the season.

We also have something special to celebrate this year, as our Ladies A Team won the Wiltshire League. Huge congratulations and thank you to everyone who played their part; your teamwork and dedication have made us proud.

As the year draws to a close, we'd like to wish all our members, visitors and friends a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to welcoming you back in 2026 for more golf, more laughter and more shared memories. From all of us at Wrag Barn, happy golfing!

Verity Manners



*Captain Mark Walker, Scott and Alison Talbert, Karen Walker and Tilly the dog*

## Highworth Running Club

Save the date! Entries should now be open for next year's springtime running race, held again over five miles. Mementos will be awarded to all finishers, and there will of course be prizes available in all the usual categories. If you're looking for a challenge in 2026, might this just be it? Don't forget you're welcome to join us on any of our training runs (Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays) if you fancy getting in shape for March. Please find us on Facebook or take a peek at our website ([www.highworthrunningclub.co.uk](http://www.highworthrunningclub.co.uk)).

Happy festivities readers, and we hope to see you in the New Year.

Jason Daniels



## Highworth Town Football Club

On the pitch the 1st team continue to be somewhat inconsistent. An FA Vase defeat to lower-level Amesbury Town was bookended by a couple of decent league results. October, though, ended with an astonishing Wilts Premier Shield win at Royal Wootton Bassett; goals in the 89th and 94th minutes saw the

game end 2-2, with Highworth then winning 5-4 on penalties to book themselves a quarter-final outing.

Our clubhouse has been refurbished throughout, courtesy of some BMW associates, and is an even better venue for parties etc. So please get in touch via social media if interested in using it.

Derek Lloyd

## Highworth Town Walking Football Club



If you want to get fit and make new friends, why not have a go at Walking Football with the friendly Highworth club? There are indoor sessions on **Fridays** from 11:30am to 12:30pm held at The Rec in Highworth. Alternatively there are outdoor sessions held on Thursdays and Sundays from 11am to 12pm, both held at Grange Leisure Centre in Stratton on their 3G pitches. All sessions are 'pay & play', meaning anyone over the age of 50 is welcome to come and play. £4 is payment per **Thursday and Sunday** sessions and £3.50 per Friday session, all payable by credit/debit card only, no cash, direct to the sports centre. Come and give us a try – you won't regret it. Email [highworthwfc@outlook.com](mailto:highworthwfc@outlook.com) or call 07769 703702 for more information.

Graham Seeley

## Highworth Town Junior Football Club

Georgia Brown's football journey began on the pitches of Highworth where she played from 2008 to 2011, aged between six and nine.

After Highworth, Georgia joined Swindon Town FC Community Foundation, where she played until age 16. Her time there included appearances in prestigious youth tournaments like the Barcelona and Dallas Cups. With Swindon lacking weekend fixtures, she also represented Swindon Spittires, Abbey Meads, and Crowmarsh FC to keep her competitive edge sharp.

A former Eastrop, Southfields and Warneford school pupil, Georgia completed sixth form at Oxford High School for girls, playing football throughout her education. At 15 she trialled for Oxford United women's team and was signed, gaining senior experience on loan at Cheltenham Town in the fourth tier of women's football. She returned to Oxford United and played until 2021.

Her talent earned her a call-up to the Scotland under-19 squad where she played against Spain and Belgium. She was set to compete in the under-19 European



Georgia Brown

Championships in 2020 but the tournament was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Later in 2021 Georgia crossed the Atlantic to attend New York's Hofstra University, an NCAA Division 1 school, and was named Conference Rookie of the Season helping her team win the Conference Championship. In her final year she was named 'Female Student Athlete of the Year' for both university and conference, graduating with a 4.0 honours degree in biomedical science.

June 2025 marked

another milestone for Georgia as she was called up to Scotland's Under-23 squad and played two matches against Iceland. A month later she signed with Sporting Jax, a new professional team in Jacksonville, Florida to compete in the Gainbridge Super League. This was followed by a spate with the Scottish women's national team.

Georgia's story is one of perseverance, adaptability and excellence, both on the pitch and in the classroom. From local pitches in Wiltshire to international arenas, she's a shining example of what passion and hard work can achieve.

Kelly Preston



**HIGHWORTH FORGET-ME-NOT  
CHRISTMAS MEMORY CAFÉ**  
with Charmaine Bushnell  
**THURSDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2025 2-4PM**  
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THE DORMERS SN6 7PQ

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NEW YEAR'S MEMORY CAFÉ**  
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## Highworth Twinning Association

### Fish 'n' Chips Quiz night

**Tuesday, January 27th 2026**

**Council Community Room, Gilbert's Lane**

**Tickets will be available at**

**Visit Highworth or by bank transfer online in early  
January 2026**

### RAFFLE

**Soft drinks for sale or bring your own wine and beer**

**Come alone or with a friend - teams organised on the night!**

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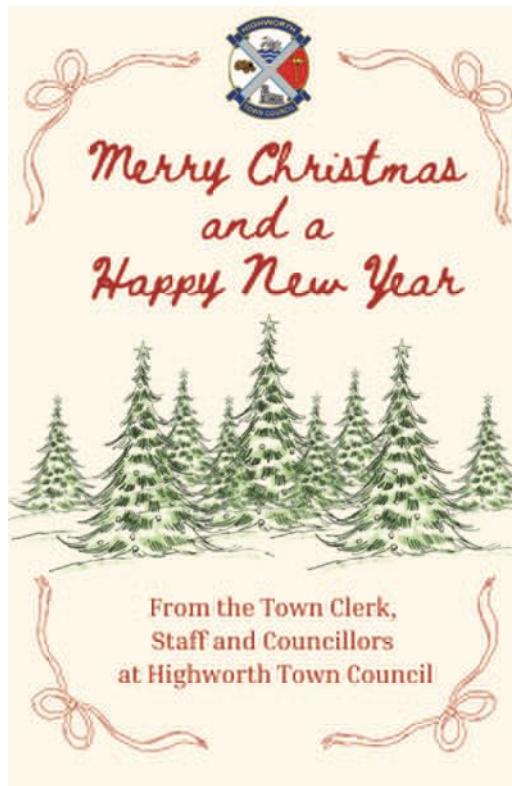
We are a community garden project which aims to provide an outreach space for the local community and support groups, and individuals who would find benefit in joining us. The Wonky Veg Club is a place to come and socialise, learn and enjoy working on the land.

Our weekly volunteer drop in sessions are open to all. So if you want to come along then we would love to see you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE 

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WONKYVEGCLUB](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WONKYVEGCLUB) 

# HIGHWORTH TOWN COUNCIL



## Message from Town Clerk

As we reach the end of a busy and rewarding year in Highworth, I wanted to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has played a part in our community life. Highworth is at its best when we come together, and this year has shown once again what a vibrant and caring town we are.

One of the real highlights has been the completion of the Barra Close Play Park. Seeing local families, children and young people enjoying the new space has been wonderful, and I'm proud that the Town Council has delivered a project that will benefit the community for many years to come. Thank you to the residents who shared ideas and feedback throughout the process, your voices genuinely helped shape the final result.

Our local events calendar has also brought us together throughout the year. From seasonal celebrations to family activities and volunteer-led successes, each event has reminded us how important it is to stay connected, have fun, and support one another. A huge thank you goes to our volunteers, community groups, councillors, staff and local businesses who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make these moments special.

As we look ahead, the Town Council remains committed to listening, improving our services, caring for our shared spaces, and creating opportunities for residents of all ages. We have much to be proud of and so much still to look forward to.

With the festive season now upon us, I would like to wish all residents a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. May it be a time of joy, kindness and community spirit for us all.

Warmest wishes,  
Deanne Rose  
Town Clerk, Highworth Town Council



## HIGHWORTH COMMUNITY PRIORITY SURVEY

### Have Your Say on Community Priorities!

Highworth Town Council Clerk is currently undertaking a Community Governance Degree, and as part of her studies she is carrying out a research project on:

#### “Exploring Community Priorities for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending.”

Paper copies of the survey are available upon request from the Council Offices or by emailing: [clerk@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk).

While this research contributes to academic studies, the results will also be shared with Highworth Town Council to help guide future decisions on CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) spending.

The survey will remain open until 1st January 2026 - so please be sure to have your say before the deadline.

Your feedback matters. Take a few minutes to complete the survey and let us know your priorities for Highworth.

Over 18's Survey

SCAN  
ME!



Under 18's Survey

SCAN  
ME!



# REPRESENTATIVES

## News from Highworth's Mayor



**It's been an uplifting month in Highworth and I'm fairly sure my mayoral chain has clocked up more miles than my car while I recover from a broken wrist!**

We began by celebrating two wonderful milestones: the 200th anniversary of the United Reformed Church, and the 65th anniversary of Gloucester House. Both reminded me how special Highworth is – a town that truly stands the test of time. Gloucester House continues to change lives through its care and dedication, while the United Reformed Church has offered a warm welcome and community spirit for two centuries.

I was also delighted to visit The Bridge Centre, run by Highworth Community Church, to see their excellent work. They provide a friendly drop-in warm space, food support in partnership with the Swindon Food Collective, and practical help with debt advice and form-filling, alongside several youth and children's groups.

Supporting young people remains one of my personal priorities and Highworth Town Council is pleased to be working with SMASH for another year to provide youth sessions. Watch this space for details on new events in the Council Community Room. I also welcomed Highworth Scouts to a mock council meeting; their lively debate proved that the future of our town is in good hands. I may even have met a few future mayors!

The festive season has now officially started with the Christmas Lights Switch-On. The lights were bright, the smiles even brighter.

Don't forget to pop these dates in your diary:

<b>6, 13, &amp; 20 December</b>	Mince pies and mulled wine at the Saturday Market (for the Mayor's Charity)
<b>8 February</b>	Mayor's Civic Service at St. Michael's Church
<b>25 April</b>	Mayor's Charity Evening at Wrag Barn

Thank you for your support and I wish you all a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year.

*Julie Murphy, Mayor*

## HIGHWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

### TOWN MAYOR & CHAIRMAN

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# CHURCHES

## St. Michael's Church Highworth

The church is open daily for private prayer.

### 10:15am Sunday Service

We meet in St. Michael's Church and groups for children and youth are held during this service, with refreshments being served after the service.

The live service can be found on YouTube by searching 'St Michaels Church Highworth'.

### 8:30am Holy Communion

On the first and third Sunday of the month.

### 11am Midweek Communion

On the third Wednesday of each month, from 11am. Coffee and cake will be served from 10:15am.

### Prayers

Tuesday Prayers at 9:30am.

Friday Blessings from 9:15am.

The second and fourth Mondays sees Prayer Hour in the Church Room at 7:30pm (excluding bank holidays).

### We remember those we love and miss

Anthony Cash

### Praying for the roads in the town

7 December Westrop and The Willows

14 December Windrush and Wrde Hill

21 December The Archers and Arran Way

4 January Barra Close and Beech Grove



11 January	Biddell Springs and Blandford Alley
18 January	Blandford Mews and Botany
25 January	Brewery Street and Brookfield



## With thanks to all those who have sponsored the floodlighting of St. Michael's Church



13/12/25

In loving memory of Roy and Sheila Johnson.

15/12/2025

Michael Page

Sixteen years have passed, still the tears remain.  
You are always in our thoughts, love you forever.

Mum and Dad

25/12/2025

Remembering Graham Arrondelle.

We miss you so much.

Sylvie and Donna

25/12/2025

Remembering Tim and Joan Peapell and the  
wonderful times we had at Christmas.

1/1/2026

Jane Bateman

A year since we lost you suddenly on New Year's Day.  
A loving and treasured wife, mother and grandmother.

We miss you so much every day.

Keith, Simon, Matthew and families

Floodlighting forms are available from St. Michael's Church office, Vicarage Lane, or the Church website at [www.stmichaelshighworth.co.uk/floodlighting](http://www.stmichaelshighworth.co.uk/floodlighting). Your dedication will appear in an issue of Highworth's LINK Magazine.

# CHURCHES

## St. Leonard's Parish Church Stanton Fitzwarren

7 December	Morning Worship, 9:30am
13 December	Decorate Christmas tree in church, 2pm
14 December	Family Christingle, 11am
21 December	Team service, Coleview Community Centre, 11am
Christmas Eve	Walking Nativity, Church Lane, 3:30pm Carols by Candlelight, 7pm
Christmas Day	Team Service, St. Margaret's Stratton, 10am
28 December	Team Service, St. Margaret's Stratton, 10am
4 January	Morning Worship, 9:30am
11 January	Family Service, 'Camels', 11am
18 January	Team Service, Stratton Methodist Church, 10:30am
25 January	Holy Communion, 11am

Stanton Coffee Morning will meet on Wednesday 17 December at Stanton House Hotel. We will get

together at 10:15am for coffee and chat, then we'll enjoy carols, memories and mince pies.

The church building will be open **every Wednesday** in school term time from 10am to 4pm; or telephone Liz and Roger on 01793 762935 to organise for the building to be open for you to visit.

Please see our website at [www.stantonchurch.info](http://www.stantonchurch.info) for updates.





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# USEFUL CONTACTS

## LOCAL CONTACTS

### EMERGENCY

<b>Police, Fire, Ambulance</b>	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>Police</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Gas</b>	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>0800 111999</b>	<b>NHS</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Electricity</b>	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>Pest Control</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>07789 781151</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>Emergency</b>	<b>0800 3169 800</b>			

### BUSES

Stagecoach Swindon	01793 521415
Thamesdown Transport	01793 428400
Dial-a-Ride	01793 616050
Community Transport	01793 617828
Traveline	0871 200 2233

### COLLEGES

Cirencester College	01285 640994
New College Swindon, Queens Drive Campus	01793 611470
North Star Campus	01793 491591

### LAW & ORDER

Crimestoppers	0800 555111
Victim Supportline	0808 16 89 111
Action Fraud	0300 123 2030

### COUNCILS

Highworth Town Council	01793 762377
Swindon Borough Council	01793 463000
StreetSmart	01793 445501

### FIRE SAFETY

Home fire safety check	0800 038 2323
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### NON-EMERGENCY

<b>Police</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>NHS</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Pest Control</b>	<b>Non-Emergency</b>	<b>07789 781151</b>

### DOCTORS AND HOSPITALS

Highworth Surgery	01793 762218
Elm Tree Surgery, (Shrivenham)	01793 782207
Great Western Hospital	01793 604020

### LIBRARY

Highworth Library	01793 463500
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### RECREATION

Highworth Rec	01793 762602
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### PHARMACIES

Highworth Pharmacy	01793 762220
Home Farm Pharmacy	01793 861392
Jones Graham Pharmacy (Shrivenham)	01793 783336

### PRESCHOOL/NURSERY

Eastrop Nursery	01793 763772
Westrop Nursery	01793 762897
South Marston Pre-school	01793 823379

### SCHOOLS

Eastrop Infants	01793 763772
Southfield Junior	01793 762210
Westrop Primary	01793 762897
Warneford Secondary	01793 762426

### TAXIS

Veezu	01793 701701
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### TRAINS

National Rail Enquiries	03457 484950
Great Western Railways	03457 000125
Disabled and Assisted Travel	08001 971329

### OTHER SERVICES

Citizens Advice Bureau	08444 994114
Trading Standards (business)	0207 830 6000
Trading Standards (consumers)	03454 04 05 06
Alcohol and Drug Service	01793 695405
Samaritans	01793 537373
Women's Refuge	01793 610610
Root & Branch (Mental Health Therapeutic Centre)	01793 782999

## Highworth LINK magazine

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Opinions expressed or implied in any contributions are not necessarily those of the editor or management committee.

No responsibility can be accepted for any error of fact in the magazine or website. Please inform the editor of any errors so they can be rectified.

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We reserve the right to edit contributions and to not publish any contribution or advertisement that is either unsuitable for our format or is inconsistent with our editorial policy.

#### Contributions:

May be published in the magazine and/or the web. Make clear any limitations you have about what, how and when we may publish your contribution.

Email is preferred, otherwise deliver to The Bridge Centre, 8 Sheep Street, Highworth.

Make sure you are writing for a general audience, not just your own organisation. News stories should not exceed 200 words. If it's too long we will ask you to cut it. Articles may be longer but get in touch first to save the inconvenience of a rejection. Photographs and advertising artwork should be clear, with good contrast. JPEG electronic format is preferred. The print process requires images ideally to be 300dpi for best results. Low resolution images, that appear clear on screen, will print blurred depending on the size and resolution of the image supplied.

Make sure any people in photos agree that the photo can be published in the magazine and on the web. Get parental consent in the case of minors.

#### Submission Deadlines:

First day of the month preceding publication.

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