

# Valley News

Issue 108 Dec/Jan 2022/3 Avington, Easton, Itchen Abbas, Martyr Worthy and Abbots Worthy

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



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# WELCOME to the **Valley News**

With the nights grown longer, the days colder and the trees having (nearly) shed their leaves, it's time to embrace winter and all that this special season brings us. Misty mornings on the River Itchen, beech trees silhouetted against an ice blue sky, the warmth, fun and festivities of Christmas and the New Year as well as Christian contemplation and celebration.

We hope to inspire you with some of the articles and events over the following pages - a host of church services and carol singing, concerts, reeling, parties and more. As more of us become concerned about our impact on the environment, we explore ways to have a 'Green Christmas' - see page 20. We look at where to buy Christmas 'Cards for Good Causes' from the car park under the Brooks Shopping Centre of all unusual places (page 7).

There's a new club to consider joining (page 6), an interview with Valley resident Anna McGowan (page 10), some behind the scenes photos of preparations for *Cinderella*, this year's Easton panto (oh yes it is!), the quiz (page 39), a poem (page 9) and a tribute to the wonderful Jill Croft (page 20) whom we're delighted to have as this month's covergirl.

We'll also be looking back at events that happened recently, including Fireworks night and Remembrance Sunday, talking local history, owls, gardens and more.

As this is both the last Itchen Valley News edition of 2022 and the first of 2023, we would like to give a special thank you to everyone who has contributed articles and photos this

year, whether regular or one one-offs. We couldn't (wouldn't) produce this magazine without you!

By the way, if you've not done so before and you want to contribute please write or email: [itchenvalleynews@gmail.com](mailto:itchenvalleynews@gmail.com) with your article and / or photo and we will do our best to include it.

On behalf of the whole IVN team, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Nathalie and James*



## Itchen Valley News

Chief Editor Mary Hogg

Editors Charlotte Appleby, Verity Coleman, Jen Gaster, Catherine Hahn, Brigid McManus, James Paterson, Nathalie Paterson

Advertising Jenny Sloan

Distribution Lyn Jones IA&A 07899 922221  
Gilly Greenwood E&MW 779540

Treasurer Henry Labram

For editorial enquiries, articles, letters or comments, please email:

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

For advertising enquiries, please email:

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

Postal address: Itchen Valley News, Chilland Cottage, Chilland Lane, Martyr Worthy, SO21 1EB.

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The Editorial Team reserves the right to refuse or amend articles or advertisements submitted for publication.

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## What's On

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*Please see page 22 for all church Christmas events and services in the Valley.*

### **Saturday 3 December**

Itchen Abbas Primary School  
Christmas Fair from 2pm to 4.30pm,  
Itchen Abbas and Avington Village Hall.  
All Welcome. Card and cash payments  
accepted for entrance and stalls.  
Contact Lesley Mallarky  
lesleymallarky@yahoo.com

### **Wednesday 7 December and Wednesday 4 January 2023**

Art History Lectures from 12.15 to  
1.15pm, Martyr Worthy Village Hall.  
Dr Wayne Jefferson introduces the  
work of John Everett Millais on the 7  
December and Pierre Bonnard on the  
4 January. Tickets £8 cash or card on  
the door or via  
www.kirstinwhite.co.uk

### **Wednesday 14 - Saturday 17 December**

Easton Pantomime - *Cinderella*.  
Easton Village Hall. Tickets £10 adults,  
£5 12s and under. Contact  
eastontickets123@gmail.com or Mary  
and David Purser 779328  
*See profile of Anna McGowan on page 10  
and 'Panto preview' on page 12.*

### **Friday 16 December**

Family Reeling Party, dancing to  
Craigievar Band. 7.30 to 11.45pm,  
Itchen Abbas and Avington Village Hall.  
Tickets £25 include a welcome drink,  
bowl of chilli, mince pies and soft  
drinks: please bring your own wine.  
Email hampshirereels@gmail.com to  
purchase tickets for groups of 8, 10 or  
12. Come dressed up with a touch of  
tartan!

### **Saturday 7 January 2023**

Martyr Worthy Children's New  
Year's Party from 3 to 5pm, Martyr  
Worthy Village Hall.

All children aged three to eight who  
live in or have a family connection  
with Martyr Worthy are warmly  
invited to a children's party to  
welcome the new year. Entertainment  
will be the ever popular Robbie the  
Wizard followed by a tea party. It's  
free but parents are asked to bring a  
plate of food.

RSVP to Louise James 07913 352693  
or lousien1982@gmail.com.

### **Friday 20 January 2023**

'Suez 1956: The End of an Era' - a talk  
by Commander James Ekin, followed  
by

drinks  
and  
canapés.  
6.30pm  
at St  
Mary's  
Church,  
Easton.



Tickets: £15. All proceeds go towards  
the St Mary's building project. Please  
contact Penelope Kellie on 01962  
779317, 07860 402942 or email:  
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### **Starting 30 January - The**



### **Bereavement Journey**

We are running a 'Bereavement  
Journey' course at St John's Church,  
Itchen Abbas. This is a six week  
course run very successfully for a

number of years at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. It aims to help the bereaved explore their feelings in a supportive environment (but is not led by trained bereavement counsellors). The sessions will run from 7 to 9 pm from Monday 30 January and on the following five Mondays. Places are limited but do please contact me if you would like to attend or if you would like more details:

emlabram@gmail.com or 07702 173001.

*Elaine Labram*

## Recycling Reminder

There are special recycling bins that take Tetra Pak items such as milk, juice and soup cartons and Pringle-type tubes. These can be found at Worthy Lane car park in Winchester and the railway car park in Alresford.

*Cllr Stephen Percy*

**Saturday 28 January  
2023**

**Spring into 2023 and  
celebrate the end of  
January**

Easton welcomes in the  
New Year with live music from  
'We Are Robot'.

7pm to 11pm at Easton Village Hall.

Pay bar, bread and cheese  
included in ticket price.

Tickets £20 available from Sally  
Stone: 779283 or [sally15@btinternet.com](mailto:sally15@btinternet.com).

Tickets won't be available on the door.

# Itchen Valley Choir



## Annual Christmas Concert

7.45 pm Wednesday 14th December  
In Itchen Abbas & Avington Village Hall

This year we are creating a party atmosphere for all to enjoy.  
We will be singing some old favourites together with seasonal cheer and,  
as always, audience participation adds to our  
special concerts.

Admission £10 at the door to include  
refreshments.





## A Brew With a View... The Return

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The bon viveurs of the valley will be delighted to know that the Easton institution of 'Brew with a View' has returned on a regular basis following the forced closure due to restrictions imposed during the Covid pandemic. This initiative, the brainchild of Ina Williams, first came into our diaries in July 2016 and was a regular social event until Covid intervened. Valley News readers will have seen, in the June edition, that Ina's efforts had been recognised when she received the Winchester Mayor's Award.

'A Brew with a View' takes place every second and fourth Wednesday of the month, at Easton Village Hall between 3 and 5 pm. There is a range of cakes with gluten free options available, all baked by Ina. There is even a choice of cream or crème fraîche as an extra treat on your selection! Reminders of the event are published on Facebook, the Itchen List and on the day there are notices on the boards by the hall and opposite The Cricketers.

Helping Ina is Sally Cannons of Martyr Worthy, who, besides being responsible for teas and coffees is also involved with setting up and clearing away. At the end of each session Geoff Wheeler can be seen in control of

washing up duties.

There is a lively, convivial atmosphere with a mix of age groups. Dogs are welcomed (house trained!) - they help mop up any crumbs that have escaped from plates. Towards the end of the afternoon, mums come in from the



school run to buy some take away treats for their children.

So, why not join other Valley residents, sample the delicious offerings and catch up on the local news?

*Doug Phillips*

## Clubbing in the Valley - Mahjong

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Mahjong is a Chinese game that is played with a set of tiles. In the old days these tiles were made of bamboo and bone or ivory with hand painted images engraved on them. These days we often use larger plastic tiles for ease of handling.

The tiles comprise three suits numbering one to nine. These suits are Bamboo, Circles and Chinese Characters. In addition there are four tiles each in suits called Winds, Dragons, Flowers and Seasons.

The game is played with four people and is a bit like the card game Rummy. All players try to compile a winning hand of 14 tiles. This is usually made up of four sets of three identical tiles plus a pair. However, you can also win a game by gathering together many other

combinations of tiles. These hands are often given fancy names such as Gertie's Garter, Greta's Garden, Three Philosophers and Wriggly Dragon to name but a few. When the



first player's hand is complete, that person cries "Mahjong!" and works out the score.

It is a fun game and we play in Easton Village Hall on Tuesday afternoons from 2 pm to 4 pm. If the weather is fine, we sometimes set up the tables outside on the terrace. To add interest, a prize is awarded to the first player who achieves the designated 'hand-of-the-week'. We also have a refreshment break with homemade cake often included.

We could do with a few more players to boost the numbers, so why not come along and give it a whirl. No worries if you haven't played before as you will be shown what to do by an experienced player. There is a £2.50 weekly charge to cover hall hire and an £8 annual subscription to Winchester U3A, payable after your first two free weeks. For further details, please contact Stella Kenny on 01962 772482.

*Arminel Tottle*

## The Chestnut Horse - An Update

The Chestnut Horse has recently been bought by Nic Roach of Avington House. "I remember the good days of The Chestnut Horse. We need to return it to a family friendly village pub with great food, a locals bar and get the village shop working properly. It

needs significant investment which will take some time to work through," he told a small group of Easton residents at a meeting arranged by Harry Smith. Nic stated that it was clearly early days. The pub needed a new kitchen, and the planning process and building work were likely to mean it would not reopen before next summer. His colleague, Tom Horswell, said that they hoped to continue to run a small village shop which would offer everyday food items and kitchen essentials, as well as great coffee and snacks for walkers and cyclists enjoying the Valley.

Further communications will be put out to keep residents informed of progress.

*Henry Labram*

## Charity Christmas Card Shop - Winchester

Visit Winchester's catacombs today! This year, the charity 'Cards for Good Causes' will be selling its Christmas cards from the former bike hub premises on the lower level of the car park under the Brooks Shopping Centre.

Yes, this subterranean cavern does exist; if you want a pop-up shop for free, you're never going to get a prime







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location. Do please make an extra effort, and explore somewhere you may never have visited before. Emulate Jules Verne and drop down into the centre of the earth one day this month. Cathy Wallis and her team will be really pleased to welcome you and you may actually find the very cards you've been after.

Vernon Tottle

*Even better, if you have any time at all to spare between now and Christmas, Cathy is accepting all offers of volunteers! Contact Cathy on 07881814568 or cathyjwallis@gmail.com - Eds*

## Kings Worthy Post Office closing in January

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The Valley News has heard the sad tidings that Sangita and B.K. Kaura are retiring at the end of January 2023. As no-one has as yet come forward to run the post office they will be closing the



business then. The Kauras have run the post office at Kings Worthy for over

20 years and provided a wonderful service to us all. There are plans in the pipeline to transfer the paper delivery to a London based firm for those who wish to do that. There is one other Post Office in the immediate vicinity - the Springvale Store on Fraser Road, just off Lovedon Lane, Kings Worthy (follow the sign to 'Local Shops'). It is handily next door to a pharmacy.

What3Words:  
shoebox.camped.bandaged  
Verity Coleman



*River Itchen from Chilland footbridge in the November evening light*

*Photo by Mary Hogg*

## Poem - The Resurrection

---

It is a shallow maroon  
Which tinges morning.  
The frosted apprehension of blades  
Stains my cheeks  
With a cold that is conscious,  
Gathering under the subtle  
Blink  
Of stars so silently that to breathe this  
first warmth  
Is an intrusion on a pervious  
Stillness, gradually intermingling  
With stirring movement as its artist  
Breaks the cocoon of bed sheets  
Into a singular sheet of glass,  
Shattered by the early bird's song.  
Every morning,  
The virginity of day is resurrected from  
the remains of  
Half moons, whose phases melt into  
the wholeness of  
Untouched suns.  
Antonia Paterson

## Itchen Insight: Anna McGowan

Anna McGowan moved to Easton in 1982 and starred in her first Easton panto that same year. Since then she



has been in or directed nearly every village pantomime. This year will be her 14th as Director and so we thought it was time the Itchen Valley News interviewed Anna.

### Where were you brought up?

I was born in Winchester and lived in Kingsworthy until the age of 12. My favourite thing at this time was horse riding. I was pretty fearless and we used to keep a pony at Browns Farm. But my father was a Jersey man and we moved to Jersey. Moving there from everything I had known was a shock but in the end I loved Jersey - the sea, the warmth and sun, and the community.

### What brought you to Easton?

My father had been badly injured in Egypt in World War II (his regiment had been left for dead but miraculously he was found alive the day after the battle) and his injuries came back to plague him. This led him to return to Winchester in search of better healthcare. I had left school in Jersey at 18 and, with university a long way away and not seeming like an option, had started working for Barclays Bank. It wasn't too bad - I used to take my lunch breaks on the beach. But eventually I wanted a change and so joined my family, moving back to Kingsworthy. I interviewed for a position in the accounts department of All Thread Distributors and my application landed on Terry's desk, as Financial Controller. Against my name he wrote "Nice lady, OK" and added a tick. Two years later we were married! We moved into the house we still live in now in 1982.

### How did you get involved with the Easton panto?

I had always loved watching musicals - it's a big passion of mine. And I'd always enjoyed acting at school and so forth. So when we moved to Easton and heard about the pantomime, we thought it would be fun and also a good way to get to know people in the village. Through it Terry and I have made life-long friends - some of our



best friends today are people we met during that first pantomime - and we love it.

### **What's so special about the Easton pantomime?**

Well, first of all, the people. Not just the actors, but everyone who helps out backstage. I am very grateful for the support of so many talented people both front of house and backstage.

Particular thanks to Judy Bishop who designs and paints the scenery and Jill Croft and Helen Smyth who tirelessly make and adjust all the costumes. The

show cannot work without these three ladies. I

remember in the old days the scenery was painted by Grenville Gore-Langton who used to live in 'The Cottage' in Church Lane.

He'd paint them on the floor of the old village hall with paint splattering up the walls and everywhere and when he ran out, he'd say "When I go back to the house I'll pick up some new paints." He meant the House of Lords.

Then it's the scripts. They were written in the 1970s from scratch and especially for the Easton panto by Gerald ('Bunny') Symes and his sister-in-law Polly, who both lived in the village and I love the fact that many of them are in rhyme. It is very important to me that we use these scripts (which are updated a bit each year) because they are completely original and unique to our pantomime and I think they reflect something about the character of our village.



I've been so lucky that Terry also enjoys pantomime and we've been in many performances together, as well as me directing him! One of his lines was "OK, let's go!" which has become a bit of a household catchphrase. Our two boys also acted in the pantomimes when they were growing up.

### **Any stand out moments in past performances?**

The stand out moment for me was during *Mother Goose*. A V shape line of (fake!) geese flew over the audience

on a pulley system to the sound of 'The Dambusters March' and came in to land on the stage. Absolutely hilarious. Many stand-out performances

from cast: so many - a wonderful leprechaun, the tallest man in the village at that time playing a mouse (his line was "I'm only a mouse and a small one at that"), a line of men and women dressed as ballet dancers in tutus dancing across the stage to the music from Swan Lake's 'Dance of the Cygnets'. Some in step and some not! Favourite pantomime?

*Cinderella*! It's "the" pantomime. A tale of rags to riches, overcoming obstacles and of magic. It's magical and ... everyone knows it and loves it.

### **What's the best thing about living in Easton?**

For me the support of the villagers throughout our lives here is the most



important thing - through good and bad times. When our eldest son, Rob, unexpectedly passed away at home here at the age of 24, we decided not to lock ourselves away - we didn't want people to feel they couldn't approach us, but of course it's tricky for people to know what to say or do in those circumstances. I remember Ina knocking on the door one day saying "I'm German so I can knock" and bringing us a plant. We felt everyone's support and kindness, and this has helped us enormously.

*Anna was talking to Nathalie Paterson*

## Easton Panto 2022 - A look backstage

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*Anna McGowan - Director*



*Judy Bishop - Scenery and props*



*Helen Smyth and Jill Croft - Wardrobe*



*Steve Percy - Music coach*



*David and Mary Purser - Tickets!*

## We welcome...

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We welcome Harry Johnson Hill who has moved from Shawford to Easton. Living at The Holdings, Chapel Lane.

*Jude Mezger*

## Tiddler Joke

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Q: Why is it so cold at Christmas?

A: Because it's Decembrrrrrrr!

*From Iris (aged 8) and Finley (aged 6) Earnshaw*



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## Remembering our fallen heroes across the Valley.

The annual Armistice and Remembrance commemorations were held in the first two weeks of November consisting of three key activities starting with the Valley's Poppy Collection, led by our Valley Coordinator Gavin Edgerley-Harris and



a fantastic team of volunteers; the Prince's Mead School Armistice Parade led by the Headmaster Mr King and Bursar Poppy Hughes; and the Remembrance Sunday parade and service led by James Young and the Revd Peter Walker.

Poppy Appeal and collections: we have 15 Poppy Appeal door to door collectors in the Valley. Each one is to be congratulated for their fundraising work and the effect they have in raising awareness of the work carried out by The Royal British Legion (RBL). They venture forth on cold, dark and wet days to raise magnificent sums from very generous donors in our four villages. An online JustGiving page has enhanced our fundraising capability but door to door collections remain at the

core of the Poppy Appeal success in our Valley. Special thanks are due to the children of the two schools in the Valley who engage, learn



and donate to the cause of Remembrance. Finally, the many businesses in the Valley are to be commended for hosting Poppy Appeal boxes. Their customers and clients have again been most supportive in donations to The Poppy Appeal. Prince's Mead School: on Friday morning parents and pupils of Prince's Mead School gathered at the front of the school for a Service of Remembrance. Leading the service was Mr King, the new Headmaster, supported by both the Chair and Secretary of the RBL Itchen Valley Group. The school was decorated in artwork created by each child and the youngest pupils wore poppies made in their art lessons. As the bell on the clock tower struck eleven the whole school fell silent for two minutes of reflection.

Remembrance Sunday: itself a spectacular day, that felt more like



midsummer than mid-November, where under the Branch President, Admiral Lang and the

Branch Chairman, James Young, 21 members of the Valley's Royal British Legion and Winchester Sea Cadets formed up on Parade with a further 80 people present in support.



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Andrew Salmond played a moving last post after which wreaths were laid on behalf of the Branch by Admiral Lang, by Sea Cadet Cheesman of the Winchester Sea Cadets, and representing the children of the Valley, Prince's Mead School's Head Boy Harry Edmondson and Head Girl Charlotte Beatty. This never ceases to be such a poignant event that echoes in everyone's hearts.

All the serving and retired members of the Armed Forces wish to thank those in the valley for the tremendous and continued support.

*James Young, Chairman, Royal British Legion, Itchen Valley*

## Off with a blast - Easton Fireworks Night



It was a dark and stormy night. Rain had been falling night and day for what

seemed like the last 100 days – to the point where I contemplated seeking planning permission to lift my house on stilts (possibly a slight exaggeration but not much). It was November the 5th, 2022. It could only mean one thing: time for the annual Easton Fireworks and Bonfire night!

I love fireworks and I love bonfires so combine the two and I am usually raring to go. Add to it that my daughter's birthday is 4 November and her birthday activities have always included meeting friends and running around carefree at the fireworks, which is really special. Until recently I am pretty sure she believed that the annual fireworks event was being held

for her. She's nine now and has clued in that it isn't.

In any case, while I am normally quite enthused for this annual event, I admit that the weather was rather depressing and I wasn't really excited about



throwing on the rain gear and standing around getting wet. As an import

from Canada to this lushly green country, I am constantly in awe of the ability of the British to keep calm and wear your best wellies – the show must go on. So on went the rainwear and torches were made ready.

On arrival at the Easton Village Hall, I was amazed by the number of people already in attendance, I thought I was early! Throwing my donation into the collection bucket at the door, I promptly lost the children to the playing field in world record time. Crowds may have been slightly smaller than the prior year on account of the weather but that didn't stop the sell out of the sausages (which were yummy) or the queue to the bar. But it was all well

organised with a lot of good cheer from the volunteers and spectators.

In the midst of chatting to friends and neighbours, the bonfire was lit and a roaring blaze got underway in

Michael Gray's field. We really are lucky in Easton to have such an amazing location for our village hall and cricket pitch. We are also extra lucky





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to have a local farmer who kindly assembles the bonfire and donates the use of land for fireworks.

As the Village Hall and Cricket Club move towards being more environmentally friendly, there were no glow sticks and toys available for sale this year. Some brought their own, recycled from last year. Instead, there was a fantastic sweet stall with a great selection of sweets, chocolate bars, amazing toffee and chocolate apples, and popcorn. As I approached the sweet stall my child miraculously appeared from out of the dark begging for money for a treat. Having deposited all my cash in the donation bucket it was great to see that the sweets, sausages and bar could be paid for by card.

There was an art competition this year which was open to all children to produce a piece of 'Firework' inspired art using any medium. The Barret Family – Flossy, Heidi and Oscar each won a prize with three brilliant pictures. Well done to them!



At this point the countdown for the fireworks began. Cue the Handel music and we are off with a blast! Kind of. There were some longer than normal pauses between explosions as some of the volunteers attempted to light the fireworks' very wet wicks! The upshot was a longer display

(hooray!) and time for another cup of mulled wine to be consumed (hooray!). A little imperfection is what a proper village fireworks is all about. It still looked fantastic!

In this year's 'Guy' competition I noted fewer guys than in prior years. The 'Minion' guy created by Alice and Luke Rosewell was a solid winner though – worthy of a toss on the fire in the spirit of 'remember, remember the fifth of November'. Much effort was clearly put in by many volunteers and we owe them a big thanks for all their hard work.



As the fireworks came to a close and I wandered around the black night trying to gather up the four girls (who I am convinced were running the opposite way from me), I thought to myself how lucky we all are to live in villages with such amazing community spirit. As the girls and I walked home through Easton and I listened to their hyperactive screams and giggles (clearly too much sugar), I couldn't even tell you whether it rained or not.

*Heather Bisbee*

## St Mary's Easton extension project

On Tuesday 27 September a group of 47 people comprising Easton villagers, and Itchen Valley churchgoers met to listen to a presentation on some proposals developed by the District Church Council for St Mary's Development Committee led by Theo Mezger. The meeting was opened with a prayer from Revd Peter Walker after which Theo presented slides detailing

the need for new facilities; the early stage proposal designed to address these needs; and the steps required, essentially planning, raising money, and obtaining necessary permission to build an extension to the existing church.

St Mary's, a beautiful Norman Church, is the largest church in the parish, seating 120 comfortably, with good underfloor heating, modern chancel and path lighting, and a professional quality sound and video streaming capability. Situated at the bottom of a steep roughly laid path, disabled access is a challenge with a further significant drop from the doorstep to the internal floor level.

Also, there are some temporary external toilet facilities provided but these are neither accessible to or suitable for disabled people.

There are no facilities for holding a Sunday School in a place other than where the adult service is in progress at any of our four churches today and all possible venues require volunteers to escort children across roads with varying degrees of hazard.

There are no facilities for after service refreshments in St Mary's other than an urn to heat water and a storage cupboard. Crockery has to be transported elsewhere for washing up and returned.

What is needed, therefore, is an additional room on the north side of the church forming a flexible space for activities and meetings, with easily accessed kitchen facilities, some storage, good insulation from outside airflow, a disabled toilet with baby changing facilities, and a smooth level disabled access from Church Lane via a drop off point level with the church floor. Some initial plans were shown of how an extension designed to

minimise visual impact to the building through extensive use of glazing and timber, with a grey slate roof to blend with the existing rendered flint walls might look. It was emphasised that the structure would be free standing and capable of future demolition at the end of its useful life with minimal impact on the listed church building itself.

Theo outlined that all the major services (water, power and drainage) and some footings were already in place and that an estimate of an incomplete design some years ago was provided at £281,000. Thus a more relevant estimate today would be £400,000. In addition to the Flower Show proceeds of £11,000 some 90% of the required funding was 'visible' and the gap would be bridged by further fund raising events.

This was in addition to everyday maintenance of the existing church covered by its dedicated fabric fund, as planning permission would not be forthcoming if the existing church was neglected.

Other facts that came to light in the meeting: Planning Applications for a similar addition had been obtained previously; the project would not commence until it was fully funded; it was hoped permissions would be in place in 2023 and that the ground could be broken in the following year. Some present said that they didn't want the church to be altered but no viable alternative solutions were proposed. The church is anxious to receive feedback from all stakeholders, particularly Easton residents. The plans as they develop and further details will be available via the church website at [www.itchenvalleychurches.org](http://www.itchenvalleychurches.org).

*Chris Ellis*

## Valley Volunteer - Jill Croft

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What does Jill volunteer for? Well the answer is - everything that goes on in the Valley, and probably more we don't know about. One hundred mince pies for CAMEO Christmas lunch, no problem. Another hundred for the Carols in the Barn, no problem. Christmas puddings for the Itchen Abbas Primary School Christmas fair. What about gluten free - well of course, no problem. A glut of little black grapes? Not tried grape jelly before? Let's give it a go. Delicious and again sold to lucky people in aid of charity. A glut of vegetables - well, what was chutney invented for? She makes it sound so easy! Harvest lunch or supper needed? Jill has organised teams for many of these. She has been in charge of catering for so many of

the Valley events in the past and is still part of the team who produce food for CAMEO, volunteering for whatever is most difficult.

As a change from cooking she does the costumes for

the Easton Panto - will the Dames' outfits fit this year's dames? What will the Fairy Godmother be wearing? You will have to see the panto to find out! Sometimes she takes part in the Panto as well - some of us still remember the synchronised swimming scene from a few years back and smile at the memory.

Every community needs people like Jill, who do the work that is necessary to enable the events to take place and we are so lucky to have her living among us and staying in the Valley even



though she is moving out of the house that she and David shared for so many years. Her new kitchen may be smaller, but we can be confident that her jam pan will still find a place in it.  
*Charlotte Appleby*

## Go Green this Christmas?

---

As we all know, Christmas can be a time of excess! Too much food and drink, presents galore, the heating on all the time and... and... and... So how can we try to have a 'green' or eco Christmas, given the tough times at the moment and the fragile state of our beautiful planet. Here are a few ideas which you might consider adopting into your Christmas plans this year. Here in the UK alone, we create 30% more waste than usual during the festive season. This equates to three million extra tonnes, and buying Christmas decorations contributes to this mountain of waste. Instead, upcycling and creating your own or sourcing plastic-free decorations this year will hugely reduce your impact on the environment. You could use wallpaper fragments to create table confetti using a star shaped paper

punch, and gift tags can be made out of last year's Christmas cards.

And did you know you can also buy biodegradable festive tape for securing your presents and not use plastic Sellotape? Or you could go all Japanese and use the art of Furoshiki to tie your presents in a square piece of fabric. No waste at all.

If you are having a Christmas tree this year, how about buying a sustainably grown one which can be put back in a pot for next year or planted in the garden to dig up and use again? Or if you favour a fake tree, perhaps investigate Freecycle, eBay or Gumtree where you can find preloved trees in great condition rather than buying new. LED lights on the tree will last longer and use much less energy than traditional bulbs and don't forget to turn them off at night!

Thinking about the big day and the food which we love to eat, how can we both economise and try to eat and drink sustainably? Firstly, planning is key. Perhaps shop for some things at a local farm shop or market to reduce food miles and minimise plastic wrapping. Only buy what you know you will eat or can recycle as leftovers for the following days. By the way, there are literally thousands of



websites offering ideas for dishes based on Christmas food leftovers so you shouldn't be short of ideas. Try to eat vegetables and fruit which are in season here and grown in the UK. It isn't always easy but surely, we cannot



continue to fly exotic produce around the world just to satisfy our fancy for strawberries in December?

What is on your present list for family and friends this year? How about buying a wildlife trust membership or a sustainable product such as a Hebridean wool blanket. Or if you are really trying to cut down, what about a family Secret Santa when every gift has to be bought from a charity or second-hand shop? Perhaps consider buying a gift for someone from Concern Worldwide, which hopes to transform the lives of those who live in 25 of the world's poorest countries. You choose your gift – maybe six chickens for £17 or a bicycle for £22 - your friend or family member receives a gift card from the charity and the item is provided to those in need.

We can all make a difference to the amount of waste we create and how much carbon we send into our precious atmosphere. The internet is full of ideas about how to put our eco wishes into action. Maybe this Christmas is a time to “collect moments not things” so we can all do our bit for the planet.

*Catherine Hahn*



# You are warmly invited to the Itchen Valley Christmas Services



**Sunday 4 December - 4pm**

***Christingle Service***

St John's Church, Itchen Abbas

**Sunday 11 December - 4pm**

***Carols in the Barn***

Graces Farm, Martyr Worthy,  
SO21 1DX

**Sunday 18 December - 5pm**

***Carols by Candlelight***

St Swithun's Church,  
Martyr Worthy

**Christmas Eve - 4pm**

***Crib Service and Carols***

St Mary's Church, Easton  
followed by community carols at  
the Cricketers Inn (approx 5pm)

**Christmas Eve - 11.15pm**

***Midnight Communion***

St Mary's Church, Avington

**Christmas Day - 10am**

***Family Communion***

St John's Church, Itchen Abbas

For full details of all of our December services please take a look at

**[www.itchenvalleychurches.org](http://www.itchenvalleychurches.org)**

## The Valley Gardeners: The Winter Garden and AGM

It was the Club's 22nd AGM on the 15 November and 65 members gathered to hear how the year had gone. Chairwoman Catherine Hahn reported that the club was in fine form with a membership of 120 and a waiting list. The finances were strong and another interesting year of garden talks, visits and workshops lay ahead in 2023.

After the talk, the Club welcomed back an old friend to talk to the members about The Winter Garden. Andy McIndoe has been in the horticulture industry for over 40 years and is a broadcaster, garden consultant, lecturer and leader of garden tours at home and abroad. He worked for Hillier Nurseries for many years, achieving 25 consecutive gold medal winning exhibits for them at the RHS Chelsea flower show. As Andy remembered, in his youth no-one bothered about the garden in the winter. Everything was cut down and tidied up in late October and the garden was not even looked at until March or April the next year. Now we are so much more conscious of the potential enjoyment the winter garden can fulfil in terms of structure and colour, as well as providing the creatures which live in our gardens with food and shelter during the colder months.

To that end, Andy advised leaving the

stems of summer perennials such as Rudbeckia and Verbenas in place as birds and insects can feed on the larvae laid within the seed heads and the tall stems look stunning when frosted. As to what to plant in our gardens for added winter interest, Andy's take was to concentrate on

foliage colour above all else, which gives year-round interest too.

Winter flowering shrubs such as Daphne, Mahonia, Edgeworthia and Chimonanthus all have a wonderful scent to attract pollinators in

the early months of the year and those which flower in the Spring have stunning berries of orange or red to light up those winter days. If you are looking to fill tubs with winter interest plants you might choose Erica (heather) or Leucothoe or Skimmia, all of which thrive in shade or semi shade and give their best colour under those conditions.

Grasses too can thrive in pots over the winter, such as Carex, and of course, the favourite Cornus (dogwood) is a must for intense and bold colour in a winter garden. Choose *Cornus sanguinea*

'Midwinter Fire' or *Cornus alba Sibirica* for a stunning display of colourful stems in winter. In terms of trees which look especially beautiful in winter, conifers are of course a good choice. *Pinus mugo* 'Wintergold' does just what it says on the tin and goes a rich colour but it is also a dwarf conifer and therefore good for small



gardens or even containers. *Sorbus vilmorinii* is a rowan tree which has pink fruits in winter after finely formed fern-like foliage, that turns to vibrant red and purple in autumn. And of course, the *Acer griseum* or paperbark maple, has chestnut brown bark for winter appeal.

These were just a fraction of the plants, trees and shrubs which Andy recommended for enlivening our winter gardens and allowing us to enjoy our outdoor spaces in every season of the year.

*Catherine Hahn*

## Easton WI

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In November, members enjoyed a fascinating evening with Ian Margettes from Malsanger Farm, near Basingstoke, owned by the Colman family. In 1995 Sir Michael Colman visited America in search of Black Mitcham peppermint, a hybrid perennial, which had been native to England. The plants are propagated by cuttings and harvested in August while the plants are still flowering, the cut leaves are put into 'cooker tubs' and through wet steam distillation pure peppermint oil is extracted and left for two years to mature before creating award winning Summerdown chocolates, peppermint creams, peppermint tea, and lotions, all infused with the single estate peppermint oil. Summerdown also grows lavender and camomile, distilling these to produce organic essential oils which are exported to French perfume houses. The farm maintains a sustainable ecosystem with six metre margins round the fields planted every year with different varieties of wildflower seeds for pollinators. The hedges are cut in November so the birds can feed

on the berries. Beehives are placed around the perimeter of the peppermint fields and the bees are fed with sugar water during the winter months until warmer weather arrives. We hope to make a visit to the farm next year, when we can enjoy walking through fields of peppermint and lavender.

*Sallie Peake*

## Upper Itchen Valley Society AGM

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On a blustery autumn evening some 40 local people attended the 51st Upper Itchen Valley Society AGM at Martyr Worthy Village hall.



After suitable refreshments and much fellowship there was a delightful talk by Rob Nicholls, the Estates and Conservation Manager of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Trust. He highlighted many vital issues involving wildlife, plant sustainability, carbon footprint control including protecting vulnerable and sensitive areas around us. Many local land and river owners work closely with the Trust.

It was extremely interesting to hear all about this important work carried out for the benefit of us all and the enhancement of our green and pleasant Valley.

*Richard Seymour*



# Easton and Martyr Worthy Cricket Club: Round-up of 2022 Season

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## Seniors Summer Report

The 1st team won the annual Bramshaw Super 8s tournament in August. They finished mid-table in their League. The 2nd and 3rd teams were both relegated (having been promoted into competitive Leagues following their successful 2021 season).

Mark Dickety, Club Captain, presented the Annual Players' Awards at the end

of the season. The Captain's Cup for best all-round player went to Isaac Low.

Isaac bowled a League best of 6 for 19 in one game and also won two matches at the death with his bat. The fun 'Spud Awards' are presented at the

discretion of the Club Captain. The WAGs Spud went to Neil Rose, who received a suitably illustrated potato. There were also awards for Young Spud, Top Spud, New Spud, Spud Hands and Duck Spud, which Mark awarded to himself!

*We have previously reported on the success of our Ladies' section in 2022.*

## Colts Summer Report

Over 90 boys enjoyed training sessions and well supported matches over the season. The U9As proved a very strong team and comfortably topped their League table with only a single defeat all season. The U9s mixed boys and girls team also enjoyed some great cricket – with many children playing their first ever matches.

The U11s enjoyed great success. The A team were League champions in their first season of 'points scoring' matches, which was sealed in a thrilling last game of the season title decider when they achieved a win over their closest rivals, Andover, with just two balls to spare to remain undefeated.

After a slow start the B team went on an excellent winning run of six matches in a row to end up joint top of their League.

The U13As secured some notable victories on their way to a fifth place finish in their League.

The U13Bs were the team to watch if you are into nail-biting finishes! They played out no less than three matches that were all decided on the very last ball, as well as a number of other extremely tight games on their way to a creditable

fourth place League position.

Both the U9s mixed team of boys and girls and the U11B Boys' squad won the Spirit of Cricket Award in their respective Winchester Warrior Leagues. These Awards are nominated by the other teams in their Leagues, who consider them enjoyable and fair to play against: a fantastic testament to all the coaches and players.

## Girls Summer Report

Coached by the redoubtable Nick Heath, the U13 Girls' squad came up against some strong opposition in the Winchester League and ultimately won two of their eight games. They play competitive hard ball games and have grown in confidence as a team.



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Coached by Charlie Evans, the U11s squad ended up firmly in the middle of their League with some stand out performances from this smaller squad of girls. The team came on immeasurably during the winter nets training and built on this with a great team spirit.

Coached by Charlie Gloyn, the U9 Girls' squad grew from strength to strength during the season. With summer training every Friday evening - and matches on Sundays - their improvement was really impressive. The U9Bs (made up of mostly Year 3 players) gained valuable experience and enjoyed playing in their first competitive matches. The U9As had an incredible season: unbeaten champions of their League!



Indoor Winter League matches will take place across many sections of the Club. Indoor winter training will commence after Christmas in preparation for the summer season 2023. Including our newly reinstated Boys U15s team. If there are adults and juniors who would be interested in playing for the Club or who might like to coach or volunteer, please visit our website for more information, or get in touch with the details below.

*Chairman: Adrian Lee*

*fulford.lee@btinternet.com, Press Officer:*

*Lynda Gray ldaten453@aol.com*

*www.emwcc.com*

## Letter from the Rectory

November was a month for looking back in appropriate remembrance. On Sunday 6



November it was good to have a short Service of Prayer and Reflection for those who have been recently bereaved; and I am also grateful to Elaine Labram who has offered to lead a short Bereavement Course starting near the end of January (more details on page 5).

And then on Sunday 13 November we were able to celebrate Remembrance Sunday in each of our four villages in the most beautiful weather. In many parts of the country this was the warmest Remembrance Day on record. We owe a big thanks to James Young for the way he led the Royal British Legion on that day (for his fuller article, see page 14).

In addition to remembering the Fallen in the last century, it was also a poignant opportunity to look back over the many storms that have engulfed our nation and world during the last twelve months. In our main Remembrance Service we heard the words of Psalm 46, a prayer which reflects on the tumults being experienced by the nations of the ancient world but which was able to proclaim: "God is our refuge and strength: a very-present help in trouble". How much we need to hear such a message in these days filled with political and economic storms.

And so, having looked backwards, we now look forwards - to Christmas and the New Year. Many of our plans for Christmas last year were still badly



affected by rising Covid cases, but we do hope this year it will be back to 'Christmas as normal'. So please look at our list of Christmas services and events on page 22. We hope that many in the parish - together with our children and grandchildren - will be able to enjoy celebrating the birth of Jesus at one or more of these events. And that Christmas 2022 will bring us all a new awareness of the comfort that Christ can bring in the many storms of our lives. For he does indeed bring "tidings of comfort and joy".

With love and prayers, Revd Peter

## From the Parish Council

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Sometimes there are local concerns to many who live in the Itchen Valley, but if one is strict about it, they are in neighbouring parishes. Two have recently come to the fore but neither are new to us. In both cases the Parish Council is doing everything it can to represent Valley residents and find solutions for the benefit of all.

First of extreme concern to nearly everyone is the dangerous road layout at the Cart and Horses junction, where tragically there has been a fatal incident. This was followed by several serious incidents and at least one 'near miss'. Clearly something needs to be done. A number of your Parish Councillors held an informal discussion with our City and County Councillors. Following their recommendations the Parish Council has passed a formal resolution requesting Hampshire County Council, as an immediate but



temporary measure, to change the 'Give Way' road markings and signs where the east and west sections of the B3047 join the A33 to continuous white lines and stop signs, and that a long term permanent safe solution is produced in the form of a single roundabout. The full text of the resolution can be found on our website.

The resolution has been sent to Hampshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways Operations and copied to other neighbouring councils asking that they join with us to push for a solution. Unfortunately so far the response of some parishes has been minimal and the parish where the junction is, and therefore should be the most concerned, along with the Highways Operations Cabinet Member have taken the view that all must wait until the police have produced a report following the recent fatal accident. There has been no indication when that will be. Itchen Valley Parish Council considers that the present dangerous situation has gone on far too long and that both temporary measures followed by a permanent solution are needed.

We have therefore invited the Highways Operations County Councillor to attend a public meeting. He has been asked to propose a date and we await his response. Apart from the Parish Council, our County Councillor Jackie Porter has also pursued other avenues not available to us to get this problem solved and is to be thanked for her efforts.

The second long term problem is with footpaths and bridleways. There are several which are in both the Itchen Valley and other neighbouring parishes. Unfortunately some parishes are not very willing to keep in good condition

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their paths and bridleways which are close to, or join with, ours. Often these paths are useful links to longer routes or circuits.

As covered previously, our volunteers helped surface a path much of which is in a neighbouring parish. It is not always possible in terms of both money and time to do this work for other parishes. However we will keep pressing those who should to keep their sections of shared paths and bridleways clear.

November's Valley News gave the results of our environmental survey. Fitting solar panels was high on the list of things people have done or are likely to do to help combat climate change. It is therefore good news that Itchen Abbas and Avington Village Hall are going ahead with solar panels in the spring. There is news of other Valley residents preparing to do the same. The question has been asked if planning permission is needed. The answer that has been given is "if the property is not listed nor in a conservation area and providing the panels do not project more than 200mm from the roof slope or wall surface then solar panels are permitted development for which you do not need planning consent".

Winchester District Local Plan is now out for consultation. It covers the part of the Parish which is not in the South Downs National Park (in simple terms the area north of the railway line). **Please note the deadline for commenting is 14 December.** The Parish Council will be making its comments but remember we are only one voice and individual comments count as well.

As this edition is covering both December and January, from all the

Parish Council may we wish you a Very Happy Christmas and All the Best for 2023.

*Patrick Appleby, IVPC Chairman.*

## Jackie's County Corner

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I wish you the best of times this Christmas period. The year seems to pass so quickly: when you read my next County Corner the days will be getting longer again!

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has now published more granular and fascinating data from the 2021 census. Go to the ONS website [ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk) to see the latest publications dated from 2 November 2022. This is a powerful set of data. It is fascinating to compare your area with another.

Local authorities at all levels are making plans for the future. Budgets being set out and Draft Plans are being consulted upon, and we'd like to know what you think of the new policies as well as the proposed sites.

The South Downs National Park has called for new sites for its refreshed Local Plan. Some parishes, like Micheldever are renewing their Parish Design statements, and Alresford is creating a Neighbourhood Plan.

Winchester is currently consulting on our Draft local plan, *Your Place, Your Plan*, until the 14 December and the County Council has its Draft Minerals & Waste plan out for consultation until the 31 January. Both of these are



## Itchen Valley Churches

### Sunday 4 December

- 10am - Parish Communion - St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy  
4pm - Christingle - St John's, Itchen Abbas

### Sunday 11 December

- 8.30am - Holy Communion (said) - St John's, Itchen Abbas  
4pm - Carols in the Barn - Graces Farm, Martyr Worthy, SO21 1DX

### Sunday 18 December

- 10am - Parish Communion - St Mary's, Easton  
5pm - Carols by Candlelight - St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy

### Christmas Eve

- 4pm - Crib Service - St Mary's, Easton  
11.15pm - Midnight Communion - St Mary's, Avington

### Christmas Day

- 10am - Family Communion - St John's, Itchen Abbas

### Sunday 1 January

- 4pm - Cafe Church - further details to follow on website

### Sunday 8 January

- 8.30am - Holy Communion (said) - St John's, Itchen Abbas  
*coffee and teaching*  
10am - All Age Worship - St John's, Itchen Abbas

### Sunday 15 January

- 10am - Parish Communion - St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy

### Sunday 22 January

- 8.30am - Holy Communion (1662) - St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy  
10am - Valley Worship - St Mary's, Easton  
5pm - Prayer for Christian Unity - St John's, Itchen Abbas

### Sunday 29 January

- 8.30am - Holy Communion (1662) - St Mary's, Avington  
10am - Morning Worship - St John's, Itchen Abbas

**Rector** - Revd Peter Walker

revd.peter@itchenvalleychurches.org 01962 588313

**LLM** - Mr Gerry Stacey

gerry.stacey@biblesociety.org.uk 01962 620263

**Parish Administrator** - Beccy Clark

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weighty and expensive books to produce! So, they are being published online for everyone on the [www.hants.gov.uk](http://www.hants.gov.uk) and [www.winchester.gov.uk](http://www.winchester.gov.uk) websites (search draft reg 18 plan for each) and paper copies are available in the libraries. Both draft plans include important policies on which the success or failure of future planning permissions will depend, as well as proposed sites. Please do have your say. Both can be tackled in 'bite size chunks.'

Last month I spoke about the future financing of HCC. The situation was recently described by the Director of Corporate Operations as 'dire'. As a result of the pressure on finances, there is a rearrangement in the number of Directorships at HCC: with one for Adults, one for Children, both of which are statutory services providing personal services such as education and social care, and one for Universal Services which includes transport, roads and countryside services. All these under the overarching theme of Hampshire 2050, planning for the future as the County Council seeks to reduce climate change and accommodate a growing population which is getting older year by year. We thought Covid 19 would bring a baby boom, but it appears not!

You will be aware of the spate of accidents at the Cart and Horses junction: one in late October proved fatal for a local resident. Tragedies like this bring high emotions and I have spoken with our MP as well as parish councils, residents and county officers about the demand for change here. This junction is in many ways the pivot of the Itchen Valley division and is used by many of us, and many agree the design is confusing which can lead to

driver error or an horrific accident. A deputation for a safer design is being made to the County on the 29 November. I put regular updates with more detail and reflections about this on my website or you can of course contact me directly.

On a happier note: Hillier Arboretum is opening for a 'light up' experience from 24 November to 31 December 4.30 to 8pm (except Christmas Day). It promises to be a great evening out; please book via their website.

*Cllr. Jackie Porter. Contact me: [jackie.porter@hants.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.porter@hants.gov.uk), 07973696085 or [www.jackieporter.co.uk](http://www.jackieporter.co.uk)*

## Steve Brine MP

---

Constituents know of my passion for, and focus on, health matters so it is great to report I have recently become the new



chairman of an influential Commons Health and Social Care Select Committee.

I gained the support of MPs across the House (Labour, SNP and Liberal Democrat colleagues signed my nomination) and took up my role in early November taking over from Jeremy Hunt who has, of course, become Chancellor. The committee has the power to question ministers and conduct inquiries into health issues – sitting on a cross-party basis which is its great strength.

The ability of the health and social care sectors to continue to deliver for patients is a key priority for my committee, particularly how to deal



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with the backlog caused by the pandemic and the need to recruit a workforce that's capable of meeting future demand. Further pressures look unavoidable given the current economic climate and the Chief Executive of the NHS has set that out starkly in recent weeks.

Despite spending vast sums on health, we fail to reap the rewards in better outcomes. We need to understand why and to press the government about getting better value for our money while delivering on the 'day job' around access to GPs and dentists in particular.

On mental health, we've a real challenge as demand far outstrips supply and I know the Government could do so much more on prevention to help tackle deeply concerning issues around health inequalities.

I welcome the opportunity as Chair to examine new solutions to support the NHS to enable it to continue providing the services that we all depend upon.

This is a national role but it will complement well my work on #priorityNHS in the constituency and the response from local health leaders has been hugely supportive already. You can read more at

[www.stevebrine.com/prioritynhs](http://www.stevebrine.com/prioritynhs)

Coming back to local matters, we know all too well the ongoing nightmare that is the Cart and Horses junction.

Following recent tragic events, I met on-site with the Executive member at Hampshire County Council (Cllr Nick Adams-King) and the local County Councillor. The meeting was useful and it's good to hear they are taking our concerns seriously. Why wouldn't they?

We have to wait for the Police report on October's awful fatal accident before putting out solutions into the public arena and keep campaigning for a safe junction. I haven't changed my

view, formed when I became our MP, that only a fundamental layout change will bring that about. Finally, my winter constituency newspaper is out now and being delivered to homes across these villages. It is packed full of news and reports on my work in Westminster. You can download a copy at [www.stevebrine.com/publications](http://www.stevebrine.com/publications).

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Steve Brine MP. 0207 219 7189 | [www.stevebrine.com](http://www.stevebrine.com)

## History of Martyr Worthy

---

For those interested in the history of Martyr Worthy and the Itchen Valley, the just published Worthies Local History Group's Worthy History No 26 2022 contains an article by me on the history of Bridgets Farm between 1698 and 1948 when it became a Government Experimental Farm.



*Martyr Worthy Place (formerly called Martyr Worthy Cottage)*

It follows up my article in last year's 2021 edition on The Lords of the Manor in Martyr Worthy between 1066 and 1698 when Maurice Abbott, who owned part of Easton and all of Martyr Worthy and whose manor house was in Easton, got into debt and was forced to sell off Martyr

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Worthy in six blocks.

One was centred on Church Lane and was bought by William Moss, a malster from Winchester. It became in due course Martyr Worthy Farm before changing its name to Bridgets Farm after the main farmyard was moved from what is today called Texas Field off Church Lane to up Bridgets Lane. It also includes part of Itchen Abbas Manor Farm and Chilland Farm.

In addition, Worthies Local History Group published in 2020 Bill Fergie and Edward Roberts' *Traditional Houses of The Worthy Villages* which covers five former timber framed yeoman farm houses in Church Lane and includes a background chapter by me on the history of Martyr Worthy.

Copies of Worthy History No 26, which also contains an article by Erica Wheeler on Worthy Women: 'Women of Worthy Park', are available from the two post offices in Kings Worthy or from Karen McCleery at [wlhg.chair@gmail.com](mailto:wlhg.chair@gmail.com). Back issues and Bill Fergie and Edward Roberts' book are also available from [wlhg.chair@gmail.com](mailto:wlhg.chair@gmail.com)  
Robin Greenwood.

If anyone has any old photos of Bridgets Farm, Robin would love to hear from them: [robingreenwood1@btinternet.com](mailto:robingreenwood1@btinternet.com) - Eds

## Our Wild Valley: Barn Owls and their Prey

While jogging along with running-angel Lucy, we stopped to watch a silent hovering barn owl that was quartering a field near the river. For at least 10 minutes we enjoyed its glide, its stop and its fall to the ground but we didn't see the result of the pounce. Silent and secret, but hunting in the middle of the morning, it didn't appear to be

bothered by us.

In winter barn owl populations are under threat as they originally evolved in a warmer and drier climate. Many barn owls die of starvation in winter - they are not well insulated, not particularly waterproof with light and soft feathers, and they need to eat more to keep their body heat up. As small mammals do not move around as much in winter finding prey is a big challenge. When there is over 7mm of snow barn owls really have trouble hunting and their populations have been shown to rise and fall in close correlation to vole populations. One way they cope is by knowing their home range inside out and knowing where to go for optimum hunting depending on the weather conditions. In November we dissected an owl pellet, which is the waste from prey that owls cannot digest in their two stomachs. The owl will swallow an animal whole and, as and when, cough up the pellet of waste. We found a mandible (lower jaw) still joined with the maxilla (upper jaw) of a rodent



amongst much dense fur. Can you see the slightly yellow front teeth from the photo - this is iron found in the front teeth to keep them stronger, and derived from eating iron rich vegetation. Thank you to kind Victoria in Itchen Stoke for finding the pellet and donating it to science/fun and amazement at my forest school

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sessions.

To help keep our barn owls in the Valley we need to ensure good prey. Voles and other small rodents need rough unmown grassland with a dense matted litter layer through which they can burrow. If you can leave a long narrow strip of grassland unmown for a while, the barn owls will have space to quarter over it and hunt. I'm sure some of you have seen them near our river and along roadside verges perhaps? To maintain/ attract a breeding pair in the valley a variety of grass fields is required for their hunting grounds.

Merry Christmas and a Very Healthy and Happy New Year.

*Sophie Rogers*

## The Practical Gardener

---

My predictions are coming true and so far this year we have had, drier, wetter and recently warmer days. Statistics suggest colder weather will be on its way. This is a great time of year for mulching. I have recently been emptying a compost heap and spreading it over some of the borders. It's quite labour intensive but far more practical than a gym! It's also a good time for cutting back hedges and shrubs and so a lot of shredding is needed. That soon fills the compost heap. I don't suppose anyone would have predicted grass cutting being a key activity in November. Yet it's good to see an almost total recovery after the drought.

Many of us will have large borders with shrubs or perennials. Because it has been so wet, walking on the soil is not good. My solution is bark. Once spread over the soil, it's a much better material to walk on and it helps



with weed control.

Last month, I wrote about bamboo and screening. Well I decided I also needed a tree. Becketts came up trumps and delivered a four metre red cedar. I dug the hole and tested it with a similar sized pot in place. It was relatively easy for two of us to put the new tree in the hole. I'm told it only grows to 60m but not in my lifetime.

Happy Gardening.

*Tony Gaster.*

## Valley Quiz No.9

---

1. By what name is Norma Jane Baker better known?
2. How long does it take the Earth to make the journey around the Sun?
3. By what name is the large sandstone formation Uluru better known by and where is it?
4. A Christmas question for the youngest member of the household. What sort of Owl dries the dishes?
5. Only two countries in the world have the definite article included in their name. What are they?
6. What does a single white line painted on the edge of a road signify?
7. What and where is the Mauritshuis?
8. In what gallery does the "Girl with a Pearl Earring" hang?
9. Paramaribo is the capital of what country?
10. What is the official length of a Marathon?

## VILLAGE HALL INFORMATION

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## Local monthly information

Itchen Valley area waste collections in  
December: Black bins on Fridays 2 and  
16 and Sunday 31; Garden waste on  
Fridays 2 and 16; Green bins on Fridays  
9 and 23; Glass boxes on Friday 9;  
January - Fridays: Black and Garden  
waste on 13 and 27; Green bins on 6  
and 20; Glass boxes on 6.

## Hampshire Farmers' Market in Winchester

Second and last Sundays of the month 9  
am - 2 pm

## Parish Council Full Meeting:

Thursday 1 December at Itchen Abbas  
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11:53 13:23 15:23 17:23

Saturday 08:23 11:23 14:23 17:23

**To Alresford:** Monday and Thursday  
(**Coll**) 11:49 15:19 17:11 18:09  
(**NColl**) 11:49 15:19 17:09 18:09

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday  
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18:09; (**NColl**) 09:49 11:49 13:19 15:19  
17:09 18:09

Saturday: 09:19 12:19 15:19 18:09

**Key:** **Sch** School days only; **NSch** School  
holidays only; **Coll** College days only;  
**NColl** College holidays only

**No Sunday or bank holiday service.**

All times shown are at Itchen Abbas.  
Times are 5 minutes later (or earlier) at

## Quiz Answers

1. Marilyn Monroe
2. 365.25 days.
3. Ayres Rock in the Northern Territory of Australia.
4. A Tea Towel.
5. The Gambia and The Bahamas.
6. It is illegal to park.
7. It is the building in the Netherlands' capital, The Hague, that houses the Royal Picture Gallery. It features an outstanding collection of 17th century Dutch and Flemish Paintings.
8. The Mauritsshuis. The Hague.
9. Suriname in South America.
10. 26.2 miles (42.195 Kms) Its origin stems from the 1908 London Olympics when the race started on the lawn of Windsor Castle and finished in front of the Royal Box at the Olympic stadium. The distance was 26.2 miles and has remained so ever since.



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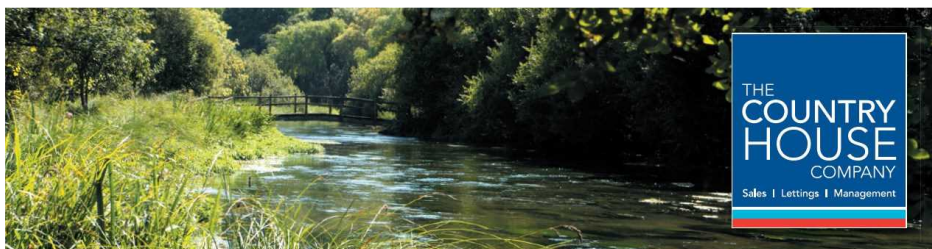
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