

ASTON ROWANT, KINGSTON BLOUNT & CROWELL

PARISH NOTES



Peter Tinson

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If you have anything you'd like to see in the next issue please get in touch.

Email: sallyparishnotes@gmail.com

Copy deadline for the April/May issue is 15th March 2026

Information in this publication is, as far as we know, accurate. The Parish Notes however, cannot accept responsibility for the quality of the information, services or items provided by other people or organisations.

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With special thanks to our team of distributors, for their continuing hard work.



(Hillwerke Recreational Trust Reg Charity No. 279656)

Charges for Hire – Effective 1st April 2024

For Residents of the Parish of Aston Rowant

Monday–Sunday & Bank Holidays

Main Hall (8am–midnight)	£15.00 per hour
Committee Room only	£8.50 per hour
Whole Day Hire (8am–11pm)	£210.00

For Non-Residents of the Parish of Aston Rowant

Monday–Sunday & Bank Holidays

Main Hall (8am–midnight)	£16.00 per hour
Committee Room only	£9.50 per hour
Whole Day Hire (8am–11pm)	£225.00

Bar Licence (if required) will incur an additional charge of £20

To make a booking, email bookings@kbvh.org,
phone **07470 441857** or visit our website www.kbvh.org
where you will also find a full description of the facilities we can
offer plus details of activities currently taking place in the hall.



KINGSTON BLOUNT VILLAGE HALL DIARY

Harmony Pilates

Tuesdays: 9am-10am
saracroker@hotmail.com

Pilates for Beginners

Wednesdays: 10am-11am
shine-holly@hotmail.com 07834994699

Pub Night

Friday 30 January 7.30pm

Friday Coffee Mornings

13 & 27 February 10.15am-12pm

Quiz Night

Friday 27 February 7pm

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

CAB Local office www.adviceguide.org.uk	01844 214827
Chinnor Village Centre	01844 353733
Church Tower, Aston Rowant: R Newton	01844 352926
Dial-a-ride (for people with mobility problems)	01869 327048
Highways Pothole Hotline	0845 3101111
Highways Street Light Hotline	0800 317802
Library-Chinnor	01844 351721
Oil Syndicate adam.bernstein@mac.com	01844 350440
Oxon County Council www.oxfordshire.gov.uk	01865 792422
Police-Thame (Thames Valley)	101 or 999
Poor's Hillock Allotments: Francesca Musaeus francesca.musaeus@hotmail.com	
Porch: S Thompson	01844 351334
Porch: J Rooksby	01844 352320
Post office-Chinnor	01844 351214
Schools:	
Aston Rowant C of E School	01844 351671
Icknield Community College Watlington	01491 612691
Lord Williams School Thame	01844 210510
Mill Lane School Chinnor	01844 352106
St Andrew's C of E, Chinnor	01844 351353
SODC Main Customer Services	01235 422422
SODC Refuse/Recycling	03000 610610
SODC Planning	01235 422600
Reporting Fly-tipping	03000 610610
SODC Environmental Department	01235 422403
Chinnor u3a [Chair]	07711 337243
Village Hall Hire/Bookings: Hayley Hopwood	07470 441857

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Salt bins

It's possible that by the time that this issue of the Parish Notes has been printed and distributed that the cold weather we suffered at the beginning of the year has been replaced with 'warmer' weather.

Regardless, I want to draw attention to the salt bins strategically placed around the parish. Some were placed there by OCC while the rest have been installed by the parish council.

These bins are checked once a year, around September, to see if they need filling – the parish gets one 'free' fill per year from OCC. They are also checked to ensure that they each have a long-armed rubber glove and a scoop with which to spread the salt.

The parish council can only do so much given its legal powers, budget and manpower. Consequently, the spreading of salt is not something that it undertakes.

This means that residents need to be community-minded and spread salt when necessary, so long as the salt is ONLY used on public footpaths and highways. For private lanes, closes, and footpaths residents will need to source their own materials.

If residents find a salt bin in need of filling or which is short of gloves or scoop, let me know via adam.bernstein@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Emergency planning

In a similar vein, there's the issue of emergency planning as there is a limit to what government at all levels - parish, district, county and national – can do in times of need.

At the risk of stating the obvious, this means that residents need to think about, and plan for, potential crises that may affect them.

When I and another councillor attended OCCs Highways Open Day recently, we were given – among things – detail on OCCs view of emergency planning. In essence, residents need to take some responsibility for what they may need to do to 'survive' should an incident occur.

OCC has a very useful page, Community resilience, at <https://tinyurl.com/mawczkn2>.

In summary, it advises householders to:

- Be aware of specific risks in the area such as flooding.
- Develop a household emergency plan that outlines where to meet if there's a need to evacuate and how to contact each other.
- Assemble a 72-hour kit with essentials for each person in the household including a three-day supply of non-perishable food and water; a battery-powered or wind-up radio and a torch with extra batteries; essential medications and a first aid kit; copies of important documents and some cash; and sanitary and toilet supplies.
- Ensure insurance coverage for home and contents.
- Register for the Priority Services Register, a free UK-wide service that provides additional support, especially during interruptions to electricity or gas supply.

At the end of OCCs webpage are links to publications and sites that will help with planning for the unthinkable.

I appreciate that, thankfully, localised crises are incredibly rare and that they tend to happen to someone else. But planning for the possible is not a wasted exercise for the very reason that if the balloon does go up, authorities may be unable to assist – quickly - and residents could be left to their own devices for a while.

Having some form of plan and resources will clearly be better than none.

Duck Race

I want to draw attention to the now annual Duck Race on Sunday 15 February at 1400hrs. Held at Fiveways Corner, families can race ducks down the stream. Best of all, it's free for all participants. At the same time, the church will be offering teas, cakes and biscuits to raise funds.

Litter pick

Finally, please note that the next parish litter pick will be held over the weekend of Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th March. Again, on Saturday meet at 1000hrs at the Cherry Tree and Sunday by the Lambert Arms. Please bring gloves and wear suitable shoes/boots. Picks and bags will be provided. Over 16s only please. For more information, contact stevensowrby@hotmail.com.

Adam Bernstein

Chairman, Aston Rowant Parish Council

adam.bernstein@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

What's On this *Feb/Mar*



Waterperry
Gardens

THERE ARE FEW BETTER PLACES TO CELEBRATE THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING THAN WATERPERRY GARDENS IN OXFORDSHIRE.

The historic ornamental gardens provide the perfect setting for the Galanthus. These wonderful little heralds of spring carpet the old orchard and riverside walks at this time of the year, and winter aconites are also likely to bring a smile to visitors' faces, providing new hints of colour in the garden*.

Feb

5TH – WORKSHOP: PRUNING FRUIT

6TH – COURSE: PRUNING FRUIT BUSHES

13TH – COURSE: PRUNING FRUIT FRIDAY

(21ST FEB - 26TH APR) – GREEN WORKS, SPRING EXHIBITION

Mar

6TH – COURSE: ROSE PRUNING

7TH – COURSE: VEGETABLES EVERY DAY



14TH – WORKSHOP: WILLOW GARDEN STRUCTURES

15TH – MOTHER'S DAY

(28TH MAR - 19TH APR) – BIG EASTER BUNNY HUNT



*Normal garden entrance fee applies.

OPEN DAILY 10:00am - 5:00pm | For more information on our events, trails and courses, visit www.waterperrygardens.co.uk  

PARISH COUNCIL & LOCAL CONTACTS

Parish Website

www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Clerk

Tracy Lambourne
clerk@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 353989

Parish Councillors:

Chairman Adam Bernstein
adam.bernstein@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07785 905120
Councillor Deborah Chaplin
deborah.chaplin@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 354648
Councillor Matthew Day
matthew.day@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 351300
Councillor Hayley Hopwood
hayley.hopwood@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07515 774871
Councillor Richard Payling
richard.payling@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 07801 764019
Councillor Trelawney Hill
trelawney.hill@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk 01844 353051

District Councillors:

Ali Gordon-Creed ali.gordon-creed@southoxon.gov.uk
Ed Sadler ed.sadler@southoxon.gov.uk 07842 602398

County Councillor

Kate Gregory kate.gregory@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Georgina Heritage georgina.heritage@oxfordshire.co.uk

MP

Freddie van Mierlo freddie.vanmierlo.mp@parliament.uk

Police Community Support Office

tel: 101 ThameHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Village Hall Hire/Bookings

Hayley Hopwood 07470 441857 bookings@kbvh.org

Play Area

Tracy Lambourne 01844 353989 clerk@astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk

Aston Rowant Cricket Club Chairman

James Robinson
chairman@astonrowantcricket.co.uk 07786 393954

ASTON ROWANT PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

Parish Council meetings were held on Wednesday 10th December 2025 and Wednesday 14th January 2026 where the planning applications detailed below were discussed. The next meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday 11th February.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

P25/S1671/O Amendment (no. 2) for development work at: Land at Woodway Farm, AR, as amended by plans received 28 November 2025. Amendment provides one less house and is contained within footprint of existing buildings, as opposed to slight expansion on previous versions. It is a Brownfield site, replacing current farm buildings, not prime agricultural or Green Belt land. **MAINTAIN PREVIOUS OBJECTION** on the basis that the properties would still be outside the existing village boundary/built-up areas on which objections for other unrelated prior applications have been made.

P25/S3778/HH Demolish existing prefabricated detached garage and side projection to main house. Construct single story rear/side extension, front porch and detached garage at 13 Icknield Close, Kingston Blount, OX39 4RS. **NO OBJECTION.**

P25/S4094/AG General purpose agricultural storage building at Town Farm Cottage, Stert Road, Kingston Blount, OX39 4SA. **NO OBJECTION.**

WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS:

P25/S1831/HH **P25/S1831/HH** – Little Spinney, AR (gates, fence & dropped kerb). No reason given

PLANNING DECISIONS OF SODC:

None.

PLANNING DECISIONS MADE SINCE THE LAST MEETING:

None.

APPLICATIONS IN NEIGHBOURING PARISHES (which may affect Aston Rowant Parish) None.

Please note that all Planning Applications for the Parish can be found on the Parish Council Website: <http://www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk> under ‘**Parish Council**’ and then ‘**Planning**’. All past minutes of Aston Rowant Parish Council (Including the Annual Parish Meeting) can be found under: <http://www.astonrowantparishcouncil.gov.uk> under ‘**Parish Council**’ and then ‘**Meetings**’. Occasional updates concerning the Parish are added to the Parish Council’s website and Facebook pages as well as the Kingston Blount/Aston Rowant (KBAR) Facebook page.

Tracy Lambourne Clerk to Aston Rowant Parish Council

THE UNITED PARISH TEAM

Rector to the United Parish

Rev'd Dr. Jacky Barr 07769 825305
 rector@unitedparish.church

Our other ministers

Margaret Poole (LLM) 01844 281042
 The Rev'd Tony Whitaker 01844 761267

Parish Administrator

Mrs Tricia Prescott phone 01844 352472
 or office@unitedparish.church
 The Parish Office is at St Andrew's
 church in Chinnor and is usually open for
 in-person enquiries Tuesday, Wednesday,
 Thursday 13:30-15:30

Churchwardens

Aston Rowant

Richard Boarder 07795 681263

Crowell

Andy and Maggie Warman
 01844 351909

Sydenham

Roy Harrison 01844 353887

St Andrew's, Chinnor

Lauretta Milligan 01844 355290
 and Robert Pegg 01844 698109

OUR USUAL SERVICE PATTERN

ASTON ROWANT	ST ANDREW'S CHINNOR	CROWELL	SYDENHAM
Every Sunday 09:00	Every Sunday 10:30	2nd and 4th Sundays 16:00 GMT 18:00 BST	2nd Sun 10:30 3rd Sun 18:00
2nd and 4th Sundays are Holy Communion	Holy Communion except 2nd Sunday is All Age Worship First Sunday: 08:00 H.C 18:00 Taize	2nd Sunday Holy Communion 4th Sunday Evening Prayer	2nd Sunday BCP Holy Communion 3rd Sunday BCP Evensong
5th Sunday one United Parish service held, 10:30. Church tbc.			



Help Needed!

We need a new Booking Clerk

Can you spare upto 2 hours a week to take on the role of Bookings Clerk? It involves processing bookings, generating invoices, confirming payments and answering queries relating to the hall. This is all done online so a computer is a must, all training will be provided plus support from the committee when needed.

APPLY NOW!

Email Hayley at kbvhbookings@outlook.com
or Andrea at kbvhall@gmail.com

YOUR VILLAGE HALL NEEDS YOU!

The Village Hall committee are looking for a new Chair to help run the Hall and lead the meetings. If you are interested and want to know what is involved please contact Andrea Tinson on kbvhall@gmail.com

We are a friendly group of people who volunteer to help run the Village Hall. We meet formally four times a year and use email to contact each other outside of those times. One perk of the role is that you have two free hirings a year.



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Opening Hours

Monday - 8am till 1pm

Tuesday to Friday - 8am till 5pm

Saturday - 8am till 2pm

Sunday - Closed

KBAR QUIZ NIGHT

Friday 27th February 2026



**Kingston Blount
Village Hall**

Doors Open: 7pm, Quiz Starts: 8pm

**£10 per person | 8 per team
Cashless Bar | Raffle**

REGISTER NOW: kbarquiz@gmail.com

All proceeds to go to Aston Rowant CofE Primary School





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Contact me to arrange your free consultation

info@meadowviewaesthetics.co.uk

07979 652460

meadowviewaesthetics.co.uk

MeadowView Aesthetics
High Street
Kingston Blount
OX39 4SJ

ARPC FOOTPATH AND AMENITIES GROUP

A very happy and prosperous New Year to all who are lucky enough to enjoy spending time in the countryside both in, and close to, the parish.

Can I start by raising safety concerns especially when the ground is frozen and slippery. To echo the words of the Parish Chair the salt bins were provided by the Parish Council at the request of the community for the use of the community. The county council will grit the B4009 but not the side roads. If you are out early in the morning and recognise that there is ice around, please use the salt in the bins.

Please see advert on page 21 about Snowdrop Sunday 15th February. The Duck Race on the Holbrook at Fiveways takes place followed by cream teas at the church. The Duck Racing is free and the simple pleasure of watching children (of all ages) chasing the ducks is one of the highlights of the year – followed by a cream tea.

The Parish Walk scheduled for January was cancelled – please see Peter Hetherington's notes (page 20) on the revised date.

The Spring Litter pick will take place over the weekend of March 7th and 8th. For details, see Chairman's notes on page 7.

In the last edition I referred to the River Thames Trust who are monitoring the quality of the water in the River Thame. I attended the quarterly meeting in December where I updated them on the work done on naming the streams in the parish. The Trust reported on the work done at the Cuttlebrook Nature Reserve which is where our streams end up before joining the main river. There has been a large increase in the number of fish found in the stream since the improvements have been made to the brook. If you are in Thame, I strongly recommend you walk through the reserve. The trust are now looking at the chalk stream tributaries and I have invited them down to Five Ways to see if we can work together to increase the biodiversity on the Holbrook.

The group's next meeting will be May 19th in Kingston Blount Village Hall at 7.30pm – as usual all are welcome.

Steven Sowerby

Chair of Footpaths and Amenities Group
stevensowerby@hotmail.com 07802 81425.

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Happy New Year!

I have not visited Fiveways as much as usual, due to the weather – amongst other issues. However, I am hearing reports of white egret sightings in the dog-pool. This pool was improved by Calum on his DoE volunteering. It provides a little extra depth for fish emerging from the deliberately overgrown section/sanctuary. It is the top spot for seeing small fish, especially bullheads. Personally, I favour the fish rather than the egrets! I have seen a few egret photos but it's not easy with a phone camera. By the time you read this, fish in the Holbourne will be moving upstream looking for spawning spots.

I did hear a distinctive plop the other day from the footpath downstream of the felled black poplar. It just could be a water vole as there have been reported sightings along the river Thame. They had been eliminated by mink in recent years but anti-mink efforts may be heralding a return of these iconic (plopping) animals. The Holbrook was tested for environmental water vole DNA some years back with a nil return. So, keep an eye out. We should try again to place a wildlife camera in the overgrown stretch with a target apple but it is difficult wading there.

The Winterbourne has barely flowed so far this winter as its reservoirs are still low after the dry summer. I am predicting no flooding this year as a result. The council have spent some time clearing the road drains along the B4009 which must help.

Whilst farmers are often accused of water course pollution, building work run off is a significant factor and there appears to be no mandatory use of barriers. Historically domestic sewage was deposited locally and was slowly used by nature. It is now quickly captured by sewage plants and turned into nitrate and phosphate which can get returned to the streams. So, villagers including myself are just as guilty. There is also evidence of detergent use - look for bubbles in the streams. This is an issue for aquatic insects. Almost all man-made chemicals can be broken down in the soil - albeit slowly. Sewage effluent is quickly processed but will contain antibiotics and polymers such as polyethylene glycol from toothpaste etc. Until the Environment Agency is effective there is nothing that can be done.

The large aged black poplar cut down by the electricity company is producing suckers. I don't know if it was a male or female tree. Poplars do well at the foot of the Chilterns despite their roots and seeds demanding an exacting riparian environment. I would like to see more of these iconic trees in the parish. We now have three black poplars within 100 yards.

The snowdrops and particularly the native daffodils are very early this year and there will probably be overlap in their flowering times. The "log bench" is rotted away – if you see me give me your thoughts on a replacement if you think it is needed.

Mike Eaton

mike.eaton@btpenworld.com

Friends of St. Andrew's Church, Chinnor

Lunchtime Concert



Featuring
Luca Zucchi
(Baritone)
and
Daniel Liu
(Piano)



Friday 6 February
12:30 to 1:15

Admission is FREE with a retiring collection in aid of
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Happy New Year to all our members and supporters, New Year, new Chairman James Robinson, new vice chairman Tim Hester and new committee, albeit with a few old as well as new faces. Also, a new beginning as the cricket club is now a charity number 121278.

Whilst the new League season is four months away, first league game is May 9th, preparation for the new season has already started. We will have 4 senior men's teams as well as a ladies and a girls' team in addition to the junior teams from U9 to U19's. All the club fixtures are on the club web site astonrowantricketclub.co.uk. The bar will be open whenever the league games are taking place – we are considering opening on a Thursday night, more details in next parish notes.

Work Parties are taking place most Saturday mornings, weather permitting, so you will see people working down on the ground. The work on repairing the site screens on the top pitch, which is what the scaffolding is being used for, has been underway for several weeks.

The club has started a crowd funding scheme to replace old antiquated ground equipment, primarily but not exclusively a new heavy roller. We would like to thank SODC for their help in this exercise – if you wish to help, please look at the web site and click the donate button.

As stated in the last notes, we are also looking, as ever, for sponsorship, especially a main sponsor and also a shirt sponsor – to help with this we have produced a booklet that can be reached by the link <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/b6f3ac3144.html#page/1>. With the work required to raise the funds to replace the now old worn-out pavilion, these sponsorships are vital to us if we are to achieve our long term goal.

By now all residents should have a letter from the club detailing the festival on the 20th June 2026. This has been renamed as Electric Hills instead of Rowachella but is essentially the same but better. We are again offering a discount to residents which will be available until the 29th March. To obtain the discount please use the password on the letter. To get further information please email on info@electrichills.co.uk.

The club memberships have been frozen at the same prices as 2025, details on the website – use the join now tab, membership is due from 1st April.

Finally, can we add our congratulations to our home grown now international players. Linsey Smith who has now been awarded a central contract with the England ladies cricket team and is currently playing in the Indian T20 competition and James Coles whose career continues to flourish and is currently playing the South African T20 competition.

Anyone without access to our website please contact either the Chairman whose contact details are in these notes (page 8) or myself on the number below.

Steven Sowerby

www.astonrowantcc.com

07802 814625

NOTICEBOARD

WHAT'S GOING ON IN KINGSTON BLOUNT, ASTON ROWANT & NEARBY

Friday Coffee Mornings

Kingston Blount Village Hall.

All welcome!

We will be open for business
from 10.15am – 12pm on:

February 13th & 27th

March 13th & 27th

April 10th & 24th



Come and enjoy a hot drink and a cake or snack.

Browse the bookshelf, feel free to select as many as you like.

Bring some new ones along to add to the collection.

Re-arranged Parish Walk

Sunday 19th April at 10.00 from Stokenchurch, Kings Hotel, Bus Stop.

The original walk on 4th January was cancelled due to ice on roads and footpaths.

This is a very scenic 4.5m circular walk – through beech woods and is on well-maintained footpaths. The walk is stile free and will be at a leisurely pace. There are 3 hills, but they will be taken slowly.

Please bring a light snack and some water. It is expected that we will return by 12.30 at the very latest.

The walk is organised by Aston Rowant Footpath and Amenities Group in conjunction with Thame and Wheatley Ramblers. It is open to all the public. But please note that we do start the walk on time.

Please come and join us. Park in the minor roads near the hotel or in the adjacent small car park.

Peter Hetherington

07767 647714

Accredited Ramblers Walk Leader.

DUCK RACES • SNOWDROP WALK • CREAM TEAS



Sunday 11th February 2026 2-4pm

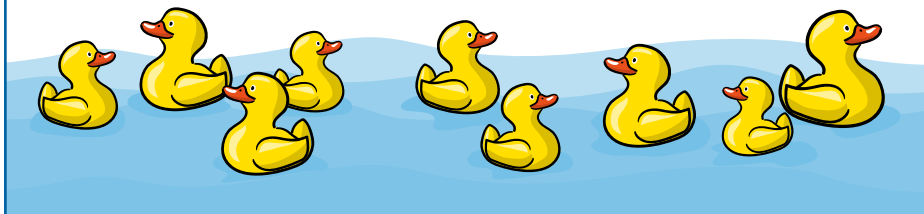
Aston Rowant

Duck Races on the Holbrook stream

Cream Teas served in Aston Rowant Church

Please wear boots/wellies!

Organised jointly by Aston Rowant Parish Council and the church



HUNGER LUNCH

Monday 2 March, 2026 12.30 -2.00pm at Aston Rowant Church

Come and join us for a simple lunch of delicious soup and bread.

Cash donations and gifts of dried and tinned food would be gratefully received.

The Oxford Charity we are supporting is The Porch's Steppin' Stone Centre.

They help the homeless to re-integrate into the community. The United Parish has supported this Charity for many years and all donations are gratefully received.



ADVERTISING IN THE PARISH NOTES

The Parish Notes are an excellent and affordable way to advertise locally. They are published every two months and delivered to every household in the area. Please email Rachel Lockwood if you are interested in advertising:

rachel.parishnotes@gmail.com

1/4 page – £12 for one issue or six issues for £50

1/2 page – £17 for one issue or six issues for £70

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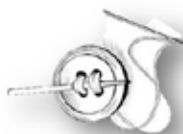
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LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Stronger Together: The Power of Partnership in a Small School Community

One of the joys of being a small, family focused school is the sense of belonging that runs through everything we do. Children are known as individuals, families feel connected, and staff work closely together to create a nurturing environment where every pupil can thrive. Yet we are also fortunate to be part of something much bigger – the Thame Partnership – which brings together one secondary school and thirteen primary schools in a collaborative network that strengthens and enriches our work in countless ways.

At its heart, the partnership is built on the belief that schools achieve more when they learn from one another. Headteachers meet every two months to plan, discuss and strategise, ensuring that our schools move forward with shared purpose and ambition. From September 2025, I was delighted to take on the role of chairing this dedicated group, supporting our collective drive to stay innovative, think creatively and maximise opportunities for all children across the partnership.

For staff, the benefits are wide ranging. Termly meetings for subject coordinators allow teachers to share ideas, compare approaches and strengthen their leadership. Regular moderation in English and Maths ensures consistency and high expectations across all schools, giving families confidence that every child is supported to achieve their best. We also benefit from shared resources – particularly in IT – which help us work more efficiently and creatively.

For pupils, the partnership opens the door to experiences that extend far beyond their own school. Cross school sports competitions, the Festival of Music, the Poetry Slam, the Dance Festival and our inspiring Science Day all give children the chance to shine, collaborate and feel part of something bigger. These events enrich the curriculum, build confidence and create memories that last long after primary school.

What makes the Thame Partnership so special is that it offers the best of both worlds: the strength and support of close collaboration, much like being part of an academy, while allowing each school to maintain its own unique identity, vision and values. It is a community rooted in mutual respect – one that lifts us all.

Our partnership wide INSET day in January is a perfect example. While pupils enjoyed an extra day at home, staff from across all fourteen schools came together for high quality training, including keynote talks from Adrian Bethune (Teachappy) and also the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) team, alongside workshops on AI in the classroom, African drumming, de escalation strategies, resilience, attendance and oracy in maths. Colleagues returned to school energised and inspired, ready to bring fresh ideas back to our children.

Being part of the Thame Partnership strengthens every aspect of school life – for staff, for families and, most importantly, for our pupils. It allows our small, family focused school to remain true to its nurturing roots while still offering the breadth, ambition and opportunities of a much larger community. It is a partnership that helps our children feel they belong not only to their own school, but to a wider network that celebrates them, supports them and encourages them to thrive. It is a community we are proud to belong to.

Helen France

Headteacher office@aston-rowant.oxon.sch.uk

POOR'S HILLOCK GARDEN ALLOTMENT

Poor's Hillock was, originally, an area of land in Kingston Wood where the inhabitants of Kingston Blount had the right to collect wood for fuel (a right called hegging or hillwerke). So, Poor's Hillock doesn't refer to a small hill but is a corruption of the word hillwerke. Following the Aston Enclosures Act of 1832, an award was made in 1835 of 12 acres of woodland, to be known as the Poor's Hillock, from which the "poor inhabitants" of Kingston Blount could, by right, collect wood for fuel. The land, however, was owned by the Lord of the Manor of Kingston Blount.

By the 1860's it appears that rather than collecting wood for fuel, the villagers were more interested in poaching the Lord of the Manor's pheasants. Consequently, the Lord of the Manor proposed to the Commissioners for the Poor that the woodland known as Poor's Hillock be exchanged for 4 acres of arable land adjacent to the village and for this land to be used to provide allotment gardens for the poor residents of Kingston Blount. This was agreed at a meeting of the villagers with the Commissioners for the Poor and the Lord of the Manor, and an Order of Exchange was signed in December 1864. The rights under the 1835 award - to collect wood for fuel - were extinguished.

From the historical records, it is evident that the land was used solely for allotment gardening with plots provided free of rent for those residents of the village who lived in rented or tied cottages. The Charity Act of 1960 required that all charities be



Illustration by Christopher Stockley



registered with the Charity Commission and, in May 1962, Poor's Hillock was entered into the Central Register of Charities by the Parish Council, with its Object stated as being "to provide allotments for the poor inhabitants of Kingston Blount". This remains the Object according to the current entry for Poor's Hillock on the Charity Commission's website.

By 1969 a significant number of plots on the allotments were vacant and it was agreed by the allotment holders and the Parish Council (the Trustee) that the plots be rearranged and grouped together, with a new roadway and central pathway constructed, and that the land surplus to current requirements (1.5 acres) be let as grazing land to the local farmers, E&J Clarke (Kingston Blount Farms) - with the option that the land could be re-acquired for allotment gardens at one year's notice. Two tenants of the allotments were appointed to act as allotment managers, to draw up the lease. collect the rent (and the rents from the plot holders) and apply the proceeds to the upkeep of the allotments. In 1995 the Parish Council agreed to the management of the allotments being entrusted to a committee elected by the plot holders and in 1998 the Committee leased a further 0.65 acres of allotment land to Kingston Blount Farms for grazing purposes. In 1977 the Parish Council decided, after consultation with the Charity Commission, to change the eligibility for a rent-free allotment garden from "living in a rented or tied cottage" to "being a Senior Citizen". This was because the number of households claiming a free plot had been steadily increasing and had reached 26 in 1977, with rent being paid on only 18 plots. The following year only 5 people claimed a rent-free plot, but this gradually increased to 8 over the following few years and as of 2025, stood at 12.

With rising maintenance and upkeep costs during the early part of the 21st century, the decision was taken for a nominal charge to be levied for beneficiaries – now defined as 'a household in which anyone is in receipt of the State Retirement Pension'. However any other household may apply for beneficiary status if they are "in need". In 2026, a beneficiary was asked to pay a total of £14.50 for a 5-pole plot including a contribution to water and insurance costs. Residents of the village who have not yet reached state pension age (non-beneficiaries) would pay £20.00 for a 5-pole plot.



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TESSA WYATT'S COUNTRYSIDE DIARY

It's the middle of January. The New Year has come and gone, and the world is rather murky. I went for a walk in the woods at Piggott's Hill yesterday, where I now keep my pony, Katie. It was too wet to ride, so I just fed her, gave her a quick brush and turned her back out, then took myself off into the woods.

Despite the rain, and the chill, there was a new energy in the air. I could feel it zinging through my veins, and so could the birds. They were singing away for all their worth. I heard a couple of territorial pigeons calling first of all, then a couple of robins tuned up, followed by a blackbird and a mischief of sparrows in a bush and then finally a chorus of unidentifiable birdy music to fatten up the sound. With the background beat of the rain dripping onto the leaves at my feet, I was treated to a glorious impromptu concert every bit worthy of the Albert Hall. It could all mean only one thing: the year has turned the corner, and Spring is on its way. Maybe not yet, but if I listen carefully, I can hear its approaching footsteps faintly in the distance.

The snowdrops popped open overnight on Sunday, and there are early signs of primroses and even daffodils are showing a few spears. And this morning, a single, pretty little mauve winter crocus appeared on the lawn (or should I say moss, lol). Her friends will probably arrive all in a rush now she has made her appearance.

On a less poetic note, a hedgehog left a calling card on our front door mat overnight, which my husband kindly cleared up. Never known that before, usually they steer well clear of the house, perhaps it was taking shelter from the rain and got caught short.

Another lovely experience was while I was poo picking the field last week, I caught movement out of the corner of my eye. There at the far end of the 6 acre field, was a Sika stag. He was in his prime, a beautiful chocolatey brown, with a handsome, broad face and shapely horns. He looked at me, and I'll swear our eyes met and just for a second I felt the world go away as I was held captive by his gaze. Then he turned away, and with a flash of white derriere, he was gone, into the woods.

There's a certain magic about this time of year. When nature is apparently silent, breath held, waiting for Spring, if we keep still, and listen, and keep our eyes up, there is life everywhere, and it feels as though, through an invisible curtain, Eden is waiting for us in all its glory.

I think we've got a few wet or frosty days to go before then though. Stay warm folks.

Tessa Wyatt

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If you are an existing Freemason in the area and are looking for a local Lodge or if you are interested in getting information about joining this new Lodge, we would love to hear from you.

Who Are the Freemasons?

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- One of the world's oldest fraternal organisations.
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- A network of men who support each other, their families, and their communities.
- Include our family within our activities to make them feel included and part of the experience.

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- We are not a secret society - our values and goals are openly shared.
- We don't engage in political or religious agendas.
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OLIVE CROSSLEY

Olive Crossley - A sister. A wife. A mum. A beloved friend. A party animal.

When someone reaches an advanced age it's easy to forget that they have led a full life up to that point, and Olive certainly did that.

Olive was born in Maidstone, Kent in April 1931. The family (two sisters and a brother) moved to Romford Essex. She grew up during the war years, experiencing the blitz and having her father away serving at sea for long periods.

In the early 1950s she married her first husband Bill and they had two sons, William and Michael. That marriage ended in the late 60s

At this time Olive took up golf, and was Lady Captain at Newlands Golf Club for several years. She met Gordon on their daily commute into London (she worked for Sun Life Insurance). They married in 1972 and within a few years moved to Kingston Blount, firstly living in Second Cottage and in 1984 moving across the High Street to Elizabeth Villa.

New friendships were made in Kingston Blount and a group (christened the 'A Team') regularly met on a Friday after a week's work. They also enjoyed several group holidays together in the UK and France which traditionally culminated in a 'show' devised and choreographed by Olive - and of course involved fancy dress. Any excuse - Olive loved life and many a New Year's Eve in KB High Street was celebrated with a Safari of dining and dancing - usually led by Olive. More recently she helped organise a street tea party, as did many others in the village. But Olive's 'tea' didn't need any milk because the teapot was filled with wine.

Olive belonged to the local WI, but a great passion of hers was gardening. She created wonderful gardens in her High Street homes and then again in Baker's Piece. She was part of, and became the keen photo archivist of, a small like-minded group of local ladies - 'The Rosies' - who spent the summers visiting beautiful gardens around the country.

All significant birthdays were marked with a party, often including music from Olive at her piano. She loved playing the piano and in later years, with tremendous help from Andrew Spiller, made CDs of tunes she had composed.

Olive and Gordon very much enjoyed village life, getting involved in the annual May Fayre and Parish Fete, and supporting many events including the Millennium celebrations. Olive ran the bookings for the Village Hall for a number of years and at the 2012 Jubilee celebrations and the Platinum Jubilee she was made honorary 'Queen for a day'.

Sadly Olive passed away on 30th December - her presence in the village will be missed.

