

Village news

March 2026

Puttenham
Astrope
Long Marston
Gubblecote
Wilstone
Little Tring



Your independent village magazine - produced and delivered free to every home in Tring Rural villages entirely by local volunteers

The Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum

In our villages



As part of her 100km challenge to walk the boundary of Dacorum, Mayor Catherine McArey was in our parish on Monday 16th February. Arriving at long Marston victory hall, she made an unplanned stop at Meet on Monday, before the group, with added WI members, started out for Puttenham.

Stopping on the way to see The Tower (pictured left; check page 2 for an update on the plans for this), the thought of cake spurred the group on to Puttenham, where Christine Rutter welcomed the group to the church, before the cake and other refreshments were served in Cecilia hall, and a well earned rest; as Catherine is still working part time in her usual role as a nurse, whilst taking on the role of Mayor. Whilst anyone can formally invite the Mayor to visit them, she feels that this walk is a way of seeing the borough and meeting people in a less formal way, as well as supporting community togetherness and some healthy exercise!



For the residents of Puttenham, Astrope, Long Marston, Gubblecote, Wilstone & Little Tring.

The Old Tower, Long Marston

Those of you who walk around the churchyard where the old tower stands will know what a special place it is.

Quiet, shady and surrounded by trees and plants it is a place where you can contemplate and ponder away from the rush of everyday life. As the old church tower group move forward forming a trust it is their intention to keep the churchyard as it is but also to enhance it by encouraging wild flower and bulbs to grow and to add some benches to rest.

Unfortunately some time over the winter we have had some garden rubbish dumped in the churchyard, as shown right. Whilst, historically some dead branches had been used to reinforce the boundary with the moat, this was intentional, and we in no way want this special place to be used as a 'dumping ground'. Fly-tipping (as this appears to be) is a crime (see also page 22 for fly-tipping reporting).

Some of this has already been cleared by the old church tower group, as see below right. The logs have been 'saved' to help create habitats in the future, and the rest will be tidied.

This year we have so far put 3 dates in the diary.
An Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Monday, see below:
Open Garden in Long Marston and Puttenham is on 28th June
Tea at the Tower is on Sunday 6th September
We look forward to welcoming you to all the events.



Easter Egg Hunt

By popular demand. All ages welcome

Meet at Victory Hall, Long Marston
Monday 6th April
Any time from 2.00pm - 4.00pm
Hunt entry free. Donations welcome
All proceeds to the Tower renovation fund



Follow the clues to the Old Tower to win a prize.

Learn more about the history of the Tower and the garden

Enjoy tea and cakes



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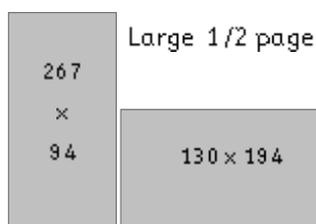
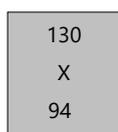
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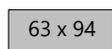
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Medium 1/4 page



Small 1/8 page



Village News is written, edited, produced and distributed entirely by local volunteers. We aim to be local, interesting, informative, fun and a good read. Please let us know if we are not!

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Harlequin52.com

The editor for the April edition is Colin Moore and the deadline for items is:**Wed 18 March 2026.**

Welcome to the March edition of Village News, where we are trying to highlight to role of the women in our community for International Women's Day (8th March, in case you didn't already know).

Dacorum's Mayor has been walking all round the Borough, so spot her in this edition throughout the pages.

And on a slightly more local note, please note that your parish Councillors have new email addresses, so please check at the back, when you want to contact them.

The days are getting longer which means that, hopefully, we shall start seeing more sunshine, something that the year so far has been lacking, and helps get us through Lent and thinking of Easter. And Easter Egg hunts at the Tower!

And on the good news front, Wilstone Community Shop have found a new Treasurer, so if you would like to help out locally, please check page 22 where we explain what you could do to support Village News, or maybe Wilstone village hall is important to you, so see page 7 to see whether you can help out there.

You can always find a copy of **Village News** wherever you are: www.wilstone.me.uk or just scan me

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What's on in & around our villages

Diary Dates

Wilstone Film Nights

Fridays
20th March
17th April
at Wilstone Village Hall, 7.15pm

Sunday 14 June

Wilstone Fete

Saturday 1st August

The Long Marston 'Make, Bake and Grow Show'

The traditional Long Marston vegetable, flower, cakes, crafts and photo competition will take place in the Village Hall this year on . So put the date in your diaries and get planting and making. More details will follow.

If you have any ideas that will make the hall show better, for example new categories, please message Tim Dean (Tim.dean60@gmail.com).

The "Big" Village Show on the recreation ground is planned to return next year.

Tring Rural Parish Council

Wed 29 April Wilstone Village Hall

APM and Council Meeting start at 7.30pm

The public are welcome to attend

The perfect opportunity to make or update your Will

Local homelessness charity, DENS, has confirmed the return of its popular Make A Will Month initiative this March.

Berkhamsted solicitor firms, Harrowell & Atkins and Machins, are generously volunteering their time for free to write or update a Will in return for a donation to DENS.

The charity provides a range of integrated services to help local people experiencing homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. Last year saw unprecedented demand for their support, including 3,379 stays at their emergency accommodation and 127,923 meals provided by their Foodbank

Lauren Parker, Supporter Relationships Manager at DENS, said: "Over half of UK adults don't have a valid Will in place, but it's such an important document. This is the perfect opportunity to get that job done, while supporting the life-changing work of DENS."

Verity, a DENS supporter who previously took part in the initiative, added: "The process was very simple. Not only did it prompt me to get my Will sorted, but it was also a charity I was very happy to support. I love my community and love that DENS are so much a part of it."

Limited DENS Make A Will Month appointments are available. To find out more and secure your slot, visit www.dens.org.uk/mawm.

You can always find a copy of **Village News** wherever you are: www.wilstone.me.uk or just scan me



Below is a list of the Services for the Village churches for February – these could change so please check online at <https://www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events> or phone the Rectory on 01442 822170

We also will have live streamed services online so please take a look

Sunday 1st March – Lent 2

6pm – Celtic Prayer – All Saints, Long Marston

Tuesday 3rd March

10am – Holy Communion -St Cross, Wilstone

Sunday 8th March – Lent 3

Services 8am and 10am in Tring, 10am in Aldbury

Tuesday 10th March

10am Morning Prayer – St Cross, Wilstone

Sunday 15th March – Mothering Sunday

10am – Holy Communion – All Saints, Long Marston

Tuesday 17th March

10am – Holy Communion cw, St Cross, Wilstone

Sunday 22nd March – Lent 5

3.30pm – Evensong BCP– St Mary's, Puttenham

Tuesday 24th March

10am – Morning Prayer– St Cross, Wilstone

Sunday 29th March – Palm Sunday

10am – service for all villages – St Cross, Wilstone

Monday 30th March

8pm – Compline – St Peter & St Paul, Tring

Tuesday 31st March

10am – Holy Communion cw, St Cross, Wilstone

8pm – Compline – St Peter & St Paul, Tring



St. Cross, Wilstone.



FARMERS MARKET

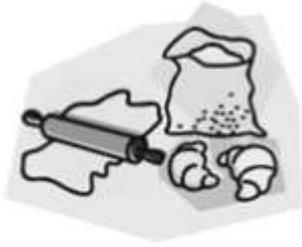
Church Square, High Street, Tring

Saturdays from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm

14 and 28 March

11 and 25 April

www.tringfarmersmarket.co.uk



ST. CROSS LENT LUNCH

WED'DAY MARCH 11TH
12NOON -2PM

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A LIGHT LUNCH OF SOUP,
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SATURDAY APRIL 25th

A MEMORABLE NIGHT OUT

At Wilstone Village Hall

Tickets on sale now - £17.50

At Wilstone Community Shop

Tring Music
Partnership



A night of music and dancing

Strictly Cabaret

Saturday 14 March

Victoria Hall, Akeman Street, Tring HP23 6AA

Doors 7.30pm | Carriages 11.00pm

Featuring:

- Zebra Jazz Collective
- Phoenix Big Band and show dancers
- Dance to live Soul from Tring School Swingband and guests
- Bar
- Raffle

Tickets £25 Students (u18) £15

Includes welcome drink

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Salsa lesson from
'Salsa in Highbury'



Tring
Working Together



ST. CROSS
WILSTONE

PALM SUNDAY
SERVICE

MARCH 29TH
AT 10.00AM

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Wilstone Film Nights



THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND

The Ballad of Wallis Island follows Charles, an eccentric lottery winner who lives alone on a remote island and dreams of getting his favourite musicians back together. His fantasy turns into reality when the bandmates and former lovers accept his invitation to play a private show at his home on Wallis Island. This is a delightful low-budget British-made film shot over 18 days in Wales, and has been nominated for an outstanding British film at the 2026 Baftas.

Friday March 20th

At Wilstone Village Hall. Doors open at 7.15pm.

Film starts at 8pm. Licenced bar.

Tickets £7.50 from Wilstone Community Shop.

BAFTA
NOMINATED



ENGAGE AN ENGRAVING

Order deadline is March 31st 2026. Don't miss this opportunity to participate



We are raising funds for phase 2, which includes the addition of a paved terrace area for those sunny days meeting friends and enjoying the atmosphere. To this end, we are offering the chance to have an engraved paving brick to be embedded in the edge of the paved area.



Sponsor a paving brick with your own personal message permanently engraved on the face. This may be simply your name, a cherished memory, or it could be a memorial for a loved one. Scan the QR code to place an order now.



Wilstone Village hall

PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE

Wilstone village hall's pre-app gets the go-ahead"

Since the article in last month's edition, Wilstone Village Hall's pre-planning application has been submitted. The committee have heard from the Planning Authority who have reached the conclusion that they, in principle, support the application. They believe that 'the car park extension would help prevent localised environmental degradation and encourage greater use of the village hall' and they added '...to ensure its long-term retention for the community'.

This is just a first step in what is a long-term process, including consultation, especially around bio-diversity net gain, more detailed planning and of course, raising the finance.

Any comments? Write to chairman@wilstonevillagehall.org.uk

Join the successful team at Wilstone Village Hall.

Wilstone Village Hall is in great shape, thanks to the team of people who give their time and skills in keeping it that way.

We want someone who can help us at committee meetings with taking minutes, issuing agendas, and attending meetings every two months. This is an official role on the committee, helping it run efficiently and especially supporting the chairman. If you are a working person your company may support this role in giving something back to the community.

If you would like to join the team, just call Peter Walker on 07768 605 684

Sudoku Corner by Colin Moore

No 196

9				1		3		
			6	4	8			7
		2			3	8		
5	6		9				4	
	4				1	7	6	
			2				9	4
	9	6					2	8

Solution on page 19



Victory Hall Long Marston village hall for hire

Ideal for : meetings, clubs, classes, private parties, live music and theatrical productions.

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Monday 9.30am
Tuesday 6.00pm
Wednesday 9.00am and 9.30am
Thursday 9.30am and 6.00pm
Friday 9.30am
Saturday 9.00am

Nora Grace Hall, Tring
Wednesday 11.30am



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From the Vicarage

by the Reverend Canon Jane Banister

On weekdays, a group of us regularly say Morning Prayer together. We are a mixture of clergy and lay people, and the service we use is the Church of England daily prayer service, so it has variations according to the day of the week, and the season. Some of the group use apps on phones or tablets, where the psalm and readings for the day are included, and some of us are old school, and use the prayer books and Bibles. I am a book person, although I do have the app as it is very useful if travelling, or if I find myself not where I expected to be at a certain time.

And I know exactly why I prefer the books: there is something very tactile about the weight of the book, the pages, and the coloured ribbons that are used to mark the pages; to me there is something important about finding the readings in the Bible so I am reminded of the position of where the reading comes from, and what happens before and after. But the most vital reason for me, is that I find the phone too distracting. Notifications pop up; beeps happen; I am tempted to look something up that pops into my head. I know that I can turn off noises and messages, and I know that I can exercise self discipline, but I also know what tempts me. So for me, it is better to shut away all the distractions and to use a book.

It is hard to imagine a world without mobile phones now, and even the most Luddite of us use them for something. But we are also aware of their dangers, and this is why in Australia they have banned young people under 16 from using the major social media platforms, and this is being discussed here also. One of the things I find disingenuous about this, is the idea that it is only an issue for children and young people – I think most of us of any age would say that we have wasted a lot of time through mobiles and what they provide, as well as having our peace of mind affected by what we read and see. If we want young people to use them less, then surely we need to model that behaviour?

There is nothing wrong per se with mobile phones, but it is how we use them that is the vital part, and we have to be honest about that. It would be wonderful if we did have the discipline to turn them off regularly, but most of us don't. So this is why some people are deleting some apps and social media so that they are not tempted, and others of us recognize when it is we need to leave them in our bags or in another room.

Temptation is what Jesus faces in the wilderness when he prepares for his ministry, and it is that time of 40 days that we commemorate each year with the season of Lent which began last month. For some of us the temptation that we are avoiding is chocolate, or alcohol, or caffeine, but the crucial aspect is to be honest. If I am being honest, then I know that it is not chocolate that impinges on my faith and how I live life, but I know that how I use my phone does – it can be a distraction from what really matters.

So by the time this is published, I hope to have been successful in letting go a little bit from what holds me back.

Loving God, in the midst of life's chaos, help me find stillness in Your presence.

Grant me the focus to carry out my tasks with diligence and purpose. May my mind be clear and my heart steadfast, reflecting Your love in all I do.

Guide me to moments of peace, and to look up and out to find you. Amen.



CUSTOM
LASER
ETCHING

077
26
46
76
76

PERSONALISED
LASER LOVELINESS

YOUR WORDS &
IMAGES
HOW YOU
WANT THEM

CHOPPING BOARDS
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Long Marston School Report New Teaching Space

by Laura Whateley

We are pleased to share that Long Marston School will soon begin work on a small, but exciting, building project to create an additional teaching space for our pupils.

The extension will be located on the grassed area at the front of the school and will include a dedicated small group teaching room, improved toilet facilities and a small additional outdoor play space. This development will allow us to better support children who benefit from quieter, focused learning environments, while also enhancing our overall provision. This is not required to go to planning as it is a small, single story extension. The plans are available to view in All Saints' church, Long Marston.

Work is expected to begin in April/May and we anticipate the project will be completed by the end of the summer holidays.

We are very grateful for the funding from the Diocese that has made this possible and for the continued support of our local community. We look forward to sharing updates as the project progresses.



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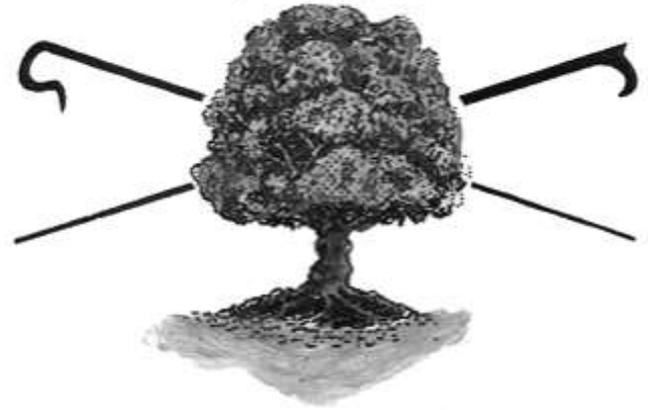
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live**

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Email: stewartivory@yahoo.co.uk



From our Reporter at the council meeting

The first TRPC meeting of 2026 was held at Home Ground Cafe, Long Marston on January 28th.

New Year, new faces

Chair Cllr Fox announced that Mark Smith has become the new Village Warden, taking over from Mr Reedman. Mr Smith already has work to do at the cemetery, repairing the lychgate and dealing with the potholes in the cemetery parking bay. Parish clerk Chloe will be taking over the running of interments and burials from Mr Reedman.

At December's meeting Andrew Turton-Ward was co-opted as a Councillor; this month it was the turn of Clare Hill to join. Some readers may be familiar with her as the president of the WI at Long Marston. Welcome to you both!

There is still one vacancy though, if anyone fancies a crack at it?

Dacorum digest

Dacorum Borough Councillors Caroline Smith-Wright and Sally Symington (who is also a Herts County Councillor) both attended the meeting.

Cllr Smith-Wright was happy to report that Puttenham was almost flood-free, and that a huge difference had been made by the landowners who had cleared their ditches. She also told us of Dacorum's Nature Recovery fair on 25th March, 6-8pm, to highlight climate issues. Dacorum are keen to get this going before the borough council is disbanded under the local government reform, to ensure that it continues afterwards.

Cllr Symington told us that over half of Dacorum's budget is spent on adult care services, and a quarter on children's services, which obviously doesn't leave much money for everything else. However, the allocation of what little is left includes the introduction of 20 mph zones to slow traffic in areas where people want them. Surveys conducted in Tring, after the zones have been in place for a year, have shown they are effective in reducing traffic speeds. Long Marston and Little Tring are on a long list of areas wanting them. Wilstone also wants the speed restriction, but currently there isn't any funding for it. Cllr Fox later advised that the waiting time for 20 mph zones is about 18 months to two years.

Wingrave Road is on another list to address its lack of signage and white lines, and to have a verge reinforced

due to exposed cables.

Cllr Symington gave an update about the grants for the Village Warden and Concurrent Services, clarifying that in 2026-27 only the Warden's grant is being halved; the Concurrent Services part will be paid in full. Cllr Fox said he was grateful for this, and thanked Cllr Symington for being a great supporter of the TRPC, as much as finances allow.

Your cafe needs YOU!

Cllr Fox reported that Home Ground Cafe is well on its way to becoming the community hub that it was intended to be. As well as a mobile vet visiting fortnightly, Cllr Foster said that a weekly "chatty cafe" was planned, for lone parishioners to be able to socialise, and there was also talk of a mother and toddler group. As you might expect, increased popularity means that more volunteers are needed - many hands make light work! Could you help?

Cllr Foster added that work on building the terrace is due to start in April. You may have noticed the advertisement in February's Village News to sponsor a paving brick? The engraved bricks will mainly be around the raised beds, so they won't get heavy footfall. An order form and payment system are available on TRPC's website. The payment system will also be used for purchasing art from the cafe and the payment of cemetery fees

Clerk Chloe said that endeavours to install the cafe's wi-fi were still ongoing.

And in other news...

Clerk Chloe informed everyone that the Councillors' email addresses and the website address had all been updated to "gov.uk" (these have been updated in the Local Contacts on page 22). Please note that the updated TRPC website url is now: <https://www.tringrural-pc.gov.uk>.

Cllr Fox advised that HORTI's request to install a 20 ft green container on Long Marston's recreation ground has turned out to be more complicated than initially thought. It would require a concrete base, which would need formal planning permission, which is unlikely to be granted. Cllr Smith-Wright thought she might have an alternative solution, so watch this space.

Wilstone's parking problems - and a possible solution - were discussed at length! See February's Village News item (page 16) for the basic information.

Cllr Macdonald expressed her concern about the ditch dredging taking place in Astrope Lane, and possible damage to the trees. She asked whether permission had been sought, as there was no signage warning drivers of the hazards just round the bend and a lot of mud on the road. Cllr Smith-Wright said she would make enquiries.

A Long Marston Pub Crawl

by James Kempton

The question I most often get asked living in Long Marston's Rose and Crown, is when did it stop being a pub? The answer is simple: 1917. We have always been pretty sure about this. World War I (1914-18) was tough for pubs. The Government slashed opening hours in 1914 (afternoon closing remained in place until 1980s) and in 1917 beer production was 1/3 of pre-war levels due to a shortage of barley. In addition, large numbers of regular customers were away fighting (especially after conscription was introduced in 1916).

The date of 1917 was confirmed for us recently when a friend sent us a cutting from the Bucks Herald, advertising the former Rose and Crown Inn for auction as a freehold home.

We are lucky to still have the Queens Head, but what about the other pubs the village used to have? Many villagers, including me, will remember going into the fourth pub, The Boot (as seen below), which closed around 15 years ago. Interestingly it was originally licensed as an Ale House, only gaining a full wine and spirits licence later.

LONG MARSTON,
Within a mile of MARSTON GATE Station,
L. & N.-W. Railway.

The Excellent Brick-built and Tiled
Freehold Dwelling House,
CONTAINING TWO LIVING ROOMS,
small Shop, and 5 Bedrooms, with
2 enclosed Yards, large Washhouse, Stable
with Loft over, and Garden at rear, having
a commanding frontage and pleasantly
situate, now known as the **Rose** and **Crown**
Inn, but to be sold unlicensed, with early
possession.

Messrs. READER & SON
Are favoured with instructions
TO SUBMIT THE ABOVE PROPERTIES
TO AUCTION,
On *SATURDAY, AUGUST 11th, 1917,*
At the **CROWN** HOTEL, AYLESBURY,
At 3 o'Clock p.m.

Particulars of Sale may be obtained of
Messrs. Parrott & Coales, Solicitors, Ayles-
bury; or of the Auctioneers, Aylesbury.





There has been a discussion on Long Marston Nostalgia Facebook site about when the White Hart ceased trading as a pub and the consensus was around 1955-57. But if anyone knows better I'd love to know. In case you don't know where the White Hart was, it was bang next to the Queens Head., as see left.

So I think we can conclude that at one point in its history, Long Marston had enough trade to support four pubs, though it is harder to say how long that golden age lasted. We have a good idea when the old pubs stopped trading, but as for the question when did the pubs first open, that seems to be lost in the mists of time.

The Rose and Crown, left, a 'while' ago.

To find out more about local history in our area go to <https://www.tringruralhistory.co.uk/>

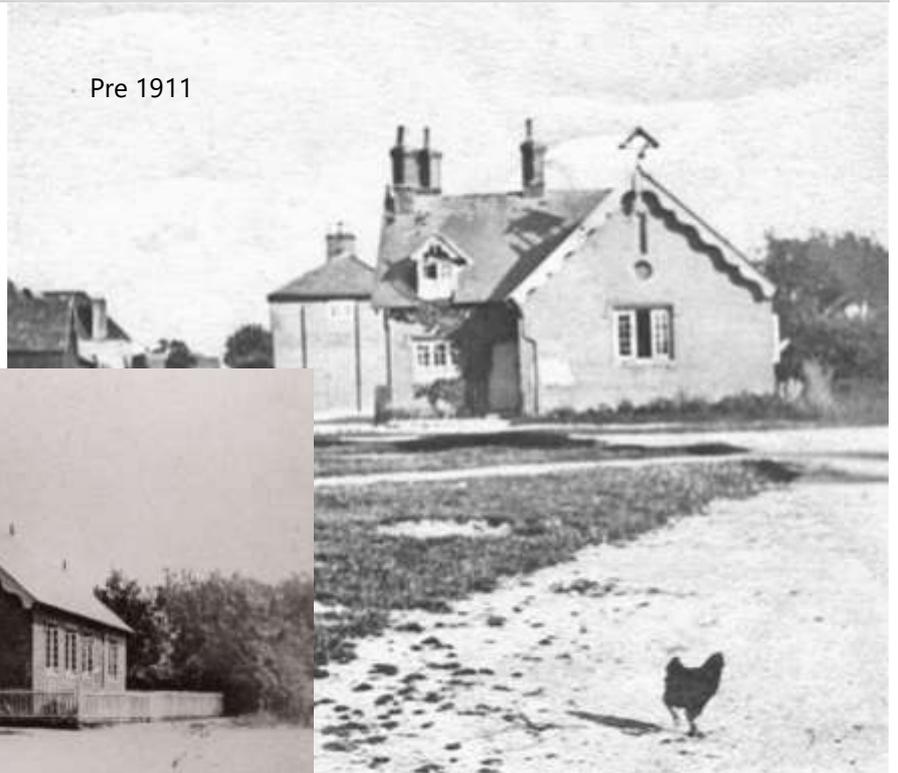
Wilstone School

by Tring Rural History

Following last month's story of Wilstone School in the 1950s, here are some photographs:



Pre 1911



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2025 – another year of steady progress for your village shop

The shop's Annual Members' Meeting that was held on Friday 6 February in the village hall saw Diana Crapnell, the shop's management committee's chairperson, deliver her report on the shop's performance during 2025. By her side was Doug Chalmers, the committee's secretary who, in the absence of the treasurer, presented the shop's financial position at the end of the year.

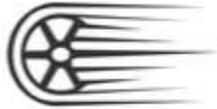
All in all, 2025 was a successful year, not only in financial terms but also in the day-to-day operation of the shop. Diana highlighted the installation of a completely new electronic point of sale (EPOS) system previously known to customers as the 'till'. But it's no longer just a repository

for collecting money, it's much more than that. It's a system that records all the transactions, displays them on a screen for the customer to see, and sends sales information to the back office so that stock levels are continuously monitored and products can be re-ordered. The installation of such a complex system was no mean feat and it's thanks to the dedication of a small team of volunteers over many months that the EPOS system is now working successfully and saving the shop considerable overhead costs in the process.

Other good news was the recruiting of several more volunteers to serve our customers – without whom the shop simply wouldn't exist; the organising of the seniors' Christmas lunch;

the running of the Christmas raffle that raised hundreds of pounds for the Hospice of Saint Francis; the donation of kilos of food to the Aylesbury Foodbank; the serving of walkers and cyclists who come from far and near; and, for the first time, the setting up of a Twilight event that heralded the coming of the festive season giving customers the opportunity to buy unusual gifts well in advance of Christmas.

As always, Diana concluded by thanking all the volunteers who work in front of and behind the scenes for making the shop such a valuable asset to the village and, in particular Ali, the shop manager, whose expertise and dedication ensures the whole operation runs as smoothly and efficiently as it does.



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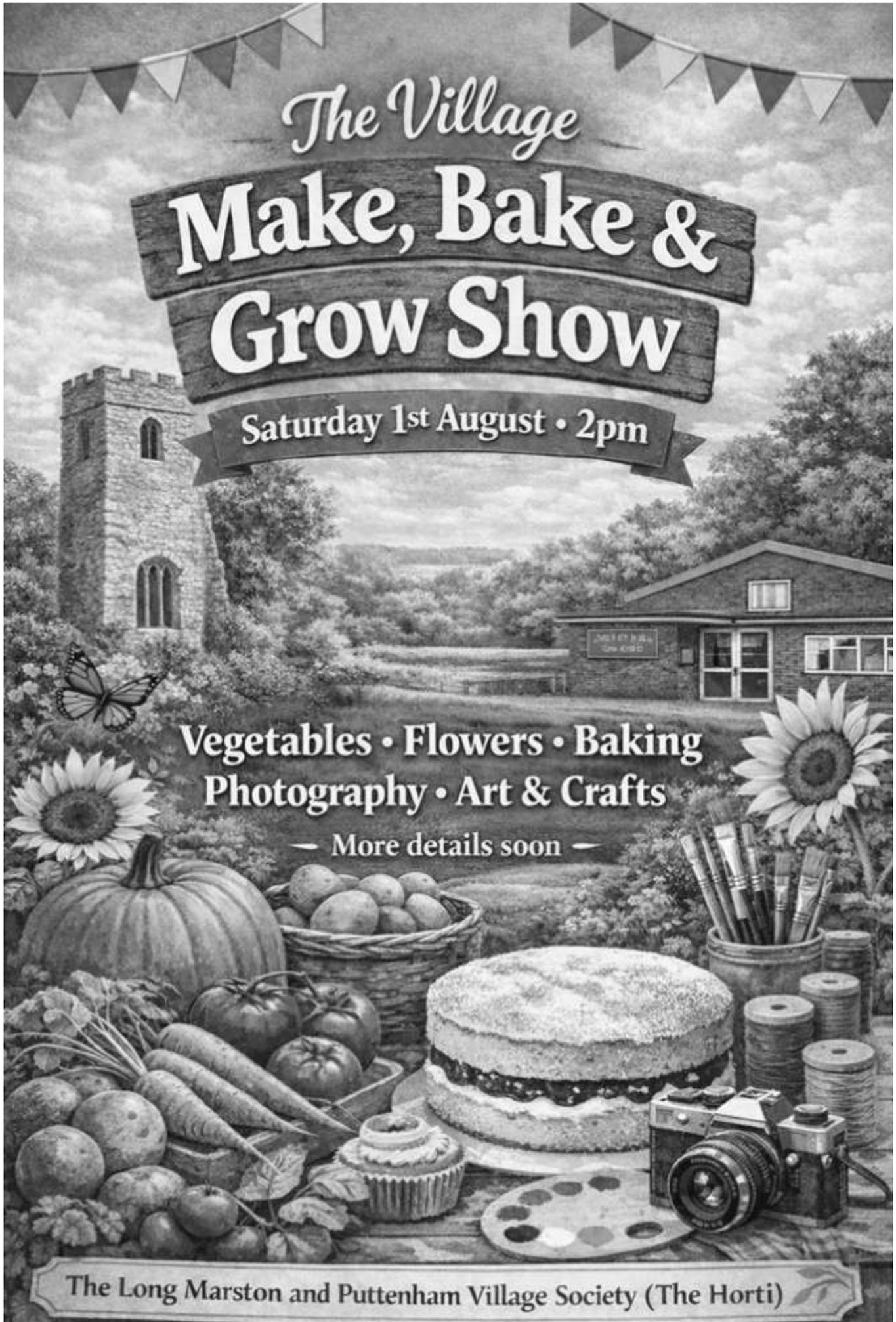
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The Long Marston and Puttenham Village Society (The Horti)

In a Class of His Own

A Story of Longub Puttastone

By Martin Winship

Alice Ball bought her cottage many years ago. The previous owner had also been a lady on her own, with the reputation for being at least a "Wise Woman", though many villagers of the time preferred the blunter soubriquet of "Witch". There was no denying that this fiercely independent woman possessed obscure skills and much arcane knowledge, mostly, but not exclusively, to do with herbs and wild plants, especially their preparation and uses in the treatment of ailments and complaints. She had fulfilled the role of medicine woman, midwife and confidante for most of the ladies of the village at one time or another, and was consequently both feared and revered, but ultimately respected. When she became too old to carry on her good works, she determined to find a successor, and as a first step, she signed up for a comfortable flat in sheltered accommodation, and put her cottage on the market. There was a great deal of interest. It was after all a property of much charm and character, with enormous potential for improvements and modernisation, as the smart

-suited estate agents were keen to point out. Alice had viewed the cottage, and had instantly and irrecoverably fallen in love with it. Some innate atmosphere seemed to emanate from the very fabric of the place, and a quiet voice whispered "Home" in her ear. Her budget, however, was limited, and it was with little real hope that she put in an offer. The owner received several other offers, and all of them were considerably higher than Alice's, but it was Alice that the lady invited to visit her, and talk things over with a cup of tea and some fairy cakes. To Alice's amazement and delight, it was her offer that was eventually accepted, and the good news did not end there. It was revealed to her that furthermore the purchase price would include the entire contents of the cottage; furniture, fittings, and a good deal more, as Alice discovered when she moved in some time later.

The furniture was certainly nothing fancy, but it was all solid and of substantial quality, and, when appropriate, comfortable. The cottage possessed a plethora of cupboards and lumber-rooms, as well as an extensive loft and even a small but useful cellar. These many and various spaces proved to be veritable treasure troves as Alice explored her new domain. They contained an emporium of objects; the collected flotsam and jetsam of a long and interesting life. It proved to be an enduring joy for Alice to investigate the hidden corners and nooks and crannies of such an Aladdin's Cave. There were volumes of wisdom (which Siegfried would no doubt refer to as spells), and jars and bottles, all neatly labelled, of all manner of peculiar substances. There were magpie traps and squirrel traps, and – to Alice's enduring glee – a fine old besom with a handle intricately carved with runes.

She sat one day with a newly discovered object on her lap, examining it with excitement and pleasure. It was a polished and inlaid wooden box with a hinged lid, perhaps a foot or so square. Inside were several porcelain cups without handles, decorated with beautiful images of birds and fishes. In a small recess at the front of the box were nestled an assortment of very fine brushes and old nibbed pens. And in the middle of all this was an ornate bottle, cushioned in blue velvet, and containing profoundly black ink. When she later showed it to Jake, who had a smattering of knowledge of antiques, he gave his opinion that it was undoubtedly an oriental calligraphy set, and was probably worth a considerable sum. But Alice would not think of selling. She had kept the faith with the previous owner, and had never sold a single thing.

* * * *



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Sometime later she was glad she had held onto the box. A new painting class was launched on a weekly basis in the village hall; a very nice young man was in charge, and word soon got around amongst the ladies of Longub Puttastone about just how good he was. The gossip was not entirely concerned with his prowess as an art teacher. Alice joined the class along with several other friends who had a certain amount of time on their hands, a degree of artistic talent, and an appreciative eye for young men. Many an envious glance was cast over Alice's wonderful calligraphy set, now repurposed as an art box with tubes of paint and some more substantial brushes included. Prunella was particularly piqued, and gave her husband his orders in her usual no-nonsense way. He wasted no time in driving into London to the shop of L Cormelisson and Son, and bought Prunella the most spectacular Royal & Langnickel art set in store. It was about the size of a folding wallpapering table and contained a dazzling array of tubes, pastel sticks, pencils, brushes, and various bewildering tools and spreaders. Even the salesman in the shop was not sure what some of these items were actually intended for. It did not matter. Prunella was satisfied. Her art set was far and away the biggest (and therefore best).

The art class settled down into a weekly session of daubing, with fairly simple subjects to paint, like vases of flowers and arrangements of fruit. The ladies were quite happy with their routine, and several of them displayed considerable talent; those that did not made up for their deficiency with determined application. All of them were surprised, and subsequently thrilled, when the tutor tentatively suggested that they might like to try their hands (or rather, brushes) at life painting. One of two of the more naive ladies were not entirely clear as to what this involved, but when those in the know explained, there was universal approval and enthusiasm, which became rather unseemly in some cases. The tutor assured them that he would look into engaging a suitable model. He was as good as his word. A fortnight later, he announced to the ladies that the following week they would be attended by a man who would pose for them. There were giggles and gasps, and Prunella clapped her hands.

Everyone arrived early for the eagerly anticipated class. There was an unusual and quite regrettable scrum for the prime places at the front of the hall, next to the podium where the model would pose. An expectant hush fell. All eyes were on the door from the changing rooms next to the stage. At last, it swung open, and in strolled Old Siegfried, clad in his scruffy great coat. It was immediately noticed by one and all that his legs below the hem of this garment were bare. He slowly mounted the podium and turning, faced the ladies with the most diabolical leer imaginable. He took hold of the ends of the binding twine knot. He was interrupted by a piercing shriek, followed by others, and then a stampede as the ladies made a desperate dash for the exit. Easels, chairs, paint pots, brushes and pallets; all were toppled and scattered in the mad rush. Within seconds, Siegfried was alone with the astonished tutor. Siegfried undid the knot, and let his coat fall open, revealing his customary jumper atop his usual disreputable trousers, the legs of which were, however, rolled up above his knees. He bent to let them down, but paused, and turned his face to the tutor.

"I'd better still get blooming paid" he growled.

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Long Marston Cricket Club



Looking Ahead to 2026

Following a year of on field stability in 2025 at Long Marston Cricket Club, we are now focussing on 2026. All three teams finished 2025 midtable in their respective divisions in the Cherwell Cricket League, so all have a good platform to build on. The league continues to expand and is now regionalised from division 2 downwards to minimise travelling – the league now covers six counties! The regional boundaries change every year, so staying in the same division does not necessarily mean playing the same teams.

Nathan Devlin will once again captain our 1st XI, who play in Division 2B. This year our playing squad will be boosted by Rivaldo Phillips who is joining us from Guyana for the summer. Rivaldo is an all rounder with huge potential. Yogesh Mistry remains as 2nd XI skipper (division 6C) and Peter Toovey takes over the reigns with Ali Whitehead looking after our 3rd XI (division 8C) following the retirement of Lee Beesley. New players are always welcome, if you are interested in joining our progressive club, please contact Nathan Devlin at nathan.devlin@hotmail.co.uk

Andy Willis will continue to manage our colts set up, ably assisted by Lorna Whiteley who will look after the administration side. If you have a sub 16 year old interested in taking up cricket, please contact Lorna at lorna.whiteley@stringer-flavour.com

In 2026 Ricky Mohamed will look after the square at Marlins our Long Marston ground. Chris Bowles and his team will look after our second ground at Mentmore, in addition to the outer ground at Marlins. Ricky is a groundsman of repute and we were delighted to secure his services during the off season.

Our club relies heavily on the support of local businesses, without whom we could not provide the excellent facilities all our members enjoy. The Happy Egg Company continue their support of our club's youth development plan. Local builders CD Lane Contractors LTD continue their long term support also as our title shirt sponsors. Mason Grab Hire LTD are newly recruited supporters of the club. Their very generous offer of support has enabled us to invest in new covers for the coming season. You will see their company logo and details on our covers when you pass by our Marlins ground.

Editor's note, if you know someone who would like that, more of Steve's cartoons are available to buy as greetings cards from both Wilstone Community Shop and Home Ground Cafe in Long Marston.

Get Involved

We are a friendly and forward looking club and all LMCC teams are mixed. New players are very welcome, as are scorers, umpires and anyone who would like to help us manage our two grounds. Training can be provided for umpires and scorers. Please contact chairman@longmarstoncc.co.uk if you are interested in getting involved. Pre-season nets will take place at Vandyke School in Leighton Buzzard every Sunday from 1:45 to 3:45 between 1st March and 12th April.

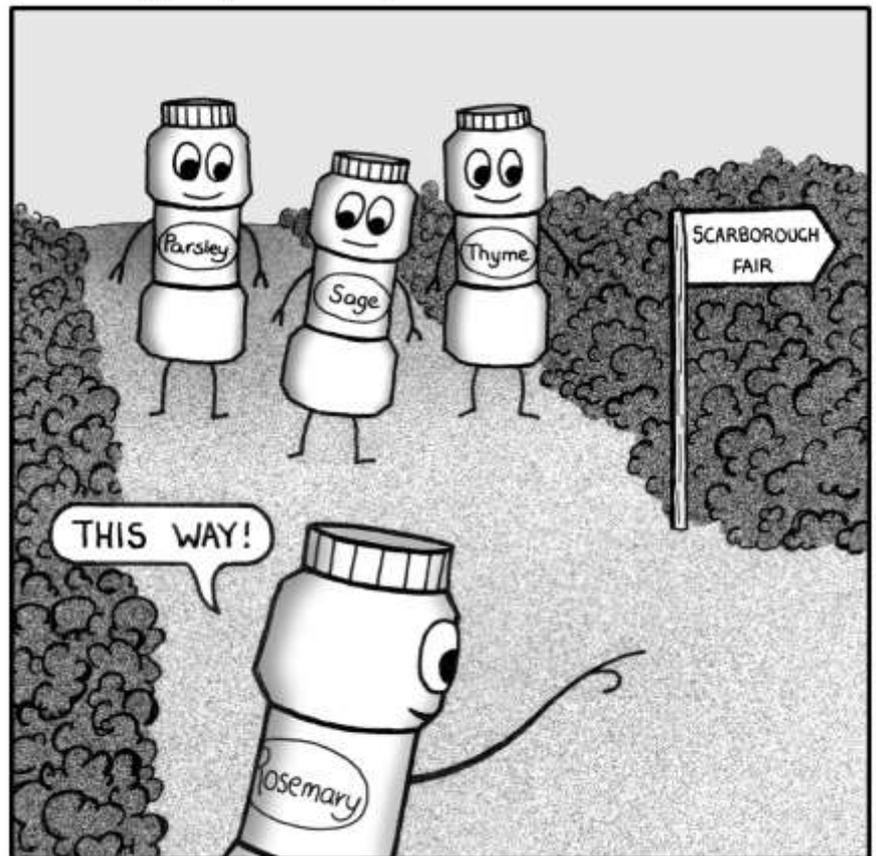
Club Sundays

The Club Bar is open on Sundays between 12 and 2PM - all are welcome. Please remember that our clubhouse is available for hire for a wide range of events and includes a kitchen, large open area and licensed bar, which we can staff. Please contact Paul Marsh (chairman@longmarstoncc.co.uk) for more information.

Ground Security

If anyone spots anything untoward at either of our grounds at Marlins (Cheddington Lane, Long Marston) or Mentmore then please contact our Chairman Paul Marsh at chairman@longmarstoncc.co.uk. If a crime is in progress please call the police.

Inklings by Steve Thompson



Volunteering Vacancies for Village News

Advertising Manager

Requires a few hours administration each month, with existing and new advertisers, and to manage and update the advertising schedule for each edition of the magazine.

Training Provided

Please contact **Amanda Russell**
villagenewsadvertising@gmail.com

Editors

Village News is looking for an two new editors to join the team. The role involves producing two editions of the magazine per year. Previous experience is not essential, but some familiarity with word processing or desktop publishing, handling emails, and downloading articles and images would be an advantage. Training will be provided. Applicants should be prepared to devote time spread over a few days in the production week of the magazine.

Please contact **Colin Moore 01442 826976** for further information.

Village News may not be able to continue beyond 2026 if we are unable to fill these vital roles!

Local Contacts

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Berkhamsted and Tring Safer Neighbourhood Team 01707 354192

Fly-tipping reports Call Dacorum Waste Services 01442 228000

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Cecilia Hall (Puttenham)

Christine Rutter 07514 548289

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LM&P Village Society (The Horti).

horti@longmarston.org

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Olga Martin 01442 822894

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Christine Rutter 07514 548289

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Dacorum's Councillors: Tring West

Brian Patterson 01442 823868

Brian.patterson@dacorum.gov.uk

Caroline Smith-Wright 07931 733151

Caroline.smith-wright@dacorum.gov.uk

Changes or additions? Contact the Editor.

editorwlm@gmail.com

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Vivian Wood

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Richard Foster (Vice-Chairman)

cldr.foster@tringrural-pc.gov.uk

Gill MacDonald (Long Marston)

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Maria Adams

cldr.adams@tringrural-pc.gov.uk

Clare Hill

cldr.hill@tringrural-pc.gov.uk

Andrew Turton-Ward

Vacancies 1

Clerk to the Parish Council

Chloe Collins 07516 344248

email:

clerk@tringrural-pc.gov.uk

Villages Warden

Mark Smith 07919 077979

warden@tringrural-pc.gov.uk

To contact by phone, use the clerk's number: 07516 344248

£6m Wilstone reservoir embankment strengthening works: an update

This article was prepared by Peter Walker from information available on the CRT website. Peter is a CRT volunteer lock-keeper.

In June last year, work started on the strengthening works by driving 2000 x 11 metre piles into two sides of the reservoir. (See the picture of the machine that grips the metal piles and vibrates them into the embankment below.) This work was completed in October. Stretching for 1,350 metres, the embankments at Wilstone Reservoir are one of the longest of the 71 major reservoirs in the Trust's care.

Since then, the Canal & River Trust have taken the opportunity to replace the muddy paths with stone.



The hedgerow that was removed to undertake the works will be replanted with a mixture of native species. The path new will run behind the hedgerow, with a post and rail fence, to keep pedestrians away from the road.

Work has started to remove the stone used to create the temporary access track and this will have been completed by the end of February. Some of the stone will be re-used locally.

Wilstone Reservoir car park will remain closed while work continues to level and resurface the footpath that runs along the top of the reservoir embankment. The steps leading to the footpath from the car park will be replaced and a new reservoir information board will be installed.

The car park is scheduled to re-open by March 2026 but the completion of the whole project will now be slightly delayed until the end of April. Additional culvert works have been identified and the materials required for the work have a long lead time.

Once the works are completed, a series of biodiversity improvements are planned to mitigate the hedgerow and tree habitat loss, including reed bed enhancements, tree planting within the Wilstone Reservoir nature reserve area and gap planting in the reservoir's hedgerows. This planting will add a mix of British native plants in keeping with the local area, such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Dog Rose, Common Dogwood, Red Dogwood, Field Maple, Guelder Rose, Hazel, Spindle, Sweet Briar Rose and Wayfaring Tree.

As well as resurfacing the reservoir crest footpath and a 200-metre section of the wooded area on the North West side of the reservoir, new steps from the car park will be installed with a resting platform half-way up, with nine seating areas for visitors on top of the steel pile caps along 200 metres of the South West embankment.

Work to reline the culvert continues, as well as clearing the ditch downstream of the culvert outfall. The culvert gives the reservoir engineers the option of diverting the water from the upstream reservoirs (Tringford, Startops and Marsworth) to Wilstone Reservoir. The reservoir is groundwater-fed, and it typically refills in the early months of the year, ready for the next boating season.

The project, estimated to cost £6 million, started in mid-January 2025.





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Since The Women's Institute's inception in September 1915, the WI has campaigned on diverse issues impacting UK government policy, social attitudes, and legislation. In 1921, we advocated for women on juries; in 1922, for more female police officers; and in 1943, for equal pay. The WI initiated the Keep Britain Tidy campaign in 1954. Each year, we select a new campaign and recent issues have included ending violence against women, promoting bystander intervention, clean rivers, and climate change.



All this happens at a national level and it's up to individual members how much they wish to get involved ... at a local level we aim to provide a friendly community focussed group to learn, laugh and support one another

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm at the Long Marston village hall. Our next Meeting will be on Tuesday 10th March and we will be welcoming a First Aid trainer to demonstrate some basic lifesaving techniques. The rest of our year is planned to



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include something for everyone, including our own Antiques roadshow, a sound bath and a talk about the wild life of Antarctica.

If you would like to come along to a meeting and see what we are all about, you would be most welcome. Get in touch with us to find out more at: lmandputwi@gmail.com