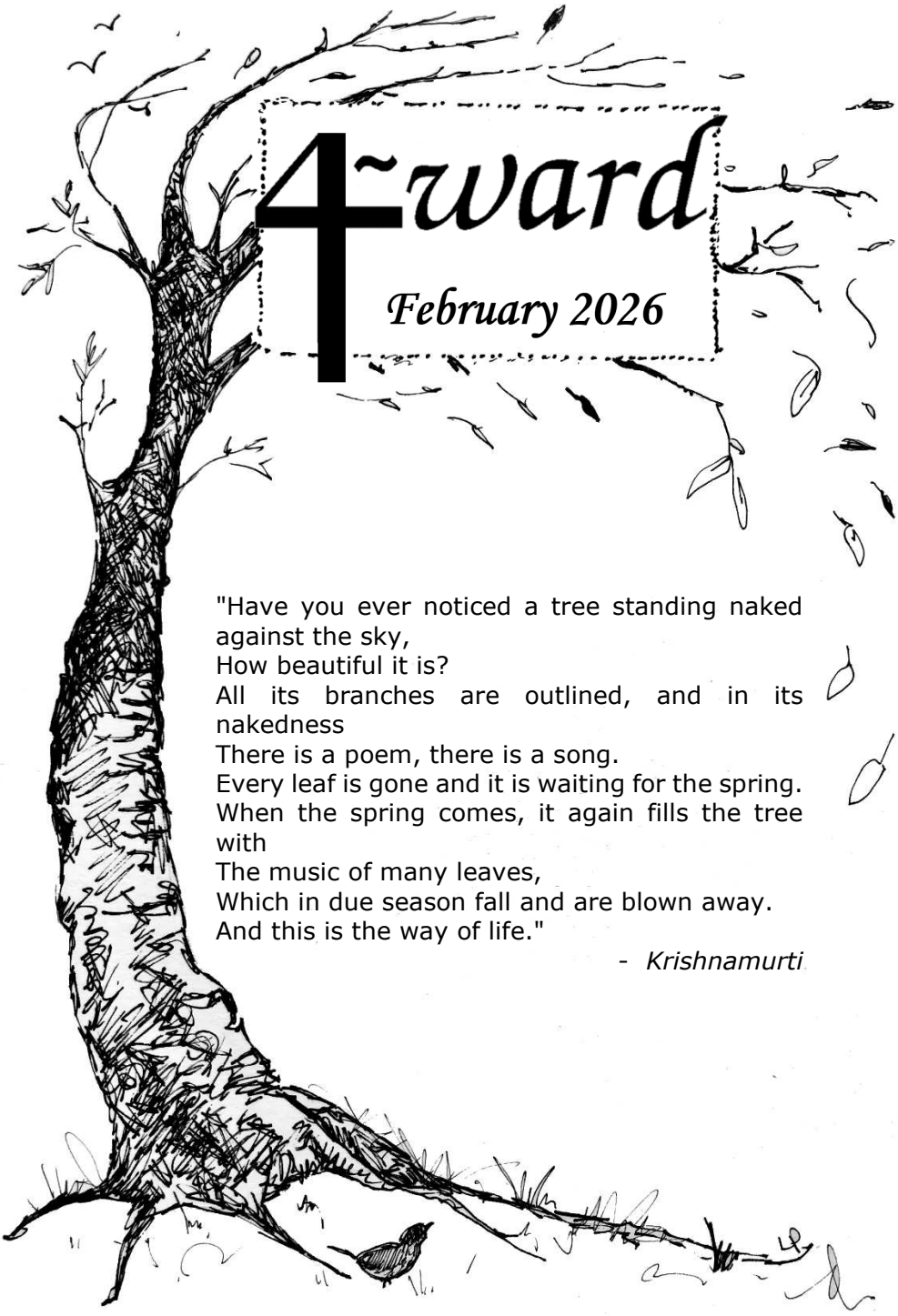
4-ward

February 2026



"Have you ever noticed a tree standing naked against the sky,
How beautiful it is?
All its branches are outlined, and in its nakedness
There is a poem, there is a song.
Every leaf is gone and it is waiting for the spring.
When the spring comes, it again fills the tree with
The music of many leaves,
Which in due season fall and are blown away.
And this is the way of life."

- *Krishnamurti*

4ward
Community magazine for
Oldbury, Shepperdine, Kington, Rockhampton & Hill

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Editorial

We pay tribute in this edition of 4ward to three past contributors. Pat Turner and Jane Bradshaw both sadly died at the beginning of January this year. Both had lived in the village for almost all of their married lives, and had been active members of our community. Both Pat and Jane were involved in separate ways with 4ward right from its inception in 1992, and in tribute we have printed a selection of Pat's lovely covers illustrating some favourite February poems, and from the 2019 edition, Jane's last article for us, introducing *Miss Bruton's Oldbury*.

George Woollard lived higher up the Severn in Halmore and Berkeley, and I only really knew him from playing crib against him in the Sharpness and District League. Back in 2019 we started chatting after the match in the Anchor, and it was then that I discovered he was a retired Severn River Pilot.

I tried to persuade him to write something about the job, telling him how we love to print anything about the River Severn in 4ward. He said he couldn't do that, but that he would try his hand at writing about his earlier life on the barges, although he didn't think it would interest anyone. Good as his word, he emailed the first of a series of articles called "*A life influenced by our River Severn*" a few days later, and it turned out that George was not just a fluent writer, but a gifted artist who had drawn or painted every barge he had ever worked on.

Crib, along with everything else, shut down during the COVID years and it was only just before Christmas that I found out that George had passed away in February 2025. So, in tribute, and because I think it's worth reading again, we will be reprinting his short series of memoirs, starting this month.

We love these tales from the past, but we live very much in the present, so thanks to our regular contributors, especially Chris Jennings and Chris Awde who keep us fully updated on activities in the Memorial Hall and Community Shop. Also, this month we were thrilled to get an update from Lily Gibbons, the new club secretary of Olveston Young Farmers, who have all been very busy as usual.

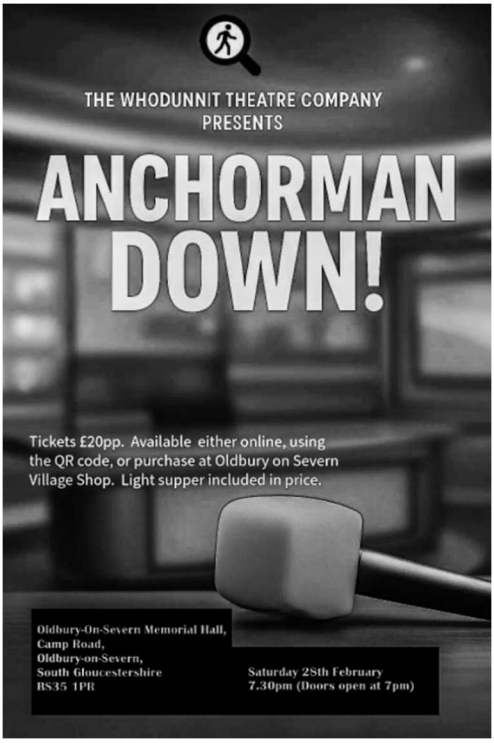
Finally, Happy First Wedding Anniversary to Joy and Mike on 2nd February - Candlemas Day.

Chris

The Hall Matters - **January 2026**

I am pleased to report that the project to replace the flooring and insulate between the floor joists is now complete, with very positive comments on the finished product. Some additional work was required, which was not totally unexpected. The 'stage area' had to be dropped by approximately 25mm, and several floor joists had to be replaced. In total fifteen lengths of 2.4m timber were used to replace damaged or rotten beams. While we anticipated replacing some joists, I was surprised that we had to replace so many. It's reassuring to know that the floor is now good for many years to come. We have also added a few more air bricks to improve ventilation. Stone slabs have also been laid in the fireplace, in keeping with the old character of the interior of the hall. The swing doors do now actually swing as well! The insulation should improve our heat retention going forward.

The work created loads of dust, and a 'shout out' for help to do a 'deep clean' was answered by the wonderful folk of Oldbury and further afield - so many turned up that it didn't take long to complete the job. So, a massive thank you to all who helped. Your time and effort are much appreciated.



It was good to see the old floor going to good use within the village. The top floor will be used in a building project at Sheepwash Farm, nice to see the floor being recycled. The original floor has found different homes and will be recycled or used as fuel.

Our next project is to install solar panels and a battery, to reduce our running costs and further improve our green credentials. This should happen within the next few months.

Just a quick reminder, the AGM will be held at the Hall on Tuesday the 10th February at 10am. All are very welcome, and it's your opportunity to get an update on the Hall and our plans for the future, and most importantly, to hold us to account.

Other events for February and March focus on the Six Nations Rugby, the dates of which can be found on the posters. We also have The Whodunit Theatre Night from 7pm on the 28th of February. This will be their second

appearance at the Hall, with last year being a very entertaining and enjoyable event. A fun evening, with you, the audience, having to solve the mystery and identify the 'villain', with clues and innuendos supplied by the cast. Tickets, as always, are available in the shop or online.

Line Dancing continues on Friday the 20th of February, and if you are interested, please do come along.

A date for your diary is Saturday the 21st of March, when the Hall and Oldbury School join forces to present a Race Night. We had one back in 2024 from which we had very positive feedback – it was loads of fun and I am sure this one will be no different.

Chris Jennings 07740 934182

Defibrillator Training in Oldbury on Severn

Training Sessions available at 9.30am or 1.30pm on 16 or 23 March [Booking Essential]

The Parish Council are pleased to be able to offer defibrillator training free of charge in the New Year. There will be two dates available, on 16th and 23rd March with two sessions on each day, one starting at 09.30 and the second at 13.30. We can accommodate up to 15 people in each session and places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The training will consist of the use of a defibrillator and an update on the 'Primary Survey' of First Aid, including CPR.

If you are interested, please contact Sheila Bedford on *01454 419506* or email *sheilabedford@hotmail.com* to reserve a place. Hope to see you there!

Oldbury on Severn - Memorial Hall 100 Club Draw Winners

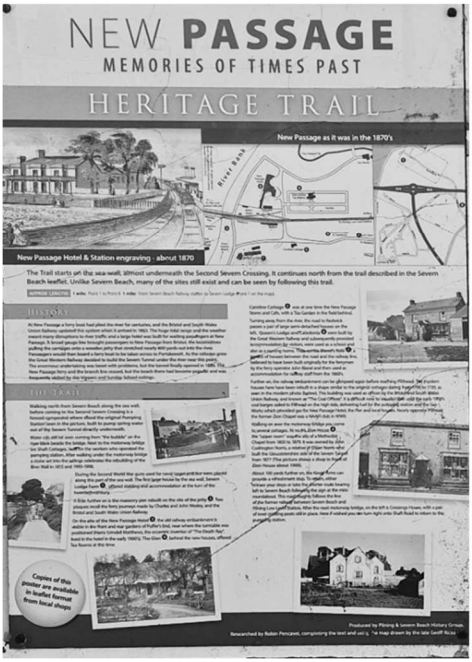
January Draw		
1st prize.	£20	Dylan Griffiths
2nd prize.	£15	Karen Awde
3rd prize.	£10	Angela Conibere
4th prize.	£10	Linda Jennings

New members of the 100 Club are always welcome!
Forms are available in the Shop, or contact Doug Mills or Angela Conibere at Christmas Cottage or *aeconibere@hotmail.com* or *01454 413828*

A VERY Local Hidden Gem – the Viewpoint at New Passage

Directions: head south from Aust on A403 coast road. Cross M4, turn right at B4064 crossroads, and right again after 400m, recrossing M4. Continue 1km to Caroline Cottage on left, aim to park where road widens. Go straight ahead on foot for 120m. At end, look left for a very informative board with history and a Heritage Trail map, then walk right for 50m to site of the 1863 railway pier, which has excellent views towards both Severn crossings. An easy one-mile walk south on coast path goes under M4 bridge and on to Severn Beach.

Ruth Riddle



Info board (left)

Railway pier plaque (right)

New Severn Crossing (below)

Severn Vale Crib League 2025/2026

Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing…… Vince Lombardi

And so it was for Sporting Oldbury, when the Severn Vale league recommenced after the Christmas break. Sporting's pair, Jim Noad and Paul Watkins, kicked off the new year to win the Doubles Competition. They held off tough opposition in the preliminary rounds to go on with a convincing victory in the final against the Dockers pairing. In the following week's first round of the Team KO cup, Jim and Paul were once again on fire with a fine 4-1 win to lead their team to an emphatic 10-5 win over Bar M. Early days yet, but the second half of the season has started very well for Sporting. The Shipwrecked have also had a reasonable start as they got through to the semi-final of the doubles and then followed up a week later with a good 9-6 win in the KO competition. The much-anticipated clash of the new year between Sporting and the Shipwrecked will take place on March 2nd.

Gerald Porter

Lights, Laughter and a New Mayor:
Sheppershine Lights Competition Shines on 4 January

It was a crisp January morning at White Cottage on Shepperdine Road, where neighbours gathered in great spirits for this year's Sheppershine Lights Competition Awards Ceremony. The garden was alive with friendly chatter, warm smiles, and the irresistible smell of bacon and sausage rolls, finished perfectly with hearty Scouse Pie — a true Shepperdine breakfast.

The event once again showed why this tradition is really cherished. Families mingled, friends reconnected, and newcomers were made to feel at home, all under the glow of festive displays that brought a cheerful end to the season.

Richie Grey, the new Mayor along with Frankie and family, voted overall winners.

This year, four awards were presented. The Best Newcomers Award went to Dawn Hayes, whose thoughtful and creative lighting display lit up the village with style. The coveted Overall Champion title was awarded to Richie, Frankie, and their family, from Poppies Barn, earning applause and admiration from everyone present.

The morning also marked an important community milestone. In a warm and appreciative moment, Andrew Terret formally handed over the Mayorship to Richie Grey. The handover symbolised continuity, commitment and the spirit of neighbourliness that always defines Shepperdine. By the end of the gathering, Richie left carrying two honours, as both this year's competition champion, and our newly appointed Mayor.

As breakfast plates emptied and conversations lingered, one thing was clear: the strength of our village lies in its people.

Whether you strung lights, baked, brewed tea, judged entries, or simply came along to cheer, your presence helped make the gathering the warm success it was.

Here's to another bright and spirited year in Shepperdine — may it shine just as warmly as this one began.

Reg Illingworth

Obituary
Patricia (Pat) Turner, 16 January 1945 – 2 January 2026

Pat passed away peacefully in Beech House on 2nd January 2026, with her husband Barry by her side. Born in Horfield, Bristol, on 16th January 1945, and growing up and educated there, she was the youngest of three children. Pat loved Oldbury; it was largely down to her that High Chimneys became the family home in May 1977. She was a country girl at heart, treating High Chimneys as her forever home.

Pat was an active member of the community throughout her life, and for many years she interpreted the poem and illustrated the front cover of 4ward to reflect this. She had been a professional ladies' hairdresser before she became a mother, and she carried this on with a small clientele until she was unable to continue; most of her clients had by then passed away. She was a keen dog trainer with her dog Digby - between them they accumulated a number of awards - and she was also very good at turning out horses to a high standard. High Chimneys used to open its garden, which had been created in no small part by Pat. She was very artistic, and talented in dressmaking and crochet. She was well read and an asset to quiz teams (usually women against the men).

Sadly, in 2019 Pat was diagnosed as having had a stroke she was unaware of. This, it seems, triggered her journey into Lewy Body Dementia and gradually all her attributes became less obvious. And so, in November 2023, she needed more care than could be provided at home, and she became a resident of Beech House, where she received devoted care until her passing.

She is survived by her husband Barry, daughters Lisa and Rebecca, and four grandchildren.

A celebration of her life will be held at St Arilda's Church at 2pm on February 18th, and her ashes interred in the New Church Yard. Afterwards there will be a reception in the Anchor Inn. All welcome.

Family Flowers only please, but donations may be made to Dementia UK.
www.dementiauk.org

She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

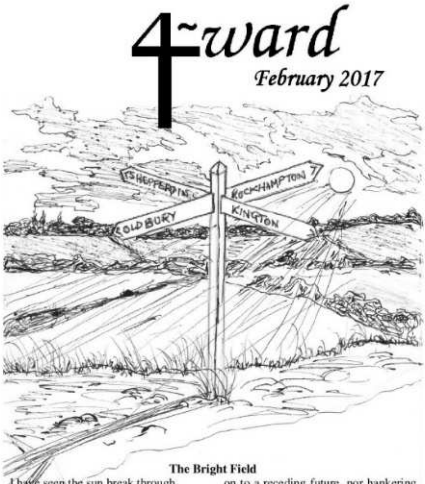
Pat illustrated the front cover of 4ward for many years.
Here are a few examples of her illustrations.

The Shortest Month

Will Winter never be over?
Will the dark days never go?
Must the buttercup and clover
Be always hid under snow?

Ah, lend me your little ear, love!
Hark! 'Tis a beautiful thing;
The weariest month of the year, love,
Is shortest and nearest to Spring.

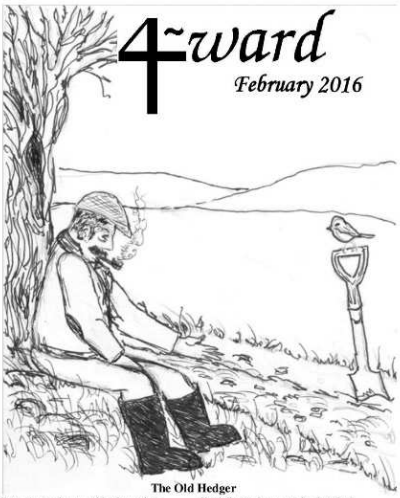
Adeline Whitney 1824-1906



The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it.
I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering
after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

The Bright Field – by R S Thomas



The Old Hedger

I likes to see them red hedge mice
Wi' eyes like private berries,
An' bullies, busy in the thorns,
Wi' breasties red as cherries;
A robin kips I company
An' shares me bread an' bacon,
I'd like a photograph o' 'im,
I'd like our picture taken.

Jist ' 'im an' me, set in the ditch,
Me wi' me pipe an' bacca,
An' Bob a-settin' on me spade,
My, it 'ud be a smacker!
I reckon some folks pity me,
When winter days be dirty,
But fresh air never worried me,
I feels a man o' thirty!

BB

from "The Planting of the Apple Tree"

By William Cullen Bryan

Come, let us plant the apple-tree.
Cleave the tough greensward with the spade;
Wide let its hollow bed be made;
There gently lay the roots, and there
Sift the dark mould with kindly care,
And press it o'er them tenderly,
As round the sleeping infants feet,
We softly fold the cradle-sheet;
So we plant the apple tree.

Church Road, Oldbury on Severn, S. Glos BS35 1QA
Tel: 01454 501090

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Funeral Notice

Jane Bradshaw died 1st January aged 87.
Loving mother to Peter and Ben and grandmother to Joe and Tom.
May she rest in peace.
Funeral at Christ the King Catholic Church, Thornbury, on 13th February at 10.30am. Followed by burial in Thornbury Cemetery.
Family flowers only; donations for St Mungo's homeless charity c/o L & J Gulwell.

Jane and her late-husband Mike lived in Oldbury for nearly 40 years, only moving to a flat in Thornbury in 2019 as their health deteriorated, and later into care homes in Cambridgeshire, near their son Ben. Mike died in 2023.

Both practising Catholics, they were founder members of Oldbury Churches Together and were involved with 4ward magazine from the start in 1992, regularly writing the Christian Comment page and contributing other articles.

Jane was fascinated by local history, and in her retirement took a degree in the subject, writing her thesis on Salmon Fishing on the Severn. She was a founder member of the History Society in Oldbury, and the instigator of the St Arilda's Day walk and picnic to the Well.

Jane had become friends with Miss Bruton, and in one of her last articles for 4ward tells how she took on the onerous task of transcribing what became "Miss Bruton's Oldbury*". In a tribute to Jane, we have reprinted the article below, along with an excerpt from the beginning of the document which we serialised in 4ward over several months. Afterwards Jane and her great friend Iris Pitman got together, and working with myself and Steve here at 4ward, fulfilled Jane's ambition and produced a limited edition of an illustrated hard-backed book of* "Miss Bruton's Oldbury*" which was sold in the Shop.*

Chris Tymko

Introduction to '*Miss Bruton's Oldbury*'

Clearing out 'stuff' accumulated over forty years, ready for a move from a fairly large house to a fairly small flat does have compensations, such as coming across something interesting that you had forgotten you had. I had collected a great deal of material about Oldbury and its surroundings and found it hard – no, impossible – to throw very much of it away. Eventually I put the whole lot into several large boxes, promising myself and my husband that I would sort it out later. Needless to say, it was very much later, and I still couldn't bear to throw much away. The boxes are still in various places in our flat.

Eventually, among the papers and pictures, I found a 23-page typescript, or rather what seemed to be a carbon copy of a typescript, rather blurred and showing signs of not being the top carbon copy in the batch. (Those who remember the trials of pre-computer typing will know what I mean.)

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When I read it, it turned out to be an account of village life at around the beginning of the last century. Anyway, I typed out my find, thanking my stars for the invention of the computer, and scattered copies among friends and family. The general opinion was that it deserved a wider audience. An illustrated version would be really good, but meanwhile, the editor of 4ward suggested that we publish some at least of the text over the next few months.

Who was Miss Bruton?
Mary Bruton, who died in 1984 at the age of 94, lived in Oldbury all her life. She was the only child of Charles Bruton, the village builder. She was a formidable lady whom few people would have ever addressed by her first name, and even now I must admit to a slight double-take when she is referred to as 'Mary' rather than 'Miss' Bruton. She recorded many aspects of village life in words, pictures and sketches. In about 1965 she wrote an account of her village memories, many of them of people and things no longer with us, and this is what I had found.

Jane Bradshaw

Miss Bruton's Oldbury Part 1 *(This excerpt is just the initial paragraphs.)*

Oldbury on Severn is off the beaten track, and the first time you try to find it you probably will not do so. If you do arrive direct and easily you will have made a mistake somewhere – you will have taken the right turning when you should have taken a wrong one, will have found us much too easily, and will have denied us the pleasure of saying, '*Oh, but folk always get lost the first time they come to Oldbury*.'

The two most outstanding features in Oldbury are the Hill and the Pill. Which of the two you place first will depend on who you are. If you are very young, or a member of the Sailing Club, you will vote for the Pill, but everyone else will say 'the Hill'.

Oldbury Hill is lovely, beloved by the inhabitants and admired by all visitors. It rises from flat countryside and is about three-quarters of a mile from the river. The hill is a circular one, rising gently on every side, but on the top there is a mound. On the top of the mound the church is built, in the most beautiful position one can imagine, with lovely long views in every direction. To the west, the long stretch of the river from Sharpness Bridge to the Bristol Channel, with the hills on the opposite side and the distant mountains of Wales as a background of ever-changing colours and shades. To the south is the cosy little hamlet of Cowhill with its soft woodland background, to the east, three miles away, the town of Thornbury with its fine church tower and its castle, and, to the north, across miles of countryside the start of the Cotswolds and Tyndale's monument are delicately silhouetted against the skyline. …

Mary Bruton

A WARM WELCOME

Central Pook is a hidden gem nestled in the beautiful hamlet of Northwick.
Surrounded by countryside we are situated in the heart of the Severn Estuary with access to a variety of cycle routes and walks.
We are a bespoke café serving breakfast brunch and lunch along with our homemade cakes, savoury bakes and amazing coffee.

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Hill & Rockhampton WI

Report of Meeting – 13th January 2026

Jill welcomed us to our first meeting of 2026. It was the second 'first', having held our first ever Committee Meeting by WhatsApp, and today our meeting was a lunchtime one. Apologies were received from four members. Our thanks go to Patsy and Geri for the lovely evening in December making wreaths.

Before starting the meeting, a minute's silence was observed in memory of the three members we had lost during 2025, Joyce Bainbridge, Gill Bennett and Maureen Hedges. We also remembered Sally Taylor, a well-known speaker on floral arrangements, who had visited us many times.

Lunch was served with a choice of three soups, Parsnip & Apple, Mixed Vegetable, and Carrot & Coriander. Whilst enjoying our choices, we discussed the five proposed Resolutions for 2026. These were (1) Accessible Public Toilets (2) Homelessness (3) Green Health (4) Vulval Cancer Awareness and (5) Independent Visitors for Children in Care. After debating the pros and cons of each, a vote was taken, our choice being to support Resolution 1. Ann will inform Avon Fed of our voting decision.

The Lunch Club was being held on Wednesday 20th January at the Tudor Arms, Slimbridge. Carole thanked Patsy for the flowers which had cheered her up after her nasty fall, and Pattie thanked the committee for providing the lovely, warming soups and rolls. Margaret Webb thanked everyone who provided packets of Paracetamol for Ukraine.

At this point, Jill introduced the possibility of our Winter Project. The post-box toppers had been so well received that we had been asked to provide other seasonal ones. After consideration, we decided it would be good if we could co-ordinate two new toppers with our Picnic Meeting. So, the challenge for members is to knit, crochet, felt, anything to do with a picnic for our May meeting. Carole has agreed to make new bases.

Our next meeting will be on 10th February, when Philomena Connelly will be putting us through our paces with seated Zumba. Please wear comfortable clothing.

There was again no draw for Rockhampton 100 Club; that is now scheduled to take place at their AGM on 27th January at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Ann Jones, Hill & Rockhampton WI Secretary

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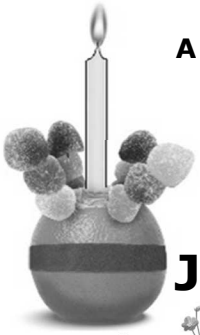
Refresh!

A service for ALL ages at St Arilda's Church starting with refreshments at 3pm.



Sunday 1st February
Christingle – Jesus Light of the World

Sunday 1st March
On the March!

Sunday 5th April
No Refresh! – Easter Sunday

St Mary's Music – "Third Sunday" Concert
Sunday 15 February at 4pm at St Mary's Church (BS35 1HQ)

We are delighted to welcome the highly-accomplished Welsh harpist Glenda Clwyd to perform for us. Glenda studied harp, piano, and singing from an early age, and went on to study at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. As well as being a distinguished performer, she is also a highly sought-after teacher.

We are sure that this will be a most enjoyable afternoon.
As usual, the concert will be followed by refreshments.
Admission is free and donations go to St Mary's Music.

Thornbury Choral Society – "Come and Sing"
Saturday 28 February at Alveston Methodist Church (BS35 3RA)

Just a reminder that Thornbury Choral Society will be holding its annual "Come and Sing" event, when we shall be studying Verdi's *Requiem*. For further details, including timings, prices and the application form, please go to *www.thornburychoralsociety.org.uk*

Church Services for February 2026

St. Mary's Thornbury

1st 10.30am
Holy Communion

8th 10.30am
All Age Service

15th 10.30am
Holy Communion

22nd 10.30am
Holy Communion

St. Arilda's Oldbury

1st 3.00pm
Refresh!

8th 6.00pm
Holy Communion

15th 6.00pm
Evening Prayer

22nd 6.00pm
Evensong BCP

St. Mary's Shepperdine

Open as a place of pilgrimage and prayer.

For details phone *01454 260316*

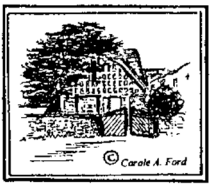
No Regular Sunday Service During Winter Months

St. Oswald's Rockhampton

Please check locally

Liz Cullimore churchwarden 01454 412208 or 07876352680 email cullimorel@aol.com

22nd 10.30am
Holy Communion service
Rev. Rob Axford

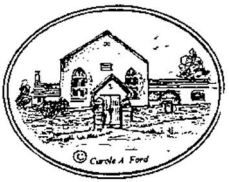


Catholic

Christ the King, Thornbury.
Sunday Mass
9.00am
10.30am

www.ctk-thornbury.org.uk

Holy Cross, Wotton Under Edge
Saturday
(vigil Mass) 5.00pm



Morton Baptist

Morning Service
Every Sunday
at
10.30am

See https://mortonbaptist.org for details

Thornbury Quakers

Chantry Community Centre on Castle Street

Sunday
10.30am

Further details contact Sheila Waters on *07738495776*

Christian Comment

On 3 October 2025, the Church of England announced that Dame Sarah Mullally would become the next archbishop of Canterbury, in succession to Justin Welby. As such, she will be Primate of All England and the metropolitan bishop of the Province of Canterbury. She will be the first woman to hold the post.

Abridged from the Address by The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally following the announcement.

Today, as I respond to the Call of Christ in this new ministry, I remain rooted in my first calling: to follow Christ, to know him – and to make him known to the world. Washing feet has shaped my Christian vocation as a nurse, then a priest, then a bishop. In the apparent chaos which surrounds us, in the midst of such profound global uncertainty, the possibility of healing lies in acts of kindness and love.

With humility and grace, we uphold and support those in need of our help. We do this to the best of our ability, in small ways and big, according to our own very particular gifts. That too is the service which I offer to the Church today.

Hope is made of the infinite love of God, who breathed life into creation and said it was good. Hope doesn't skip over grief, pain and messiness of life but enters into it, and tenderly tells us that God is with us.

Across our nation today, we are wrestling with complex moral and political questions. The legal right of terminally ill people to end their own lives. Our response to people fleeing war and persecution to seek safety and refuge. The pressures on communities who have been overlooked and undervalued. The deep-rooted question of who we are as a nation, in a world that is so often on the brink.

The Christian faith is unwavering in its teaching that we are all made in the image of God. Each one of us deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. Christ commands us to love God, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is complex and challenging. But there is also something very simple about it. Along with my colleague bishops, I am called to share the hope that we have found in Jesus Christ – and what it means for us all as individuals, and as a society. The role that I will take on next year is one that can only be done together.

Some will be asking what it means for a woman to lead the Church of England, and to take on the Archbishop of Canterbury's global role in the Anglican Communion. I intend be a shepherd who enables everyone's ministry and vocation to flourish, whatever our tradition.

I humbly offer myself, and the gifts and experience that God has given me, in service to God's world and God's Church.

I will not always get things right. But I am encouraged by the psalmist who tells us that, "*Though you stumble you shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds you fast by the hand*."

I trust in the truth of those words for me, for you, for the Church of England, for the nation, for the Anglican Communion and for the world. Held fast by the Lord's hand, please pray for me as I will pray for you.

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Olveston Young Farmers

Olveston Young Farmers Club have had a really busy and enjoyable few months, with a great mix of socials, learning opportunities and fundraising.

On 22nd December, we finished the year with our Christmas Quiz Night at Falfield Village Hall, which saw nearly 70 people attend. The quiz was written and hosted by our club president, along with a round of tongue-in-cheek "joke awards" voted for by members. It was a brilliant night, and a lovely way to round off the year with members and the local community.

Our first meeting back in the New Year was a painting evening with Chrissie Beeston, which was a relaxed and popular social night and something a bit different for the club. This was followed by a talk from *North and Letherby Ltd*, who gave members an interesting insight into becoming a surveyor and the career opportunities available within the industry.

Looking ahead to February, members are busy preparing for the upcoming county bowling competition, alongside a packed programme of stock judging events taking place throughout the month.

We also have a farm safety talk planned for 2nd February, which we felt was particularly important given the recent number of serious accidents involving young farmers. The session will focus on raising awareness and reinforcing safe working practices, and we're hoping it will spark some really important discussions among members.

Alongside our meetings, the club also carried out our annual Christmas tree collection, collecting over 200 trees and raising just under £1,200. It was a fantastic community effort and great to see so much local support for Young Farmers in the area. Despite one minor vehicle breakdown along the way, the two collection days ran smoothly and were a good example of the teamwork behind the club. We're already looking ahead to next year and aiming to make the collection even bigger and better.

Overall, Olveston YFC continues to be a friendly, active and welcoming club, and we're looking forward to everything the rest of the year has in store.

Lily Gibbons - Club Secretary –
olvestonyfc@gloucestershireyfc.co.uk

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Funeral Notice from the Dursley Gazette published last year on 13 March 2025

George Woollard of Berkeley, retired Severn River Pilot and ex-Merchant Navy, passed away peacefully on 27th February 2025 at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, aged 86 years. Much loved Father of Paul and David, Grandfather of Thomas, Charlie, Sienna and Luisa.

The funeral service was held at St. Mary's Parish Church, Berkeley, on Friday 28th March 2025.

*As mentioned in the editorial, this short series of memoirs "*A life influenced by our River Severn*" were written by George in 2019 and illustrated with his own drawings and photos.*

George was an exceptionality modest man who made light of his learning, and made me promise that, while he was alive, I would not mention his writing to anyone in his crib team from the Pier View, or anywhere in the Sharpness / Berkeley area, neither was I allowed to send them any copies of the magazine as they might consider him "big headed." Now, sadly he is no longer with us, so if anyone from Sharpness, Halmore or Purton happens to be reading this, do please pass it on to anyone who knew George, or who is interested in the local history of the area, the River Severn, or the canals, as I think it deserves a wider audience.

Chris Tymko

"A life influenced by our River Severn"

The life, part of which is described here, began in the summer of 1938, at No.10 Dock Rd., Sharpness Gloucestershire.

From a young age, and given the surroundings of a small, but busy Port, my interest in ships grew. To skip a few years, I "escaped" from formal secondary education, with, I admit, relief, at sixteen years of age. At that time, home was a cottage in Halmore, from where nearby Purton, with its canal and river, beckoned like a magnet. Many pleasant hours were spent on the banks, and out on the estuary sands, fishing, and unknowingly gaining experience of the intricacies and moods of a unique waterway.

Anyway, come 1954, I applied for, and was accepted, as a "third hand" on a motor tanker barge of the Regent Oil Company. So began my adventure into "real" life.

At that time our River was busy on each tide with local and foreign traffic moving to and from sea, and out-ports to Sharpness, and beyond. Regent Oil ran a fleet of small tanker barges from Avonmouth to Gloucester, and onwards to Stourport in Worcestershire.

One day a letter arrived which directed me to join their motor barge "Regent Lady" at Purton at 06.00 one Autumn morning. Rising early, I cycled the mile or so down to Purton upper bridge and waited expectantly. In the half light of early morning, a convoy of vessels came slowly past, bound inland, all still showing their navigation lights. Soon, I spotted my new workplace, and home from home, approaching. On deck the Driver, (Engineer) waited to take my bike, and baggage, and help me to board as she slowly passed. Here, I should explain, such barges were manned by three men, Skipper, Driver, and third hand. Dumb, or unpowered barges were two handed, Skipper and Mate. Once aboard, the thrill of belonging to a working vessel set in. I was shown over the craft from bow to stern, and my duties explained. This being a pre-war-built barge, she had accommodation forward in the bows, comprising a small cabin for the Skipper, and a main cabin with living and eating space for all, and two fold-up bunks for the other two crew members. It was cosy, if sparsely furnished, with a table, electric heater, cooker, sink, wash place, and cushioned bench seats, with lockers for gear, personal and otherwise.

I was quickly left in no doubt that responsibility for keeping this accommodation clean and tidy was down to me. Back aft then to the wheelhouse, past the tank-tops and lifeboat, I was shown the rudiments of how the vessel was navigated, a sturdy, brass-bound steering wheel, engine controls, and a brass-binnacled compass. Again, it was made clear that keeping all brasswork bright and clean was down to "yours truly".

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INSIDE OUT

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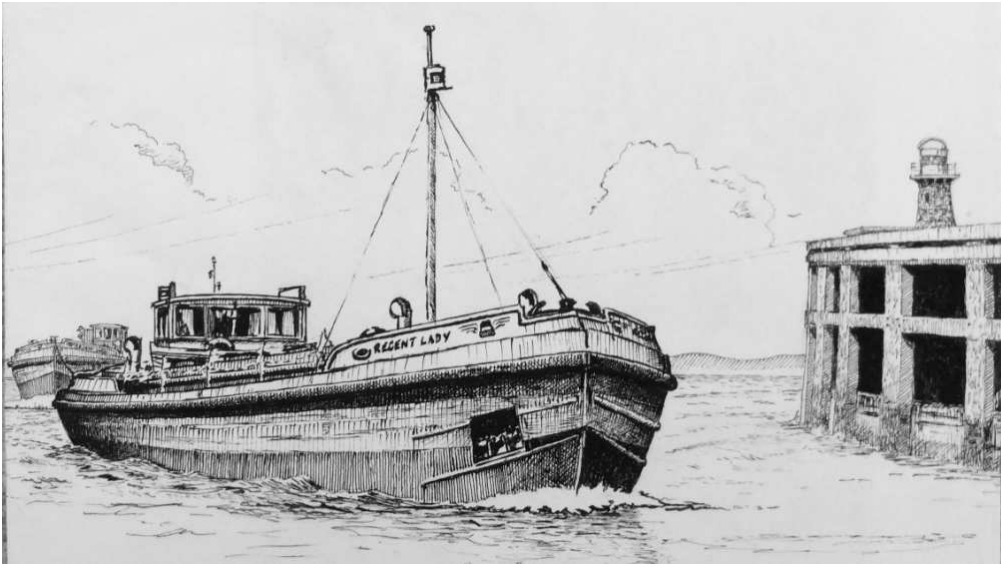

I loved it - and after breakfast got down to it. But, first, the engine room where the main engine, a Ruston & Hornsby diesel gave motive power, and a smaller diesel generator or "Rattler" provided on-board power. This also apparently was my Pigeon. Also in the engine room was the toilet, which to the uninitiated was a complex system of valves and a pump allowing flushing, without flooding. So began my life afloat.

As a young lad, fresh out of school, a working life on the Severn was both interesting and fascinating. One was quickly taught how to pull one's weight, and help to run the barge, even to take a pride in doing so. From the turbulent waters of the Estuary, to the calm, picturesque reaches of the upper River, there were always new sights and experiences, as well as learning to steer, by sight and by compass, rope work, cleaning, painting, cooking, etc., in fact starting to become self-sufficient as part of a team.

Oddly, some of the things learned at that time, I was able to use to advantage many years later as a Channel Pilot. Little odds and ends in themselves, but never forgotten. For example, briefly, to remember that whilst the flood tide was still running in the main River, the ebb was already setting down along the shore. This could be a real timesaver outward bound. To use marks on the shore to know when it was safe to take the occasional short cut "over the grounds". Above all, to work WITH the River, using the tide to advantage, and not fighting it. So much to absorb, in an absorbing job.

Most crews lived in, or near, Sharpness, so generally speaking, a round trip took about three days, depending on tides, and weather. Perhaps it might be of interest to describe a typical round trip, to give an idea of what went on.....

George Woollard

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A note from the Severn Vale Village Agent

Volunteer Drivers Needed in Our Villages: Help Neighbours Get to Vital Medical Appointments

In rural communities, getting to a GP or hospital appointment can be a real challenge. Limited public transport, long distances, and lack of taxis often mean people miss essential care. You can change that.
We're looking for volunteer drivers from our villages to help neighbours reach their medical appointments safely and on time. It's a simple act of kindness that can have a huge impact on someone's health and wellbeing.

Why you might love it:

- Retired? You've got the time and local know-how.
- Working from home? A trip between Zoom calls could brighten someone's day.
- Love meeting people? This is a great way to connect with your community.

Why It Matters:

- You'll be supporting vulnerable people who otherwise might miss vital treatment.
- It's a great way to strengthen community ties and meet new people.
- You'll be part of a network of caring locals making life easier for others.

What's Involved:

- Use your own car to drive someone from your village to their appointment.
- Mileage expenses reimbursed.
- No medical knowledge needed, just a friendly attitude and a valid driving license, and DBS check (we'll sort that out for you).

Join Us

If you can spare a little time and want to make a big difference in your village, then we would love to hear from you. Contact Elizabeth on *elizabeth@wern.org.uk* or leave a message on *07880 344460* today and become part of something truly local and life changing.

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NOSTOS Trio
Saturday 28 February at 7.30pm at United Reformed Church, Chapel Street, Thornbury, BS35 2BA

February's event is another chance to see pianist Khrystyna Mykailichenko performing in concert.

ACTION ARTS GROUP

Formed in 2025, The Nostos Trio unites three young dynamic musicians, Monty Guo (violin), Khrystyna Mikhailichenko (piano), and Jae Min Kim Kang (cello). They represent Australia, Ukraine and Spain/South Korea respectively.

Though newly established, the trio combines a wealth of international experience, with its members having performed widely across Europe, Asia and Australia, as soloists, chamber musicians, and orchestral leaders. Together they bring a distinctive energy and sensitivity to the piano trio repertoire, creating performances marked by depth, clarity and communicative power.

Their programme consists of:

Piano Trio no.1 op. 70 "Ghost" by Ludwig Van Beethoven
Piano Trio no.3 op. 101 by Johannes Brahms
Piano Trio (1952) by Amo Babadjanian.

Tickets £25, students £10, under 10s free, from *AAGThornbury@gmail.com*
Interval drinks. Profits will be donated to *Bristol Aid to Ukraine*.

Rainfall

	December	
2025	**2024**	**2023**
137.0mm	68.5mm	175.5mm
5.40"	2.70"	6.91"

	Totals for years	
2025	**2024**	**2023**
1021.0mm	1281.0mm	1155.5mm
40.19"	50.54"	45.50"

Update on The Armstrong

After the announcement at the switching on of the Christmas lights that the doors will be opening in April this year, it is all systems go for The Armstrong team. The new bar, foyer and 120-seater refurbished Cossham Hall will be open for business in the Spring and until then, behind the barriers, the exciting transformation continues.

In the meantime, the planning and preparations are in a very intense phase and all members of the team are working hard to make sure everything will go to plan when the venue is once more a centre of community life in Thornbury. Work on the bar is well under way, and some of the team were lucky enough to enjoy a wine tasting with the chosen drinks supplier, St Austell Brewery.

Fundraising will be vital for the next phase of the project, and the Armstrong Team has been delighted that community groups and individuals are coming forward to raise money to add to the pot. In December, *Bristol Concert Wind Band* held a wonderful sell-out concert at the United Reformed Church in aid of The Armstrong charity. It was a delightful event which put everyone in the mood for Christmas and raised a considerable sum for the cause. If you belong to a group or organisation which is willing to run a fundraising event, please get in touch via *hello@the armstrong.co.uk* and of course individual donations can be made by donating on the website *www.thearmstrong.co.uk*

During February and March this year a lot more of the community will be able to find out about how the complex will be operating from April onwards. People with an active interest in its future will be invited to come through the doors and spend an hour or two learning more, along with all of us who have been heavily involved over the past few years. There will be a lot of celebrating to be done! If you would like to find out more, please go to *www.thearmstrong.co.uk/whats-on* or email *jill@thearmstrong.co.uk*

The Armstrong Diary is now open from April 2026, so if you are considering booking an event or community activity, please get in touch by emailing *hello@thearmstrong.co.uk*

"My Fair Lady"

Live performances in Tockington during February Half Term
Wednesday 18th - Saturday 21st February, all at 7.30pm
PLUS an extra Matinee on Saturday 21st February at 2pm
at Olveston & Tockington Parish Hall, Upper Tockington Rd BS32 4LQ

This musical is packed with some of the most famous songs from the genre! Order tickets online at *https://bit.ly/PPorders* or call *01454 202011*. Prices are £12 Adults, £8 Children, and £14 Premium seats. Parish Players tickets always sell quickly, and *My Fair Lady* will be popular – so don't delay!

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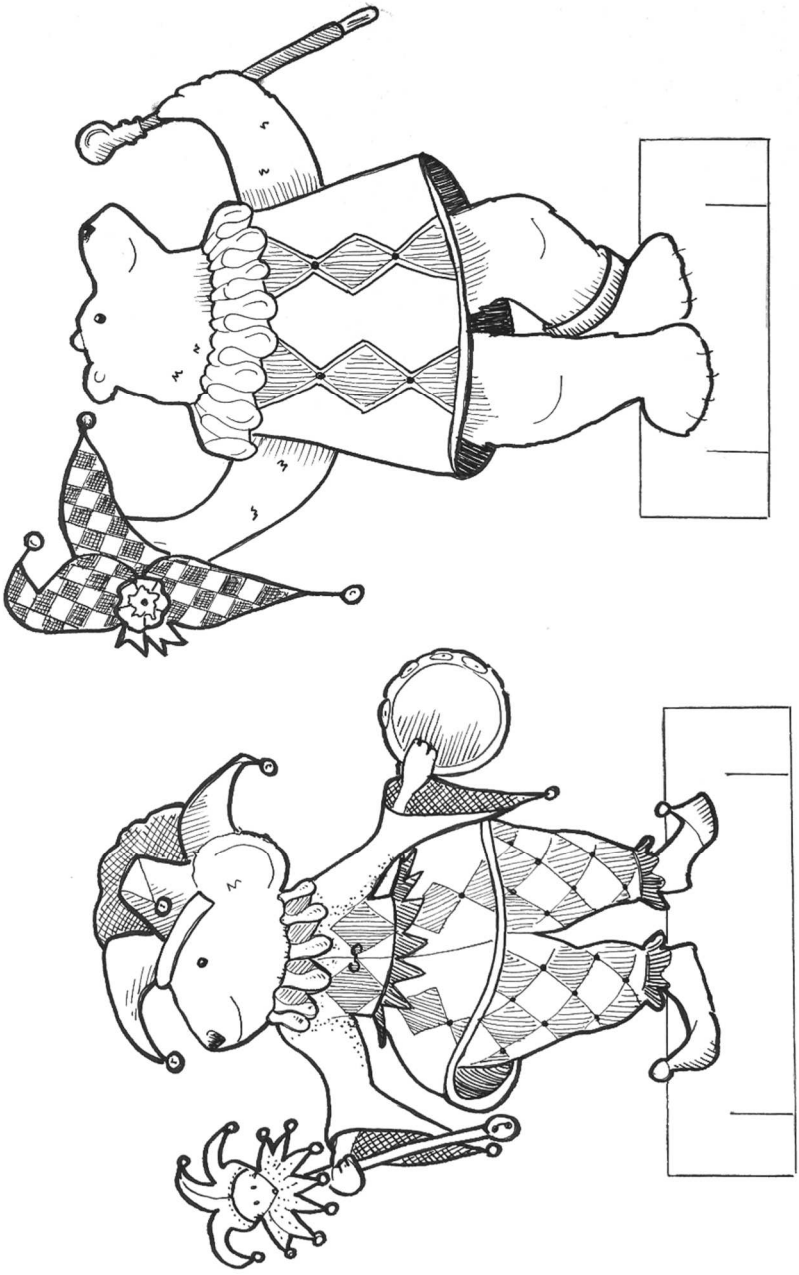

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Thornbury Musical Theatre Group – *Snow White*
Six performances (3 day / 3 evening) between 18 – 21 February (half term) at WADCA, Watleys End Road, Winterbourne, BS36 1QG

Join Thornbury Musical Theatre Group as they return to WADCA following their sell-out pantomime *Jack and The Beanstalk* last year!

During half term week, from Wednesday 18th to Saturday 21st February, Thornbury Musical Theatre Group is proud to bring you a brand-new take on one of the most traditional and popular pantomimes. Written in-house by Jamie Wright and Tirion Cowell, '*Snow White*' will be performed at the Winterbourne & District Community Association (WADCA) at Watleys End Road, Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1QG.

Whether you are a kid or kid at heart, this will be a great half term treat. A feelgood show packed with audience participation, drama, romance, upbeat songs, high powered dance routines and plenty of laughter.

Performances on Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th at **7.30pm**, Friday 20th at **2.30pm** and **7.30pm**, and Saturday 21st at **10.30am** and **2.30pm**. Standard tickets £12 bookable online at *www.tmtg.org.uk/tickets* or by phone on *07516 270140*. Please note - all **accessible** tickets need to be booked via our box office telephone number on *07516 270140* or by emailing *tickets@tmtg.org.uk* - more details: *www.tmtg.org.uk* or Facebook.

Tortworth Lake Open Sundays - with Refreshments from March

Tortworth Lake is private, with no rights of access. The estate however welcomes the public to enjoy this special place on the **first Sunday** of each month from February to October only. Opening times are:

February 1, **March 1**, **September 6** and **October 4**: **10am - 5pm**
April 5, **May 3**, **June 7**, **July 5** and **August 2**: **10am - 6pm**

Any changes to these times, due to unforeseen circumstances or adverse weather conditions, will be on *https://www.facebook.com/TortworthEstate*

Local clubs and charities have for many years been selling refreshments on open Sundays, helping to raise funds towards their running costs. These have included local schools, RNLI, SARA, Mind Café, and JIGSAW Thornbury.

The lake can be accessed on the right-hand side, just after the lay-by, after crossing over junction 14 of the M5 when travelling towards Tortworth from Thornbury. Dogs are permitted, but must be kept on leads. There is ample parking on site. Unfortunately, there is uneven ground in places and the tracks can be muddy, so wheelchair and pram access may be difficult. Refreshments are provided for sale during each open Sunday, **except** for the one occurring in February. Please note that wild swimming and fishing are not permitted at the Lake.

FREE EVENTS AT THORNBURY LIBRARY IN FEBRUARY

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES

Monday*	10am-5pm
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Friday	10am-5pm
Saturday	9.30-12.30
Sunday	OPEN ACCESS

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Wednesday 18th February 2026
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T

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Friday 6th February
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Children's Events

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Suitable for all children 0-5

Lego Club — **Saturdays 9.30-10.30**
Suitable for all children 4-11

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Calendar Dates for Oldbury

7th	Feb	Sat	Rugby 6 Nations. England vs Wales. Memorial Hall
10th	Feb	Tue	Memorial Hall AGM 10am
14th	Feb	Sat	Rugby 6 Nations. Scotland vs England. Memorial Hall
20th	Feb	Fri	Line Dancing. Memorial Hall
21st	Feb	Sat	Rugby 6 Nations. England vs Ireland & Wales vs Scotland. Memorial Hall
28th	Feb	Sat	Whodunit Theatre Night. Memorial Hall
7th	March	Sat	Rugby 6 Nations. Italy vs England
14th	March	Sat	Rugby 6 Nations. Super Saturday. Memorial Hall
20th	March	Fri	Line Dancing. Memorial Hall
21st	March	Sat	Race Night with the School. Memorial Hall
11th	April	Sat	Games Night. Memorial Hall
17th	April	Fri	Line Dancing. Memorial Hall
18th	April	Sat	Spring Fayre. Memorial Hall
25th	April	Sat	Open Mic Night. Memorial Hall
5th	Sep	Sat	Oldbury Produce and Craft Show. Memorial Hall

OVCC Film Show, second Friday of month, Memorial Hall, doors open at 7.15pm

If you have any more local events that you would like to include in this diary, please email the magazine at **4wardmag@gmail.com**

Oldbury Elders Luncheon Club

Meet at 11.45am in the dining room, lunch served at 12noon.
on the last Tuesday of the month.
Thanks to Mark Sorrell and the team at the Anchor.
Any enquiries to Janet Astle *07747 198878*

Oldbury Whist Drives, first and third Saturdays

of the month, at 7.30pm in the Westmarsh Lane Pavilion.

New players always welcome!
If anyone would like to learn the game or brush up on their skills, please feel free to contact me - Matthew Riddle - 07877 413 298 matthewriddle1967@googlemail.com

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