

MICKLEHAM PARISH Magazine

A community magazine for Mickleham and Westhumble



A.N. Colwell 1984

February 2026



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MICKLEHAM PARISH Magazine

February
2026

Mickleham
Parish
Magazine

A community magazine for
Mickleham and Westhumble
published under the auspices
of Mickleham PCC with an
independent editorial panel.

The magazine is published at the
beginning of each month except
January and August.

COPY DEADLINE

MARCH 2026 MAGAZINE

Sunday
8th February 2026

send to:
editor@micklehammag.co.uk

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Contributions in any form are
welcome as are good quality
photographs. There is no
charge for advertising local
charity and community events.
However the editors reserve
the right to shorten, omit or
reformat articles submitted
for publication depending on
space. Copy published is not
necessarily the views of the
editors or panel.



Printed by Holbrooks Printers Portsmouth

Mickleham Rectory

Hi everyone

Christmas is well past as I write this, but I am still happily munching the remains of chocolates, mince pies and shortbread. They will be finished soon as I realise it is not long until Lent starts and I usually try to give up something sweet. Already the days are a getting a bit longer although they don't seem to be getting warmer, but spring is coming!

I had forgotten the origin of the word Lent and so, courtesy of AI, I found it is derived from an old English word *lencten*, which meant springtime and was related to the lengthening of the day. It is related to other Germanic words for spring such as the German *Lenz* and Dutch *Lente*. It became associated with the Christian period of penitence and fasting in preparation for Easter.

The traditional observance of Lent by European Christians involves fasting, prayer, almsgiving and self-reflection. It may prompt a review of our lifestyle, including our carbon footprint and how much we consume of the Earth's resources. We may choose to be more frugal or find ways to support charities. For many of us it becomes a test of willpower; can I resist chocolate, alcohol, biscuits, frequently checking my phone? These are all good things to give up and may help our health and relationships, but do they help spiritually? They may, if we feel these items have become too important to us. The aim of Lent for a Christian is to become purer in heart for, as the Beatitudes says, 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God'. This means clearing ourselves of selfishness and greed, hatred and unforgiveness and replacing them with a focus on God and his will. I read somewhere that purity of heart is a bit like being a child who is promised an ice cream at the end of the day. During the day the child will enjoy all sorts of other activities but will repeatedly ask 'Can I have an ice cream now?' Having our focus on God means not forgetting him or his love and his guidance while still living a full, active, life with things to enjoy and things to challenge us.

Each of us can observe Lent in whatever way we choose. We can give up what has become too important or dominant, reflect on what it means to have a pure heart and spend time in stillness and in prayer as we refocus on what is important, what is of God. Money saved by being more abstemious can be given to good causes. Perhaps that saved by caring more for our environment can be given to Five Talents (see article by Tim Mathieson on page 5).

Lent starts on 18th February with Ash Wednesday, when there is a service in church at 7.30 pm so that we can gather to encourage each other, offer our Lent pledges to God and ask for his help to be faithful. Later, there will also be Lent courses to help us focus on God and Lent lunches where we can enjoy soup, cheese, good company and support local charities.

God Bless

Sandra

The Rev'd Dr Sandra Faccini, Parish Priest

St Michael's Church Services

10 am Sunday Services available on Zoom

Joining information for both Zoom and telephone users is available in Pews News Online each week. If you would like to join us by Zoom then contact Alison Wood for the codes or to ask her to include you on the emailing list for Pews News: admin@micklehamchurch.org.uk / phone 01372 376443. We hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us for worship. Please refer to Pews News Online for the latest information. If you missed any of the services or would like to revisit them all are available on the church YouTube channel: <https://youtube.com/channel/UCI4pbewCT91iZhcd0EjJBIw>



Bible Study



Monday Evening Group
At Westhumble Chapel 7.45 - 9 pm
Contact Amanda Wadsworth
aewadsworth@hotmail.com

Thursday Morning Group
At Westhumble Chapel 11.30 - 12.30 am
Contact Alison Wood 01372 376443
admin@micklehamchurch.org.uk

ALL WELCOME TO EITHER GROUP



First Saturday of the month

Coffee Morning

Westhumble Chapel

Saturday 7th February

Come along between 10 am and noon

Coffee and cake £2 Free drinks for children

Everyone welcome

For further information call Jonathan Blake 07787 126966



Tea @ 3

Monday 16th February

Host: Rev'd Mandy MacVeans

34 Oakdene Close, Brockham, RH3 7LZ

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siberrman@btinternet.com

Church Community Group



Lent Lunches



The famous soup and cheese lunches are returning. These events are always popular and full of fun. There are four dates to put in your diary: 26th February and 5th, 19th and 26th March.

Last year these lunches raised an impressive £1,390.49, which was shared equally between Joe's Buddy Line, the Meeting Room, and Dorking Foodbank. If you have not yet heard of Joe's Buddy Line, I would strongly encourage you to find out more about this very special local charity.

The Christmas Fair was another great success. With a focus on local artisans' crafts and well-received refreshments, it raised £318.19 for the Meeting Room.



Westhumble Chapel with crib built by Gerry Weaver

We enjoy a wonderful community, but it does not just happen. It takes effort and sustained commitment throughout

the year from some very special people. Please do support village events whenever you can this year. Without that support, they risk disappearing, and the whole community would be poorer for it.

I cannot thank enough the members of the Community Group (Denise Darling, Frances Presley, Andy Diamond and Mark Day) along with Sarah Pritchard, for making these and many other community events possible.

Finally, a mention for non-Community Group events organised by Jonathan Blake. He and the people he gathers to help, continue to do so much for the community. This year the monthly Chapel Coffee Mornings raised £1,733.27 and supported the Air Ambulance, St Michael's Nursery and School. Carol singing around the pubs raised £310, which was split between The Meeting Room and the foodbank. Thank you to everyone who supported these events.

Kelvin Pritchard

Men's and Women's Breakfasts

9-10 am at The Stepping Stones pub

WOMEN'S BREAKFAST
3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
NEXT BREAKFASTS

31ST JANUARY
& 21ST FEBRUARY

Book with:
srandall55@gmail.com for 31st Jan
admin@micklehamchurch.org.uk for 21st Feb

MEN'S BREAKFAST
4TH SATURDAY OF THE MONTH
NEXT BREAKFAST

28TH FEBRUARY

Book with:
Andy Diamond
adiamond714@gmail.com

Church Eco Group Working towards Carbon Net Zero

The Church of England is working towards being Carbon Net Zero by 2030. This is a worthy but massive challenge, given that many of the Church of England's buildings are as old and draughty as our beautiful church in Mickleham or as uninsulated as our chapel in Westhumble.

Our starting point was an energy audit conducted by recommended outside consultants back in 2023. A major recommendation was that we change our energy supply contracts to selected 'green' tariffs. The Church of England carried out an exercise to check the 'green' credentials of a wide range of suppliers and tariffs. St Michael's now gets its electricity from Scottish Power 100% Renewables tariff, and its gas from Crown Gas and Power Green Biogas tariff. In next month's Eco Group article, we will provide the up-to-date list of approved CoFE suppliers. Surprisingly to many, the switch has also resulted in a more competitive tariff for the church and chapel.

The most effective and environmentally beneficial action is, however, to REDUCE total energy usage. We have been progressively checking doors and windows for draughts and fitting appropriate draught excluders where possible. Old buildings present interesting challenges when walls, doors and windows have many awkward gaps... but we are trying. We have a programme to convert the lighting in St Michael's from halogen to LED. Some fittings were suitable to simply switch to LED bulbs, but other fittings needed to be replaced to be LED compatible. We obtained a 'Quick Wins' grant from the diocese for these works. To evaluate the effect of these changes, we took meter readings before, during and after much of this programme, both for a Sunday Service day, and a non-Service weekday.

The table shows that our electricity consumption has been reduced by over 40%, a very pleasing and somewhat surprising result.

There are still more light fittings to convert in the vestry (currently CFL - compact fluorescent lighting), the chandeliers in the Norbury Chapel on the north side of the church and over the piano (currently dimmable halogen but not a straightforward bulb swap). We hope for further reductions in electricity consumption as we continue our programme of conversion to LED lighting. Hopefully, this might encourage you to consider converting to LED at home. You will be using less energy... a tick in your 'green' box and you should see a worthwhile reduction in your energy bill. Also, the bulbs last longer! What's not to like?

Church Eco Group

	Before	After
Sunday Service day	24 kW/hr	14 kW/hr
Weekday	9 kW/hr	6 kW/hr

St Michael's Church Community Group Food Bank Collection

We welcome items for adults, children and infants including:

- non-perishable food
- laundry and cleaning supplies
- personal hygiene products

LOCAL COLLECTION POINTS

MICKLEHAM

Garden Corner off Old London Road
Mary Banfield 01372 373912

WESTHUMBLE

St Anthony Pilgrims Way
Sue Tatham 01306 882547

The Stepping Stones
Westhumble Street



Also items may be brought to Coffee Mornings at Westhumble Chapel and St Michael's Church on Sunday mornings

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A Little Given, Much Gained



Agatha from Rwanda, expelled from school when she became pregnant, was rejected by her family. She gave birth to a baby boy. Shamed and depressed, stigmatised by her community, Agatha considered taking her own life, but felt unable to leave her son alone.

She was persuaded to join a local savings scheme set up by Five Talents, where she met other local women who encouraged her to start saving the little she could. She took an RWF 200 (Rwandan Franc) loan from them, equivalent to £1.25. With this money Agatha bought a large bag of sweets, which she then sold at the roadside. The profit enabled her to feed her son, and to save a little more. With her next loan, Agatha started making cassava snacks, which she sold to school children. The business was so profitable that she was able to employ another member of her community to help with the baking. Now, after a further period of saving, she has taken one more loan from the savings group to grow her business and set up a small shop fronting onto the main road. Agatha's family, seeing her success, has accepted her back again. When her son starts primary school, Agatha will go back to school and complete her education too.

Agatha's story is typical of the 300,000 people, mostly in east and central Africa, who have been

supported by Five Talents since it started operating 20 years ago. The idea for St Michael's to support this UK-based charity came from our Bible Study Group's climate change study, which challenged us on how we could respond to the climate crisis. In addition to our own personal energy saving initiatives, we felt that reaching out to support poorer communities in climate-challenged areas would be appropriate.

Five Talents is a type of microfinancing charity, operating in a number of mostly African countries, usually in partnership with local churches. However, it does not lend money directly. It supports the establishment of local savings schemes, and training in literacy, numeracy and

business skills to ensure a sustainable process that can bring long-lasting change to poorer communities. Not only does this benefit financial well-being, but also enhances social relationships, education and a sense of self-worth that create a foundation for ongoing improvement in people's lives. So, as Five Talents puts it, they provide a hand up, not a handout.

We hope that members of our church and parish community will support this initiative, which we see as a long-term project for us. Any financial support would be welcome, either one-off or a small steady stream of donations based on savings from our own domestic energy reduction, and/or 'carbon offsetting' for our overseas flights or holidays. In this way, we could provide long-term support to much poorer communities most at risk from climate change.

We look forward to welcoming a speaker from Five Talents to our 10 am service on Sunday 15th February. Anyone who would like to find out more is, of course, welcome to join us then.

You can make donations (either one-off or regular payments) to:

Account: **Mickleham PCC**

Sort code: **60-07-02**

Account no: **44699336**

Ref*: **5 Talents**

**Please use this reference to ensure correct allocation*

Tim Mathieson



The Nativity Service on Westhumble Field

As Jonathan, Sarah, Gerry and I put the finishing touches to the crib, the sun slowly slipped behind the horizon, leaving a cloudless sky, twinkling with stars marking the start of Christmas Eve. A wondrous collection of about two hundred adults, children and four-legged friends gathered at the top of Adlers Lane ready to follow the star and journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

Following the star



The manger and audience

Our travels took us past a roaring fire, where we found the shepherds and sang a carol before we moved on to the manger. Thank you to Mark Frost for his hay, where our very own baby Jesus (aka Quinn Taylor) performed beautifully.

As usual the costumes were fantastic, and we had a full complement of angels, stars, kings, shepherds, sheep and a donkey! Thank you to all the children who helped to bring the Christmas story to life and to remind us about this joyful time of year.

A huge thanks to all those who had a reading and those who were part of the

tableau (Robyn Rawson Cain, Sebastian McIlwraith-Jay, George Masters, Alex and Mia Geyle, Amelia Rudolf-West, Seb Machin, Henry and Joshua Willens, Simon and Luke Heaver) and to those who worked tirelessly to set up and run the service, particularly to Jonathan Blake, Sarah Pritchard, Gerry Weaver, Poppy Parfitt, Alison Wood and The Reverend Sandra Faccini.

I love seeing our community gathering in this way, to share joy and sing a few carols, readying us all for Christmas Day. See you all on Christmas Eve 2026, same time, same place!

Elly McIlwraith-Jay

Children's Concert Peter and the Wolf

Many moons ago on most Sunday mornings my father would ask the family, each in turn, what we would like to hear on the 'gramophone'. Ours had a triangular needle, which needed a special pair of scissors with a triangular hole to sharpen it, and I used to beg to use them. My mother invariably chose Grieg's Norwegian dances, but I always asked for 'Peter and the Wolf' by Sergei Prokofiev.

As soon as Andy Diamond, the narrator, began the story with 'Early one morning...' I was immediately back in our sitting room and waiting for Peter's music to announce his arrival in the meadow. Clare Kennington played Peter's cheerful music on the viola and she was soon joined by Helen Birchmore on her flute welcoming the bird, Julia Philpott sounding just like a duck with her oboe, and Andrew Meredith making us think there was a real cat in the church with his clarinet. Andy continued with the story of the fun they were all having when

Grandfather, played by Jo James on her bassoon, appeared to warn them of the danger that the wolf might 'come out of the forest'. The tune played by the whole ensemble with Tracy on the piano soon let us know that he *did* come out of the forest and very quickly gobbled up the duck.

A marching tune played on the piano told us that the hunters were on the trail of the wolf, but when they got there they found that Peter had already caught it and the story ends with a grand procession to take it away, but... 'if you listen very carefully you can hear the duck quacking inside the wolf because he had swallowed her whole'. Certainly, the children in the church were listening very carefully. Eyes were wide open, when a scary bit came mouths were wide open as well, and hardly anyone moved unless to find a comforting hand to hold.

This is such a fantastic way to introduce young people, maybe some older

ones as well, not only to music but also to the instruments that make the music. Thank you, Tracy, Andy and all the instrumentalists for such an entertaining and enjoyable hour on a grey winter's afternoon. Please, what is planned for next year?

I would like to thank Tracy for organising the concert and giving me the instrumentalists' details.

Frances Presley

Photo Isabel Budleigh



Mickleham Choral Society

The house lights went down, Noël was sung lyrically and repeatedly, and the fairy lights were lit in sequence across the choir (a harder feat than you would imagine, requiring much rehearsing). The MCS Christmas Party 2025 had begun.

The Christmas atmosphere now set, we moved into *Deck the Hall* including audience participation (in singing not decking as the hall has been recently refurbished) and *In the Bleak Mid-Winter* with solos from, the unrelated, Jane Hughes and David Hughes.

The next section was a *tour de force* by Barbara Steadman Allen who not only composed her piece *Good Festival of Christian Cheer*, which won the London Bach Choir Carol Competition 2024, but later sang a solo, accompanied the last verse of *Joy to the World* on the trumpet and was even seen tapping the tambourine. In-between these pieces we sang *Something Told the Wild Geese* by Andy Beck. This took us back to the dark days of Covid and the lockdown, when our musical director, Juliet Hornby, took on the Herculean task of recording each of us separately, alone in the hall, to be edited over many hours into a choral video. This is still available on YouTube and I think, we are all very proud of it.



Barbara Steadman Allen on the tambourine



Photographs by Bogdan Schiteanu

Back to Christmas and lesser known, but magical, carols by Rutter, Angerman and Althouse before sliding into more secular songs with the Carpenters' schmaltzy *Merry Christmas Darling* and the Hollywood musical style *All That Holiday Stuff*, which would have been accompanied by high kicks and jazz hands if we hadn't been in such serried ranks.

The concert was interspersed with fun seasonal readings by Paul Vickery, Catherine Matthews and Mike Benson and a real musical treat from Annie Dennis on double bass, Gill Herbert on violin and our fantastic accompanist Judith Flint on piano, playing a lively

arrangement of *Brightest and Best* by Shawn Kirchner, inspired by banjo music apparently. With the choir joining in, it certainly made the heart sing.

As is traditional, the last chords of *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* led to hark the rapid removal of staging and chairs to herald the arrival of groaning tables of sweets and

savouries (the meringues were back) and hot mulled wine. The evening was publicised as a carol party and that's exactly what we had.



A few days later, the choir met up again to sing at Wild About Coffee in Norbury Park to an appreciative audience of walkers and dogs. This was organised by Will and Annie Dennis and raised an admirable £140 for the charities Leatherhead Start and The Meeting Room. Dina Stovell

A message from Liz Absalom



Many thanks to all who supported the Macmillan Coffee Morning at Chapel Farm in early December, which raised £1,500 for Macmillan.

Also, thank you to the fifty people who attended the Carols by the Chapel Ruins event in Westhumble on 16th December, and donated £180 for the Gambian Horse and Donkey Trust.



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KING WILLIAM IV

Dear Neighbours and Friends,

Happy February! Soon it will be spring.

This month we are open weekends, and Wednesday and Thursday daytimes. We are also busy on our annual improvements and upgrades, which include the path from the top of the garden to the patio, the garden itself, and flooring and ventilation work in the pub cellar and kitchen.

Unfortunately, to complete the work we will need to close for ten days or so in the second half of the month, so please do keep an eye on the website for updates on opening times. We will be back to full opening hours in March.

Hope to see you all soon,

Eamonn, Kat, and Anne

Byttom Hill Mickleham 01372 372590 www.thekingwilliamiv.com

Dorking Community Wardrobe

Many of us take our unwanted clothes to a charity shops. With that in mind, we wanted to make you aware of a further option.

The Dorking Community Wardrobe CIC (Community Interest Company) has the aim of reducing clothing waste but also, like the foodbank, has local community 'targets' to which they can direct the donated items. They re-use and redistribute good condition, pre-loved

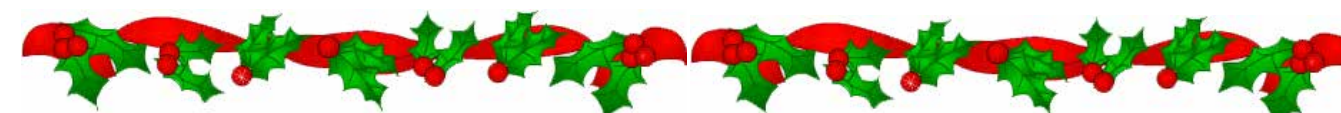
clothing into the local community. Non-reuseable items are sent for recycling and, like charity shops, the Community Wardrobe receives cash for this, which is invested back into the Wardrobe. It is a non-profit organization. They also offer clothing in return for a monetary donation, so it may be worth a visit in search of that retro hat you have been after, but clothing is given free to those in need.

The Dorking Community Wardrobe

is open at The Christian Centre every Friday 10 am to 1 pm, and the occasional Saturday (check on-line). The Christian Centre is next to St Martin's Church and accessible by car from Church Street.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This has no connection with our very successful foodbank, so please do not deliver clothes to our local foodbank drop-off points.

St Michael's Community and Eco Groups.



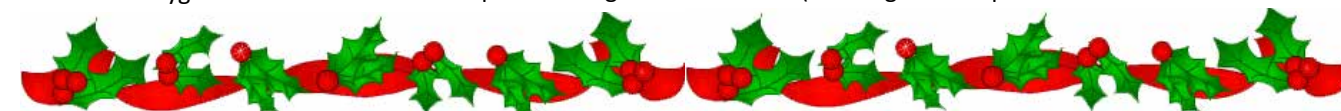
Thank you to Christmas card participants

Thank you to all those that sent their Christmas greetings through the magazine Christmas card. An impressive £490 was raised and split between St Michael's CofE Infant School, St Michael's Community Nursery and the Mickleham Playground. All three bodies

send their thanks.

Hilary Budd from the Nursery said, 'That's amazing, thank you!' I have a wish list running with an Early Years supply company and will now purchase a mini post box to support literacy, a pocket swing for Forest School (avoiding

the risk of rotten branches), some planks to use with our tiny tyres creating obstacle courses and supporting physical play and some lipped planks for racing and exploring gravity. Happy New Year to all those who have helped support the purchase of these new resources!



Speaking of posting things...

Pity the Poor Postal Worker

I was delivering leaflets round Burney Road recently and began to think about letter boxes in front doors. A sizeable number were not wide enough to take an A4 envelope without bending it and one was even too small for an A5 one. Mostly they opened inwards but every now and then one would stub fingers on a flap that opened outwards and upwards. Most were at a reasonable height but one was right down at the bottom of the door.

Some outer flaps were fiercely sprung loaded and required holding open. Combined with dense, interlocking 'brushes' on the inside, to keep the draughts out, one hand got scratched and bitten from above while the other suffered from below during the battle to get the items through. I was mindful that anything left sticking outside could alert burglars to an empty house.

Then there were the vertical letter boxes. These were fine if the hinges of the flap were at the side but those hung



from above obstructed the passage of anything being pushed through. Perish the thought of one opening outwards. As for the autumnal wreath hanging down over the top half of a vertical slot, the less said the better.

Some letter boxes have a cage or box behind them to catch the mail. The far side of many of them are too close to the door and long items must be jiggled into dropping down into them. Talking of boxes, it is not unknown for the delivery person to march confidently on

to the front door only to be confronted with no letter box at all. Then a search ensues for the mailbox somewhere on the property. Usually, it is quickly sighted, just to the right or left of the front door, sometimes it is fifty yards back on the gate post and sometimes, it isn't a box at all but a flip top bin hiding in the shrubs.

There is a British Standard EN 13724:2013 Postal services - Apertures of private letter boxes and letter plates. I am surprised that Royal Mail does not refuse to deliver if the letter box does not comply.

As for the other hazard postal workers face, namely dogs, those met in the gardens were quite benign despite some pretence of guarding the homestead with loud barking. A wagging tail gave the game away.

With apologies to anyone who feels their offending letter box could be identified. All is forgiven.

Barbara Jones

Local and Community Government Reorganisation

New Year Update

The government confirmed on 28th October 2025 its plans for local government reorganisation in Surrey. Two new 'unitary' councils will replace the existing twelve councils in April 2027. An East Surrey unitary will replace the current areas covered by Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge councils. A West Surrey unitary will take over Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley, and Woking. Surrey County Council will also disappear from existence.

The government also confirmed its commitment to repayment in principle during 2026/7 of £500m of Woking Borough Council's enormous debt. This is a first tranche of repayment support, and the government will 'continue to explore what further debt support is required at a later point'. Woking's total debt is estimated at £2.5bn, with annual debt service costs estimated at £170m. Spelthorne and Surrey Heath, also in West Surrey, also have debts totalling in the region of £2bn. Thus, even after the government has repaid £500m, there will be a debt burden of about £4bn inherited by the new West Surrey Unitary Authority.

None of this should fall on the East Surrey Unitary Authority, of which we will be a part, but someone is going to have to pay for the profligacy of Woking Borough Council. You may think that someone should be the councillors who presided over Woking's disastrous financial policies, but so far, other than the Financial Reporting Council announcing that it had opened investigations into the conduct of two former employees, and possible action against the auditors, there has been no such move. East Surrey's inherited debt will be a more manageable, but hardly trivial, £285m.

The government's line is that this reform will see stronger local councils in charge of all local services, equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and lead and empower their communities, and that ultimately it will help drive up living standards. There may be some wishful

thinking here. There will be no tier of local government between Mickleham Parish Council and East Surrey Unitary Authority, and of course Westhumble doesn't (yet) have a parish council. So, if you thought our voice wasn't being listened to by Mole Valley District Council on such matters as biker noise, wait until we are trying to engage with a unitary authority dealing with four times the population.

Elections for the new unitary councils will take place in May 2026, with the new authorities formally taking over responsibilities from 1st April 2027 (no, this isn't an April Fool, but you'd have thought they might have chosen a different date). Existing councillors will remain in post until 31st March 2027. Services will, we are told, 'be delivered as usual throughout the process'. Those of us who have experienced corporate mergers will be only too aware of the disruption and stress for employees that such reorganisations bring, as employees struggle to understand different working practices, and compete to keep their jobs. I personally think that there will be a significant degree of chaos and/or stasis.

The Lib Dems have announced their two local candidates for the East Surrey unitary authority to be Johanna Farrar-Astrop and Dineke van den Bogerd, currently both district councillors for Capel, Leigh, Newdigate and Charlwood. Other political parties will no doubt follow suit.

Parish Councils

About half of Surrey, like Westhumble, and indeed Dorking, does not have parish councils, 'unparished' in the jargon. A public consultation on this topic closed on 31st October, and Mole Valley District Council has, as a result, stated its intention of creating a number of new parish councils, including Westhumble, but of leaving Mickleham Parish Council in place. Mole Valley District Council is also considering expediting the process so that the new parish councils can be established before the East Surrey Unitary Authority is in place, removing the risk that the new authority blocks this change. A decision on this is to be taken at a Mole

Valley District Council extraordinary general meeting on 13th January.

Strategic Authority and Mayor

There is also talk of an elected mayor for Surrey, who would create a new Strategic Authority covering the whole of Surrey. Establishment of this will be subject to the 'relevant statutory tests' (no, me neither) being met and there will be ongoing discussions between local officials and the Minister of Devolution. This part of the exercise is remarkably opaque, even by the standards of the rest of this reorganisation, and quite what the functions of the Strategic Authority and the mayor will be, as opposed to the functions of the unitary authorities, remains to be seen. Maybe the prime minister is going lukewarm on the creation of new mayors, given that they seem to create power bases for leadership challengers such as Andy Burnham.

Neighbourhood Area Committees

The government appears to have spotted the gap in governance between parish councils and unitary councils, and has mandated the creation of Neighbourhood Area Committees, NACs for short, to try to fill the gap. These are supposed to be attended by a cross-section of local residents' representatives. One of these areas, Dorking and Villages, has started a pilot NAC, to which I was invited on 2nd October, 11th November and 8th December. We sat in groups comprising parish, district and county councillors, police officers, health professionals, county council officers and charity organisers. The chair was Hazel Watson, our county councillor. We discussed a whole range of problems facing people who live in the area. Housing affordability and lack of transport were mentioned, but also youth and vulnerability challenges, health and wellbeing, anti-social behaviour, noise. Work was done on what caused deprivation for some in our otherwise wealthy part of Surrey.

All that was quite instructive, but when I asked what power and budget these NACs will have, the answer was 'we don't know'. This is because the new unitary authority will be the body that decides how much power and what

budget, if any, they will allocate to these NACs. Also, as set out above, that unitary authority won't formally assume power until April 2027. I made the point that without power or budget the NACs would be talking-shops, and then we would all stop attending them.

Also, whenever a point was made with which the elected officials disagreed, it tended to be dismissed pretty quickly. For example, I expressed the view that the issues that affected Dorking as an urban area were rather different from the issues affecting the rural villages that surrounded it. This view did not seem to be accepted. Nor was any district councillor prepared to accept that housing affordability problems in our villages might be down to their planning policy.

I was left with the impression that if a NAC wanted to do something which wasn't the policy of the party in power in the new unitary authority,

it would simply never happen. Nor does there seem to be any point in abolishing district councils and then creating another body that does the same thing. Perhaps the appropriate model to be followed might be that of a parliamentary select committee, which scrutinizes the work of elected officials and civil servants, and seeks to hold them to account. Without budget or power, NACs will be useless.

Abolition of Police Commissioners

The government has announced that it will abolish police and crime commissioners. The police forces who currently report to these commissioners will report to mayors, where there is a mayor, and to a newly-created board where there isn't. They have also floated the idea of merging some police forces, but Surrey Police and Sussex Police already operate closely together in any event.

Conclusion

I apologise for the length of this note, but the subject is important to all of us. In short, we have a decision on unitary authorities. They are going to come whether we like it or not. We probably have a decision on a mayor and a strategic authority, but zero detail. We probably will have a new Westhumble Parish Council, but the same Mickleham Parish Council. We do have a pilot project on NACs, but no indication as to their budget or powers. We won't have police commissioners, going forward.

Let's hope it all works. As of now, I'm more than a bit sceptical. It does feel a bit like pushing the deckchairs round on the Titanic. Maybe we should just have written a note to Santa and shoved it up the chimney. Probably just as effective as all the work that the government is doing, and a lot cheaper.

Will Dennis
Chair of MPC

Garden Shed Christmas Craft Workshop



Christmas started early in Mickleham Village Hall with the Wreath and Table Decoration Workshop bringing a welcome touch of seasonal spirit. The scent of pine and citrus filled the air. Freshly foraged greenery was piled high on the tables along with berries, ribbons and festive trimmings ready for everyone to use.

With some gentle guidance, participants set about making their own wreaths and table centrepieces, sharing ideas and admiring each other's handiwork along the way. A pause for refreshments including home-made mince pies, mulled wine and tea gave everyone a chance to chat and compare progress.

By the end of the session, the tables were filled with finished decorations, each one a little different but all full of personal touches. Everyone left feeling inspired, festive and more than ready to bring a little home-made magic to their Christmas celebrations.

Cathy Lee

Monday 16th February 7.30 pm

A talk by Julie Verity
Gertrude Jekyll
and her garden at
Munstead Wood

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Any Questions

Pauline Davis 07759646353 or paulinedavis33@icloud.com

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 07811 088097
 Friends of Box Hill – Chair Lyn Richards 01737 842889
lyn@mra.uk.net

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DORKING GROUP OF ARTISTS
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MICKLEHAM & WESTHUMBLE BADMINTON CLUB
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MICKLEHAM CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION
 Secretary – Sarah Parfitt 07767 891772
sarah@sarahparfitt.com

MICKLEHAM CHORAL SOCIETY www.micklehamchoral.org.uk
 THURSDAYS 8 - 10 pm – MICKLEHAM VILLAGE HALL
 Conductor – Juliet Hornby 01372 373106
 Secretary – Mike Benson secretary@micklehamchoral.org.uk

MICKLEHAM CRICKET CLUB
 Membership contact – Will Dennis 07903 842674
will@micklehamhallfarm.co.uk

MICKLEHAM OLD BOX HILLIANS FOOTBALL CLUB
 Secretary – John Atewell 01372 374745

MICKLEHAM PARISH COUNCIL
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bookings@micklehamvh.co.uk

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

*within the United Benefice
of Leatherhead and Mickleham*

INCUMBENT — The Rev'd Will Perry 01372 372313

PARISH PRIEST

The Rev'd Dr Sandra Faccini * 01372 417664
07763 488961

parishpriest@micklehamchurch.org.uk

* Main working days: Monday, Tuesday and Sunday

CHURCHWARDENS

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cwa@micklehamchurch.org.uk

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FUNERALS CO-ORDINATOR

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AUDIOVISUAL

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PCC ECO GROUP

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PASTORAL VISITOR

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annettejc46@gmail.com

www.micklehamchurch.org.uk

*For information about services for other denominations
see website pages.*

Search on 'Churches Together Mole Valley'

CALENDAR FEBRUARY

1	Fourth SUNDAY of Epiphany	10 am	Family Service
3	Tuesday	7 pm	Compline in church
7	Saturday	10 am to noon	Coffee at Westhumble Chapel p2
8	Second SUNDAY before Lent	8 am 10 am	BCP Holy Communion at Westhumble Chapel Holy Communion
15	SUNDAY next before Lent	10 am	Holy Communion Speaker from Five Talents Charity after service
16	Monday	3 pm 7.30 pm	Tea@3 p2 GS talk at The Stepping Stones pub p11
17	Tuesday	7 pm	Compline in church
18	Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm	Holy Communion with Ashing in church
20	Friday	7.30 pm	M&WLHG AGM in Mickleham Village Hall p19
21	Saturday	9 - 10 am	Women's Breakfast at The Stepping Stones p19
22	First SUNDAY of Lent	8 am 10 am	BCP Holy Communion at Westhumble Chapel Holy Communion
26	Thursday		Lent Lunch at Mickleham Village Hall p3
28	Saturday	9 - 10 am	Men's Breakfast at Stepping Stones p19

Dates for your diary

Sunday 15th March

Mothering Sunday Workshop in church
followed by 11 am Worship for All Service

Thursdays 5th, 19th and 26th March

Lent Lunches p3



MEMBERS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Andy Diamond	Elaine Machin
Celia Lyons	Tim Mathieson
Caroline Jones	Beverley Mehta
Vickie Leney	Richard Siberry
Susan McGrath	Amanda Wadsworth
Paddy MacVean	

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH COMMUNITY GROUP COMMITTEE

Mark Day	07852 117249 mickleham@hotmail.com
Denise Darling	07780 673372 denisedarling4@btinternet.com
Andy Diamond	07789 775354 adiamond714@gmail.com
Kelvin Pritchard	07770 280410 Kelvin@wan2lan.com

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Mary Banfield 01372 373912 mgbbmw@aol.com
Frances Presley 01306 882473 jasempres@gmail.com

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REGISTER

Friday 23rd January Funeral service of
Alexandra (Sandra) Mary, Lady
Wedgwood followed by
burial in the churchyard.

Community Directory

Continued from page 13

MICKLEHAM & WESTHUMBLE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Chairman – David Kennington 01372 362309
www.surreycommunity.info/mwhs or davidkennington144@gmail.com

MICKLEHAM AND WESTHUMBLE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Chairman – Ben Tatham 01306 882547
ben@thetatham.co.uk or www.micklehamwesthumblehistory.co.uk

MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cllr Chris Budleigh 07801 520059
councillor.budleigh@molevalley.gov.uk

Cllr Abhiram Magesh 07765 126399
councillor.magesh@molevalley.gov.uk

Cllr Leah Mursaleen-Plank 07803 353352
councillor.mursaleen-plank@molevalley.gov.uk

RGS SURREY HILLS

Headmistress – Hayley Robinson 01306 374814
reception@rgs-surreyhill.org

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (A) INFANT SCHOOL

01372 373717
info@stmichaels-dorking.surrey.sch.uk

Friends of St Michael's School – friendsofstmichaels2017@gmail.com

ST MICHAEL'S COMMUNITY NURSERY

WEEKDAY MORNINGS – MICKLEHAM VILLAGE HALL

Supervisor – Hilary Budd 01372 361021
stmichaelsnursery@btinternet.com

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor – Hazel Watson 01306 880120
hva.watson@btinternet.com

SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST

01483 795440
info@surreywt.org.uk

THE ARTS SOCIETIES (FORMERLY NADFAS)

Betchworth – Mary Venning 01306 883301
Dorking – Sue Tatham 01306 882547
Leatherhead – Beverley Mehta 01372 374304

TREE WARDEN

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WESTHUMBLE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

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westhumble.neighbourhood.watch@gmail.com

WHATSAPP GROUP

Neil MacKay nlpm@lineone.net

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

CITIZENS ADVICE

Dorking – Lyons Court 01306 732302
Leatherhead – Swan Mews High Street 01306 732301

CRIMESTOPPERS

POLICE Non-emergencies 0800 555 111

(often quicker to make online report) <https://report.police.uk/>

Neighbourhood Specialist Team – Dorking Rural East
General enquiries molevalley@surrey.pnn.police.uk

NHS Urgent and emergency care 111

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Eva Lanceley *07903 630567
Ella Parfitt 07746 882175
Bea Moore *07444 557958
Farah Patel 07757 807246
Mia McPhillips *07792 187160
Holly Flynn *07917 434566

*Parent/partner's mobile number

Catsitting

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Jim Fuller 1933 - 2025



From humble beginnings, Jim made his way in life. As a boy, he and his brother were evacuated to Tintagel in Cornwall where he was billeted with some maiden ladies who really wanted a girl! Back home in Epsom, he attended Sunday School and was also a choir boy in the Congregational Church where he got pocket money for turning up. In 1958 he would marry Evelyn in the same church.

He went on to join the 5th Mid-Surrey Epsom company of the Boys' Brigade in 1950 where he was very proud to be the mace bearer and was promoted to sergeant. His unit was invited to Buckingham Palace, where he almost spoke to King George VI. However, the boy next to him answered the King



instead of Jim! The bonus of the Boys' Brigade was the annual camping holiday at Woolacombe in North Devon, where he led the troop as they marched along the beach and caught the eye of the local girls.

After matriculating, he left Glyn County Grammar School for Boys in Ewell and went to work in London before joining the RAF on a four-year commission. He was selected to train as a pilot in Winnipeg in Canada under NATO. Here he lived among French, Polish, and Canadian trainee pilots and enjoyed the camaraderie he had with them. He also appreciated the hospitality of the local prairie farmers who often invited them to Sunday lunch. However, due to aviation sickness he had to retrain as a navigator. He graduated as Flight Lieutenant Fuller and was gazetted in *The Times* of 1954.



On his return to Epsom, he joined a wholesale toy and stationery company called Trickeys of Ewell, where he was successful and always valued for his integrity. While at Trickeys, Jim became one of the founding members of the 'Club Group' of stationers which



still exists today. His claim to fame was speaking at *The Savoy* in London and meeting Joan Bakewell, then the thinking man's pin up. He enjoyed his annual trips to the toy fair in Harrogate and had many amusing stories to tell on his return. He regretted turning down 'Rubik's Cube' in the 1970s but did accept and market the 'Cabbage Patch Doll' in the 1980s.

On the death of Evelyn in 2000 he met me. We were together for twenty-five happy years and married at St Michael's Church in 2009 by The Rev'd David Ireland. Many of you who attended our wedding were present again at the church for his funeral. I would like to thank everyone for their kindness and support.

Throughout his life Jim was known for his kind and caring nature, his dry wit, warm smile and for the twinkle in his eye. He never spoke ill of anyone and never complained, even in the face of adversity. He was also very handsome.

Jim was one of life's gentlemen, loved and respected by everyone he met. He will be remembered and missed by many. I was privileged to have been in his life for twenty-five years, sixteen as his wife. He was my rock and my stay and always made me laugh.

Carole Brough Fuller

Community News

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Sandra, Lady Wedgwood on 16th December. Her funeral took place at St Michael's Church on 23rd January and we hope to include an obituary in the March issue. Sadly, more recently, there have been

three more deaths in the community: Keith Crouch of Swanworth Lane, Annette Wates of Box Hill, and Stewart Keen of Old London Road. Stewart and his wife Stella only moved to Mickleham last March. Our sincere condolences to all four families for their loss.

A warm welcome to Tom and Holly Davies and sons, George and Chester, who have moved to Mickleham.



Mickleham and Westhumble Local History Group
Heritage Open Day Exhibition Sites

Pilgrims Way Court Westhumble



Pilgrims Way Court today, showing the Shippen in the centre with the Byre on the left and Haybarn on the right

In last November's magazine we focussed on the Leladene Arch built by Victor Freeman, a wealthy American businessman, soon after he bought the Camilla Lacey Estate in 1922. The following year he employed Trollope and Colls to build a new Home Farm in the meadow south of Chapel Lane. It was based on an old Dutch model, covering three sides of a square, surrounding a courtyard with a pump in the middle. The pump drew water from a cistern beneath it, which was fed by pipes from the surrounding buildings' downpipes. The buildings included a laundry, dairy, cowshed/milking parlour, carthorse stable and hay barn with a cottage for farmworkers on each end.

In 1931 Freeman was found dead in his bath. Apparently, the estate was in financial difficulties – this was the period of depression after the Wall Street crash. The 80-acre estate was put up for auction in three lots:

Lot 1 All that portion north of Chapel Lane, which included the mansion with its numerous attached buildings and the parkland.

Lot II That portion south of Chapel Lane, consisting of Home Farm and all its buildings (subsequently developed as a residential estate).

Lot III A brick and tiled block of Superior Modern Cottages near the drive entrance, all vacant.

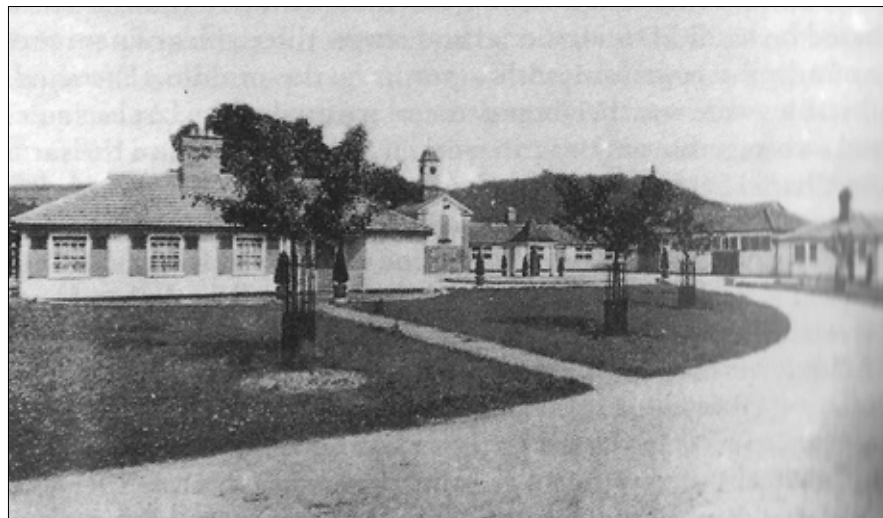
The Home Farm buildings were destined to be demolished, but they were bought by Portwell Ltd, a firm that consisted of the founder and designer of the A C motorcar, John Portwine* and John Weller, respectively. They were not builders, but both had an interest in building and had the foresight to preserve the buildings and convert them into dwellings.

The laundry and dairy became *The Byre* (a shelter for cows - OE *bur*). The hexagonal room on the northeastern corner of the building was the dairy. It still has white ceramic tiles lining its domed ceiling. The part now called *The Shippen* (a cowhouse - OE *scypen*) was the cow shed. *The Haybarn* was just that. The carthorse's stable is now the garage for *Mands Place*. The cottages were called *St Anthony* and *Barn End*. Barn End fell into disrepair about ten years ago and is now being rebuilt.

The name, *Pilgrims Way Court*, was given to the former Home Farm buildings some time ago when there was a plan afoot to number all houses in Mole Valley. St Anthony is listed as 1 Pilgrims Way Court on Council Tax forms.

**John Portwine was local historian Ronnie Shepperd's father-in-law.*

Sue Tatham



Home Farm 1931, St Anthony is on the left



Aerial view of Pilgrims Way Court in 1980s

Friends of Juniper Hall

Our Programme for 2026 is taking shape and is very focused on the environment.

12th March Nigel Bond of River Mole River Watch will give a talk on the History of the River Mole and its current state.

7th May a talk given by a representative from Surrey Wildlife Trust.

These are morning meetings (11 for 11.30 am) followed by a light lunch of soup and sandwiches.

9th July our AGM, with a talk by a member of the Field Study Centre Staff followed by afternoon tea.

On **Saturday 18th July** the centre will be hosting another Festival of Nature, with lots of family-orientated events and hopefully better weather than in 2025.

24th September, an evening meeting with a talk by Surrey Bat Group, including a bat walk in the hall grounds (weather permitting). Tea and biscuits will be available.

In November, we are hoping to have a talk from the Woodland Trust.

3rd December, finish the year with our usual Christmas Lunch.

Our morning meetings followed by lunch incur a charge of £10 for members and £15 for non-members. Charges for other meetings may be less. The bulk of these charges go into the fund that the Friends use to support Juniper Hall. This year some of the fund will be used to create bursaries, so that disadvantaged children can attend Field Study Centre residential courses.

New Members would be very welcome to help support this worthwhile cause. You can find out all about the Friends of Juniper Hall's activities and how to become a member by visiting our website friendsofjuniperhall.org or contacting us via email on, friendsofjuniperhall@gmail.com

Peter Almond

M&W Local History Group AGM

followed by

Tales from Dorking's dinosaur swamp

A talk by Pete Brown

Friday 20th February

7.30 for 8 pm Mickleham Village Hall

All welcome

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NB: The display panels from our exhibition 'Where is it?' will also be available to view before the start of the AGM

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Valuable Weeds - The Dandelion

Dandelions are perhaps the best-known plant, one of the first we recognise as children. They are abundant and grow everywhere from your comfortable vegetable patch or flower border to an inhospitable ledge on a block of flats, in walls and between paving slabs. The name dandelion comes from the old French word for the plant, *dent-de-lion* (tooth of the lion), after their narrow-toothed leaves. The modern French word is *pis-en-lit* (wet the bed) which comes from the fact that the leaves have a diuretic quality and thus picking a dandelion and eating it might cause you to wet the bed!



There are around 250 species of dandelion, easily recognisable with their bright yellow flower-heads packed with petals (each one an individual flower).

Each flower-head commonly produces about 200 seeds, which are dispersed by the wind and can travel up to 500m. If you wish to reduce their number in your garden, pick the seed heads before they blow away - and don't put them on your compost heap. You can also dig them up, but a new plant can grow from any small part of the tap root left in the ground. Dandelions are perennials, so they will overwinter in the ground and emerge again the following spring. If you keep removing new growth and seedlings they will weaken and die. An undisturbed plant can live for ten years. However, dandelions are more than just a weed. Due to their long flowering period (March to October), they are extremely beneficial to pollinators.

They feed a large variety of insects and birds, particularly when other food sources are scarce. In 2018, the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme recorded 90 different species of bee, 62 species of hoverfly and 25 species of butterfly visiting dandelions on one survey. Fifty-five species of insects feed on their leaves and stems, and bullfinches, greenfinches and goldfinches all like to eat the seeds. In fact, dandelions are so beneficial to insects that the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) have put them on the RHS Plants for Pollinators list, where they rub shoulders with garden favourites including *Alstroemeria* (Peruvian Lilies), *Dahlias*, *Mahonia*, *Antirrhinum* (snap dragons) and *Buddleia*.

All parts of a dandelion are edible for us too and have been used medicinally for centuries. They are good sources of vitamins A, C and K, and they promote liver health, aid digestion and improve the immune system. The leaves are high in calcium and magnesium and are a nutritious addition to salads and smoothies. Dandelion flowers are strong antioxidants, containing flavonoids and polyphenols. They also have diuretic and detoxifying properties, supporting kidney function and helping to eliminate toxins. The

Photographs Sue Willis



flowers are even used in skincare balms and creams to help soothe the skin. Try the recipe for dandelion tea below, or for those of you who prefer a stronger drink, dandelion wine is a thing.

The dandelion is a cheerful, remarkable



Dandelions are excellent rabbit food

native plant that provides wonderful benefits for us and our gardens, so think twice before you wage war on them. If you allow them to live in some areas, you will be helping support greater biodiversity and all the critters who come to visit.

Dandelion Tea Recipe

- Pick light green leaves and dig up some roots.
- Wash them thoroughly and chop small, keeping leaves and roots separate.
- Bring 1L of water to the boil, add 2 tablespoons dandelion root, reduce the heat, cover the pan and simmer for 1 minute.
- Remove from the heat.
- Add 2 tablespoons chopped leaves and soak for 40 minutes.
- Strain and enjoy the tea.

(Editor: You try this recipe at your own risk.)

Sue Willis and Janet Barker

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Classic Car Rally at Goodwood

On Sunday 28th September, I played hookey from choir and the morning service because I had been asked by my youngest son if I would like to go to a classic car rally at Goodwood. Would I like to? What a silly question, and I thought that God (and organist David Fishwick) would forgive me.

I have always been interested in old cars. My first set of wheels was a 1936 Austin 7, which cost me £65, more than a month's wages. I sold it a year later for £65 and it paid for my ticket to Canada. Incidentally, when I returned from Canada to get married, a friend asked my new husband if he would like to buy it back, but the reply came immediately 'Absolutely not, I already have one liability!'.

My son's car is a 1969, 13/60 soft-topped Triumph Herald, of which he is inordinately fond and it comes second in his affections after his son. He has always loved old 'bangers'. His friend, Pete, has a dark red 1965 Mustang fastback.



The Mustang and the Triumph Herald

The drive to Goodwood was part of the 'Distinguished Gentleman's Drive', an event that works in conjunction with the Movember Charity, which in turn works with prostate cancer charities. On one day in the year about 160 DGD's



My dream car

all over the world gather in different towns, cities and villages and drive in convoy to a chosen destination, ours being Goodwood. By the time that we set off about 1 pm BST, the Australian rallies would have finished and those in California were just getting ready.

So 8 am found us in the car park in The Old Deer Park, Richmond, together with an amazing collection of classic cars. If I were to name them all I would almost fill the rest of the magazine. There were VW Beetles, E-Type Jaguars, Mercedes, Porches, Triumphs, Mustangs, Alfa Romeos, a couple of Bentleys and Rolls, but surprisingly enough, not many Austins or Fords. The one car that I really yearned after was a Monteverdi, a Swiss car of which there are very few of the early ones left in the world. It has an interesting history, which is worth reading about. However, most of them now have a six-figure asking price.

At 8.30 am we left in a long convoy through the narrow and steep Surrey Hills heading for Dunsfold airport, where we were fed coffee and buns, and then onto Goodwood. It was amazing to drive into this famous ground. We were given half an hour to find lunch before returning to our cars to line up before it was our turn to 'parade'.

We had to wait for two groups ahead of us and then at last we were in the line-up, three abreast, on the famous track waiting for the flag to go down. It was almost eerie as we all drove sedately round, but in what seemed like two minutes we were round and in the parking slots next to the track.



Parading three abreast

That is where the real 'car talk' started. Walking round looking at all the makes, ages, sizes, and shapes, not to mention colours (I am talking about the cars not their owners), one could appreciate the knowledge, care and love that had gone into these vehicles. I did not dare to join in any conversation; my knowledge does not go much beyond punctures and oil change. Despite this, I learnt a whole new vocabulary about differentials, stock, manifolds etc.

My biggest mistake was being improperly dressed. Nearly all the men were well-turned-out in smart suits, collars and ties, with interesting shoes. The ladies, and there were many both driving and passengers, were in elegant autumn clothes and most of them were wearing hats. Not a pair of jeans to be seen except mine, but I would not have missed the visit for anything.

Frances Presley

Local Artist Sherree at Goodwood

I am often asked where people can watch me paint live. An opportunity to do this has arisen as I am honoured to have been appointed as Artist in Residence by the Duke of Richmond for his Goodwood Estate. I will be painting at five 'demos'. The artwork, which will cover Glorious Goodwood, the Festival of Speed, Goodwoof, and the golf and cricket grounds will ultimately contribute to a book called

A Year at Goodwood and an exhibition will be held at Goodwood House, dates TBA. The first three demos will feature horses on 5th February, Spitfires on 26th February and dogs on 7th May, all starting at 6 pm at The Kennels, Goodwood. For more information, please contact me on 07881 951125, email svdhomestudio@gmail.com or contact The Kennels directly.

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Learning from Nature

A nursery curriculum is 'what we want our nursery children to learn'. At St Michael's, an understanding and a love of nature are part of our curriculum. As readers will know, we are outdoorsy! The weather does not stop us from playing outside and extremes of weather help our children to be curious, explore and learn. We had great fun chipping our Arctic animal toys from an icy landscape, creating winter ice art, and needing hot water to melt frozen sand, readying it for cement for wall building, with our pretend bricks.



Ice Art

At the end of this month, we will participate in the RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch. The Birdwatch offers a

wonderful opportunity for children to explore the natural world in a simple, meaningful way. Designed to be accessible and playful, the activity encourages young children to watch birds in their school grounds or local area, helping them develop a wide range of skills while nurturing curiosity and care for nature.

Watching birds encourages children to slow down and look closely. What colour is the bird? Is it big or small? Is it hopping or flying? These simple observations help children practise focus and attention. Even short periods of watching birds in the garden can build concentration in a calm, natural way. Alongside some of our bird resources, we will use the RSPB website to create tally charts and bird identification pictures. Even if counting is not strictly accurate, the experience helps children understand numbers, more and less, and simple comparison as they watch birds land and eat from the bird feeders we will create for them. Simple actions, such as helping to make or refill a bird feeder, encourages empathy and respect for nature. These early experiences can foster a lifelong positive attitude towards wildlife and the environment, maybe the



Is that a lesser spotted tree surgeon?

next Sir David, or Hamza Yassin, will be from the nursery!

Hilary Budd



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December 2025 Crossword Answers

ACROSS

1 & 8 Deep and crisp and even
11 Noggins 12 Boron 13 Yearnings
14 Gaffer 16 Tape 17 Yes 19 Bis
21 Came 23 Museum 27 Ignorance

28 About 30 & 31 Feast of Stephen

32 Parallel Bars

DOWN

2 Elder 3 Cantata 4 Ingenue
5 Pliancy 6 Resists 7 Ragbag

9 Venue 10 Nays 15 Ali 16 The

18 Emu 19 Briefly 20 Sunlamp

21 Curator 22 Mindful 24 Usage

25 Mutiny 26 Mess 29 Other

Richard Roberts-Miller

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Music in Dorking in February

7th at noon, lunchtime recital at St Martin's church

7th at 5.30 pm, Dorking Chamber Orchestra at St Nicolas' Church, Bookham

7th at 7.30 pm, English Chamber Orchestra at Dorking Halls, £20-30, 01306 740619

9th at 7.15 pm, ballet screening at Dorking Halls, £19.50, 01306 881717

17th -21st at 7.30 pm, DDOS *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, £22-24, 01306 881717



Ian Codd

Surrey Hills International Music Festival

Tuesday 5th May, West Horsley Place, a guided walk to take in some of our glorious local countryside ahead of a short lunchtime talk with music

Thursday 7th May, RHS Garden Wisley, toe-tapping jazz by the Julian Bliss Quintet

Evening performances at Holy Trinity Guildford

Saturday 9th May, Tenebrae vocal group,

and Friday 15th May, a romantic song recital by our patron, mezzo-soprano Dame Sarah Connolly

Monday 11th May, lunchtime concert, Betchworth with students from the Yehudi Menuhin School

Thursday 14th and Saturday 16th May, Menuhin Hall in Cobham, a two piano extravaganza and sublime chamber music

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Settling Back After Christmas – Exciting Times Ahead!

After a well-deserved Christmas break, the children have returned to school full of energy and enthusiasm. It has been wonderful to see how quickly they have settled back into routines, ready to embrace the learning opportunities this term brings.

Our new topic is *Fire and Ice*, a fascinating geography theme that is already sparking curiosity and discussion in classrooms. This half term is focused on ice and life in the Arctic. The children will explore the unique landscapes, wildlife, and ways of life in this extreme environment, developing their understanding of geography and global diversity.

As part of our School Development Plan, we have also been working hard

on improving our classroom displays. These are now more focused on key vocabulary and essential information, helping to reduce cognitive load and support learning more effectively. The aim is to create calm, purposeful spaces that celebrate learning without overwhelming pupils.

With lots of exciting activities planned, including creative projects and opportunities for outdoor learning, this term promises to be both engaging and enriching. We look forward to sharing the children's progress and achievements with you in the weeks ahead.

Inclusion at St Michael's

At St Michael's, we are proud to offer an education that is not only exciting



and engaging, but genuinely inclusive of every child. All children are different, and we celebrate these differences as a strength of our school community. By recognising and valuing each child's individuality, we create a learning environment where everyone feels accepted, understood and supported.



Our whole-school commitment to inclusion helps pupils thrive both academically and emotionally.

All staff regularly take part in whole-school training to continually update our knowledge and understanding of a wide range of special educational needs, including autism (ASD) and ADHD. This ongoing professional development ensures that children are supported consistently, no matter who they are learning with, and that staff feel confident in adapting their teaching to meet a broad variety of needs.

We are lucky enough to have fantastic Occupational Therapy (OT) equipment, this enables us to provide daily sensory, OT-based movement tracks to help pupils regulate, focus and feel ready to learn.

We are incredibly grateful to our hardworking PTA (the FRIENDS) for raising additional funds, which help us to purchase valuable equipment and resources that further enrich our children's learning experiences.

By combining high expectations with understanding, creativity and care, we aim to ensure every child at St Michael's feels valued, included and excited about learning.

Anna Fox (SENCO)

Hidden in Stone: Dorking's Dinosaur Discovery

Dorking Museum's new exhibition celebrates the town's contribution to the developing understanding of the wildlife that roamed the area 125 million years ago. At that time, the Dorking area was part of a vast tropical river delta with swamps, sand flats and lagoons that extended across much of what is now south-east England and the Isle of Wight. Extreme seasons and changing conditions resulted in the evolution of amazing species and the Wealden clay has yielded much evidence of the dinosaurs that evolved.

The discovery of a giant claw, by fossil enthusiast Bill Walker in a quarry near Ockley in 1983, led to the excavation

of an almost complete skeleton, which resembled a crocodile that stood up on its hind legs. This provided evidence of a previously unknown dinosaur species and led to the recognition of a new group of specialised fish-eating dinosaurs. The creature was given the scientific name *Baryonyx walkeri* in honour of its finder and provided the key to understanding more fragmentary remains of similar dinosaurs that were being unearthed on other continents. They became known as Spinosaurids because some had elongated neural spines and they had a semi-aquatic lifestyle based on hunting fish and scavenging whatever they could find.

The fossilised skeleton found by Walker, dubbed 'Claws' by the media at the time, is now on display at the Natural History Museum. Four decades on from the discovery, two new *Baryonyx* cousins have been found in the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, and maybe other unknown species are still down there in the clay.

The exhibition, on until mid-May, explores Dorking's dinosaur connections in greater detail. Displays include lifelike replica models on loan from the University of Southampton. Takeaway model templates of Dorking's most famous dinosaur are available to go with the exhibition.

David Burton

A Weather Word Search

Thank you to Barbara Jones for this month's puzzle. It is a word search based on weather terms, all of which are in the list to the right. There are no gaps between words for two word answers in the grid.

Why not have a go at puzzle setting for yourself? Send in your puzzle and solution to the editor email, editor@micklehammag.co.uk and you may find it featured on the back page. Answers to the December crossword are on page 25.

O	G	X	W	F	M	S	O	D	I	T	D	R	L	H
D	E	N	A	O	L	I	R	K	H	L	E	V	I	Y
A	L	D	I	E	B	I	S	U	G	T	W	G	U	P
N	I	H	E	N	Z	N	N	T	S	A	H	O	D	S
R	A	T	E	Z	T	D	I	I	R	P	G	A	L	E
O	H	W	L	P	E	H	W	A	R	A	C	P	S	S
T	B	E	M	R	M	T	G	E	R	A	L	A	T	U
E	Z	E	E	R	B	A	S	I	L	G	T	N	I	N
H	W	Q	O	T	N	S	O	M	L	U	P	S	R	S
A	A	T	S	R	U	B	D	U	O	L	C	D	R	H
A	L	O	D	R	A	Z	Z	I	L	B	R	L	O	I
R	R	B	E	T	P	S	N	O	W	N	H	O	D	N
F	C	E	N	A	C	I	R	R	U	H	V	C	S	E
S	L	Y	E	Z	S	C	Y	C	L	O	N	E	K	J
H	E	A	T	W	A	V	E	N	O	O	S	N	O	M

blizzard
breeze
calm
cloudburst
cold snap
cyclone
dew
drizzle
frost
gale
haar
hail
heatwave
high pressure
hurricane
lightning
mistral
monsoon
rainbow
sleet
snow
sunshine
thunder
tornado
twister



Seasonal Sightings

Hellebores to the left and snowdrops with hellebores in the background to the right, both photographed by Neil MacKay at Polesden Lacey on Wednesday 7th January.

This led several people on the village WhatsApp to claim sightings of other early blooms. Please send a photo in to the magazine of early sightings of flowers or birds so that we keep a local record. A copy of each issue is kept by the Local History Centre at Woking and in the village archive so over time a picture of changing seasons may be documented.



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