

BLUNSDON

VILLAGE MAGAZINE

February 2026

FRONT LANE

Photo by Debra Richardson



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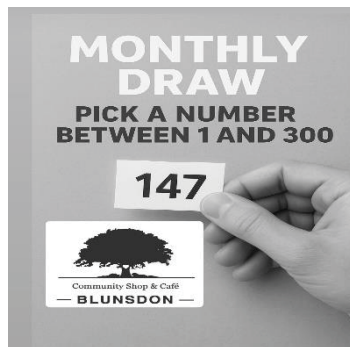
SEASONED FIREWOOD



Welcome to 2026 from Blunsdon Community Shop & Café!

January saw Ryan say goodbye to join the Police Force. He joined us as one of our original weekend teenagers when we first opened, so we are very proud of him. We also welcomed Pete as a new member of the paid team. Many of you will know Pete as he has been a dedicated volunteer for some time now.

Did you know it's a year since we launched our Monthly Draw?



Our Monthly Draw is a fantastic way to raise funds for the shop and cafe. We need to purchase supplies for our back office and the money raised from the monthly draw enables us to keep things running smoothly. For only £2 a number you get the opportunity to win anything from £75 to £150 depending on the number of entries.

Dates for your diary in February

Fri 6th February

FREE wine of the month
tasting from 4 pm

***Follow us on Social
Media to see all our
events***

Looking for something new in 2026? Why not join our Volunteer Team?

- Full training and support is given
- Give as little as 1 hour a week
- Be part of our Award Winning Team
- Interested? Please speak to a member of our team or email

[**volunteering@blunsdoncommunityshop.co.uk**](mailto:volunteering@blunsdoncommunityshop.co.uk)



**Shop opening times are: Mon, Tues, Weds, Thurs, Sat: 8 am - 5 pm, Fri 8 am - 6 pm
Sunday: 8 am - 4 pm. Cafe closes 1 hour before the shop.**

*****Changes to FRIDAY Hours - we are now closing at 6 pm*****

. FOOD FOR THOUGHT.
Outside Catering



**Mobile fish & chip van will be at
Blunsdon, Blunt Rise from 5pm
Thursday 5th Feb & Thursday 19th Feb
2026**

**If you would like a copy of our menu
please email**

grahamrowcliffe58@outlook.com

or WhatsApp 07515 288414

**Pre orders welcome by WhatsApp or
text 07515 288414.**

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.
Outside Catering





St Leonard's Church
Blunsdon
Connecting with God, each other
and our community

Exciting News from St Leonard's Church!

St Leonard's PCC, Blunsdon, are pleased to announce that after four years of consultation and planning we have been awarded a "Faculty" or permission by the Diocese of Bristol to carry out some changes to our church. This process has involved full participation by organisations, such as Historic England, The Victorian Society and the Church Buildings Trust to ensure all changes are carried out sympathetically. We are very excited by this news and look forward to these changes making the building accessible to many more people. It will become a space for use by the whole community, building on things like the Toddler Group, the Lego Club and monthly book sale, alongside the regular use by the church congregation and services. The changes include removal of an obsolete gas boiler, installation of an air source heat pump, under floor heating, insulation, new toilet and kitchen facilities, plus outside storage for community groups.

In order to move our project forward, we are looking for volunteers with relevant experience who might like to get involved. So, if you have a background of fundraising, construction, surveying or similar we would love to hear from you.

Perhaps you are new to the area and would like to get involved in this exciting project as a way of getting involved with your community. Please contact one of the church wardens Paul – paulwmorris777@gmail.com or Helen- griff9999@btinternet.com



OUR REGULAR EVENTS AND SERVICES AT ST LEONARD'S

- **Baby & Toddler Group every Wednesday 10am–12pm**
- **Lego Club 1st Saturday 9.30–11am**
- **Men's Breakfast 2nd Saturday 9am in the shop**
- **Coffee & Book Sale 3rd Saturday 10am–12pm**
- **Community Prayers Monday 10–10.30am Fortnightly**
- **Bell Ringing every Friday 6–7pm**
- **Communion Service 1st & 3rd Sunday 10am**
- **Morning Worship 2nd Sunday 10am**
- **Breakfast Church 4th Sunday 9am (with breakfast!)**

Everyone welcome!



Come In For Lunch:

Homemade Soup & bread

Tuesdays in Lent, noon-2pm

February 24th

March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th

Venue: St Leonard's Church

In support of the work of CHRISTIAN AID

Everyone is welcome. There is no charge.

**Donations are requested for Christian Aid's work
with people of all faiths or none.**

**Christian Aid is a partnership of people,
churches and local organisations committed to
ending poverty worldwide.**

If you would like to make soup,
and/or bread, please contact
Jane:
jane_ockwell@hotmail_com



BLUNSDON WI

We meet in the large hall of Blunsdon Village Hall on the third Wednesday of the month. The programme of events over the next few months will be:-

February 18th	Jeff Evans	The Questionable History of the TV Quiz Show
March 18th	Jim Macleod	History of the Traditional British Toastmaster
April 15th	Ali Warren	The first Celebrity Chef Alexis Soyer
May 20th	No Speaker	ANNUAL MEETING + RESOLUTIONS + American Supper

We also run other events during the month such as visiting gardens, houses or factory tours often including a tea and cake, ladies that lunch outings, and various craft activities. There are also a very active book club (next book *The Glassmaker*: A spellbinding new novel set in Venice by Tracy Chevalier) and film club (next film can be found on ITVX *The Chain* (1984 version))

To find out about our WI call Anna on 01793 706392 or visit our website jackie707.wixsite.com



CREATE and CONNECT

EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY
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AND EVERY THIRD FRIDAY
AT 5:30-7:00PM

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SN26 7DA

An opportunity to meet with others over a cuppa and cake to create. Whether you draw, paint, knit, crochet or simply colour, you can bring your own project, or you can use our materials. Or you can just come along for a chat!



CREATE • CONNECT





Parish Council Update – February 2026

Welcome to 2026, so with the festive season well past, it is a great time to focus on 2026 and ensure we stick to those new year's resolutions. As we start into 2026, we are aware that not all residents get the chance to pop into our parish meetings so this magazine provides a great opportunity to set the tone for the months ahead, by updating ongoing projects, identifying new priorities, and continuing to build on the progress we made last year. Your input, ideas, and involvement are what make this parish thrive, and we're grateful for the commitment each of you bring.

Planning Highlights

A parish council is a *statutory consultee*. This means Swindon Borough Council must notify the parish council about planning applications, but the parish council does not have the power to make the final decision to approve or refuse them, that decision is made solely by Swindon Borough Council. The parish council's role is to provide local knowledge, raise concerns or objections, and represent the views of the community. Its comments are considered as part of the decision-making process. Members of the public can view applications, read parish council comments, and submit their own feedback here:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20268/planning_applications/380/view_or_comment_on_a_planning_application

Applications Received

Application Ref: S/25/1500 Description: Erection of 5 No dwellings. Site Address: Land At Eden Field, Kingsdown Lane, Blunsdon Swindon SN25 5DL Decision: The PC objected.

Application Ref: S/HOU/25/1646 Description: Erection of rear dormer windows and loft conversion. Site Address: 30 Thames View, Blunsdon, Swindon SN26 8AQ Decision: The PC has no reason to object.

Application Ref: S/HOU/25/1651 Description: Erection of side dormer windows, raising of existing roof. Site Address: 24 Sutton Park, Blunsdon, Swindon SN26 7BB Decision: The PC objected.

Application Ref: S/RES/25/1647 Description: Reserved matters application in respect of scale, layout, appearance and landscaping in relation to approval of outline application reference S/OUT/20/0549 for the erection of 8 no self-build dwellings. Site Address: Land East of Woodbine Cottage, Kingsdown Lane, Blunsdon Swindon SN25 5DL Decision: The PC objected.

Application Ref: S/HOU/25/1662 Description: Amendment to roof construction of previously approved single storey side/rear/Ext REF: S/HOU/25/0099/WOODCL Site Address: 93 Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon SN26 8AA Decision: The PC has no reason to object.

Decisions Made by SBC

S/ADV/25/1441 Description: Proposed Double-sided digital Bus Shelter advertising displays to replace existing Double-sided internally illuminated 6-sheet Bus Shelter advertising displays. Site Address: O/S Unit A Stephenson Road, Cricklade Road Swindon. Decision: Granted Consent

Projects & Improvements

The Blunsdon office is now officially based at Linley Road, Blunsdon SN26 7AP, it will provide an ideal base for staff and councilors to have meetings, a hot desk for clerical staff and an ideal site for the caretakers to plan their schedules and workload. We will soon be having a post box here, so this should be used for the parish council items, and community suggestions, as well as general post. Note all mail for the preschool should still go to the village hall post box.

The MUGA site was full of activity over the last few months, we are pleased to say that the site provided the winter training and helped lots of teams keep to their fitness etc., from the end of February there will be a number of timeslots available as football teams will return to the fields. The facility is also set up for tennis courts, so if there are any local teams or individuals that would like to book a regular weekly slot then now is the time to let us know.

Community Groups & Events

Golden Gatherings will continue for 2026 with fantastic news that funding has been offered by the Prestbury Trust (St Leonard's Church) a BIG thank you to them. Please keep an eye out for this project led by Hazel Wakefield. We will share dates in future magazines and on social media.

We have a number of regular groups hiring the facilities within the village. If you are a regular booker and would like us to share your classes on our website, then please get in contact.

Challenges and areas of focus

We'd like to share more with you. This section offers a few short snippets of what your councilors are currently working on, some positive, some more challenging, but all part of the real day-to-day work of serving our community. We believe in being open about the issues we're tackling, the progress being made, and the areas where we're still pushing for better outcomes. By sharing these updates, we hope to give you a clearer picture of the work happening behind the scenes and the commitment we hope to bring to every task, big or small.

Highways Sign: BPC are not pleased that a directional highways sign has appeared, directing traffic from Tadpole Garden Village into the village despite BPC querying that the Haul Road is not yet adopted by SBC and so Highways signage should not be in place.

Rivan: BPC are asking whether there is a pecuniary interest for Swindon Borough Council in that should this plan be approved, would it attract Carbon Capture funding for them, we know they are promoting Carbon Capture projects currently and would not want this to influence their decision.

High Street: The water leak is now improved in the High Street, the broken pipe and blocked gully has been repaired/cleared.

Back Lane/Front Lane: The leak in this area is still of concern, despite numerous attempts to request investigation with Thames Water they are still not addressing the problem.

Defibrillator for MUGA: BPC would like to express its sincere thanks to the Rapid Relief Team for funding a defibrillator and cabinet for the MUGA. This generous support provides a valuable resource for the whole community. We will now have 5 in the Village.

Speed watch Update Speed Watch Data Table (Nov–Dec 2025)

Date	Location	Vehicles Counted	Exceeding	Max Speed (mph)	Limit (mph)	Start Time	Finish Time	Area Description
18/11/2025	Broadbush	278	2	36	30	15:00	16:00	The Shrubbery
20/11/2025	Turnpike	37	5	45	30	09:00	09:40	Opp. No. 16
21/11/2025	Lady Lane	396	12	45	30	14:30	15:30	Cycle Path
25/11/2025	Broadbush	243	8	42	30	14:00	15:00	Junct. of Sams Lane
27/11/2025	Broadbush	222	6	38	30	09:00	10:00	The Shrubbery
28/11/2025	Lady Lane	310	4	38	30	14:30	15:10	Cycle Path
03/12/2025	Ermin St	109	10	47	30	10:00	11:00	Minerva Heights
08/12/2025	Broadbush	290	2	38	30	14:30	15:30	The Shrubbery

The Speed Watch sessions over November and December give a helpful snapshot of where drivers are not sticking to the limit. Lady Lane stands out straight away, with lots of traffic and a noticeable number of people drifting well above 30 mph. Broadbush also appears several times, and while the speeding numbers aren't extreme on any single day, the fact that it keeps coming up suggests it's a road where habits are hard to shift. Ermin Street is a quieter spot overall, but the speeds recorded there are worrying, with some of the highest figures in the whole period. Altogether, these locations feel like the ones where a bit of extra attention or gentle community reminders could genuinely help improve how safe and comfortable residents feel.

Road use across the parish is shifting as new developments come forward, and access routes evolve, and we're seeing the impact of that in the way traffic moves through our community. Having residents involved in Speed Watch makes a genuine difference; your observations help us spot emerging issues early and focus attention where it's most needed. If you have a little time to spare and would like to support this work, please get in touch at ianjankinson@blunsdon-pc.gov.uk.

Ermin Street: Our landscaping project along Ermin Street was completed just before Christmas, supported in part by a £30,000 grant from the Trees for Climate fund. We have planted 4,000 native trees to form a new hedge that will enhance pedestrian access from Ermin Street to the bottom of Blunsdon Hill. Alongside the path, we have added 7,000 native flower bulbs and sown 15kg of native wildflower seed into the grass banks.

Delivering the project on what was once the main trunk road to Cirencester was challenging, particularly due to the number of underground utilities, but the final results have been warmly received. We are grateful to Oliver Saunders, our Project Manager from Bath Land Management and the contractors involved and are now focusing on ongoing maintenance to ensure local people and wildlife benefit from these improvements for many years. We are committed to keeping the village an attractive and pleasant place to live and work.

Meet Your Councillor / Staff Member Each month, we'll be introducing you to the people working behind the scenes at Blunsdon Parish Council.

Meet Councillor Paul Weston

Role on the Parish Council:

Paul joined Blunsdon Parish Council in September 2023 and has now served for over two years. His main focus is planning, but he also contributes across a range of other areas where his professional experience and practical skills add real value.

What Paul gets involved with:

Paul brings a thoughtful, analytical approach to council work, shaped by his background as a career engineer and a director in a global engineering company. His contributions include:

Reviewing and advising on planning applications

Offering insight on wider council matters where his expertise is helpful

Supporting discussions on long-term projects and improvements

Bringing a structured, problem-solving mindset to complex issues

Championing the needs and perspectives of local residents

As the council's only Military Veteran, Paul is particularly passionate about supporting the Armed Forces community and ensuring their voices are represented.

His connection to the village:

Paul has lived in Wiltshire since 1991 and made Blunsdon his home in June 2022. He values the peace of village life, the open views, the greenery, and the strong sense of community that defines the parish.

What he enjoys about the village:

For Paul, the village's charm lies in its tranquility and the genuine community spirit that brings people together. He appreciates the friendliness of residents and the shared pride in keeping Blunsdon a welcoming place to live.

A few words about Paul:

Outside council work, Paul is an advanced driver and rider with the IAM and a keen motorcyclist. Each year he leads the Swindon Toy Run, delivering toys to the children's

ward at the hospital, something he finds deeply rewarding. His long-standing commitment to community service made becoming a Parish Councilor a natural next step.

Dates for Your Diary

Parish Council Meetings – The next two meetings for the Parish Council will be on:

February's Full Council meeting to be held **Monday 2nd February at 7.30pm**

February's Finance meeting to be held on **Monday 16th February at 7.30pm**

If you want to come along, please let us know. Details are on the Parish Council notice boards, Website and FB page.

Contact: Ian Jankinson – ianjankinson@blunsdon-pc.gov.uk – 07702 684281

February 7th: Ward Surgery Meeting at The Village Shop (11:30am) is an informal drop-in session where residents can speak to their parish councilors about any local issues, ask questions, or get help. It's just a friendly, open time for people to raise concerns without needing an appointment, helping councilors stay connected with the community.

Did You Know?

Blunsdon sits on a site that dates back to Roman times, and archaeologists discovered that a Roman travelers' resting place once existed exactly where the Cold Harbour pub stands today. So next time you pass the Cold Harbour, you're walking over a spot that's been welcoming travelers for nearly 2,000 years.

Blunsdon Baby and Toddler Group

We meet every Wednesday morning in St Leonards church from 10 to 11.30am, term time and holidays.

The group includes foster carers, parents and grandparents, so a good mixture and plenty of experience if you wish to pick people's brains!

We ask £1 per session to cover costs, and this includes hot drinks and biscuits.

There might be singing and craft sessions as well so come along and see who we are.



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for the Nursery into Blakehill Business Park

Notes from the Editor

The magazine is run by volunteers from the village. All your ideas, comments and contributions will always be welcome.

Blunsdon Village Magazine is available to read online at Blunsdon Parish Council website: blunsdonparishcouncil.co.uk

EDITOR: Please email all items for the magazine to blunsdonmagazine@gmail.com

Arlene tel. 07493 978388

ADVERTS: For advert enquiries please contact Penny on 01793 722073

Front Cover: Front Lane on a winter's day

Your March Magazine will be delivered from: 27th February

Magazine issue	Deadline for items for inclusion
March	18th February

Community Messages

Christmas Crafties - On Wednesday December 2nd, the 14th annual Christmas Crafties event was held in the Village Hall. Mulled wine and home-made mince pies provided sustenance as we made wreaths, tree decorations, gift boxes and tags. Yet again, there was much creative flair on show, and jollity was had by all. The event heralds the start of my Festive Period every year and as well as having a really good time, we raise money for charity.

This year we presented a cheque for £707.70 to the Prospect Hospice.

Thank you to everyone who helps make this event so special each year.

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and that 2026 will be healthy and happy for all. (Judy)



A huge **thank you** to everyone who got involved with the Scout Christmas post and helped us raise £927 for 1st Blunsdon Scout Group, which will enable us to continue to provide exciting activities for our young people.

The wonderful team at our community shop sold 2,117 stamps and our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers and parents delivered 2,188 Christmas cards! An amazing effort – thanks to all.

Steve Iles, Group Scout Leader, 07885 188079

iles.swindon@gmail.com



Rotary

Club of Swindon North & Thamesdown

Registered Charity No: 1023031

Website: rotaryswindonnorth.org.uk

Email: rotaryswindonnorth@gmail.com

OUR CHARITY QUIZ PROMISES FUN, FOOD, AND FUNDRAISING

A night of friendly competition, delicious food, and community spirit awaits as we, together with the Inner Wheel Club of North Wiltshire, host our annual Charity Quiz and Ploughman's Supper. It takes place on **Friday March 13th at the Supermarine Football Club, Swindon, SN3 4BZ. Doors open at 6:30 pm for a prompt 7:00 pm start.**

Teams of four to six are invited to put their knowledge to the test, with prizes awarded to both the winning team and the runners-up. Tickets cost £17.50 per person, which includes participation in the quiz and a hearty Ploughman's Supper featuring bread, cheese, pâté, celery, tomatoes, pickles, chutney, and butter, followed by a tempting selection of homemade desserts.

The evening will also feature a raffle with a variety of prizes up for grabs, and a bar offering a limited selection of drinks (please bring cash for the bar and the raffle).

All proceeds from the event will be split equally between two local charities: Swindon's Roxi Foundation which supports children and families affected by autism and ADHD, and CALM, the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Movement which assists families with children undergoing treatment at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon.

Tickets can be purchased by visiting :

www.goodhub.com/go/rotaryquiz2026,

or emailing rotaryswindonnorth@gmail.com,

or phoning 07710 228697 (Ken).



A Recipe from CookFoodFan

Shrove Tuesday - I always have fond memories of Shrove Tuesday when I was a child, it was a fun family tradition. We always said we should have them more often as our pancakes were served with brown sugar and lemon. Of course, I do eat them more now as I like banana or cottage cheese pancakes for breakfast with Greek yoghurt and fruit. In 2026 Shrove Tuesday is on February 26th, so here are a traditional crepe like pancake

recipe and my two favourite pancake recipes.

Shrove Tuesday Pancakes (makes 12)

100g plain flour

300ml milk

2 large eggs

oil for frying

1. Put the flour in a large bowl and make a well in the middle. Beat the eggs and milk together and slowly add to the centre of the flour. Whisk slowly pulling in the flour (to keep it lump free). When you have a smooth batter, set aside for 30mins to rest.
2. Put a frying pan on the heat. Add a little oil then wipe round with kitchen towel. Pour a little batter in the pan and swirl it round. Cook the pancake until it looks waxy on the top before turning or flipping it over. When cooked keep warm in a low oven while you cook the rest.
3. Enjoy with lemon and caster sugar or your favourite filling.

Banana Pancakes (Serves 2)

2 ripe bananas

60 grams flour

2 large eggs

½ tsp cinnamon (optional)

Oil for cooking

1. In a bowl mash the bananas with a large fork, add the eggs and mix together.
2. Add the flour and cinnamon, stir until combined.
3. Heat a frying pan, add a little oil then wipe round with kitchen towel.
4. Put a small amount of batter into the pan (so pancake is 7-10cms), cook until small bubbles form (2-3mins). Flip and cook for 2mins.

Depending on the size of your pan cook 3 or 4 at the same time. When cooked keep warm in a low oven while you cook the rest. Serve with yoghurt and fruit.

High Protein Pancakes (Serves 2)

4 tbsp cottage cheese

100g rolled oats

2 eggs

1 tsp cinnamon

1. Put all the ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Cook as Banana Pancakes and serve with yoghurt and fruit.

TIP: Pancakes can be stored in the fridge (in an airtight container) for up to 4 days and just reheated in a microwave when needed.

Once cold pancakes can also be layered between baking parchment and frozen for up to 2 months.

ENJOY



BLUNSDON FOOTBALL CLUB

Blunsdon are 7th out of 11 in the Swindon & District Premier League

Recent Results

Great Western	Lost 1 – 5
Marlborough Town	Drew 3 – 3
Old Town Athletic	Lost 1 – 4
Swindon Rovers	Lost 1 – 6
Bassett Bulldogs	Lost 1 – 2

A poor run of results caused by a mixture of player injuries, unavailability and loss of form have seen Blunsdon falter in the league. The way to turn this around is to play through it with determination to put things right.

It was great to see **Ian Rosewell** recently returning to the club, this time as a player, after many years of service as a manager (as well as many other duties) who brought much success to Blunny.

There is still plenty to play for in the second half of the season, especially as another cup run beckons if we can get through away at Ramsbury on 24 January.

Upcoming fixtures, Kick Off 2 p.m. Saturday, unless stated

Date	Opponent	Venue
31 st January	Great Western	New College
14 th February	Old Town Athletic	Commonweal School
28 th February	Abbey Meads	Moredon Sporting Hub
7 th March	Cricklade Town	Cricklade Leisure Centre

Come and support the Amber & Black at The Theatre of Trees & beyond

**Social Walking from
Blunsdon Community Shop**

**Every 2nd and 4th Thursday
of the month at 10:00am**
We start and finish at the shop.

**New
walkers
always
welcome**

**Any queries, please message
Alex on 07554 811779**


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GREAT LAKES OUTREACH



Over the past four years, Matthew Elwick, Blunsdon resident and a keen cyclist with Swindon Wheelers has cycled annually in France with business colleagues and friends, tackling some of the Tour de France's most iconic climbs, including **Galibier, Alpe d'Huez, and Col du Tourmalet.**

In June 2026, Matthew will be taking on a very different challenge: a **700km 49000ft cycling journey across Burundi**, visiting **key charitable projects each day** and seeing first-hand the impact of community-led development.

Burundi is seen as the second poorest country on this earth. This ride is in support of **Great Lakes Outreach** whose work across the region is both practical and transformative.

<https://www.greatlakesoutreach.org/>

<https://www.greatlakesoutreach.org/get-involved/bike-for-burundi/>

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Phone lines are open to book appointments from 8am Tues, Thurs and Frid and from 3pm on Mon and Weds. **EMERGENCIES** - Call NHS 111 (outside surgery hours)

Day	Doctor Times	Reception
Mon	3.10pm - 4.40pm	3pm-6.15pm
Tues	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm
Weds	4pm - 7.10pm	3pm - 7.15pm
Thurs	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm
Frid	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm



Happy New Year! I hope that you enjoyed the end of year festivities, however that may look to you. My reading goal this year is to read more of the books on my shelf before buying new ones...at least until its down into double figures!

I opened the year with two books, one new (a present so not broken my goal yet!) and one that's been on the shelf for far too long and they both seem good thoughts to share for a new year in very different ways.

I started with Mary Earps, and her autobiography *All In*. There has been a huge amount of publicity and controversy around the release of this one, so I was intrigued to say the very least. And interesting it was, even if you are not a football, or women's football fan this is a really thought provoking read about how we can go about achieving our personal goals when the decisions being made around us are out of our control. She comes from a perspective of being in charge of your own destiny, and it certainly gave me a lot to think about. There is, of course, some good behind the scenes intel, both positive and negative but isn't that real life?! I highly recommend it whether you are a fan or are looking for a new perspective. It can be tricky to pair sporting stars to wine as it tends not to be a focus in their lives or stories. Mary mentions enjoying a glass of good red wine, and given that she currently plays for Paris St Germain, I've gone for a Louis Jadot Bourgogne Gamay, available from Sainsburys at £16.50. It is a treat but one that is well worth it. It's a blend of wild fruits and just a hint of spice; just like Mary herself! It's a beautifully smooth red that should be served chilled to pair perfectly with a relaxed reading session.

For something different, I moved on to *29 Seconds* by T M Logan. I really enjoyed *The Holiday* by Tim so when I spotted this one in a charity shop for £1 it came home with me...I then feared that it wouldn't be as good as *The Holiday* so saved it on my shelf. I was gripped from page one and couldn't put it down. We join Laura, a newly single Mum who is facing a tough time with her boss at the university where she lectures. She is a witness to an act of crime and unwittingly saves a life of a Russian leader's young daughter and he wants to repay her in the best way he knows...as always with crime thrillers it is really difficult to fully review as I don't want to give away any spoilers but I will say it didn't go to plan or the way I expected; absolutely just as a thriller should be! For the pairing, I've gone for one of our fridge staples, a Viognier, a wine that was very nearly extinct, which could be a discussion in itself. My further reasons are two fold, one Sarah and her friend, Laura love to share a bottle of bargain but good wine; this one from Aldi definitely falls into that category with flavours of apricot, peach and pear; it sells itself as a must try wine, what more do you need for a must read book?!...and it has an easy to spot pocket watch on the label denoting that for Laura time is running out; 29 seconds is not long!

If your bookshelves are looking a little bare and you've seen something in one of my articles or on my Instagram page @reading_with_wine please let me know as I'm always happy to lend...I also now have official limited edition wine glasses that you can purchase- free delivery in the village!! As always, read as much as you like, share as much as you can but please drink responsibly.

Golden Gatherings

Fancy a cuppa and chat?



Dates for February: Wednesday 4th & 18th from 3pm

Blunsdon Community Café

A warm welcome awaits you.

Come along to meet fellow Blunsdon residents,
enjoy good company and make new friends.

Dial-A-Ride transport is available for both journeys.

If you are interested for yourself or someone you know, please email
Hazel Wakefield at goldengatheringsblunsdon@gmail.com

GOLDEN GATHERINGS UPDATE

Since its launch in October 2025, Golden Gatherings has had 5 successful sessions with new participants joining us each time. In December, our festive session was particularly well-received. We had a quiz and a singalong, led by local resident, Geoff Gleed, playing the keyboard. We also had a sack full of wrapped presents to distribute to all participants with gifts that had been donated by the local community. A BIG thank-you for everyone's generosity.

The welcoming, warm and friendly space of the Community Cafe is where we meet and our group of volunteers make each session memorable, so a big thank-you to Angela, Judy, Karen, Liz and Geoff. Additionally, without the support of the Parish Council, particularly, that of Ian Jankinson and Jim Taylor, Golden Gatherings, would not have been able to offer community transport for the pilot sessions, allowing otherwise housebound residents the opportunity to leave their home and enjoy the chat and company that the Golden Gatherings' sessions offer.

It is also local resident, Clive, who is the Dial-a-Ride volunteer mini-bus driver, and his support is much appreciated too.

Moving forward into 2026, we have been awarded financial support from the local Prestbury Cottage Trust to cover transport costs and we thank Helen Griffiths and her fellow Trustees for their confidence in us to deliver this social opportunity to our older Blunsdon residents.

If you or someone you know would like to join us, we meet in the Community Cafe bi-monthly, each 1st and 3rd Wednesday afternoon at 3pm. For transport or additional information, please contact Hazel Wakefield on 07974 150250 or via goldengatheringsblunsdon@gmail.com.



The Chatterbox - THE BLANK PAGE

I was sitting down with my laptop, staring at the screen in front of me. Not a single word was on it. The document I'd opened was empty and totally blank – just like my brain, it seemed. What could I write about that would make an interesting article, make readers connect with and enjoy? It seemed I had nothing but tumbleweed rolling around my head, bumping from one side of my skull to the other.

I tried to empty my mind of such a negative attitude and, instead, focussed on the blank page, just waiting for ideas. Maybe I should be more grateful that the page was blank? Afterall, it's not as if I was faced with an exam paper asking me to comment on a particular character or passage from a novel I'd HAD to read, rather than WANTED to read. I wasn't being asked to give a viewpoint on the political selection process of some far-flung country. It was just a blank page.

Blank means something is plain, unadorned or empty. It is something that is yet to be created and, therefore, can fulfil any purpose that it's given. It has huge potential and can be a starting point of something truly breathtaking and moving – or it can simply remain a waste of space. That decision is ours to take. I stopped looking at the empty document as a threat or a chore to put something – anything! - on and began, instead, to appreciate the fact that there were no constraints, no demands or any limits to what I could create with this sheet of paper. The only thing it would be defined by was my own imagination.

I imagined living in a country where writing down your thoughts and expressing yourself and your viewpoints would be considered a crime and realise that I'm fortunate to have a voice that I'm permitted to use. Surely the very fact that I could sit down in a peaceful room inside a warm home also warranted gratitude. If not on a laptop, I had paper and pens aplenty for the task. I am not in a warzone; I'm safe and have plenty of food and water. I have much to be grateful for, unlike many.

I thought of all the authors who sit at a keyboard brimming with ideas, plots and storylines; whose next novel had to begin at the same point I was at now – sitting in front of an empty page. The greatest writers ever known had to take that step – putting their first words on that blank piece of paper. The greatest speeches ever written began with a solitary opening word and a headful of ideas that they needed to share, convey and impart to inspire generations to come. There are also the songwriters whose scribbled notes and heartfelt lyrics sometimes sell for phenomenal prices years after they've passed on to that great concert hall in the sky. All the world's most beautiful, unforgettable and powerful words have begun with a blank piece of paper.

Quicker than I imagined, my page is full and I didn't need to scratch my head much after all. It's often the fear of starting something new and taking that first step that makes us panic, like stepping into an abyss but if we regard the blank page as an opportunity, full of hope and possibility, I think we'll see it's rarely as difficult as we first thought.

Have a great month!

Scarecrow Trail & Open Gardens

Saturday 27th & Sunday 28th June 2026

Open Gardens to visit
Breakfasts, Afternoon Tea and Cakes to eat
Scarecrows to make and find

Expressions of interest welcome to
Judy drjudy_robbins_62@hotmail.com for the gardens,
and Lucy csturgess@btinternet.com for the scarecrows.

I'd love to open my garden!

Name & Address:	
Which days would you like to open your garden? Please choose one: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both days• Saturday only• Sunday only	
Mobile Number:	Do you WhatsApp?
Email:	
Is there restricted access for prams, buggies or wheelchairs? Yes / No Access to your garden is via...	
Are there any hazards? For example ponds / steep slopes / steep steps	

Please return your completed form to **6 The Ridge**, or take a photo and email / WhatsApp to: Judy Robbins, **07962 318087**, **drjudy_robbins_62@hotmail.com**

We want to build a Scarecrow!

The theme this year is the letter **T**. This is in memory of Tony Griffiths who passed away soon after our last Open Gardens event in 2024. Tony was a stalwart of many Blunsdon institutions but he particularly enjoyed serving the breakfasts at Open Gardens.

We would love as many entries as possible so with expressions of interest please contact Lucy at **csturgess@btinternet.com**

I have already got my **T**hinking Cap on and will **T**ry to make one a fitting **T**ribute to **T**ony!



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