

BLUNSDON

VILLAGE MAGAZINE

March 2026

Photo by Debra Richardson



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Blunsdon Community Shop & Café

March 25th will be our 3rd Anniversary of our new Shop & Cafe. We are extremely proud of our Shop/Cafe and our involvement in our community from supporting the Golden Gatherings to welcoming our Blunsdon pre-schoolers for book readings, as well as supporting many other local activities and groups. We are honoured to be finalists for the BIG Highworth Community Team of the Year Award 2026 and we have our fingers crossed for their Awards Event on Saturday 28th March.



Are you a shareholder in the Community Shop & Cafe? For as little as £10 you can become a shareholder and financially support our community business. As a shareholder, you receive the benefits of a shop loyalty card and regular updates from our Chair, as well as invites to events or new product launches. Our shareholder funds contribute to our larger cost items such as fixtures & fittings, servicing and repairs, so all contributions are greatly appreciated.

Mother's Day and Easter is coming! 🧡 Looking for that little something special for Mother's day? Please shop local and take a look at our range of local crafts and gift ideas on our feature table. Easter Eggs are in the shop too - pop in to choose your favourite chocolate treat! 🐰

Dates for your diary in March- follow us on social media for up to date event news.

Fri 6th March
FREE wine of the month tasting from 5 pm. Why not pop in after work?

Wed 4th and 18th March
Golden Gatherings 3 pm
Tues 17th March
Talk & Talk 2.30 pm David Mitchell returns to present "Who killed the North Wessex Way?" Book your place at the shop

Wed 25th March at 7.30 pm
"Documenting the Battle for the village of Groin, Germany in 1945" fascinating documentary and talk by George Foster, tickets are £20 each which includes wine and a Little Grazey Platter. Secure your place soon!

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.

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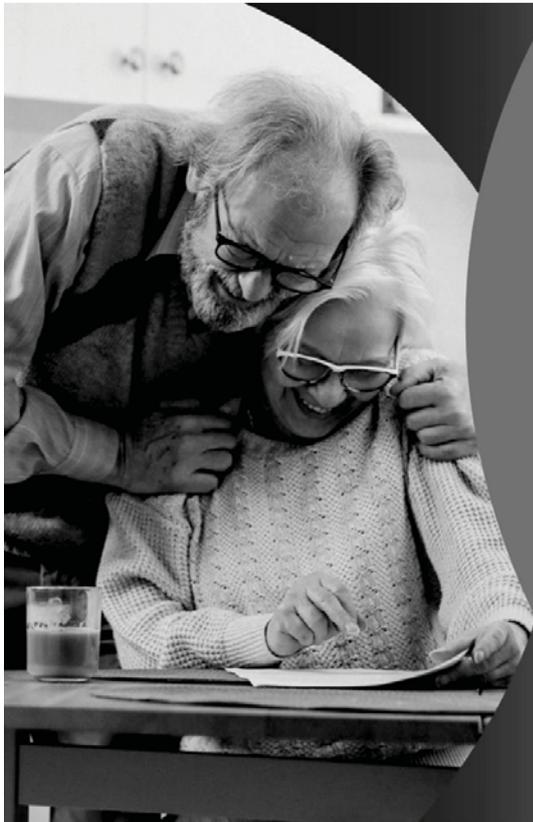
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St Leonard's Church
Blunsdon

Connecting with God, each other
and our community

From the Rector's Pen.....

Easter and therefore Lent is about as early as it can be this year and I am scrambling to get everything sorted for Lent.

The Church of England are offering a 40 day reflection using the booklet "Draw Near," copies should be available in your local church. I am also leading a course at St Michael's "Deepening Discipleship" which started on the 22nd Feb. (7.30pm Sunday evenings) For Christians Lent is a time for self-reflection, in preparation for the Easter celebrations. Whatever patterns of prayer/study, fasting, you choose, it might be helpful to remember that Lent is a Season for returning to God, however far from Him we might feel.

It is an opportunity for deepening our relationships with God, even if we're not sure how much we believe. It is a time, moreover, in which we become aware of the Father's love, revealed for us in the Son who came to die upon the cross for us, that we might live.

I pray that this Lent will be a springtime for your soul and that we may each prepare well to celebrate the Easter feast together. All that remains is for me to wish you a happy and holy Lent, and to assure you of my prayers as we embark upon the adventure of Lent together.

God Bless

Rev Phil Goodey

NOTE WE WILL JUST MEET ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY
DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

CREATE and CONNECT
EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY
AT 10:00AM - 11:30AM

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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!

JOIN US!





CREATE • CONNECT

*****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.



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

St Leonard's Refurbishment – Join the Village Engagement Team

St Leonard's Church, Blunsdon, our beautiful 13th-century church and largest community space, is about to begin an exciting new chapter. Plans are in place for a major internal refurbishment including a new heating system, kitchen, improved toilets, upgraded audio-visual equipment and wider improvements – all carefully designed to respect over 600 years of history.

Our vision is to create a true "space for all": a warm, flexible and welcoming place that continues to support worship while also serving the whole village community.

Fundraising and construction planning are already underway, and we are now forming a Village Engagement Team to help keep the village closely involved. The team will work with the local school on heritage projects, support wildlife initiatives in the churchyard, share updates on progress, engage with potential user groups and help organise events during the refurbishment.

Membership is open to anyone in Blunsdon and the surrounding area. No experience is required – just enthusiasm and a willingness to be involved.

If you would like to help shape the future of St Leonard's and ensure it remains at the heart of village life for generations to come, please get in touch.

griff9999@btinternet.com or paulwmorris777@gmail.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

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

Venue: St Leonard's Church

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If you would like to make soup,
and/or bread, please contact

Jane:

jane_ockwell@hotmail.com





Parish Council Update – March 2026

As March arrives, the first signs of spring are beginning to show, lighter evenings, new growth, and that welcome feeling of the parish waking up after winter. It's a natural moment to look ahead with optimism and energy, as the year starts to take shape, and our community's projects gather momentum.

This edition offers a chance to share what's happening across the parish as we move into the spring months: updates on ongoing work, early progress on new initiatives, and a look at the priorities that will guide us through the season. Whether or not you're able to join our parish meetings, we want everyone to feel connected to the decisions and developments shaping our shared spaces.

Your involvement, ideas, and support continue to make a real difference. As the days brighten, we look forward to building on that sense of community and making 2026 a positive year for all.

During March we'll be renewing residents' allotment agreements, so please keep an eye out for emails from us. If you decide not to renew your plot this year, please let us know so we can offer it to someone on the waiting list. For those planning to renew, now is a great time to start thinking about your next fruit and veg projects as the growing season begins to take shape.

Planning Highlights

A parish council is a *statutory consultee*. This means Swindon Borough Council must notify the parish council about planning applications; 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 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/26/0028 Description: Internal and external alterations to fire damaged warehouse. Site Address: Unit 1, Crompton Road, Groundwell Industrial Estate Swindon SN25 5AW. Decision: The PC have no reason to object.

Application Number: S/26/0115 Proposal: Erection of part two storey and part single storey rear extension, front porch and bay windows with canopy, new roof tiles, conversion of garage to habitable and associated works. Site Address: 89 Ermin Street, Blunsdon Swindon SN26 8AA Decision: The PC have no reason to object.

Decisions Made by SBC

Application Ref: S/25/1067 Proposal: Demolition of garage and relocation of summer house, and erection of 1no. detached dwelling, replacement garage and associated works (Variation of Condition 2) from previous application S/22/1266 regarding proposed plans. Site Address: Land At The Ferns, Front Lane, Blunsdon Swindon SN26 7BJ. Decision: Application Granted by SBC

Application Number: S/25/0086/RACH Proposal: Erection of 2. No dwellings. Site Address: Land Adjacent To Happy Acre, Kingsdown Lane Blunsdon Swindon SN25 5DL. Decision: Application Granted by SBC

Application Ref: S/25/0302/LZWI Description: Erection of 3no self build homes following the demolition of existing dwelling and garage. Site Address: Dinton, Broad Bush Blunsdon Swindon SN26 7DH. Decision: Application Granted by SBC

Application number: S/HOU/25/1651/JOPL Proposal: Erection of side dormer windows, raising of existing roof. Site Address: Agent: 24 Sutton Park, Blunsdon Swindon SN26 7BB. Decision: Application Granted by SBC

S/HOU/25/1646/ADHI Proposal: Erection of rear dormer windows and loft conversion. Site Address: 30 Thames View, Blunsdon Swindon SN26 8AQ. Application Granted by SBC

Application Number: S/TPO/25/1611 Re: Works to Tree under TPO 2025-01. At: Orchard House, Hunts Hill, Blunsdon, Swindon. Decision: Application Granted by SBC

Application Number: S/25/0809/RACH Proposal: Erection of a temporary synthetic fuel facility, solar array and associated Infrastructure. Site Address: Land Off Little Rose Lane, Swindon. Decision: Application Granted by SBC.

We have been informed that planning application S/20/1685/TB, relating to the proposed anaerobic digester facility near Castle Eaton, has now been withdrawn by the applicant. This means the proposal will not proceed in its current form, and the planning process for this application has formally concluded.

The Rivan application has been granted planning permission for the development proposed, subject to a detailed list of conditions. Although approval has been given, this is not the end of the process. The development cannot begin until all conditions have been fully met, and these requirements are extensive.

The full list of conditions can be viewed on the Swindon Borough Council website:

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

The Parish Council is very disappointed with the outcome, but our focus now is on supporting residents as the project moves into its next stages. We will monitor progress closely to ensure the developer is held to the highest possible standards and that all planning conditions are properly enforced.

In parallel, the Parish Council will be reviewing the decision process in detail to understand whether any further avenues of challenge or scrutiny may be available.

Projects & Improvements

We are now progressing for the water connection to the new office after many months of requests and follow-ups. Despite this delay, the office has already hosted numerous meetings and is proving to be a valuable base for council activity. While on site, it's also

encouraging to see the parish-council-funded car park being well used — supporting families arriving and leaving school, visitors to the park, and the teams using the MUGA.

If you are selling your property, please be aware that estate agent boards are permitted only within the boundary of the property being marketed. To help keep the village looking tidy and to avoid obstruction or confusion, boards must not be placed on verges, junctions, green spaces, or any other public areas. Thank you for helping us maintain a neat and welcoming village environment.

Community Groups & Events

Golden Gatherings dates for March are 4th and 18th, any questions please contact:
Goldengatheringsblunsdon@gmail.com

Speed watch Update

Speed Watch Data Table (Jan 2026 and early Feb 2026)

Date	Vehicles counted	Exceeding limit	Maximum Speed mph	Speed Limit	Start	Finish	Area
28/01/2026	219	2	40	30	14:00	15:00	Junction with Sams Lane
30/01/2026	347	3	37	30	13:55	14:55	Cycle Track
31/01/2026	195	10	59	30	09:00	10:00	Telephone Box
02/02/2026	30	3	39	30	10:30	11:15	Opp No 16
04/02/2026	268	7	41	30	15:05	16:00	Minerva Heights

January brought persistent wet weather, which meant our Community Speedwatch volunteers were only able to carry out a limited number of checks. Despite this, several monitoring sessions did take place in key areas of the village, including the junction with Sams Lane, the Cycle Track, the Telephone Box area, opposite No. 16, and Minerva Heights. Across these locations, most drivers were travelling within the 30mph limit. However, the session near the Telephone Box recorded noticeably higher speeds compared with the other sites, highlighting it as an area where driver's behavior continues to be a concern. The remaining locations showed generally good compliance, with only a small number of vehicles exceeding the limit.

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

Challenges and areas of focus

As we head into the third month of the year, we want to share a little more about what your councillors are working on. This section offers a few short snapshots of current projects, some positive, some more challenging, but all part of the everyday work involved in serving our community.

We're committed to 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 sense of what's happening behind the scenes and the level of dedication we aim to bring to every task, big or small.

Highways Sign: The developer, Crest Nicholson, is currently working to complete the northern half of William Morris Way to allow it to progress toward adoption, once finished they'll start work of the southern half and Greene Street. The directional sign remains in place for the A419, so the Haul Road will be gaining extra traffic.

High Street: A replacement traditional wooden footpath sign has been put in place near the Blunsdon House Hotel.

Back Lane/Front Lane: The blocked gully on Back Lane has now been cleared by SBC, thank you to the resident for reporting this. We have also had a quick repair to a large pothole on Back Lane due to help from residents reporting to SBC.

Swindon Borough Council has advised us that Thames Water will be carrying out work later this month. To allow this, an official Order will be in place prohibiting vehicles from using Front Lane at the junction with Back Lane.

Traffic will be diverted via Back Lane and Ivy Lane in both directions.

The Order legally runs from 23 March 2026 for up to six months, but the actual works are expected to take place between 23 and 25 March 2026 only.

MUGA: A portaloos has also been provided for MUGA users should they need facilities during their booking. In addition, we are currently progressing plans for bicycle stands to support those travelling to the MUGA or park area, with installation to follow once final arrangements are complete.

Line painting carparks: We are just sorting line painting at the village hall car park and loading bay at shop to help identify areas.

Hunts Hill: The gully has now been fixed super quick, thanks to Cllr Hughes, Ward Cllr Weisingers & SBC.

Ermin Street: You will be able to watch our 4000 new native trees along Ermin Street come into leaf and begin to grow this spring. Look out for Silver Birch, Hawthorn, Hazel and Wild Service trees amongst others. Look out also, for our 7000 new perennial flowers which will grow in strength and number and give a better display year-on-year. Yellow Aconite is the earliest flowering bulb we planted but can take a year or two to get properly established. It's beautiful yellow flowers form carpets of colour in January and February. Other flowers to look out for will include Common Primrose, Wood Anemone, Bluebells, Wild Daffodil (the native one) and Snowdrops. Many other native species have also been sown using a wildflower meadow mixture, but the majority will not flower until 2027. Yellow Rattle is one that we will see this year, and it is known as the 'Meadowmaker', which is why we sowed a lot of it! It parasitises on the roots of grasses, stealing its energy from them rather than taking it from the soil. This reduces the prevalence of grasses and allows more room for flowers! For more information, or to volunteer to assist in the ongoing management and monitoring of our new wildflowers areas, please contact our Clerk

debbiebraiden@blunsdon-pc.gov.uk

Remember: pot holes, road and path damage is the responsibility of SBC who have an online reporting system – but multiple reporting helps get the job done!

Thank You to the Rapid Relief Team

Blunsdon Parish Council would like to extend our sincere thanks to the **Rapid Relief Team (RRT)** for their generous funding of the new defibrillator and exterior cabinet for the MUGA. RRT is a global charitable organisation known for providing practical support to communities, emergency services, and people in need through compassion-driven volunteer work.

Their contribution has enabled us to install a vital piece of lifesaving equipment that will benefit everyone who uses the MUGA, the park, and the surrounding area. Having a defibrillator on site significantly improves emergency response capability and strengthens the safety of our community.

We are proud to support the work of the Rapid Relief Team and deeply appreciate their commitment to helping local communities thrive. Their generosity has made a meaningful and lasting difference to our village, and we are grateful for their partnership. (see below)



Parish Precept Update for 2026/27

Blunsdon Parish Council has reviewed the precept for the coming year, and we want to explain the reasons behind the change.

For several years we have kept our Band D precept deliberately low compared with many similar parishes. However, the cost of delivering services has continued to rise, and the parish has taken on more responsibilities previously managed by Swindon Borough Council. These include maintaining public green spaces, emptying over 30 bins, managing the cemetery and churchyard grounds, hedge cutting, leaf clearance, building maintenance, and supporting community facilities such as the Village Hall, Community Building and MUGA. Blunsdon has also grown significantly, increasing demand on our services, while inflation has raised the cost of contractors, utilities, insurance and essential maintenance.

To remain financially sustainable and continue providing the services residents rely on, the Band D precept for 2026/27 will be £124.20. This brings us more in line with similar parishes and ensures we can maintain facilities, meet legal obligations, and plan for future needs. Our Finance page on our website blunsdonparishcouncil.co.uk contains a resident's precept letter with a more detailed brief on what the precept is and why it has changed, in addition a full breakdown of the parish budget will be available on our website from the end of



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March. If you have any questions, please contact the Clerk at debbiebraiden@blunsdon-pc.gov.uk

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 Peter Hughes

Role on the Parish Council: Peter's main responsibilities centre on public footpaths and roads, ensuring they remain safe, accessible, and well-maintained for everyone in the village. He is also an active member of the local Speedwatch team, helping to monitor and address speeding concerns across the parish. His focus is firmly on improving road and pedestrian safety and ensuring that Blunsdon's network of footpaths remains usable and enjoyable for residents.

What Peter gets involved with: Peter contributes to a wide range of Parish Council work, drawing on over 36 years of experience in food retail management, along with his current part-time roles in retail auditing and supply chain. This background gives him a strong understanding of operational planning, problem-solving, and community-focused decision-making. He uses this experience to:

- Support discussions on infrastructure, maintenance, and village improvements
- Bring a practical, structured approach to council decisions
- Help shape policies that balance village needs with long-term sustainability
- Advocate for safer roads, better footpaths, and improved pedestrian access

Peter's ability to combine real-world experience with a calm, thoughtful approach makes him a valuable voice in council discussions.

His connection to the village: Peter has deep roots in the local area, having lived here since 1974. He returned to Blunsdon in 2020 after previously living in the village for three years, drawn back by its character and sense of community. He enjoys the peace and quiet, the beautiful scenery, and the friendly atmosphere, especially among fellow dog walkers, who help make the village feel like home.

What he enjoys about the village: For Peter, Blunsdon's charm lies in its blend of rural tranquility

and strong community spirit. He appreciates the open spaces, the slower pace of life, and the way residents look out for one another. The village's natural beauty and welcoming feel are what make it such a special place to live.

A few words about Peter: Peter decided to join the Parish Council after becoming increasingly frustrated by the level of service provided by Swindon Borough Council and the perceived neglect of the village. Rather than simply accepting the situation, he chose to get involved and work towards positive change.

He is particularly passionate about improving local services and infrastructure, and he wants to ensure that the Parish Council plays an active role in reducing the impact of ongoing housing developments on village life. His goal is to help protect what makes Blunsdon unique while supporting thoughtful, community-led improvements for the future.

Dates for Your Diary

Parish Council Meetings – The next two meetings for the Parish Council will be on:
March's Full Council meeting to be held Monday 2nd March at 7.30pm
March's Finance meeting to be held on Monday 16th March 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

March 7th: Ward Surgery Meeting at The Village Shop (11:30am) it is an informal drop-in session where residents can meet with parish councillors to discuss local matters, share ideas, or ask for guidance. It's a relaxed and welcoming opportunity to chat face-to-face without needing an appointment, helping councillors stay closely connected to the community and the issues that matter to you.

Did You Know?



Blunsdon was once home to one of the highest points in the Swindon area — **Blunsdon Hill** — which offered such clear views across the Vale of the White Horse that it became a key landmark for travelers long before modern roads and signage existed.



BLUNSDON WI

Rather staying at home watching the TV 34 of us met on a wet and wild night to listen to a very entertaining speech by Jeff Evans about the history of the TV quiz show. Lots of familiar names and the scandalous way that American TV so blatantly cheated come to mind.

Our February visit to the snowdrops got rained off but we have several exciting trips organised for March to look forward to. The next meeting is on March 18th and is about the history of the traditional toast maker.

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

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: St Leonard's Church in early springtime

Your April Magazine will be delivered from: 28th March

Magazine issue	Deadline for items for inclusion
April	18th March

Community Messages

Thank you from the family of Stuart Allen (formerly of Berton Close and later the High Street) for the messages of support and condolences from all Blunsdon friends and neighbours.

BLUNSDON SURGERY Tel 01793 721254

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



Rotary

Club of Swindon North & Thamesdown

Registered Charity No: 1023031

Website: rotaryswindonnorth.org.uk

Email: rotaryswindonnorth@gmail.com

Highworth is about to be swept up in intrigue, suspense, and community spirit when we, in association with the Highworth Amateur Dramatic Society (HADS), present a thrilling Murder Mystery Drama. It's a fundraising event so it's not only an evening of captivating entertainment but also an opportunity to support local charities supported by Rotary. Tickets cost £25 each and that includes a lite-bite barbecue supper supplied and delivered by Andrews the butchers in Highworth.

Beers, wines and soft drinks will be available from a cash bar.



The Murder Mystery Drama is for two nights, Friday 24th and Saturday 25th April, both starting at 7pm, in Highworth's historic St Michael and All Angel's Church. For Tickets at £25 each, scan this QR code or visit www.goodhub.com/go/rotarymurdermystery Our Club President, Robin Elliott, says: "We're delighted to be hosting these two evenings of fun, food, and fundraising. Not only will they appeal to drama enthusiasts but also to anyone looking for an enjoyable night out with a difference. And, being Rotary, we

can assure everyone that 100% of the money we raise will be distributed to worthwhile local charities."

For more information about our Murder Mystery Drama, and our Rotary Club in general, visit www.rotaryswindonnorth.org.uk

Golden Gatherings

Fancy a cuppa and chat?



Golden Gatherings update

Whilst it is great to see Golden Gatherings' participant numbers continuing to rise, we are aware this does result in a busier shift for the Community Cafe staff and volunteers. We thank Bridie and Mary in particular for their welcoming smiles, great coffees and making time to converse.

We now have 27 registered participants and during our bi-monthly sessions it is great to hear conversations flowing with much laughter amongst everyone. If you are a regular Cafe customer and find the interaction a bit noisy, please forgive us, since this community bi-monthly social opportunity is much appreciated amongst our participating older residents.

In March, we will meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 4th and 18th March in the Community Cafe at 3pm. Everyone is welcome.

If you know someone who may like to join the group, please encourage them to contact Hazel Wakefield on 07974 150250 or send her an email to goldengatheringsblunson@gmail.com and she will contact them directly.



A Recipe from CookFoodFan

Warming Soup

I have noticed that I use red lentils a lot in the winter, they are part of the pulses family, cheap to buy but a good source of plant-based protein, fibre and iron. I use them to bulk out mince dishes, in dhal recipes, adding to stews, curries and of course soups. At the beginning of last year, 2025, my recipe was for Spiced Red Lentil Soup, so this soup recipe is Red Lentil Coconut Soup, really easy to make, comforting and of course delicious. Great for lunch served with some bread.

Red Lentil Coconut Soup

1 tbsp oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tsp salt
1 tsp cumin seeds (or ½ tsp ground cumin)
½ tsp cayenne pepper
200g red lentils
1 x tin chopped tomatoes
½ can coconut milk (but I put it all in!)
Black pepper
Optional garnish: a dollop of yoghurt, toasted pumpkin seeds

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan, add the onion, garlic, ginger and salt. Soften for 2 mins.
2. Add the turmeric, cumin and cayenne pepper. Cook for 1 min.
3. Add the red lentils and tomatoes, 1 can full of water (use empty tomato tin) and coconut milk. Stir to combine, turn the heat up and bring to the boil.
4. Reduce the heat to barely simmer and cook until the soup has thickened and the lentils are cooked through, about 15 mins.
5. Turn off the heat, taste and adjust the seasoning adding black pepper.
6. Using a blender, blend until smooth.
7. Serve with a dollop of yoghurt and some toasted seeds.

Tip: I toast seeds (e.g. pumpkin, sunflower) and nuts in a dry frying pan, Keep an eye on them and toss regularly otherwise they will burn. Lovely added to soups, salads or breakfast yoghurt.

ENJOY with some fresh bread. Blunsdon Community shop have a delivery on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays from Dangerfields. I can recommend their ancient cereal loaf.



BLUNSDON FOOTBALL CLUB

Blunsdon are 7th out of 10 in the Swindon & District Premier League

Recent Results

Great Western

Lost 1 – 6

Ramsbury

Won 7 – 2 Cup Quarter Final

This winter's damp stuff has seen numerous local fixtures cancelled, but at least the sun shone when Blunsdon came through in style in the cup match at Ramsbury, with veteran Lee Toomey scoring a hat-trick.

We will now face a Semi-Final against old rivals Chiseldon at Sutton Park on 21st March. Please come along and cheer us on to reach the cup final for the second year in a row.

Upcoming fixtures, Kick Off 2.30 p.m. Saturday, unless stated

Date	Opponent	Venue
28th February, 2 p.m.	Abbey Meads	Moredon Sporting Hub
7th March	Marlborough Town	Elcot Lane, Marlborough
14 th March	Bassett Bulldogs	Sutton Park
21 st March, 2 p.m.	Chiseldon – Cup Semi-Final	Sutton Park
28 th March	Old Town Athletic	Commonweal School

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

SAVE THE DATE – Heart in Hand Saturday 4th April.

Join us as we celebrate five great years at the Heart in Hand with a family fun day party for everyone to enjoy.

The celebrations will feature live music from bands 'Busy Fools' (3pm till 5pm) and 'Burn The Midnight Oil' (6pm till 8pm). There will also be face painting, an Easter Bonnet competition for the children, garden games, tasty food and sweet treats, with plenty more fun throughout the day.

Come along and celebrate with us – we would love to see you there.

The Rule Family



**Social Walking from
Blunsdon Community Shop**



**Every 2nd and 4th Thursday
of the month at 10:00am**

We start and finish at the shop.

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

*New walkers
always
welcome*



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Well, we made it through January and February; spring is calling! I managed to stick to my challenge of reducing my To be read pile with no new books being bought in January, let's see how the rest of the year now goes.

There are some incredible launches coming out over the next few months and I'm starting with a recommendation for the new Veronica Henry; *The Invitation*. I love all Veronica's books and this one has become a firm favourite already with two different time periods, two love stories in one family and how they come together in the face of tragedy. I would pair this with a deep, warm red such as a Shiraz from the Barossa region in South Australia. There is a lovely one that is currently on offer in Morrisons too. Lose yourself in the comfort of blackberries, plum and spice as you navigate a time of unease and unrest. As always with books about war, I learnt so much; I didn't know that war artists were sought out to show the country not only what was going on, but also just what these men committed too. It just goes to show the depth of the effect on more than the soldiers alone, The sideline of an author in waiting only added to the perfection of the storyline for me; I'll always love a strong woman who fights for what she wants and Stella definitely fought hard. The story wraps up in the most thoughtful way, and jts hauntingly touching.

My second recommendation this month is *Swept Away* by Beth O'Leary, an accidental boat theme to start the year. As we come to expect from Beth, it's a book with heart and more than a touch of romcom humour. Zeke and Lexi realise their one night liaison is more than they bargained for when they wake up to discover their boat is no longer moored in sleepy Gilmouth but bobbing along in the Northern Sea. The Merry Doormouse was cosy enough for evening cuddles and snuggles but she isn't built to sail the seas, it becomes a tale of survival, secrets and sea views, and a stray seagull....and then one mega twist! I loved every page, both Lexi and Zeke grow individually and together meaning they are both wonderful characters. They love a gin and tonic so that would be a brilliant pairing but let's make it on brand and look forward to spring with the Blossom Hill Gin Fizz blend. I love the Rosè version, it's a joyful fruity wine with a twist of country gin; full of hope and happier days to come...

We look forward to longer evenings and possibly even reading in the garden, toasting wonderful words and wine.

Let me know what you are reading and drinking over on Instagram via [@reading_with_wine](https://www.instagram.com/reading_with_wine)

The Chatterbox - Wish Upon a Star

I know next to nothing about Astronomy but find our night skies so beguilingly beautiful and full of unanswered questions. The ability to see the stars at night (when it stops raining!) is one of the things that I particularly like about Blunsdon. The lack of streetlights is possibly a contentious topic and I know it can't be easy walking your dog late at night or even just going up the path when you get home and there aren't any lights on in the house. The rewards, however, are revealed when you look up to see the diamond white pinpricks of light on that never-ending, pitch-black bolt of velvet cloth.

Until recently, overgrown trees severely limited our view of the night sky. We couldn't see the moon's rise and if a meteor shower was forecast, we were unlikely to see it even if the sky happened to be clear. To be honest with you, it made me sad. Being excluded from witnessing the simple, natural and reassuring gift of nature like a bright, silvery crescent moon rising or a shooting star streak through the black night made me feel as though a basic need was being denied until, thankfully, the tree issue was finally addressed and once again our view of the sky is much less restricted. This nightly occurrence is unavailable to so many though if they live in towns and cities or even villages where light pollution prevents the sight of the nocturnal sky from offering up its gifts. I know many may not even feel it as a loss but the combination of a quiet moment of reflection, the black night and a million stars can be deeply profound especially when we think of our own place and purpose within the universe.

Several times we've been fortunate enough to witness the Northern Lights which has been unusual this far south. Only on one occasion were they visible to us with the naked eye but by going online and finding advice on where to look for them and how to photograph those illusive, magical colours, it's been possible to capture them from Blunsdon more than once thanks to our dark skies.

I remember being in my friend's back garden when I was about seven or eight years old. It was during the winter when it got dark very early, probably around teatime. I recall looking up at the stars and wondering if there was someone like me looking back at that very same moment. It was possibly one of the deepest thoughts I'd had in life up to that point and one I still ponder on to this day. The night sky gives us a perfect backdrop for creativity and dreams. What child doesn't dream of flying a spaceship to another planet or finding a handful of stardust in their pocket to make their dreams come true? I think I'll always make a wish upon a star, be full of awe at the ominous spectacle of an eclipse and smile at the thought that we all contain a little bit of magical stardust.

Keep shining through March!

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.

Blunsdon Scarecrow Trail and Open Gardens - 27th & 28th June 2026

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 **csturjess@btinternet.com**

I have already got my **Thinking Cap** on and will **Try** to make one a fitting **Tribute** to **Tony!**

5 Hearts, One Cause

My twin sister and I have taken on many challenges over the years, but never side by side — and that's what makes this one so incredibly special. To stand shoulder to shoulder for such an amazing charity, alongside Kathy and Charlotte Weir, means more than words can say. We know this journey will test us mentally and physically, but we're determined (and just stubborn enough!) to see it through. Together, as four strong women, we'll face the tough moments, celebrate the highs, probably laugh a lot along the way — and achieve something truly epic. Raising £5,555, a number close to our hearts, would make it even more meaningful.

Doddie's Triple Crown is the 2026 edition of Rob Wainwright's epic annual cycling challenge, raising vital funds for My Name's 5 Doddie Foundation.

Our mighty — if slightly crazy — team is made up of 4 Cyclists: Kathy Weir, Charlotte Dun, Lyn McCartney & Rhae Honey (Blunsdon resident, see photo)



The challenge will take place from Tuesday 10th to Friday 13th March, during which we'll cover an incredible 800 miles over four days, arriving in Dublin the evening before Scotland take on Ireland at the Aviva Stadium in the Guinness 6 Nations Championship.

Our (slightly circuitous!) route is as follows:

Day 1: Melrose to Leeds

Day 2: Leeds to Gloucester

Day 3: Gloucester to Pembroke (overnight ferry to Ireland)

Day 4: Rosslare to Dublin

We need all the support we can possibly get, as we have just four weeks to train our butts off (not long at all!) and be ready to begin our challenge on Tuesday 10th March.

We would absolutely love, love, love to raise as much money as possible for this incredible charity.

Please see our JustGiving page <https://www.mynames5doddie.co.uk/>

“Our vision is simple: A World Free of MND.”



Thank you, thank you, thank you



Swing Birds: Who Ruffled the Feathers?

Music for Spies, Sleuths & Superheroes in aid of Prospect Hospice

Swindon's all-female big band, Swing Birds, return with a brand-new themed concert in support of Prospect Hospice.

The performance takes place at The Deanery CE Academy, Swindon, on Sunday 26th April 2026 at 7pm. Founded in 2014 by local musician Mo Squires, Swing Birds began as a one-off project inspired by trailblazing all-female bands such as Ivy Benson's. The group quickly took flight, building a loyal following and becoming a vibrant part of Swindon's musical community. The Birds come from many walks of life; some are professional musicians, while others play for fun – all united by their commitment to delivering joyful, high-quality performances. In June 2024, Mo died from endometrial cancer. Prospect Hospice provided exceptional care throughout her last months, supporting her at home, in hospital, and in her final days at the hospice in Wroughton. When the band planned an annual birthday concert in Mo's honour, choosing Prospect Hospice as the charity was a natural decision. Prospect Hospice continues to face major funding pressures. With annual costs escalating and only a small proportion covered by government support, the charity has had to make difficult cuts, including bed closures and reduced home-care capacity. Every member of Swing Birds has experienced Prospect's incredible assistance in one way or another, and they are immensely thankful for the care their Bird-in-Chief received. They appreciate the opportunity to give something back to Prospect Hospice.

What to Expect: The Birds will be celebrating the epic music which so often goes hand in hand with Crime Fighters of TV and cinema. Think the glamorous grandeur of James Bond themes, the cool Mancini jazz of the Pink Panther and the funk-infused orchestration of 70's TV cop shows, lovingly curated and performed the way only Swing Birds can. Witnesses report special guests joining us on the night!

Event Details Date/Time: Sunday 26th April 2026 at 7pm (doors 6pm)

Venue: The Deanery CE Academy, Peglars Way, Swindon, SN1 7DA

Tickets: Available NOW for just £12.50* each. Scan the QR code or purchase online : (*booking fees apply) <http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/SwingBirds>

Parking: Plenty of parking available with fully accessible (flat access) front-row seats.

More Info: for more details follow Swing Birds social media

<https://linktr.ee/swingbirds>

Swing Birds band members are giving their time free of charge - all profit from this event will be donated to Prospect Hospice.



Whether you're a regular Bird Watcher or new to their sound, the evening promises something for everyone! Come along for an unforgettable evening of live music, delivered with the unique flair, elegance and humour that only Swing Birds can offer!

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